

OUTLINES OF CHRISTIAN
DOCTRINE

BY THE REV.

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TO MY BROTHER,
GEORGE EVANS MOULE, D.D.,
MISSIONARY BISHOP IN MID CHINA,
WITH LOVE AND REVERENCE
I INSCRIBE THIS BOOK.

P R E F A C E .

THE present short treatise was at first planned in the form of a Commentary upon the Thirty-Nine Articles. As the work proceeded the author was led to think that a sketch of the main doctrines of the Faith might be more generally useful, which, while always keeping in view the great historic Confession of the Church of which he thanks God he is a son and presbyter, should omit some topics contained in it and deal with others in a way somewhat different from that of a commentary.

The work makes not the least pretension either to originality or to fulness. It will have well served its purpose if in any degree it can stimulate its readers to personal study, and suggest lines for work and thought.

The author humbly trusts that what he has written has been written "at the foot of the Cross." Certainly, he has never willingly forgotten the presence of Him "whom truly to know is

everlasting life." Before Him he desires ever to prostrate himself, and ever to recollect more fully that, as regards the depth and height of His Revelation, "we know in part, and prophesy in part."

Writing on the Day of the Annunciation, he reverently takes up as his own, in view of the holy truths he has here attempted to discuss, the words of its Collect, now thirteen centuries old :

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an Angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought to the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CAMBRIDGE, March 25th, 1889.

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(2) THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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In a Third Edition (Feb., 1890) Indexes have been added, and some corrections and alterations made. The writer is much indebted to his critics for indications of omission or error

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

I. NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION. II. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

WE are about to attempt a statement of the main doctrines of the Christian Faith, taken as the expressions of truths divinely revealed in the Scriptures, and divinely adjusted to the nature and needs of man. We desire to state and comment as always remembering not only the duty of accuracy and fairness, but also the presence of Him who is the eternal Life, Truth, and Love, the ever-blessed God, to whom be glory for ever.

As introductory to our study, we make a few remarks here on the Connexion between Natural and Revealed Religion, and on the Holy Scriptures and their authority.

I. Christian theology, as presented in Revelation, practically assumes, as otherwise given, certain great facts about man, the world, and God. It assumes the truth of inferences from general human consciousness, such as the reality of our personality, self-conscious, intelligent, and free to will; the reality of the material world; and of the immaterial; of their difference, and of our capacity really (not

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fully) to know both ; the reality of the law of causation, that every change or becoming has an adequate cause really related to it ; the reality of will as a true cause, an ultimate force. It assumes the fact of conscience, the unforced response of man's nature to evidence for the existence of an absolute law of moral obligation and accountability. It proclaims, but it even more largely assumes, the existence of God, the free Personal Creator, Himself eternally and necessarily *being*, and the sole ultimate cause and basis of all positive *becoming* ; goal and repose of all that which in man seeks for original and perfect being, truth, and goodness ; raised above condition and relation, as being self-existent and self-sufficient, but freely, sovereignly, and lovingly entering into relation with the creation of His will ; Infinite, by the absence of all limit to His excellences, each in its kind, and meantime Personal, that is, knowing Himself, and intelligently willing—a view of Him which, far from limiting His nature, is of the essence of its greatness, for the absence of personality would be a vast imperfection. Revelation assumes that man, being what he is, and placed in the world, being what it is, has ground enough to be sure that that world exists because of the existence of One supreme Power of at least his own order ; a Power which cannot *less than himself* know, will, and love (see further below, p. 12).

Christianity assumes and claims the facts of general developed human consciousness, as part of its evidence, and as necessary to a full estimate of its doctrines. And it deals with man, accordingly, not as with an abstraction, but as an actual being under actual conditions. It presents its doctrine of God, not *in vacuo*, but as to a being made

in His image (below, p. 157). It presents its doctrine of salvation as to a being actually suffering from moral discord in his actual state of nature. Individual men may repel these claims. But Christianity invites them to reconsider their denial in the light of more general facts, and to listen again.

Meanwhile these assumptions prepare the way for articulate Revelation from God to man. Revelation assumes conscience, for, example, but it refuses to be thought of as its natural development. It is *for* man, and *to* him, but not *of* him. It speaks to man, conscious of the existence of supernatural power, as a direct message from the region of that power. It speaks to man, conscious of moral difference, and of internal moral discord, as a message, direct from the region of absolute right and love, about the nature and remedy of his own sin.

Christianity assumes of course the possibility of such direct messages. It assumes that the eternal personal Cause and Possessor of all creatures is supremely free amidst all ranges of His works, and in particular free to communicate, in His spiritual Personality, with the personal spirits whom He has made free to communicate with each other. And the independent study of physical phenomena only harmonizes with this assumption, by leading the observer, true to the deepest principles of thought in his own nature, along the chain of change and cause to the conviction of an ultimate Cause quite inscrutable to physical research. In other words, physical enquiry, often suspected of a tendency to materialistic atheism, really leads towards a region of being on which it can pronounce no positive verdict, and from which therefore may issue effects

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which it can neither predict nor preclude. That region, says Revelation, is God, supremely free to will and act. Physical enquiry, in its proper province, has no quarrel with that assertion. It has no proof to offer that He "who inhabiteth eternity" cannot speak from thence, amidst and through all that He has willed to exist; not treating His handiwork capriciously, or as unreal, but using it as entirely elastic under His wise and loving will.

The word Revelation may be used in a wider or a narrower sense. Man, rightly and fully studied, is to himself a revelation of the being of God. The external world is in some important respects a revelation, deeply connected with that conveyed through manhood. But common consent restricts the word Revelation to communications from and about God given otherwise than through the normal phenomena of man and the world. Such communications, Christianity holds, have been made from the very first to man. God has thus spoken sometimes by physical miracle, sovereign abnormal handling of material things and their successions; sometimes by spiritual miracle, as by disclosures of the future, or of present facts of the unseen world. Above all, Revelation has come through the Incarnation of the Son, the Christ, of God; through His manifested Person, Word, and Work. And if we ask for a sure *record* of Revelation in this its more definite and precious aspects, the Christian answer is, the Holy Scriptures.

II. The Holy Scriptures, whatever their origin and nature, are as a fact one of the great phenomena of the world. No other collection of writings exists which mysteriously combines, as they do, the widest diversities of date and authorship with the

deepest pervading harmonies and unities. In one aspect they are a part of the national literature of a much isolated race; in another, they have been and are the spiritual oracle of many generations of precisely the most cultivated and vigorous races. Historical research affirms the accuracy of their pictures of men and manners of the remote past; but meanwhile they themselves refuse to separate from their firm texture of narrative and teaching the presence everywhere of the supernatural. From one side they are a long and solid chain of recorded and predicted events; from another, they are a continuous exposition of supreme spiritual principles, spiritual forces, and fears, and hopes.

They have been very often criticized in respect of their description, for example, of the origin and processes of the material universe. But among their defenders in these respects are found some of the chief exponents of the latest scientific knowledge.¹ They have been attacked in the region of history. But the past is full of verifications of their historical accuracy in matters once apparently hopeless of explanation; while it is also full of warnings against premature explanation of such difficulties.

But the Christian student sees the most impressive characteristic of the Holy Scriptures in the fact of the attitude towards them taken by Jesus Christ. Antecedent to all questions of its spiritual authority, the New Testament, as a whole, is a mass of valid historical evidence to the opinions of Jesus Christ. And in this character it attests beyond a doubt His profound veneration for the

¹ See Mivart, *Lessons from Nature*, Dawson, *Chain of Life*, and *Modern Science, etc.*, Reusch, *Bible and Nature* (Eng. trans.), and Cave, *Inspiration of the Old Testament*.

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Holy Scriptures then existing; that is to say, for the Old Testament, as in substance, and practically in detail, it exists to-day. For Him it possessed the peculiar and awful characteristic of Divine Authority. He stated no theory of its construction; but looking upon it as it existed, He recognized in it the decisive utterance of God, even in its minor features of expression. For the mind which recognizes in Jesus Christ all that He claimed to be, this verdict on the supernatural character and divine authority of the Old Testament is final.

And the transition of inference to the New Testament is not difficult. As a fact, Jesus Christ entrusted the exposition of His message to a selection of His contemporary followers. As another fact, within a very few generations, at furthest, from His death, the vast majority of His disciples recognized in certain writings, claiming to emanate from that circle, a divine character, identical with that of the older Scriptures.

The claims of some of these writings to authenticity were freely discussed, and in some cases long doubted. But this was never so with more than a small fraction of the whole mass finally recognized. And, what is most significant, doubt never extended, seriously or widely, to the point of refusing divine authority to an apostolic writing once ascertained. And it is certain that the "New Testament Canon," thus recognized from the first in idea, and in the concrete of its present contents within three centuries from the death of Jesus Christ, has shown itself ever since, by the evidence of spiritual and moral power, to be indeed of the same order with those older Scriptures before which the Incarnate Christ Himself bowed. And let it

be remembered that the thoughtful and reverent study of the *internal* evidences of the Holy Scriptures will always contribute above all things to the solid belief in their divine character, and their claim to ultimate spiritual authority for the Christian.¹

For in fact the attitude of Christ to the Old Testament Scriptures is decisive proof that they rightly claim *ultimate* spiritual authority. And it is well to remember, as a great subsidiary item of natural and historical evidence on this subject, that the early generations of the Christian Church held, with practical universality, this view of the Scriptures. On few subjects, if any, are the Christian writers of the first few centuries more entirely agreed than on the ultimate authority of the Holy Scriptures.² (See further, p. 139.)

It is important to observe that authority may be real, yet not ultimate. A Creed has authority; a Council has authority; a Father has authority, and still more, many consenting Fathers, witnessing to facts of belief. But none of these has ultimate authority. The Scriptures have it. (See below, p. 214.)

No thoughtful man will hastily urge his private judgment against the deliberate verdict of his religious community lawfully expressed; or against a great consensus of Christian witnesses or interpreters. That is, he will recognize authority in them. To him "private judgment" will be not so much a *right*, to be loudly asserted, as a sacred and searching *responsibility*, to be reverently remembered. But all this is not a concession of ultimate

¹ See Lord Hatherley, *Continuity of Scripture*, especially pp. xli-xliii.

² See this fully illustrated by Dean Goode, *Divine Rule of Faith and Practice*, vol. iii., ch. xi.

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authority to anything but the Holy Scriptures. Reverently, but still lawfully and firmly, if the deplorable necessity should arise, the individual may appeal, from even Creed or Council, to the Holy Scriptures, asking to be tested by their sacred verdict alone, as the basis of the authority of all other lawful courts. On the other hand, he will cherish a high reverence *à priori* for the results of doctrine actually attained by those other courts, as against any isolated conclusions of his own.

The Holy Scriptures, then, are divine Revelation for the Christian who takes his place without reserve at the feet of the Jesus Christ of the Gospels. It remains to explain briefly what is the relation between them and systems or expositions of doctrine based upon them.

Scripture, it is obvious, is not in itself a formulated system of doctrines. But it does not therefore discountenance the construction of a system. The truth is that Scripture both contains in abundance the materials for a system, and in many of its parts, particularly in the Epistles, indicates a system. Up to a certain point Scripture is thus analogous to "Nature." The universe is not a system of science. But it contains the materials for the construction of theory and development of system, and by the orderliness of its phenomena it suggests an exposition in forms of mental order.

True, Scripture contains immensely more than the materials for a doctrinal system. It contains a mass of expressions and manifestations of Divine affections. It is a record of personal dealings of God with man, awful and tender, so presented as to caution us, at every step, never to study doctrinal method and order out of relation to the living and

eternal Love. And Scripture contains, moreover, abundant warnings that its contents are in their nature so related to the inscrutable that in any systematization we soon reach the point of holy silence. With such provisos, however, we rightly approach the Scriptures with the aim first to ascertain their *data* of facts and truths, and then, knowing that their Author is the Lord of order, and has so constituted us that our minds must seek order through all phenomena, to endeavour to combine the *data*; in other words, to trace a Theology.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

I. THEISM II. THE HOLY TRINITY.

I. THEISM.

IN these pages, of course, no attempt is made to *elaborate* the argument for God from man and nature. We have seen already that the Christian doctrines, which are our real concern here, very largely assume that argument as, more or less consciously, carried out in the mind already. All that we do is to indicate some of the great converging lines of testimony outside the Scriptures, and to remark briefly on some systems of misbelief.

What then are the main lines of testimony, other than direct and miraculous, to the being and glory of the "One living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible" (Art. I.)?

Stated as simply and briefly as we can, they are—those testimonies which arise from man's observation of the world, and from man's observation of himself, and, as a special and profound fact under this last head, from man's possession of certain tendencies, or laws, of his nature, which, lying at the basis of all

his powers of observation and reasoning, conduct him also, with mysterious certainty of result, beyond them. We mean what are known as our "Intuitions;" man's constitutional recognition of certain primary facts as incapable alike of formal proof and of natural doubt.

Such facts are, the reality of our own personality, the reality of existence external to our own, the universal truth of the first principles of geometry, as that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, and the absolute difference between right and wrong. No logical process (in the popular sense of logical) can prove these truths. But when once the contemplation of them is occasioned to man by observation, and their bearing made clear, man is such that he cannot naturally doubt them, while in a state of mental and moral health.

The elements of evidence for God thus presented to man, apart from Revelation, work then somewhat as follows, so far as we can analyse a process which ordinarily takes place without the least conscious analysis. Man finds himself in the midst of a world, a universe, showing innumerable and ever-multiplying instances of *order*. We do not say design; for the word design takes for granted personal will behind order. Man sees order, the more closely he observes; from the dust beneath to the starry skies above. His instinct is to infer personal purpose and action behind it. Why so? Because in that region of observation which to him is quite immediate, namely his own personal consciousness, he knows that the production of order inevitably implies purpose in action, somewhere, however far, behind the result. And he is certain that he is not his own cause, not his own maker; that he himself is, in all the order of his being, an event, a production, demanding

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(for this is an intuition of the mind) a sufficient cause behind it. And he finds himself so related to things around him, so adjusted to and interlaced with the external world, that he naturally tends to recognize himself as, in some great respects, part of it; and so in its personal Cause to look for his own. And in himself he finds, immediately and inalienably, the facts of personal intelligence, will, and love, and the certainty that wrong and right in actions are absolutely different. And it is intuitive to him to be naturally sure that such consciousness is in a true sense *supernatural*, that it belongs to a higher order than other matters of observation, so that that which cannot know, and will, and love, and discern moral truth, is incalculably lower in the scale of being than that which can. The combined facts of the inner and outer worlds, watched by the one observer, man, thus naturally suggest to man Personality behind and above phenomena, recognized as exercising intelligent will, and as knowing good and evil. Meantime, the external things actually observed are always finite, and so cannot merely of themselves carry proof up to the infinite; but then the gulf is lawfully bridged by those intuitions which demand, by the constitution of the mind, the existence of the ultimate and uncaused; *being* behind all *becoming*; power than which nothing can be more strong, truth than which nothing can be more true, goodness than which nothing can be more good. Order, observed by the personal existence, man, who is himself profoundly related to that order, witnesses to personality behind it, personality of at least man's order, because man's cause. Conscience, known in himself by man, witnesses to that personal Cause as not only knowing good and evil, but as ranged on the

side of good. Intuitions of the infinite—as, for instance, in space and time—witness to that personal Cause as not only to a high degree knowing, willing, and good, but as being (because ultimate) *all-knowing*, *all-powerful*, *all-good*; a God of infinite attributes, that is to say, eternally exempt from imperfection in everything that can be predicated of Him; not a vague Something embracing all being, but the eternal One who is good so that He could not be better, wise so that He could not be wiser, strong so that He could not be stronger; perfect in Himself and to our true apprehension, infinite to our always finite comprehension.

It would indeed be idle to say that this idea of God so dwells in the human mind that it needs nothing to call it out, admits of no development, and demands no revelation. What we mean is that in its highest and noblest form it is still an inference as true as sublime from constant facts of the world and of man; that in the lowest manifestations of religion, even among savages, there are discernible the rudiments or the relics of it, and that Revelation finds in man's capacity for it and tendency to it the prepared receptacle for its glorious message, a message which meanwhile man's study of the world and himself could never by itself develop, and the essence of which, as Christians believe on good grounds, was accordingly given supernaturally to man even in the first days of his being.¹

To this faint sketch of the lines of theistic testimony we append a brief notice of opponent or alien systems, with passing remarks.

¹ Among books developing the theistic argument we commend specially Flint's *Theism*, Harris' *Self-Revelation of God*, and Père Gratry's *Connaissance de Dieu*.

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Polytheism is the belief of many invisible personal agents, more or less co-ordinate, behind or in phenomena. It is the belief of many races. In very many instances, if not practically in all, there lies however a theistic (i.e., as the word by usage means, *monotheistic*) background behind the polytheism, discoverable as the thought of the people is better observed and understood; one indication among others that polytheism is not the germ of theism, but a degradation. It is almost needless to say that polytheism as a belief is on the wane. Observation, now enormously developed, and ever developing, in its range and minuteness, tends to evince a unity in nature which effectually discredits polytheism. On the other hand, Revelation indicates an element of truth underlying it, telling us of innumerable existences other than human, personal, and therefore true causes, but all wholly subject (willingly or not) to the Supreme.

Pantheism is the view of things which may be roughly said to identify God and the universe, including man. More strictly, it views the universe, including the human consciousness, as a phase of the Absolute Being, held to be itself non-personal, non-conscious. God is the Ocean, the universe a wave, or waves. Ocean and waves alike are water, but the waves are not the ocean, only its surface in a certain state. In this view there is no separation between God and the world; all phenomena, good and evil, are equally and alike related to Him, or to It. The great existing instance of pantheism is Indian Brahmanism. To the Brahman all existences, material and personal, are transitory phases of the inscrutable Brahm, itself unpersonal, which for ever evolves and absorbs universes and persons,

yet without design, sovereignty, or distinction. It is remarkable that human instinct has so triumphed, however, as to make India the stronghold of developed polytheism, which is, in this case at least, the popular correlative of an inner pantheism.

Revelation wholly repudiates pantheism, above all by its witness to the eternal difference of right and wrong, and by always representing the Creator as the wholly free personal Cause of all other existence, and wholly sovereign over it. On the other hand, it fully responds to the element of truth in pantheism, by revealing the true God as not only distinct from His creation, and sovereign over it, but always and everywhere present and working in it; not so that "the universe thinks and knows," but so that His living, willing, and holy presence is the sustaining cause of all things moment by moment, in their nevertheless real existence, and while they work each in its sphere and order.

Atheism, although in theory the creed of the many millions of oriental Buddhists, is now rarely avowed, in a positive form, in thoughtful circles of unbelief. Practically, it involves the view that the world of phenomena explains itself. But observation shows more and more clearly that the universe, so far as its material resources and laws go, tends to quiescence and death. It is not self-sufficient for its existence. It must therefore have begun, originated *ab extra*, by a cause or causes not material. Non-theistic thought infers from this an impersonal eternal "force" as the cause; a cause not only mysterious, but unknowable; only, man can know that it is not the archetype of his own personality. To this view the abiding answer is our immediate certainty of personality, of self-conscious-