

# On the Introduction of Rationalistic Principles Into Religion

by J.H. Newman

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*Rationalism is a philosophy that seeks to understand and explain everything through reason and evidence, often at the expense of faith and trust in God's power.*

**Scripture:** John 3:1, John 6:60, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Ephesians 3:8

**Topics:** "Faith And Reason", "Christian Doctrine"

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## Description

John Henry Newman preaches about the dangers of Rationalism in interpreting the Bible, emphasizing the need to understand the mysteries of the faith and not reduce them to mere practical or moral teachings. He warns against the tendency to systematize and simplify the doctrines of Christianity, such as the Trinity and the Atonement, to fit human understanding and desires, rather than accepting them as profound truths beyond full comprehension. Newman highlights the importance of maintaining the integrity and depth of revealed truths, resisting the temptation to water down or distort them for the sake of practicality or human reasoning.

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## Transcript

IT is not intended in the following pages to enter into any general view of so large a subject as Rationalism, nor to attempt any philosophical account of it; but, after defining it sufficiently for the purpose in hand, to direct attention to a very peculiar and subtle form of it existing covertly in the popular religion of this day. With this view two writers, not of our own Church, though of British origin, shall pass under review, Mr. Erskine and Mr. Jacob Abbott.

This is the first time that a discussion of (what may be called) a personal nature has appeared in these Tracts, which have been confined to the delineation and enforcement of principles and doctrines. However, in this case, while it was important to protest against certain views of the day, it was found that this could not be intelligibly done, without referring to the individuals who have inculcated them. Of these the two authors above mentioned seemed at once the most influential and the most original; and Mr. Abbott being a foreigner, and Mr. Erskine having written sixteen years since, there seemed a possibility of introducing their names without seriously encroaching on the province of a Review.

It will be my business first to explain what I mean by Rationalism, and then to illustrate the description given of it from the writings of the two authors in question.

## §. 1--The Rationalistic and the Catholic Spirit compared together.

To Rationalize is to ask for reasons out of place; to ask improperly how we are to account for certain things, to be unwilling to believe them unless they can be accounted for, i. e. referred to something else as a cause, to some existing system as harmonizing with them or taking them up into itself. Again, since whatever is assigned as the reason for the original fact canvassed, admits in turn of a like question being raised about itself, unless it be ascertainable by the senses, and be the subject of personal experience, Rationalism is bound properly to pursue onward its course of investigation on this principle, and not to stop till it can directly or ultimately refer to self as a witness, whatever is offered to its acceptance. Thus it is characterised by two peculiarities; its love of systematizing, and its basing its system upon personal experience, on the evidence of sense. In both respects it stands opposed to what is commonly understood by the word Faith, or belief in Testimony; for which it deliberately substitutes System (or what is popularly called Reason,) and Sight.

I have said that to act the Rationalist is to be unduly set upon accounting for what is offered for our acceptance; unduly, for to seek reasons for what is told us, is natural and innocent in itself. When we are informed that this or that event has happened, we are not satisfied to take it as an isolated fact; we are inquisitive about it; we are prompted to refer it, if possible, to something we already know, to incorporate it into the connected family of truths or facts which we have already received. We like to ascertain its position relatively to other things, to view it in connexion with them, to reduce it to a place in the series of what is called cause and effect. There is no harm in all this, until we insist upon receiving this satisfaction as a necessary condition of believing what is presented for our acceptance, until we set up our existing system of knowledge as a legitimate test of the credibility of testimony, until we claim to be told the mode of reconciling alleged truths to other truths already known, the how they are, and why they are; and then we Rationalize.

When the rich lord in Samaria said, "Though God shall make windows in heaven, shall this thing be?" he rationalized, as professing his inability to discover how Elisha's prophecy was to be fulfilled, and thinking in this way to excuse his unbelief. When Naaman objected to bathe in Jordan, it was on the ground of his not seeing the means by which Jordan was to cure his leprosy above the rivers of Damascus. "How can these things be?" was the objection of Nicodemus to the doctrine of regeneration; and when the doctrine of the Holy Communion was first announced "the Jews strove among themselves," in answer to their Divine Informant, "saying, How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" When St. Thomas doubted of our Lord's resurrection, though his reason for so doing is not given, it plainly lay in the astonishing, unaccountable nature of such an event. A like desire of judging for oneself is discernible in the original fall of man. Eve did not believe the Tempter, any more than God's word, till she perceived that "the fruit was good for food."

So again, when infidels ask, how prayer can really influence the course of God's providence, or how everlasting punishment consists with God's infinite mercy, they rationalize.

The same spirit shows itself in the restlessness of others to decide how the sun was stopped at Joshua's word, how the manna was provided, and the like; forgetting what our Saviour suggests to the Sadducees,--"the power of God."

Rationalism then in fact is a forgetfulness of God's power, disbelief of the existence of a First Cause sufficient to account for any events or facts, however marvellous or extraordinary, and a consequent measuring of the credibility of things, not by the power and other attributes of God, but by our own

knowledge; a limiting the possible to the actual, and denying the indefinite range of God's operations beyond our means of apprehending them. Mr. Hume openly avows this principle, declaring it to be unphilosophical to suppose that Almighty God can do any thing, but what we see he does.

And, though we may not profess it, we too often, it is to be feared, act upon it at the present day. Instead of looking out of ourselves, and trying to catch glimpses of God's workings, from any quarter,--throwing ourselves forward upon Him and waiting on Him, we sit at home bringing everything to ourselves, enthroning ourselves as the centre of all things, and refusing to believe any thing that does not force itself upon our minds as true. Our private judgment is made everything to us,--is contemplated, recognized, and referred to as the arbiter of all questions, and as independent of every thing external to us.

Nothing is considered to have an existence except so far forth as our minds discern it. The notion of half views and partial knowledge, of guesses, surmises, hopes and fears, of truths faintly apprehended and not understood, of isolated facts in the great scheme of providence, in a word, of Mystery, is discarded. Hence a distinction is drawn between what is called Objective and Subjective Truth, and Religion is said to consist in a reception of the latter. By Objective Truth is meant the Religious System considered as existing in itself, external to this or that particular mind: by Subjective, is meant that which each mind receives in particular, and considers to be such.

To believe in Objective Truth is to throw ourselves forward upon that which we have but partially mastered or made Subjective; to embrace, maintain, and use general propositions which are greater than our own capacity, as if we were contemplating what is real and independent of human judgment. Such a belief seems to the Rationalist superstitious and unmeaning, and he consequently confines faith to the province of Subjective Truth, or to the reception of doctrine, as, and so far as it is met and apprehended by the mind, which will be differently in different persons, in the shape Of orthodoxy in one, heterodoxy in another; that is, he professes to believe in that which he opines, and he avoids the apparent extravagance of such an avowal by maintaining that the moral trial involved in faith does not lie in the submission of the reason to external truths partially disclosed, but in that candid pursuit of truth which ensures the eventual adoption of that opinion on the subject, which is best for us, most natural according to the constitution of our minds, and so divinely intended.

In short he owns that faith, viewed with reference to its objects, is nevermore than an opinion, and is pleasing to God, not as an active principle apprehending different doctrines, but as a result and fruit, and therefore an evidence of past diligence, independent inquiry, dispassionateness, and the like. Rationalism takes the words of Scripture as signs of Ideas; Faith, of Things or Realities.

For an illustration of Faith, considered as the reaching forth after and embracing what is beyond the mind or Objective, we may refer to St. Paul's description of it in the Ancient Saints; "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" or to St. Peter's; "Of which salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, the glory that should follow; unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have evangelized you." Here the faith of the ancient Saints is described as employed, not on truths so far as mastered by the mind, but truths beyond it, and even to the end withheld from its clear apprehension.

On the other hand, if we would know to what a temper of mind the Rationalistic Theory of subjective Truth really tends, we may study the following passage from a popular review. It will be found to make use of the wonders of nature, not as "declaring the glory of God, and showing His handywork," but in order to exalt and deify the wisdom of man. Of the almost avowed infidelity contained in it, I do not speak.

"For the civil and political historian the past alone has existence, the present he rarely apprehends, the future never. To the historian of science it is permitted, however, to penetrate the depths of past and future with equal clearness and certainty; facts to come are to him as present, and not unfrequently more assured than facts which are past. Although this clear perception of causes and consequences characterizes the whole domain of physical science, and clothes the natural philosopher with powers denied to the political and moral inquirer, yet foreknowledge is eminently the privilege of the astronomer.

Nature has raised the curtain of futurity, and displayed before him the succession of her decrees, so far as they affect the physical universe, for countless ages to come; and the revelations of which she has made him the instrument, are supported and verified by a never-ceasing train of predictions fulfilled. He [the astronomer] "shows us the things which will be hereafter;" not obscurely shadowed out in figures and in parables, as must necessarily be the case with other revelations, but attended with the most minute precision of time, place, and circumstance.

He converts the hours as they roll into an ever-present miracle, in attestation of those laws which his Creator through him has unfolded; the sun cannot rise, the moon cannot wane, a star cannot twinkle in the firmament without bearing testimony to the truth of his [the astronomer's] prophetic records. It has pleased the "Lord and Governor" of the world, in his inscrutable wisdom, to baffle our inquiries into the nature and proximate cause of that wonderful faculty of intellect,-that image of his own essence which he has conferred upon us, &c. &c.....But how nobly is the darkness which envelopes metaphysical inquiries compensated by the flood of light which is shed upon the physical creation!

There all is harmony, and order, and majesty, and beauty. From the chaos of social and political phenomena exhibited in human records, phenomena unconnected to our imperfect vision by any discoverable law, a war of passions and prejudices governed by no apparent purpose, tending to no apparent end, and setting all intelligible order at defiance,-how soothing and yet how elevating it is to turn to the splendid spectacle which offers itself to the habitual contemplation of the astronomer!

How favourable to the development of all the best and highest feelings of the soul are such objects! The only passion they inspire being the love of truth, and the chiefest pleasure of their votaries arising from excursions through the imposing scenery of the universe, scenery on a scale of grandeur and magnificence compared with which whatever we are accustomed to call sublimity on our planet, dwindles into ridiculous insignificance. Most justly has it been said, that nature has implanted in our bosoms a craving after the discovery of truth, and assuredly that glorious instinct is never more irresistibly awakened than when our notice is directed to what is going on in the heavens, &c.

Here desire after Truth is considered as irreconcilable with acquiescence in doubt. Now if we do not believe in a First Cause, then indeed we know nothing except so far as we know it clearly, consistency and harmony being the necessary evidence of reality; and so we may reasonably regard doubt as an obstacle in the pursuit of Truth. But, on the other hand, if we assume the existence of an unseen Object of Faith, then we already possess the main truth, and may well be content even with half views as to His operations, for whatever we have is so much gain, and what we do not know does not in that case tend at

all to invalidate what we do know.

A few words may be necessary to bring together what has been said. Rationalism then, viewed in its essential character, is a refusal to take for granted the existence of a First Cause, in religious inquiries, which it prosecutes as if commencing in utter ignorance on the subject. Hence it receives only so much as may be strictly drawn out to the satisfaction of the reason, advancing onwards in belief according to the range of the proof; it limits Truth to our comprehension of it, or subjects it to the mind, and admits it only so far as it is subjected. Hence again it considers faith to have reference to a thing or system, far more than to an agent, for an agent may be supposed as acting in unknown ways, whereas a system cannot be supposed to have existence beyond what is ascertained of it. Hence moreover it makes the credibility of any alleged truth to lie solely in its capability of coalescing and combining with what is already known.

Mr. Hume, as has been observed, avowed the principle of Rationalism in its extent of Atheism. The writers, I shall have to notice, have religious sensibilities, and are far less clearsighted. Yet even Mr. Erskine maintains or assumes that the main object of Christian faith is, not Almighty God, but a certain work or course of things which He has accomplished; as will be manifest to any reader either of His Essay on Internal Evidence, or on Faith. He says, for instance, in the latter of these works,

"I may understand many things which I do not believe: but I cannot believe any thing which I do not understand, unless it be something addressed merely to my senses, and not to my thinking faculty. A man may with great propriety say, I understand the Cartesian System of Vortices, though I do not believe in it. But it is absolutely impossible for him to believe in that system without knowing what it is. A man may believe in the ability of the maker of a system without understanding it; but he cannot believe in the system itself without understanding it. Now there is a meaning in the Gospel, and there is declared in it the system of God's dealings with men. This meaning, and this system, must be understood before we can believe the Gospel. We are not called on to believe the Bible merely that we may give a proof of our willingness to submit in all things to God's authority, but that we may be influenced by the objects of our belief, &c."

Every word of this extract tells in illustration of what has been drawn out above. And it is cited here merely in illustration; what judgment is to be formed of it shall be determined in its place. To resume the thread of our discussion.

We shall now perhaps be prepared to understand a very characteristic word, familiarly used by Mr. Erskine among others to designate his view of the Gospel dispensation. It is said to be a Manifestation, as if the system presented to us were such as we could trace and connect into one whole, complete and definite. Let me use this word "Manifestation," as a token of the philosophy under review; and let me contrast it with the word "Mystery" which on the other hand may be regarded as the badge or emblem of orthodoxy. Revelation considered as a Manifestation, is a doctrine variously received by various minds, but nothing more to each than that which it appears to be. Considered as a Mystery, it is a doctrine enunciated by inspiration, in human language, as the only possible medium of it, and suitably according to the capacity of language; a doctrine lying hid in language, to be received in that language from the first by every mind, whatever be its separate power of understanding; entered into more or less by this or that mind, as it may be; and admitting of being apprehended more and more perfectly according to the diligence of the person receiving it. It is one and the same, independent and real, of depth unfathomable, and illimitable in its extent.

This is a fit place to make some remarks on the Scripture sense of the word Mystery. It may seem a contradiction in terms to call Revelation a Mystery; but is not the book of the Revelation of St. John as great a mystery from beginning to end as the most abstruse doctrine the mind ever imagined? yet it is even called a revelation. How is this? The answer is simple. No revelation can be complete and systematic, from the weakness of the human intellect; so far as it is not such, it is mysterious. When nothing is revealed, nothing is known, and there is nothing to contemplate or marvel at; but when something is revealed and only something, for all cannot be, there are forthwith difficulties and perplexities. A Revelation is religious doctrine viewed on its illuminated side; a Mystery is the self-same doctrine viewed on the side unilluminated. Thus Religious Truth is neither light nor darkness, but both together; it is like the dim view of a country seen in the twilight, with forms half extricated from the darkness, with broken lines, and isolated masses. Revelation, in this way of considering it, is not a revealed system, 'but consists of a number of detached and incomplete truths belonging to a vast system unrevealed, of doctrines and injunctions mysteriously connected together, that is, connected by unknown media, and bearing upon unknown portions of the system. And in this sense we see the propriety of calling St. John's prophecies, though highly mysterious, yet a revelation.

And such seems to be the meaning of the word Mystery in Scripture, a point which is sometimes disputed. Campbell, in his work on the Gospels, maintains that the word means a secret, and that, whatever be the subject of it in the New Testament, it is always, when mentioned, associated with the notion of its being now revealed. Thus it is, in his view, a word belonging solely to the Law, which was a system of types and shadows, and is utterly foreign to the Gospel which has brought light instead of darkness. This sense might seem to be supported by our Lord's announcement, for instance, to His disciples that to them was given to know the mysteries of His kingdom; by His command to them at another time to speak abroad what they had heard from Him in secret. And St. Paul in like manner glories in the revelation of mysteries hid from the foundation of the world.

But the sense of Scripture will more truly be represented as follows. What was hidden altogether before Christ came could not be a Mystery; it became a Mystery then, for the first time, by being disclosed at all, at His coming. What had never been dreamed of by "righteous men," before Him, when revealed, as being unexpected, if for no other reason, would be strange and startling. And such unquestionably is the meaning of St. Paul, when he uses the word; for he applies it, not to what was passed and over, but what was the then state of the doctrine revealed.

Thus in the 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, "Behold I show you a Mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." The resurrection and consequent spiritualizing of the human body, was not dreamed of by the philosophy of the world till Christ came, and, when revealed, was "mocked," as then first becoming a mystery. Reason was just where it was; and, as it could not discover it beforehand, so now it cannot account for it, or reconcile it to experience, or explain the manner of it: the utmost it does is by some faint analogies to show it is not inconceivable.

Again, St. Paul, speaking of marriage, says, "This is a great Mystery, I mean, in its reference to Christ and the Church;" that is, the ordinance of marriage has an inward and spiritual meaning, contained in it and revealed through it, a certain bearing, undefined and therefore mysterious, towards the heavenly communion existing between Christ and the Church:--as if for persons to place themselves in that human relation, interested themselves in some secret way in the divine relation of which it is a figure.

Again: "Great is the Mystery of piety, God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." 1 Tim. iii. 16. Now, is the revelation of these truths a Manifestation (as above explained) or a Mystery? Surely the great secret has, by being revealed, only got so far as to be a Mystery, nothing more; nor could become a Manifestation, (i. e. a system connected in its parts by the human mind,) without ceasing to be any thing great at all.

It must ever be small and superficial, viewed only as received by man; and is vast only when considered as that external "truth into which each Christian may grow continually, and ever find fresh food for his soul. As to the unknown and marvellous system of things spoken of in the text just quoted, it is described again, in an almost parallel passage, as regards the subject, though differently worded, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of Angels, to the full concourse and assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the perfected just, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." xii. 22--24.

In like manner when St. Paul speaks of the election of the Gentiles as a Mystery re-vealed, the facts of the case show that it was still a Mystery, and therefore but revealed to be a Mystery, not a secret explained. We know that the Jews did stumble at it: why if it was clear and obvious to reason? Certainly it was still a Mystery to them. Will it be objected that it had been plainly predicted? Surely not. The calling indeed of the Gentiles had been predicted, but not their equal participation with the Jews in all the treasures of the covenant of grace, not the destruction of the Mosaic system.

The prophets every where speak of the Jews as the head of the Gentiles; it was a new doctrine altogether (at least to the existing generation) that the election henceforth was to have no reference whatever to the Jews as a distinct people. It had hitherto been utterly hidden and unexpected; it emerged into a stumbling block, or Mystery, when the Gospel was preached, as on the other hand it became to all humble minds a marvel or mystery of mercy. Hence St. Paul speaks of the Mystery "which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men .... that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."

In these remarks on the meaning of the word Mystery, some of the chief doctrines of the Gospel revelation have been enumerated; before entering, however, into the particular subjects to be discussed, it may be right briefly to enumerate the revealed doctrines according to the Catholic, that is the anti-rationalistic notion of them. They are these: the Holy Trinity; the Incarnation of the Eternal Son; His atonement and merits; the Church as the medium and instrument through which He operates on the world in the communication of them; the Sacraments, and Sacramentals, (as Bishop Taylor calls them,) as the principal channels through which His merits are applied to individuals; Regeneration, the Communion of Saints, the Resurrection of the body, consequent upon their administration; and lastly, our faith and works, as a condition of the available-ness and success of these divine appointments. Each of these doctrines is a Mystery; that is, each stands in a certain degree isolated from the rest, unsystematic, connected with the rest by unknown intermediate truths, and bearing upon subjects unknown. Thus the Atonement, why it was necessary, how it operates, is a Mystery; that is, the heavenly truth which is revealed, extends on each side of it into an unknown world. We see but the skirts of GOD'S glory in it. The virtue of the Holy Communion; how it conveys to us the body and blood of the Incarnate Son crucified, and how by partaking it body and soul are made spiritual. The Communion of Saints; in what sense they are knit together into one body of which Christ is the head. Good works; how they, and how prayers again, influence our eternal

destiny. In like manner what our relation is to the innumerable company of Angels, some of whom, as we are told, minister to us; what to the dead in Christ, the spirits of the just perfected, who are ever joined to us in a heavenly communion; what bearing the Church has upon the fortunes of the world, or, it may be, the universe.

That there are some such mysterious bearings, not only the incomplete character of the Revelation, but even its documents assure us. For instance. The Christian dispensation was ordained, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. iii. 10. Such is its relation to the Angels. Again to lost spirits: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness in this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." Eph. vi. 12. In like manner our Lord says, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church, Matt, xvi. 18. implying thereby a contest. Again in writing the following text, had not St. Paul thoughts in his mind, suggested by the unutterable sights of the third heaven, but to us unrevealed and unintelligible? "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us" (that is the Church,) "from the love of God, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD." Rom. viii. 38, 39.

The practical inference to be drawn from this view is, first, that we should be very reverent in dealing with revealed truth; next, that we should avoid all theorising and systematising as relates to it, which is pretty much what looking into the ark was under the Law: further, that we should be solicitous to hold it safely and entirely; moreover, that we should be zealous and pertinacious in guarding it; and lastly, which is implied in all these, that we should religiously adhere to the form of words and the ordinances under which it comes to us, through which it is revealed to us, and apart from which the revelation does not exist, there being nothing else given us by which to ascertain or enter into it.

Striking indeed is the contrast presented to this view of the Gospel, by the popular theology of the day! That theology is as follows;--that the Atonement is the chief doctrine of the Gospel;--again, that it is chiefly to be regarded, not as a wonder in heaven, and in its relation to the attributes of God and the unseen world, but in its experienced effects on our minds, in the change it effects where it is believed. On this, as on the horizontal line in a picture, all the portions of the Gospel system are placed and made to converge; as if it might fearlessly be used to regulate, adjust, correct, complete, every thing else. Thus, the doctrine of the Incarnation is viewed as necessary and important to the Gospel, because it gives sacredness to the Atonement; of the Trinity, because it includes the revelation, not only of the Redeemer, but also of the Sanctifier, by whose aid and influence the Gospel message is to be blessed to us. It follows that faith is nearly the whole of religion, for through it the message or Manifestation is received; on the other hand, the scientific language of Catholicism is disparaged, as having no tendency to enforce the operation of the revelation of the Atonement on our minds, and the Sacraments are limited to the office of representing, and promising, and impressing on us the promise of divine influences, in no measure of conveying them. Thus the Dispensation is practically identified with its Revelation or rather Manifestation. Not that the reality of the Atonement is formally denied, but it is cast in the back ground, except so far as it can be discovered to be influential, viz. to show GOD'S hatred of sin, the love of CHRIST and the like; and there is an evident tendency to consider it as a mere Manifestation of the love of CHRIST, to the denial of all real virtue in it as an expiation for sin; as if His death took place, merely to show His love for us, as a sign of GOD'S infinite mercy, to calm and assure us, without any real connexion existing between it and GOD'S forgiveness of our sins. And the dispensation thus being hewn and chiselled into an intelligible human

system is represented, when thus mutilated, as affording a remarkable evidence of the truth of the Bible, an evidence level to the reason, and superseding the testimony of the Apostles. That is, according to the above observations, that Rationalism, or want of faith, which has first invented a spurious gospel, next looks complacently on its own offspring, and pronounces it to be the very image of that notion of the Divine Providence according to which it was originally modelled; a procedure, which, besides more serious objections, incurs the logical absurdity of arguing in a circle.

Â§ 2. Remarks on Mr. Erskine's "Internal Evidence."

THIS is in fact pretty nearly Mr. Erskine's argument in his Internal Evidence: an author, concerning whom personally I have no wish to use one harsh word, not doubting that he is better than his own doctrine, and is only the organ, eloquent and ingenious, of unfolding a theory, which it has been his unhappiness to mistake for the Catholic faith revealed in the Gospel. Let us now turn to the Essay in question.

Mr. Erskine begins in the following words:

"There is a principle in our nature, which makes us dissatisfied with unexplained and unconnected facts; which leads us to theorize all the particulars of our knowledge, or to form in our minds some system of causes sufficient to explain or produce the effects which we see; and which teaches us to believe or disbelieve in the truth of any system which may be presented to us, just as it appears adequate or inadequate to afford that explanation of which we are in pursuit. We have an intuitive perception, that the appearances of nature are connected by the relation of cause and effect; and we have also an instinctive desire to classify and arrange the seemingly confused mass of facts with which we are surrounded, according to this distinguishing relationship." pp. 1, 2.

He then speaks of two processes of reasoning which the mind uses in searching after truth.

"When we are convinced of the real existence of a cause in nature, and when we find that a class of physical facts is explained by the supposition of this cause, and tallies exactly with its ordinary operation, we resist both reason and instinct when we resist the conviction that this class of facts does result from this cause." p. 2.

Again:

"There is another process of reasoning ... by which, instead of ascending from effects to a cause, we descend from a cause to effects. When we are once convinced of the existence of a cause, and are acquainted with its ordinary Diode of operation, we are prepared to give a certain degree of credit to a history of other effects attributed to it, provided we can trace the connexion between them." p. 3.

Presently he says,

"In [all] these processes of reasoning we have examples of conviction, upon an evidence which is, most strictly speaking, internal,--an evidence altogether independent of our confidence in the veracity of the narrator of the facts." p. 8.

Now, before explaining the precise argument he draws from the contents of Scripture, be it observed, that in these passages, he countenances the principle of "believing or disbelieving in the truth of any system which may be presented to us," according as it contains in it or not, a satisfactory adjustment of causes to effects, the question of testimony being altogether superseded. Accordingly he says a little further on of

the Apostles; "Their system is true in the nature of things, even were they proved to be impostors." p. 17. And it will appear from other passages of his work, that he does not hesitate to receive the other alternative contained in the original proposition with which he opens it, viz. that that professed revelation is to be rejected, which implies a system of causes and effects incongruous in man's judgment with each other. To proceed:

His argument is as follows:--

"The first faint outline of Christianity" he says, "presents to us a view of GOD operating on the characters of men through a manifestation of His own character, in order that, by leading them to participate in some measure of His moral likeness, they may also in some measure participate of His happiness." p. 12.

Again:

"If the actions attributed to God, by any system of religion, be really such objects as, when present to the mind, do not stir the affections at all, that religion cannot influence the character, and is therefore utterly useless." p. 23.

"The object of Christianity is to bring the character of man into harmony with that of God." p. 49.

"The reasonableness of a religion seems to me to consist in there being a direct and natural connexion between a believing the doctrines which it inculcates, and a being formed by these to the character which it recommends. If the belief of the doctrines has no tendency to train the disciple in a more exact and more willing discharge of its moral obligations, there is evidently a very strong probability against the truth of that religion .....What is the history of another world to me, unless it have some intelligible relation to my duties or happiness?" p. 59.

Now in these passages there is, first, this great assumption, that the object of the Christian revelation is ascertainable by us. It is asserted that its object is "to bring the character of man into harmony with that of God." That this is an object, is plain from Scripture, but that it is the object is no where told us; no where is it represented as the object in such sense, that we may take it as a key or rule, whereby to arrange and harmonize the various parts of the revelation,--which is the use to which the author puts it. God's works look many ways; they have objects (to use that mere human word) innumerable; they are full of eyes before and behind, and like the cherubim in the Prophet's vision, advance forward to diverse points at once. But it is plainly unlawful and presumptuous to make one of those points, which happen to be revealed to us, the telos or end of His providence, and to subject every thing else to it. It plainly savours of the Rationalism already condemned; for what is it but to resolve, that what is revealed to us, is and shall be a complete system; to reject every thing but what is so complete; and to disallow the notion of revelation as a collection of fragments of a great scheme, the notion under which the most profound human philosophy is accustomed to regard it?

"Christianity," says Bishop Butler, "is a scheme quite beyond our comprehension. The moral government of GOD is exercised by gradually conducting things so in the course of His providence, that every one at length and upon the whole shall receive according to his deserts; and neither fraud nor violence, but truth and right, shall finally prevail. Christianity is a particular scheme under this general plan of providence, and a part of it, conducive to its completion, with regard to mankind; consisting itself also of various parts and a mysterious economy, which has been carrying on from the time the world came into its present wretched state, and is still carrying on for its recovery by a divine person, the Messiah, who is to gather together in

one the children of GOD, that are scattered abroad,' and establish 'an everlasting kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' .... Parts likewise of this economy, are the miraculous system of the Holy Ghost, and His ordinary assistance as given to good men; the invisible government which Christ exercises over His Church and His future return to judge the world in righteousness, and completely re-establish the kingdom of GOD..... Now little, surely, need be said to show, that this system or scheme of things is but imperfectly comprehended by us. The Scripture expressly asserts it to be so. And indeed, one cannot read a passage relating to this great mystery of godliness, but what immediately runs up into something which, shows us our ignorance in it, as every thing in nature shows our ignorance in the constitution of nature." [Anal. ii. 4.]

In this passage the great philosopher, though led by his line of argument to speak of the Dispensation entirely in its reference to man, still declares that even then its object is not identical with man's happiness, but that it is justice and truth; while, viewed in itself, every part of it runs up into mystery.

Right reason, then, and faith combine to lead us, instead of measuring a divine revelation by human standards, or systematizing, except so far as it does so itself, to take what is given as we find it, to use it and be content. E. g. Scripture says that Christ died for sinners,--so far we may systematize; that He rose for our justification, that He went that the Spirit might come. Such and such like portions of a scheme are revealed, and we may use them, but no farther. On the other hand the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity is a mere juxtaposition of separate truths, which to our minds involve inconsistency, when viewed together; nothing more being attempted, for nothing more is told us. Arrange and contrast them we may and do; systematize (i.e. reduce them into an intelligible dependence on each other, or harmony with each other) we may not; unless indeed any such oversight of Revelation, such right of subjecting it to our understandings, is committed to us by Revelation itself. What then must be thought of the confident assumption, without proof attempted, contained in the following sentence, already quoted?

"The first faint outline of Christianity presents to us a view of GOD operating on the characters of men through a manifestation of His own character, in order that, by leading them to participate in some measure in His moral likeness, they may also in some measure participate in His happiness.

That GOD intends us to partake in His moral likeness, that He has revealed to us His own moral character, that He has done the latter in order to accomplish the former (to speak as a man) I will grant, for it is in Scripture; but that it is the leading idea of Christianity, the chief and sovereign principle of it, this I altogether deny. I ask for proof what seems to us an assumption, and (if an assumption) surely an unwarranted and presumptuous one.

Notice was above taken of the selfishness of that philosophy, which resolves to sit at home and make every thing subordinate to the individual. Is not this painfully instanced in one of the foregoing passages? "What is the history of another world to me, unless it have some intelligible relation to my duties and happiness?" Was this Moses' temper, when he turned aside to see the great sight of the fiery bush?

Further, be it observed, the above theory has undeniably a tendency to disparage, if not supersede the mysteries of religion, such as the doctrine of the Trinity. It lays exclusive stress upon the character of GOD, as the substance of the Revelation. It considers Scripture as a Manifestation of GOD'S character, an intentional subjecting of it in an intelligible shape to our minds, and nothing more. The author says:--

"The reasonableness of a religion seems to me to consist in there being a direct and natural connexion between a believing [its] doctrines, and being formed by these to the character which it recommends."

Again

"These terms ["manifestation," and "exhibition,"] suit best with the leading idea which I wish to explain, viz. that the facts [i. e. doctrines, as is just before explained] of revelation are developments of the moral principles of the Deity, and carry an influential address to the feelings of man." p. 26.

Now, is the theological doctrine of the Trinity such a development? Is it influentially addressed to our feelings? Is it "an act of the divine government," as the author expresses himself? Further, does he not also tell us the "reasonableness of a religion seems to consist in there being a direct and natural connexion between a believing the doctrines which it inculcates, and a being formed by these to the character which it recommends?" We need not dwell on the assumption hazarded in this passage; for surely it is conceivable that reasons may exist in the vast scheme of the Dispensation, (of the bearings of which we know nothing perfectly,) for doctrines being revealed, which do not directly and naturally tend to influence the formation of our characters, or at least which we cannot see to do so. We have at least the authority of Bishop Butler to support us in considering that,

"we are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge it were to be expected God would give mankind by Revelation, upon supposition of His affording one; or how far, or in what way, he would interpose miraculously, to qualify them to whom He should originally make the Revelation, or communicating the knowledge given by it; and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live, and to secure its being transmitted to posterity." [Anal. ii. 3.]

But even though Butler, and other deep thinkers, had not said a word on the subject, the immediate and inevitable result, or rather operation of Mr. Erskine's principle, when applied to the matter of the Scripture Revelation, is a sufficient refutation of it. It will be found to mean nothing, or to lead pretty nearly to Socinianism. Let us take an instance: he says that the reasonableness of a religion, and therefore its claim on our acceptance, consists in there being a direct and natural tendency in belief in its doctrines to form that moral character which it recommends. Now, I would ask,--do we never hear it asked,--have we never been tempted to ask ourselves,--"What is the harm of being e. g., a Sabellian?" And is not the habit of thought, from which such questionings proceed, owing to the silent influence of such books as this of Mr. E.'s? Further, do we not hear persons say, "As to the Athanasian doctrine, I do not deny there is a Mystery about the Manifestations of the Divine Nature in Scripture, but this Mystery, whatever it is, as it does not interfere with the practical view of the doctrine, so, on the other, it cannot subserve it. It is among the secret things of GOD, and must be left among them;"--as if we might unthankfully throw back again into the infinite abyss, any of the jewels which GOD has vouchsafed to bring us thence.

The reader may at first sight be tempted to say, "This is an overstrained handling of Mr. Erskine's words. What he does mean, is, not that the want of connexion between doctrine and precept is an objection, (though his words strictly taken may say this,) but, that where such a connexion does exist, as we see it does in Christianity, there is a strong argument in behalf of the divinity of a professed Revelation." Probably this was his original meaning, and it would have been well had he kept to it. But it is the way with men, particularly in this day, to generalize freely, to be impatient of such concrete truth as existing appointments contain, to attempt to disengage it, to hazard sweeping assertions, to lay down principles, to mount up above GOD'S visible doings, and to subject them to tests derived from our own speculations. Doubtless He, in some cases, vouchsafes to us the knowledge of truths more general than those works of His which He has set before us; and when He does so, let us thankfully use the gift. This is not the case in the present instance. Mr. E. has been led on, from the plain fact, that in Christianity there is a certain

general bearing of faith in doctrine upon character, and so far a proof of its consistency, which is a token of divine working,--led on, to the general proposition, that "in a genuine Revelation all doctrines revealed must have a direct bearing upon the moral character enjoined by it;" and next to the use of it as a test for rejecting such alleged doctrines of the gospel, e. g. the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, as do not perceptibly come up to it.

That I am not unfair upon Mr. Erskine will appear from the following passages.

"The abstract fact that there is a plurality in the unity of the Godhead, really makes no address either to our understandings, or our feelings, or our consciences But the obscurity of the doctrine, as far as moral purposes are concerned, is dispelled, when it comes in such a form as this,--'GOD so loved the world, &c.' or this 'But the Comforter, which is, &c.'--Our metaphysical ignorance of the Divine Essence is not indeed in the slightest degree removed by this mode of stating the subject; but our moral ignorance of the Divine character is enlightened, and that is the thing with which we have to do." p. 96.

Now I do not say that such a passage as this is a denial of the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed; but I ask, should a man be disposed to deny it, how would the writer refute him? Has he not, if a Trinitarian, cut away the ground from under him? Might not a Socinian or Sabellian convince him of the truth of their doctrine, by his own arguments? Unquestionably. He has laid down the principle, that a Revelation is only so far reasonable as it exhibits a direct and natural connexion between belief in its doctrines and conformity to its precepts. He then says, that in matter of fact the doctrine of the Trinity is only influential as it exhibits the moral character of God; that is, that so far as it does not, so far as it is abstract (as he calls it) and in scientific form, i. e. viewed as the Catholic Doctrine, it is not influential, or reasonable, or by consequence important, or even credible. He has cut off the Doctrine from its roots, and has preserved only that superficial part of it which he denominates a "Manifestation,"--only so much as bears visibly upon another part of the system, the character of man,--so much as is perceptibly connected with it, so far as may be comprehended.

But he speaks so clearly on this subject that comment is perhaps needless.

"In the Bible the Christian doctrines . . . stand as indications of the character of GOD, and as the exciting motives of a corresponding character in man."

This assumption must not pass without notice; often they so stand, not always, as he would imply. When St. Paul bids Timothy hold fast the form of sound words, or St. Jude exhorts us to contend earnestly for the faith, these Apostles seem so to direct for the sake of the faith itself, not for any ulterior reason. When St. John requires us to reject any one who brings not the true doctrine, nothing is said of it as an "exciting motive" of a certain character of mind, though viewed on one side of it, that doctrine certainly is so. St. Paul glories in the doctrine of CHRIST crucified as being a strange doctrine and a stumbling block. St. John states the doctrine of the Incarnation in the first chapter of his gospel, as a heavenly truth, which was too glorious for men, and believed on only by the few, by which, indeed, the Father was declared, but which shone in darkness. But to return:

"In the Bible, the Christian doctrines are always stated in this connexion) they stand as indications of the character of GOD, and as the exciting motives of a corresponding character in man. Forming thus the connecting link between the character of the Creator and the creature, they possess a majesty which it is impossible to despise, and exhibit a form of consistency and truth which it is difficult to disbelieve. Such is Christianity in the Bible; but in creeds and Church articles it is far otherwise. These tests and summaries

originated from the introduction of doctrinal errors and metaphysical speculations into religion; and in consequence of this, they are not so much intended to be the repositories of the truth, as barriers against the encroachment of erroneous opinions. The doctrines contained in them, therefore, are not stated with any reference to their great object in the Bible,--the regeneration of the human heart by the knowledge of the Divine character. They appear as detached propositions, indicating no moral cause, and pointing to no moral effect. They do not look to GOD on the one hand as their source; nor to man on the other as the object of their moral urgency. They appear like links severed from the chain to which they belonged; and thus they lose all that evidence which arises from their consistency and all that dignity which is connected with their high design. I do not talk of the propriety or impropriety of having Church Articles, but the evils which spring from receiving impressions of religion exclusively or chiefly from this source." pp. 93, 94.

It is always a point gained to be able to come to issue in a controversy, as I am able to do here with the writer under consideration. He finds fault with that disjointed and isolated character of the doctrines in the old Catholic creed, that want of system, which to the more philosophical mind of Bishop Butler would seem an especial recommendation from its analogy to the course of nature. He continues,

"I may instance the ordinary statements of the doctrine of the Trinity, as an illustration of what I mean. It seems difficult to conceive that any man should read through the New Testament candidly and attentively, without being convinced that this doctrine is essential to, and implied in every part of the system: but it is not so difficult to conceive, that although his mind is perfectly satisfied on this point, he may yet, if his religious knowledge is exclusively derived from the Bible, feel a little surprised and staggered, when he for the first time reads the terms in which it is announced in the articles and confessions of all Protestant Churches. In these summaries, the doctrine in question is stated by itself, divested of all its Scriptural accompaniments, and is made to bear simply on the nature of the Divine essence, and the Mysterious fact of the existence of Three in One. It is evident that this fact, taken by itself, cannot in the smallest degree tend to develop the Divine character, and therefore cannot make any moral impression on our minds." pp. 94, 95.

Now, here, if it were to the purpose, this author might be encountered on his own ground. Surely, if it were religious to do so, it might be asserted, in contradiction to his last remark, that the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity does "tend to develop the Divine character," does "make a moral impression on our minds;" for does not the notion of a Mystery lead to reverence, awe, wonder, and fear? and are these not moral impressions? He proceeds:

"In the Bible it assumes quite a different shape; it is there subservient to the manifestation of the moral character of GOD. The doctrine of GOD'S combined justice and mercy, in the redemption of sinners, and of his continued spiritual watchfulness over the progress of truth through the world, and in each particular heart, could not have been communicated without it, so as to have been distinctly and vividly apprehended; but it is never mentioned, except in connection with these objects; nor is it ever taught as a separate subject of belief. There is a great and important difference between these two modes of statement. In the first, the doctrine stands as an isolated fact of a strange and unintelligible nature, and is apt even to suggest the idea, that Christianity holds out a premium for believing improbabilities. In the other, it stands indissolubly united with an act of Divine holiness and compassion, which radiates to the heart an appeal of tenderness most intelligible in its nature and object, and most constraining in its influence." p. 95, 96.

Here, at length, Rationalism stands confessed, and we hear openly the "mouth speaking great things," described in prophecy. Again:

"The hallowed purpose of restoring men to the lost image of their Creator, is in fact the very soul and spirit of the Bible; and whenever this object does not distinctly appear, the whole system becomes dead and useless."

If so, what judgment are we to pass upon such texts as the following? "We are unto GOD a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life." "What if GOD, willing to show His wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?" "He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained." "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The glory of GOD, according to Mr. Erskine, and the maintenance of truth and righteousness, are not objects sufficient, were there no other, to prevent "the whole system" of revealed truth from "becoming dead and useless." Does not this philosophy tend to Universalism? can its upholders maintain for any long while the eternity of future punishment? Surely they speak at random, and have no notion what they are saying. He proceeds:

"In Creeds and Confessions this great purpose is not made to stand forth with its real prominency; its intimate connexion with the different articles of faith is not adverted to; the point of the whole argument is thus lost, and Christianity is misapprehended to be a mere list of mysterious facts. One who understands the Bible may read them with profit, because his own mind may fill up the deficiencies, and when their statements are correct, they may assist inquiries in certain stages, by bringing under their eye a concentrated view of all the points of Christian doctrine; and they may serve, according to their contents, either as public invitations to their communion, or as public warnings against it; ... but they have not calculated to impress on the mind of a learner a vivid and useful apprehension of Christianity. Any person who draws his knowledge of the Christian doctrines, exclusively or principally from such sources, must run considerable risk of losing the benefit of them, by overlooking their moral objects; and, in so doing, he may be tempted to reject them altogether, because he will be blind to their strongest evidence, which consists in their perfect adaptation to these objects. The Bible is the only perfectly pure source of Divine knowledge, and the man who is unacquainted with it, is, in fact, ignorant of the doctrines of Christianity, however well read he may be in the schemes, and systems, and controversies, which have been written on the subject. .. The habit of viewing the Christian doctrine and the Christian character as two separate things has a most pernicious tendency. A man who in his scheme of Christianity, says, 'here are so many things to be believed, and here are so many things to be done,' has already made a fundamental mistake. The doctrines are the principles which must excite and animate the performance, &c." pp. 139--141.

It is not the design of this Paper to refute Mr. Erskine's principles, so much as to delineate and contrast them with those of the Church Catholic. Since, however, he has already, in several of these extracts, assumed that Scripture ever speaks of revealed doctrines in a directly practical way,--not as objects of faith merely, but as motives to conduct,--I would call attention to the following passage, in addition to those which have been above pointed out. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter

into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said to thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto Him, Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not Our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Some persons, doubtless, are so imbued with modern glosses and the traditions of men, that they will discern in all this but a practical exhortation to conversion, change of heart, and the like; but any one who gets himself fairly to look at the passage in itself, will, I am persuaded, see nothing more or less than this,--that Christ enunciates a solemn Mystery for Nicodemus to receive in faith, that Nicodemus so understands His words, and hesitates at it; that our Lord reproves him for hesitating, tells him that there are even higher Mysteries than that He had set forth, and proceeds to instance that of the Incarnation. In what conceivable way would a supporter of Mr. E.'s views make the last awful verse "subservient to the manifestation of the moral character of GOD," or directly influential upon practice? unless, indeed, he explained its clauses away altogether, as if they meant nothing more than is contained in the next verses, "As Moses, &c." and "God so loved the world, &c." All this is too painful to dwell upon. The latter part, particularly the conclusion, of the sixth chapter of the same Gospel, would afford another instance in point.

Now let us hear what Mr. Erskine says in like manner on the doctrine of the Atonement, which he would exalt, indeed, into the substance of the Gospel, but in his account of which, as well as of the other Mysteries of revelation, he will, I fear, be found wanting.

"The doctrine of the Atonement through Jesus Christ, which is the corner-stone of Christianity, and to which all the other doctrines of Revelation are subservient,"--

Here is the same, (what I must call,) presumptuous assumption,--

"--has had to encounter the misapprehension of the understanding as well as the pride of the heart."

Now let us observe, he is going to show how the understanding of the Church Catholic has misapprehended the doctrine.

"This pride is natural to man, and can only be overcome by the power of truth; but the misapprehension might be removed by the simple process of reading the Bible with attention; because it has arisen from neglecting the record itself, and taking our information from the discourses or the systems of men, who have engrafted the metaphysical subtleties of the schools upon the unperplexed statement of the word of GOD. In order to understand the facts of Revelation, we must (sic) form a system to ourselves; but if any subtilty, of which the application is unintelligible to common sense, or, uninfluential on conduct, enters into our system, we may be sure that it is a wrong one."

The author here alludes to the Catholic teaching in the words "systems of man;" indeed it has been fashionable of late so to speak of it; but let me ask, which teaching has the more of system in it, that which regards the doctrines of revelation as isolated truths, so far as they are not connected in Scripture itself, or that which pares away part, and forcibly deals with the rest, till they are all brought down to an end

cognizable by the human mind? It must be observed that the author expressly sanctions the formation of a system, which Catholic believers do not. He proceeds,

"The common-sense system of a religion consists in two connexions,--first the connexion between the doctrines and the character of God which they exhibit; and secondly, the connexion between these same doctrines and the character which they are intended to impress on the mind of man. When, therefore, we are considering a religious doctrine, our questions ought to be, first, What view does this doctrine give of the character of GOD in relation to sinners? And secondly, What influence is the belief of it calculated to exercise on the character of man? . . . . The first of these questions leads us to consider the Atonement as an act necessarily resulting from, and simply developing principles in the Divine mind, altogether independent of its effects on the hearts of those who are interested in it. The second leads us to consider the adaptation of the history of the Atonement, when believed, to the moral wants and capacities of the human mind. .... There is something very striking and wonderful in this adaptation; and the deeper we search into it, the stronger reason shall we discover for admiration and gratitude, and the more thoroughly shall we be convinced that it is not a lucky coincidence, not an adjustment contrived by the precarious and temporizing wisdom of this world, but that it is stamped with the uncounterfeited seal of the universal Ruler, and carries on it the traces of that same mighty will, which has connected the sun with his planetary train, and fixed the great relations in nature, appointing to each atom its bound that it cannot pass." pp. 97--100.

These last remarks are true of course in their place; so far as we think we see an adaptation, even though Scripture does not expressly mention it, let us praise God and be thankful;--but it is one thing to trace humbly and thankfully what we surmise to be GOD'S handywork, and so far as we think we see it, and quite another thing to propound our surmises dogmatically, not only as true, but as the substance of the revelation, the test of what is important in it, and what not; nay, of what is really part of it, and what not. Presently he says as follows:--

"The doctrine of the Atonement is the great subject of Revelation. GOD is represented as delighting in it, as being glorified by it, and as being most fully manifested by it. All the other doctrines radiate from this as their centre. In subservience to it, the distinction in the unity of the Godhead has been revealed. It is described as the everlasting theme of praise and song amongst the blessed who surround the throne of GOD." pp. 101, 102.

Now that the doctrine of the Atonement is so essential a doctrine that none other is more so, (true as it is,) does not at all hinder other doctrines in their own place being so essential that they may not be moved one inch from it, or made to converge towards that doctrine ever so little, beyond the sanction of Scripture. There is surely a difference between being prominent and being paramount. To take the illustration of the human body: the brain is the noblest organ, but have not the heart, and the lungs their own essential rights (so to express

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