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ARTICLE I.

MAN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

By Rev. Edward Beecher, D. D., Boston.

It is a fundamental question in all theology, and in all religious experience, are the relations of the divine and the human mind such that it is possible to have a true knowledge of God?

It is commonly assumed that such is the fact, and systems of theology are constructed, and the reality of an intelligible and rational religious experience is defended on the assumption that it is possible to know God, and to commune with him. And yet there is a form of scepticism which at the present time is extensively prevalent, which denies the possibility of any such knowledge, and thus strikes a blow at the root of all such theology, and all such religious experience. Moreover in the writings even of some of the most orthodox divines, there are the germs of a scepticism concerning the reality of our knowledge of God, in some respects, which when fully developed lead to similar results — results which they above all others on reflection would repudiate. And yet, vitally important as this question is, it has rarely if ever been directly, fully and formally considered, as its importance demands.

It is our purpose to invite the attention of thinking minds to this subject, by a few remarks on some of the prominent points which it involves.

We shall first inquire how that knowledge of God is obtained, which is at the basis of all our common systems of theology, and of religious experience, and then pass in review some of the modes in which the reality of that knowledge is assailed.

Such knowledge of God as has been adverted to is obtained by the assumption that God designedly made the human mind in his own image, in order that every man might have in himself the means of knowing God and thus the power of communing with him. By assuming that the mind is made in the image of God it is meant that God and man alike have rational powers, that is, the powers requisite for the perception of truth, for the comparison of objects, and for judging of the value of results; that they have the power of choosing ends, and of forming plans to gain those ends; that they have the power of benevolent emotion or love;—that they have the power to perceive and to feel, what is honorable and right, so that they are capable of pleasant or painful emotions as they are conscious of regarding or disregarding truth and right in their conduct, and that in these respects the divine and human mind so far correspond that by knowing the human mind, we can know the divine.

That our current systems of theology are in fact based upon this assumption is too obvious to need a labored proof. It is enough to advert to a few illustrations of the fact. Take then any of the doctrinal treatises of the elder President Edwards, for example that on the End for which God created the World, and it is obvious at a glance that the idea of God which pervades that treatise, the only idea which could render such a discussion possible, is taken from the human mind. If man had not the power to consider the nature and relations of things, to select an end for which he will act, and to put in operation a system of means to gain that end, and if he did not assume the existence of similar powers in God, he could neither raise, discuss or understand the question considered in that profound and fundamental dissertation. The whole of the introduction, containing explanations of terms and general positions, discriminating between chief and inferior ends, and ultimate and subordinate ends, in relation to God, consists entirely of illustrations taken from the actions of men with reference to such ends, in choosing them and forming plans to obtain them. In like manner, in his treatise on the Will, he argues that a determination of the will may be virtuous and praiseworthy, though necessary, thus: "God is necessarily holy, and *his will* is necessarily determined to what is good." He also argues against the Arminians on the ground that they concede the truth of this position. Here is a most manifest assumption on both sides that man, so far at least as the will is concerned, is truly in the image of God,—so as to authorize reasoning from the divine to the human mind. Indeed in one instance in his work on the will, Edwards thus explicitly states this assumption as the basis of his reasoning:¹

¹ Part II. § 5.

"The essential qualities of a moral agent are in God, in the greatest possible perfection; such as understanding to perceive the difference between moral good and evil; a capacity of discerning that moral worthiness and demerit, by which some things are praiseworthy, others deserving of blame and punishment; and also a capacity of choice, and choice guided by understanding, and a power of acting according to his choice or pleasure, and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense praiseworthy. And herein does very much consist that image of God wherein he made man (Gen. 1: 26, 27 and 9: 6), by which God distinguished man from beasts, viz. in those faculties and principles of nature whereby he is capable of moral agency. In like manner in Calvin's Institutes, in his discussion of election, predestination and decrees,¹ a similar use of language constantly occurs, and the whole discussion would in a moment become utterly unintelligible if it were to be denied that election, predestination and decrees in the actions of man, are in kind the same as election, predestination and decrees in God, although put forth on a much smaller scale by man than by God. But it is needless to multiply such illustrations. All ideas of moral government, law, authority, love, providence, justice, grace, mercy with reference to God — which are the staple of all theological systems, fall away the moment that we deny the assumption now under consideration.

Equally true is it that the prevalent doctrines concerning religious experience rest upon the same assumption. A God is always assumed and described as the object of love, whose intellect, affections, will, and moral nature, are in kind, although not in degree, like those found in the human mind. The very idea of communion with God implies such a similarity of nature and faculties, that common views, ends and interests are possible between God and man, that man can so understand the ends of God as to adopt them as his own, and the interests of God, as to identify his own with them, and the feelings of God as to respond to them in devoted and intelligent love. But universal as is this assumption, no efforts are commonly made to evince its truth. Indeed it is an assumption so natural and necessary, that it seems rarely if ever to occur to those who make it, that its correctness can be called in question. This, however, is by no means the case. It not only can be, but is called in question, and that extensively.

In the first place, the system of Pantheism, known in all ages, but of late extensively revived even in Christendom, is in its essential nature, an explicit denial of its truth. The fundamental element of that system is a denial of the personality of the Deity. But the central

¹ Book III. Chap. 31.

element of personality is the will. This, as essential in selecting ends and forming plans, together with the intellect to guide the emotions to influence it, and with power in its turn to affect or control them, is absolutely essential to any conception of a person. All this Pantheism renounces, and instead of a personal God with intellect, affections, will; ends and plans, introduces one great self-existent substance, including in itself the whole universe, but without self-consciousness, intellect, affections, ends or plans. It has simply an inward tendency or power, to unfold itself in various evolutions, now of matter, and now of mind. Man is the highest development of this deity; in him alone he becomes self-conscious. Of course under such a system all ideas of law, responsibility, and a moral government administered by a personal God disappear.

The bolder and more consistent forms of Pantheism readily admit, avow, and defend these results, and treat all ideas of a personal God derived from the personal attributes of the human mind as merely the delusions of anthropopathy or anthropomorphism. But there are others who refuse to be classed with these, who yet call in question, or it may be deny, the conformity of our ideas of God as a personal God to the reality of his being, and thus virtually reduce him to the condition of a God unknown at least to us. In this class we may without injustice place the distinguished scholar Schleiermacher. Indeed, the charge of Pantheism has been brought against him without hesitation. Although his admirers strenuously defend him against this charge,¹ yet thus much at least is true; he maintains that a great degree of piety can exist among such as deny the truth of our common conceptions of a personal God. Moreover he asserts in his own person that "when the idea of God is derived in too great a degree from human relations, and God is conceived of as *personally exercising thought and volition*, it is brought down into the sphere of opposition and controversy." By reaction from such a view of a personal God, there arises according to him, a view "in which the Supreme Being is represented not as personally exercising thought and volition, but as the universal necessity, *exalted above all personal attributes*, and producing and combining every mode of thought and existence." Here then we seem to have placed before us in contrast a personal God, and the God of Pantheism. In view of this contrast, Schleiermacher remarks, "Nothing seems more unwarrantable than for the adherents of the one conception, to charge those with a godless spirit, who repelled by the force of anthropomorphism, have taken refuge in the other; or, for those on the other hand, to accuse their opponents of adopting an idolatrous service, and

¹ See especially the Letters of George Ripley to Andrews Norton.

to regard their piety as without value, on account of the human character of their conceptions of God. A man may be truly religious, whether he incline to one of these conceptions or the other; but his religious spirit, the consciousness of God in his inward feeling, must be better than the conception which he has formed; and the more he identifies this with the essence of religion, the less does he understand himself.¹ Subsequently to this he remarks that both views are "defective" and that "neither corresponds to its object." He also says: "It cannot be maintained that the admission of one or the other of these conceptions in and for itself can be taken as the sign of a more or less perfect religion." His object in these statements is to show that all "are not despisers of religion who cannot reconcile themselves with the personality of the Supreme Being, as it is commonly represented." He concedes, indeed, that there is an "almost inevitable necessity of admitting it," and disavows all purpose to weaken the conviction of it in any mind that holds it. Yet he is of opinion that the origin of this necessity can be explained, and that the truth of the conception is so questionable, that "among truly religious men there have never been zealots, enthusiasts or fanatics for this notion." With reference to the charge of atheism often brought against the advocates of Pantheistic views, he thus remarks: "So far, as indeed has often been the case, as atheism has been understood to mean nothing but hesitation and uncertainty in regard to this conception, the sincerely pious will view the existence of this around them with great composure; and there has always been something which they deem far more irreligious, as indeed it is, namely, the want of an immediate consciousness of the Godhead in the feelings of the soul. They will be the slowest to believe that any man in fact can be entirely destitute of religion; for before such a person can exist, they know, that he must be totally deprived of feeling, and degraded with the peculiar attributes of his being, into a mere animal; since he only in their opinion, who is so deeply degraded, can lose the consciousness of God in the universe and in ourselves, — of the Divine Life and Energy by which all things subsist."

Of the ideas here presented of the nature of religion it is not our purpose at this time fully to speak. It is enough to say that these views directly tend, as we have previously remarked, to produce a scepticism which strikes a blow at the root of all our current systems of theology, and common views of religious experience. The idea that the human mind was designedly made in the image of God in order that we may be enabled to understand him, is rejected; and all communion with

¹ Ripley's third Letter to Andrews Norton, pp. 39, 40.

God which implies the choice of common ends, coöperation in common plans, and the interchange and reciprocation of intelligent affection is excluded as no essential part of religion; and in its place is introduced as its essence a mere consciousness of an inward vital power in ourselves and in the universe around us on which we are entirely dependent and which consciousness is common to all men — unless perhaps it may cease in a few cases of extreme degradation. The manner in which, according to him, we are “conscious of God in the universe” as well as in ourselves may be explained by another passage, in which he says: “How then can any one assert that I have described a religion without God, when I have in fact portrayed nothing else than the immediate and original being of God in ourselves through the elementary feelings which I have pointed out? Or is not God the supreme and only unity? Is it not God alone before whom, and in whom all that is individual disappears? And when you look upon the universe as a whole, as a comprehensive totality, can you do this otherwise than as in God?” * * * “In no other way than through those emotions which the universe awakens within us, do we pretend to attain to a consciousness of God in immediate feeling, and hence it is in this way only that we have spoken of him. Would you therefore call in question the claims of this feeling to be a consciousness of God, a *possession of the divine being*; I can then impart to you no further instruction or explanation.” That all suspicion of any unfair dealing with Schleiermacher may be removed, it is enough to note that we have taken the preceding extracts from the works of a defender, and that they are a part of an argument designed to prove that he is not justly liable to the charge of being a Pantheist. Without considering at large the success of the defence, it is sufficient to remark, that if the assertions of the preceding extracts are true, all our common views of theology and religious experience must fall away and disappear. We have been wont to entertain entirely different views of the unity of the universe. The fundamental idea of our view has ever been that of a personal God forming a plan, and disclosing it to minds created in his own image. He is the omnipresent illuminator of intelligent minds. When they choose him as their portion, and his plans as theirs, and thus sympathize with the central ruling mind in holy love, their innumerable minds become morally and socially one, and the central mind is over all and in all and through all. But this is not a unity of essence or being, but of ends, plans, thoughts, affections, sympathies and joys, in those who are essentially distinct; and the peculiar joy of the union arises from the fact that it is not necessary, but is the voluntary and free act of distinct minds. Hence the moment that the unity of affection and will

in the truth ceases, no other unity remains, but an entire separation takes place between God and alienated minds.

But if the foundation of these views falls away, if all ideas of God derived from human personality are to be rejected, then it is impossible in thinking and speaking of God to rise above the idea of a mere vital force or power, clothed with no moral attributes, and giving rise to no moral laws, no sanctions, no plans, and no system of moral government. Of course all possibility of theology or religious experience, as we have before said, ceases, at least in the common understanding of those terms.

Besides this complete and all pervading scepticism, there are partial tendencies to similar results even in the writings of the most orthodox divines. It is not denied by them that in some respects the human mind is a true image of the divine, but that it is so in other important respects they do deny. The effect of this denial is to produce such a dissimilarity between the divine and the human mind, that the latter ceases truly to represent God to us and the ascription of some of its ideas and modes of action to God is regarded as virtually anthropopathy.

Those which we shall proceed to consider do not relate so directly to personality as the preceding, but rather to the conformity of some of our fundamental and necessary ideas to those of the divine mind.

It appears to us reasonable, and probable, that if God desired to commune with us, he would not confer on us original and necessary laws of thought and belief, such that we must of necessity view things as they are not, and of course as he does not view them. In the strong language of Sir William Hamilton, to suppose this "is to suppose that we are created capable of intelligence in order to be made the victims of delusion; that God is a deceiver, and the root of our nature a lie."¹

Out of many illustrations we will at the present time consider the assertions of many that God does not or may not agree with the necessary ideas of the human mind as to time, space, and the immutable principles of morals.

We will begin with our conception of TIME. Whatever may be the true nature of time, it cannot be denied that it is a fundamental and necessary conception of our minds. It is impossible for us to conceive of events except as succeeding one another in time, and the distinctions of time as *past*, *present* and *future*, we cannot, if we ever so much desire it, regard as unreal and not corresponding to the true state of things as seen by God. Moreover, if they are unreal, just so far it is impos-

¹ Note A. on Reid, § I. p. 743.

sible for any communion to exist between us and God, for we cannot throw off our conceptions of time, and God cannot coincide with our finite minds in their delusive modes of mental action. The moment then that we deny that time appears to God as past, present, and future, just as it does to us, God becomes to us in a very important respect an unknown and inconceivable God. Yet President Edwards, and in this he represents a large class of theorists, does not hesitate to call our conceptions of time as past, present, and future a delusion of the imagination. With reference to the supposition of an infinite length of time before the world was created, distinguished by successive parts, properly and truly so; or a succession of limited and measurable¹ periods of time, following one another in an infinitely long series;" he says "it must needs be a groundless imagination. The eternal duration which was before the world, being only the eternity of God's existence; which is nothing else but his immediate, perfect, and invariable possession of the whole of his unlimited life, together and at once: '*Vita interminabilis, tota simul, et perfecta possessio.*' Which is so generally allowed, that I need not stand to demonstrate it."² In the margin he quotes from an anonymous author an argument to sustain his position. In it occurs the following assertion: "If once we allow an all-perfect mind, which hath an eternal, immutable and infinite comprehension of things always, (and allow it we must), the distinction of past and future vanishes with respect to such a mind." It is not our purpose to go into a consideration of the arguments by which any reach such results. It is enough here to say that such is the nature of the human mind that it is utterly impossible that the authors of such statements should have any conception of a God such as they describe. The very language that they use is unintelligible to us except on the assumption that time is in reality — as it seems to us. What is meant by "the immediate possession of the whole of his life together and at once?" Can any sense be attached to these words except on the assumption of a contrast to something not immediate, not together, not at once? There is in like manner a constant use of the language of time in all such arguments, against the reality of time, nor is it possible for the human mind to frame or to express an idea on the subject that shall be at all intelligible, except on the assumption that our ideas of time are real and true. And in fact as soon as the metaphysical crisis is over, those who thus reason go on to speak of time as alike a reality to God and to man. It would be a fair test of this question to call upon those who assert that there is to God no distinction of past or

¹ We regard the common reading *unmeasurable* as a misprint.

² *Freedom of the Will, Part IV. Sec. 8.*

future, to interpret their own arguments against the future restoration of the lost, to holiness, and to explain how God views what we are wont to call the future eternal punishment of the wicked, or the future and eternal blessedness of the righteous. To him it would seem that they are neither past or future. They neither have been, in his view, nor are they to be. What then? Are they to him in existence now? Nay, *our now* is but a point of time, and will not contain an eternity of joy or wo. But what is *God's now*. Is it to him now true that the wicked have suffered forever in hell? Have the redeemed yet unborn been forever with him in heaven? If not, what is meant by their assertion that there is to God no distinction of past or future? In truth so long as the mind of man remains as it is, such an assertion can have no effect except to render the Divine mind in this respect totally unintelligible, while the human mind will go on to conceive of time just as the laws of its nature compel it to do. This is the least that can be said of such speculations. It would not however be going to an excess to say that they involve palpable absurdities. When reading them, we cannot help thinking of attempting to aid the vision of the eye by filling the house with the dense smoke of a blinding and stifling combustion. If our minds were not made to delude us, time past and future are as truly realities to God as to us, and it is but doing violence to the mind to attempt to think otherwise, or to express in words any idea of a God to whom it is not so.

In the following passage, at the close of his treatise on God's Last End in Creation, Edwards speaks as other men do as to time.

"It is no solid objection against God's aiming at an infinitely perfect union of the creature with himself, that *the particular time will never come* when it can be said, the union is now infinitely perfect. God aims at satisfying justice in the eternal damnation of sinners; which will be satisfied no otherwise than with regard to its *eternal duration*. But yet *there never will come that particular moment*, when it can be said that now justice is satisfied." Suppose now that Edwards had attempted to translate this passage into the language of his metaphysical theory, that the idea of a succession of periods of time following one another in an infinitely long series is a groundless imagination, and that to God there is no distinction of past and future; could he have done anything except to unsay what he had just said, by stating that although he had spoken of particular future times in an endless series, after the manner of men, yet it was in fact a mere illusion? Would he not be obliged to say the same of all his arguments against the restoration of the wicked to holiness and heaven at any future period of their existence? And if he had attempted to put any real and true

idea in the place of what he had dismissed as a groundless imagination, could he have said anything that did not do violence to his own mind and that of his readers by vain efforts to express in words or to understand that which is totally inexpressible, unintelligible and inconceivable, and which is so because it is absurd?

The conception of SPACE is no less necessary to us as our minds have been constituted. It is indeed true that its theological relations are not so direct and obvious as those of time. Still however it is of necessity true that if God regards our notions of space as a mere illusion, and as not at all corresponding to the reality of things, then there is another point of entire dissimilarity between our minds and that of God, so that our faculties and modes of intellectual action do not at all represent him to us. Yet President Edwards when called to answer an objection to his views of the will, does not hesitate not only as we have seen, to regard as illusive our necessary conceptions of time, but also to place those of space in the same category.

"This objection (he says) supposes an extent of space beyond the limits of the creation, of an infinite length, breadth, and depth, truly and properly distinguished into different measurable parts, limited at certain stages one beyond another, in an infinite series. Which notion of absolute and infinite space is doubtless as unreasonable, as that now mentioned, of absolute and infinite duration." — "A diversity and order of distinct parts, limited by certain periods, is as conceivable, and does as naturally obtrude itself on our imagination, in one case, as the other; and there is equal reason in each case, to suppose that our imagination deceives us." — "I think we know not what we mean if we say the world might have been differently placed from what it is, in the broad expanse of infinity; or that it might have been differently fixed in the long line of eternity."¹ By a reference to his notes on the mind we find that he held the preceding views of space as a consistent part of a system of idealism, and that he resolved the whole material universe into the constant manifestation of God's ideas to the mind by a constant exercise of his will. On this point Sir William Hamilton well observes, "It is evident that if *extension* be not *immediately perceived* as externally existing, extended objects cannot be immediately perceived as realities out of and independent of the percipient subject." Hence Edwards was consistent in saying, "There can be nothing like those things we call by the name of bodies, out of the mind, unless it be in some other mind or minds."

Now without going into any formal examination of this theory, it is enough to say that it is contrary to the natural, universal and necessa-

¹ On the Will, Part IV. Chap. 8.

ry action of our minds as God has made them. All men of necessity think, speak and write as if space were an external reality. Who, for example, in studying the solar system, and the starry worlds separated by infinite spaces, thinks of calling it in question? Sir William Hamilton accordingly holds that our perception of external space itself is immediate and direct as well as of objects in it, and that the idea of space is not merely suggested by the processes of sensation, as Reid maintained. In a note on this view of Reid,¹ he first proves that it leads to idealism, and then says, "The philosophers who have most loudly appealed to the veracity of God, and the natural conviction of mankind in refutation of certain obnoxious conclusions, have too often silently contradicted that veracity and those convictions, when opposed to certain favorite opinions. But it is evident that such authority is either good for all, or good for nothing. Our natural consciousness assures us, (and the fact of that assurance is admitted by philosophers of all opinions), that we have an immediate knowledge of the very things themselves of an external and extended world, and on the ground of this knowledge alone, is the belief of mankind founded that such a world really exists."² Hence he applies to our direct perception of external space and our belief of its reality, the same language that Reid does to our belief of the existence of external objects. "It is not a deduction of reason, but a natural principle. The belief of it, and the very conception of it, are equally parts of our constitution. If we are deceived by it, we are deceived by him that made us, and there is no remedy." Of this statement the truth is undeniable.

Now if these things are so, then it must be true as we have asserted, that if God regards our notions of space as a mere illusion of the imagination, as Edwards suggests, if they do not at all correspond with the reality of things, then so far God is to us an unknown, and an unknowable God. Our minds do not at all represent him to us. When we think and speak of him as creating worlds in the boundless regions of space, it is all an illusion. And yet if we reject our natural ideas of space and attempt to translate our language into the philosophical sense, it becomes perfectly unintelligible, and to attempt to understand it, just as in the case of time, does violence to the mind itself. God never made it to understand, or to conceive of, the philosophical verbiage on this subject.

Our illustrations of the mode of destroying the power of the human mind to represent God with reference to the principles of morals we will take from the celebrated Romish divines and philosophers, Pascal

¹ Inquiry into the Human Mind, Chap. 5, Sec. 7.

² Hamilton's Reid, pp. 128—130.

and Abelard. They believed that it was revealed in the word of God, that even infants were justly liable to eternal punishment for the sin of Adam, which was committed before they were born or existed, and that therefore it would be just for God actually to consign them to eternal misery in hell. Listen now to Pascal. "What can be more contrary to the rules of *our wretched justice*, than to damn eternally an infant incapable of volition, for an offence wherein he seems to have had no share, and which was committed six thousand years before he was born? Certainly nothing shocks us more rudely than this doctrine, and yet without this mystery, the most incomprehensible of all, we are incomprehensible to ourselves."¹ Here, under the influence of supposed revealed facts, Pascal ascribes to God acts which directly shock and violate all possible ideas of justice or honor which the mind of man can form. And in order to defend them he is obliged to assail the conformity of our ideas of justice to the reality of things as seen by God. Our justice it seems, which condemns such things in God, is *wretched justice*, but God, who does such acts, forms nobler and more elevated ideas of justice than we can attain unto. No doubt if the acts alleged are in fact *just*, all our ideas of justice are wretched, and our confidence in them must be utterly shaken. Yet so long as we have them, we cannot but feel that we are still more wretched if the God under whose government we live can do such things, and not be wretched himself. In order to conceive of such a God, we are obliged to renounce all ideas of honor or right of which the human mind can form a conception, and then what but utter darkness can remain? That God is a diabolical being we cannot, we will not admit, and yet formed as we are, we can see nothing else in such acts. God therefore in the most important part of his character becomes to us an unknown God.

The same facts were believed by Abelard, and he too felt their utter incompatibility with our ideas of justice and honor. How then does he defend them? Hear his words: "Would it not be deemed the summit of injustice among men, if any one should cast an innocent son for the sin of the father into the flames, even if they endured but for a short time? How much more so if eternal? Truly, I confess that this would be unjust in men, because they are forbidden to avenge even their own real injuries. But it is not so in God, who says, vengeance is mine, I will repay, and again, I will kill, and I will make alive. For God commits no injustice towards his creature in *whatever way he treats him*, whether he assigns him to punishment or to life."² Again he says: "In whatever way God may wish to treat his creatures, he

¹ Hallam Hist. Lit. Vol. IV. p. 94, Paris ed.

² Opera, p. 395. Paris, 1616.

can be accused of no injustice, nor can anything be called evil in any way if it is done according to his will. Nor can we in any other way distinguish good from evil, except by noticing what is agreeable to his will."¹ No doubt the will of God in fact is always conformed to what is just and right. But Abelard here explicitly denies that there are any immutable principles of honor and right, to which the will of God can be conformed. Of course our natural and necessary ideas of immutable morality are a delusion. No one has set forth the absurdity, and ruinous consequences of these views, more vividly than Bellamy.² The general scope of his argument is this. It destroys all essential difference between God and the devil, for it implies that if God did but will to feel and act as the devil now does, it would be right, and his present character wrong. Certainly it follows, from the view of Abelard, that there is in fact no standard by which his creatures can judge of the character of God, and that it would be absurd to ask, shall not the judge of all the earth do right, for certainly he will always do what he does in fact do, and this according to Abelard is the only standard of right. Just as if there were no necessary and immutable difference between benevolence and malevolence,—between a purpose to produce a happy universe, and a purpose to produce a miserable one. Just as if God could make it right to treat the innocent and the guilty as if there was no difference in their character; to enact the law of love, and then to inflict eternal misery on all who keep it, and to confer eternal rewards on all who break it;—to hate all who love and honor him, and to honor all who hate him! But enough; nothing but the supposed necessity of defending acts of gross and palpable injustice, falsely ascribed to God, could ever have driven a mind like that of Abelard, one of the most independent thinkers of his age, to do such violence to those principles of immutable justice and honor which God has implanted in the mind and in virtue of which it is in that particular his own image. Yet such views are not repudiated even at this late day so decidedly as they ought to be. Even Dr. Chalmers has said, that it may be "the real truth of the case" that an individual is "justly culpable, for an iniquitous deed—done not by himself, but by another who lived nearly 6000 years ago," although he admits that "his own moral sense is altogether unable to apprehend it."³

But if the natural and necessary ideas of the human mind, as to justice and honor, do not truly represent the ideas of justice and honor in the divine mind, then all thought of communion with God is absurd. Communion implies something in common between two minds. But

¹ Op. p. 395.

² Works, Vol. I. p. 81.

³ Lect. 25 on Romans, p. 129. New York edition.

if our necessary ideas of honor and right are unlike those of God, then there is an essential discord between us on a vital point, and in following his ideas of justice, honor and right, he must of course shock ours, and we must either violate our moral natures, or revolt from his acts, and be repelled from him. Plainly, the convictions of the human mind as to honor and dishonor, right and wrong, are the most important in the universe. On them all just views of God depend. How great then the calamity to have the confidence of man in them, as truly representing the ideas of God, so shaken that he can for a moment even suppose that to punish an innocent individual for a deed done thousands of years before he was in existence, can be honorable or just.

We have thus, as we proposed, considered how that knowledge of God is obtained which is at the basis of our common systems of theology, and of Christian experience, and reviewed some of the modes in which the reality of that knowledge is assailed. It will naturally be expected that we should next consider the reasons for believing that this knowledge is real and trustworthy.

These are derived chiefly from two sources, the necessity of the case, and the uniform usage of the word of God.

It is perfectly plain that to us the only alternative is between knowledge of God thus obtained and no knowledge at all. We are indeed aware that the doctrine has been recently defended that God cannot be revealed as the infinite, the absolute, the one; but only through finite media, such as sounds, colors, forms, works, definite objects and signs. Besides this we are told he can be represented by such human modes of action as imply limitation and imperfection, as deliberating, reasoning, remembering and the like.

But we are constrained to ask, of what use would all this be, and what knowledge of God would it communicate to one who had not the image of God in his own mind in the powers of will, intellect, affection, and of discerning and feeling moral good and evil? But to one who has them, God cannot be revealed except as an intelligent moral person. There is nothing in the material world which can give a knowledge of God to a being who has within himself no intellectual image of God. The manifold forms, colors, motions, sounds, combinations, systems and arrangements of the material world do not reveal God to the irrational animals that surround us. They have not the image of God within. To us they reveal him only because being intelligent and rational, capable of forming and executing plans to gain ends, we are thereby rendered capable of understanding in the works of an infinite being the manifestation of powers similar to our own, and hence of inferring his being, and attributes. And if because God is infinite and

we finite we assume that no faculty, act, feeling or passion that exists in man can be truly predicated of God, for fear of anthropopathism, then all possibility of gaining any knowledge of God is destroyed. Love, joy, exultation and various other passions implying happy emotions are by all without hesitation ascribed to God. Yet of these we know absolutely nothing except what is derived from the human mind. What do we know of knowledge, intuition, choice or purpose, except from our knowledge of such phenomena in the human mind? Nay, what do we know of mental action of any kind except what we derive from the same source? Shall we then through fear of anthropopathy refuse to ascribe any kind of mental action to God? For all practical purposes, we might as well turn atheists at once; for if God be totally unintelligible, of what use is the barren truth that an unknown God exists? But the end is not here. Pursuing the same course of reasoning, some hesitate to ascribe even existence to God. A late writer¹ says, "Some have been unwilling to attribute *being* to the deity, since we have no conception or knowledge of *being in itself*, still less of *infinite being*. Our knowledge of being, is only of being this and that, a conditional being, which is not predicable of God." Surely such results are a *reductio ad absurdum*. Can truth conduct to such an issue?

Hence Neander, distinguishes between anthropomorphism, as denoting the ascription of a material form to God, and anthropopathism or the ascription of the emotions, and acts of the human mind to God. "At the root of the latter (he says) lies *an inner, and undeniable necessity*; since man being created in the image of God, being a spirit in affinity with the Father of spirits, is *constrained and warranted* to frame to himself the idea of God after this analogy. There is, therefore, a true as well as a false anthropopathism; and a correct as well as an erroneous avoidance of it, according as this analogy is rightly or improperly used."²

But still clearer is the evidence derived from the word of God. In the first place it most distinctly asserts that God may be known. "The knowledge of God" is a result assured to all who rightly seek it;³ not merely theoretical knowledge, but that of soul satisfying communion. It was the special design of our Saviour to assure his disciples in his interview with them before his death, that such a knowledge of God was possible, sure, and infallible. God the Father should come unto them, and manifest himself unto them, and dwell in them and they should know him certainly and be assured that he was in them. This knowledge of God he calls eternal life. John the apostle thus express-

¹ Theodore Parker. Discourse of Religion, p. 163, Note.

² Ch. Hist. Torrey's translation, Vol. I. p. 561.

³ Prov. 2: 5.

es his convictions on this point. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true."¹ The marriage supper of the Lamb, in the nineteenth chapter of the Apocalypse,² is but a prophecy of that full and joyful knowledge of God, and communion with him which the church is destined yet to reveal on earth, when all those causes of ignorance of God that sin has introduced shall be removed.

It being then the fundamental doctrine of the Bible that God may be known, and its avowed end to give a knowledge of God, and to bring man into a state of communion with him, we are authorized to conclude that the mode adopted therein to effect these results is based on the truth. But it is a fact too notorious to need proof, that the same assumption pervades the Bible which, as we have shown, pervades all our common systems of theology, that man is the image of God in his fundamental constitution, as an intelligent, voluntary, affectionate, and moral person. Throughout, God is described in language taken from the human mind. Nor is there in the Bible any intimation that in the use of such language there is a necessity, or even a danger of delusion. It nowhere stigmatizes it as anthropomorphism, or anthropopathy. Nor does it even call in question the accuracy of the fundamental and necessary conceptions of the human mind concerning time and space, and justice, honor, and rectitude. It always uses the common language of men concerning time and space, with reference to God and to man, and never intimates that as God views things they are illusive. God also appeals to common principles of right between him and his creatures, as for example when he refers to them as requiring the death of the soul that sins, for its own sins, and those only, and repudiating the idea of treating the righteous and the wicked alike, as a procedure undeniably and necessarily unjust.³ Moreover when Abraham in his plea for Sodom said to the Lord, be it far from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked, shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? God admitted the binding force of the plea.⁴

It must indeed be admitted that one or two rhetorical representations of the enlarged scale on which God plans, and views the events of successive ages, have been pressed into the service of a delusive philosophy, and forced to utter the theory of God's eternal now; and we have accordingly been reminded that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.⁵ But that the idea is not philosophical and scientific, but that it is a rhetorical presentation of the relative brevity of human periods compared with eter-

¹ 1 John 5: 20.² Rev. 19: 7—9.³ Ezek. 18: 19—32.⁴ Gen. 19: 25.⁵ 2 Pet. 3: 8.

nity is too plain to admit of denial. So it is said, a thousand years, are in thy sight, as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.¹ God's scale is eternity. Compared with this, one day, or a thousand years, are like infinitesimal quantities in mathematics, when connected with an infinite quantity — differing it may be among themselves — but all so relatively minute as to be alike disregarded and dropped. Excepting one or two such passages, the main current of the Bible all runs one way. Time appears to God as it does to us. The basis therefore of the whole Bible is the great principle that man in his fundamental mental constitution, is the image of God, and that his fundamental conceptions as to time, space, and moral rectitude, agree with the reality of things as seen by God, and that on these grounds alone is a knowledge of God or communion with him possible.

No book on earth is so entirely free from the taint of a spurious and delusive philosophy as the Bible. None tends so powerfully to retain the mind in the domains of a sound and healthy common sense, and to establish it in that abiding assurance of a real knowledge and heartfelt love of God, which is the essential element of eternal life.

It now remains that we consider the bearings of the principles thus far discussed and illustrated upon the promises of a more full knowledge of God, and perfect communion with him than has hitherto been enjoyed by his church on earth. This inquiry will have reference in part to the effects of a restoration to the mind of God's moral image to increase its power of truly representing him to us. It will also consider the question at present exciting some interest, whether the divine Being is as truly the subject of painful emotions as of those that are pleasant, or whether those portions of Scripture that ascribe such emotions to God are to be regarded in such a sense anthropopathic, as to require us to interpret them as they have hitherto been interpreted by most divines. But this subject is one of such importance that the limits imposed upon us by the circumstances of the case will not allow us at this time to enter upon the inquiry.

¹ Ps. 90: 4.