

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VIII.

PROFESSOR PAINE ON THE ETHNIC AND
CHRISTIAN TRINITIES.¹

BY PROFESSOR FRANK HUGH FOSTER, PH.D., D.D.

IN this new volume, Professor Paine has carried a step further the work begun in the "Evolution of Trinitarianism."² That work was an effort to show that the Christian doctrine of the trinity was no part of primitive and pure Christianity, but had originated by a process of evolution, marked by the importation of foreign and unsound materials, and tending already to an end in Pantheism which must necessarily condemn it. He now advances to the position that all religions have trinities, which result necessarily by processes of evolution, and are all alike worthless. Hence the condemnation of the Christian doctrine is complete.

After a "preliminary survey" in which he affirms the universality of the law of evolution, and its strict application to human affairs and history, to the exclusion of all exceptions and, in the sphere of religion, of all divine revelation, Professor Paine discusses the "causes of the rise of the ethnic trinities." He finds these in the sacredness of numbers, particularly of the number three, in the idea of generation, and in the general feeling among men of the "need of a mediating and intercessory being between man

¹The Ethnic Trinities, and their Relations to the Christian Trinity. A Chapter in the Comparative History of Religions. By Levi Leonard Paine, D.D., Professor, etc. Crown 8vo. Pp. x, 378. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1901. \$1.75, *net*.

²Reviewed in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April, 1901, p. 209 ff.

and God." Beginning the study of the several examples of trinitarian doctrine with the "Hindoo Brahmanic trinity," he passes in review successively the Persian Zoroastrian, the Greek Homeric, the Greek philosophical, and the Greek Plotinian trinities. The Vedic trinity was Dyaus, Indra, and Agni; the later Brahmanic Brahma, Vishnu, and Civa. Upon Brahmanism follows Buddhism, and here we have "the only clear and complete historical counterpart to that of dogmatic Christianity." Gautama, like Jesus, "was not a dogmatist but a moral teacher." Their teachings have a "striking similarity." The lives of Buddha also possess a great correspondence to the lives of Christ. Buddha begins his career with a fast and a temptation. Legends of miracle begin early to gather about him. He became deified in the belief of his disciples, and was finally made the supreme deity incarnating himself in Buddha, and his birth was made miraculous, and from a virgin. When we pass to the later trinity, Vishnu incarnates himself in Krishna, the god-man. Krishna was, however, a purely mythical being, whereas the Christian doctrine of the incarnation begins with an historical person, Jesus. Thus two general classes of incarnations may be distinguished: (1) that "which starts with deity, and by an incarnation reduces deity to humanity"; (2) that "which starts with a real human being and raises him to the rank of deity and then accounts for his human nature by an incarnation of his deity." Of the latter class, Jesus, Buddha, and (probably) Zoroaster are examples. A similar account of Zoroastrianism next follows, in which the same lines of development are traced. Zoroastrianism adds the doctrine of the miraculous birth of the *mother* of Zoroaster. In connection with the idea of a necessary mediation, Zoroastrianism develops a "saviour," and finally, by hesitating steps, a trinity, Ormuzd, Anhita, and Mithra. The early Greek theology gives a succession of

trinities, and in Athene (in the *Odyssey*), a compassionate mediator. The *Odyssey* "as a religious poem stands unrivalled in ethnic literature." Rome also had its trinity, of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva.

With the study of Greek philosophical trinitarianism, Professor Paine enters on a movement beginning with Plato but not culminating till Plotinus (400 B.C.—250 A.D.). Plato was himself no trinitarian; but he was followed in the development by Philo, who introduced the Logos as the central principle of mediation between God and his creatures. This is the origin of the Logos-doctrine in Christian theologians, Justin, the author of the Fourth Gospel, etc. From Philo came also the word "mediator," employed by Paul. He did not himself, however, go as far as to produce a doctrine of trinity, which was begun by Numenius. In Plotinus we have, finally, the fully developed, wholly abstract, pantheistic trinity of "The One, the Mind, the Soul."

Having thus sketched the history of the Ethnic trinities, Professor Paine is ready to draw his conclusions, and to this devotes a second part of his book. These may be reduced to the single position that Jesus Christ was a mere man, and is to be esteemed and treated as one of the great teachers of man, first, no doubt, but like them in all essential respects. "The appearance of Jesus Christ can just as easily be accounted for, from an historical point of view, as that of Zoroaster, or Moses, or Gautama, or Socrates." Whatever else appears in traditional Christianity about him is to be rejected as the product of the natural course of un-instructed human thinking. "Frequently in theological literature such matters as the virgin miraculous birth of Christ, his resurrection and ascension, his incarnation, and his preëxistent condition as the second person of the trinity, and even the trinity itself, are described as historical facts in contrast with similar legends and dogmas current in the

Ethnic religions, which are treated as inventions of Satan, or at least as superstitious and wicked forms of error"; but they are not facts. The virgin birth of Christ is exactly on a level with the miraculous and quasi-virgin birth of Buddha. Christianity is, therefore, not the true religion while other religions are false; it is simply one of them, produced in the same way, and having no peculiar authority. Still, on account of its superiority in other respects, Christianity has a mission as a world-wide religion. It must give up its dogma and confine itself to its religious spirit, and then it can first enlighten, and gain finally, the whole world. Its true trinity is: *Love, truth, freedom*. It is as yet unready to perform this mission, being hindered by two great defects, viz., ignorance and insincerity. But when it has finally got adjusted to the new thought, it will effect its task.

In the former article, it was the writer's object to show that Professor Paine had put himself beyond the limits of church fellowship among the Congregational churches. That question was sufficiently handled and the conclusion made sufficiently clear. If Professor Paine has a right to full fellowship among us, then our Congregational freedom means that we have no longer *any* doctrinal tests whatever; but we have, and daily apply such tests. Dismissing this aspect of the matter, as a denominational and local question, we shall consider the present book in its larger relations as a discussion of the origin and value of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and as having an interest for every Christian. Judged by sound canons of historical investigation, has Professor Paine made out his case?

The science of Comparative Religion is still a new science, and is conceived in various ways. Professor Paine's position is the extreme one, adopted by Kuenen and many others, that Christianity has no more of a divine element in it than any other religion, with the general implication

that there is no divine element in any of them, except as the providential government of the world may be said to supply it. Now, for our own part, with this understanding of the matter, we should be ready at once to grant the conclusion gained by the long historical study we have reviewed, that the trinity and the supernatural features of current Christian doctrine are to be rejected. The argument is successful; but it is quite superfluous, for the conclusion may be gained much more immediately from the premises. In fact, the conclusion is identical with the premises; and it is surely unnecessary to be so pedantic and formal as to say: There is no such thing as the supernatural; therefore, the supernatural in Christianity is really non-existent. Why not say at once, We must assume Christianity to be a human product; and as we, in this age of the world, cannot see any reason for believing in the trinity, we reject it at once on the grounds of this irrationality?

But, for ourselves, we cannot accept this short and easy method in comparative religion. We prefer a juster method. Let the religions of the world be studied objectively and without the prejudice of partisan feeling, for the sake of understanding them and seeing what they can teach us. Then the question may fairly be put whether the rise of certain things in these religions throws any light on similar things in the Christian religion. But to render the answer of any value, Christianity will need to be studied in its own distinctive characteristics. The process of sponging out all its peculiarities and of extemporaneously identifying its great features with the corresponding features of other religions because of sameness of name (incarnation, etc.), will result in no profit.

The peculiarities of Christianity raise certain questions which must be settled before the canons of the historical criticism can be regarded as settled. Some historians, not as frank as Professor Paine, prefer to say that history, like

all human science, deals only with the secondary causes of events, and therefore, *abstracts from*, or *provisionally ignores*, the first cause, God. It, therefore, cannot *consider* the miraculous element of Christianity. It neither affirms it nor denies it. Such investigation for limited purposes may be of value; but as a final instrument for the discovery of the truth, it is useless and hopeless. Either the miraculous *is*, or it is *not*, a fact. If it is a fact, a history which leaves it out will never have all the facts, and never arrive at truth. Wherefore the dogmatic question comes first, Is the miracle possible? And then the historic inquiry for the actuality of miracles may follow. It is our own unshaken conviction that the answer of both of these questions has been overwhelmingly in favor of "traditional" Christian theology, and that Professor Paine condemned his studies to foregone failure when he began by accepting pure naturalism. He is an example, to employ a phrase recently current in California, of a "surrender to evolution,"—of a man who has not fully or deeply understood evolution, but in deference to the loud clamor of the evolution of fifteen years ago, has weakly abandoned precious Christian truth, certified by the experience of centuries of Christian life in the church. The evolution of to-day leaves room for the maintenance of these truths, as Professor Paine would have seen, if he had had more insight and patience, and loyalty to Christian experience. He has put himself in the position of a man "behind the times" because he was not patient enough to wait for the results of more leisurely studies of the perplexing and multitudinous facts falling under evolution.

Great results are to be hoped for from the study of the history of religion when its students shall have become more deeply philosophical, better acquainted with its facts, and more reticent as to "assured results." In passing, now, to a more detailed estimate of Professor Paine's

studies, we wish therefore to grant frankly at the beginning certain of the postulates of the science. They may be all embraced in the word "evolution," and evolution, in every justified and established sense, we are prepared to grant, as a principle displayed in the realm of thought as well as in that of inorganic and organic nature. The progress of men's ideas is by slow changes. Idea acts upon idea; divergences to the right and left, almost imperceptible at the first, become determinative at the end; the logical results seem often to work themselves out almost as if the ideas were living things and acted upon each other as individuals do amid a struggling mass of organic forms. And this evolution is found in Christianity. Every great Christian idea has passed through it. It appears even in the New Testament. And countless distortions of Christian doctrine have occurred, by which, in limited groups and for a time, systems have been developed which were essentially heathen. Evolution has thus been accompanied by "degeneration" in thought as in biology. There is normal evolution and abnormal. How are they to be distinguished? Not by history, for history can only sketch growth and record results attained. The criticism of processes is *logical* in its nature, and belongs to dogmatics,—whether the dogmatics of biology or theology. The mere naturalist in theology will apply his own dogmatics, and will say that everything is abnormal which he does not believe to be rational,—abnormal, that is, not as *not* being evolutionary, but as being *mere* evolution, or the necessary evolution of ignorant ages, or evolution useful as leading to something better but of no permanent value in itself. This is Professor Paine's position, and substantially includes all Christian theology in condemnation. But the "traditional" Christian, that is, the Christian who stands consciously and gladly in the historic faith of Christendom, will say that the normal in Christian development is that which

agrees in substance with the original source of Christianity, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, with its primitive spirit, and with its essential nature. The answer to the question, What are these? will be gained, again, by dogmatics, for at the threshold of investigation the old question as to the reality of the miraculous will be thrust upon the attention. It would seem to be a purely historical question, but recent historical criticism of the New Testament is, under the management of many critics, utterly subjective and wholly anti-supernaturalistic. Hence, everywhere the first question is, What do you think as to miracles? and that can be answered only by dogmatics.

When these matters of method have been settled,—when in one word history has learned its place as a single science in a family of mutually dependent sciences,—much is to be expected of the study of the history of religion. It will be a study of the religious nature of man, the depths of which have not yet been fully explored, and the inextinguishable demands of which for reconciliation with God by the removal of the guilt of sin have been somewhat forgotten in our current theologies,—as other demands have been forgotten in other ages. Then, the great primal truths of religion will receive new illustration and proof,—the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. That old truth, represented more clearly by Zwingli than by any other Reformer, but entering into all our historical Reformed theology, that the Spirit “worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth,” will be illustrated and confirmed; for it can hardly be denied by those who ponder over Ethnic ethics, or trace the devotion of Ethnic heroes to their ideas of right, that a spirit substantially Christian was in many of them. But, undoubtedly, the chief fruit of these studies will be to strengthen the defense of Christianity by the exhibition of its great superiority to the best that Egypt, India, and the rest have produced. If ideas

of the work of the divine Spirit among the nations are enlarged, it will be seen more clearly than ever how essential to man's salvation the "more sure word of prophecy" has been, and how revelation—the supernatural and personal communication of truth to men—was called for, and received, in the line of prophets whom Christ sent and then himself followed. And, in particular, to the great basal truths of Christianity will be brought with new power that new proof from evolution which Mr. John Fiske may be said to have died elaborating, that the persistent and universal result of the process of evolution in the department of human thinking will be found, like such results in every other department of life, to correspond to the spiritual environment of man. Professor Paine speaks of the "need so deep in human nature of some mediator or mediating movement between God and man," as uniting "all religions together, whether Ethnic or Christian, however distinguishable in other respects" (p. 58). If this is the result of the evolution of religion everywhere, culminating in the Christian doctrine of trinity, incarnation, and atonement, then these doctrines are true, for there is a reality in the spiritual world, a truly existing environment, corresponding to this evolutionary product.

Unfortunate, untrue, and damaging to Christianity, as we deem Professor Paine's book to be—for which epithets we are about *to give our reasons*,—we yet think it will prove of great value to the American Christian church. It will call fresh attention to this field of study, and excite a new interest in it. It becomes, in a degree, a vital matter for Christian believers to know what the teachings of "Comparative Religion" really are when Christian teachers turn aside from life-long convictions and teaching to attack the central elements of Christian doctrine by means of its processes and results. We are called as with the quick blast of a trumpet to learn what these religions are, and

how they bear upon our faith. The answer of the call will bring enlargement to our horizon and increased vigor to our faith.

We propose, now, to examine Professor Paine's work more carefully, in order to determine his success in reducing Christianity to the level of the Ethnic religions. His general argument may be said to be this, that if any feature of Christianity (such as miracles) can be found in these other religions, it can have no more value in the one case than in the other; and that, as we ascribe it in the one case to the operation of purely natural causes (in the case of miracles to the growth of legend under the influence of the natural love of the marvelous), we must do the same in the other. This argument is thoroughly fallacious. It consists in identifying things entirely different solely because they bear the same name. It is a verbal argument, not a real one. Our reply will consist in exposing this fallacy. We shall restrict our examination chiefly to Professor Paine's treatment of Buddhism, because every essential feature of the discussion is found here. We shall thus bring what we have to say within manageable limits. A few isolated remarks may be added upon subsequent points; but the whole argument of Professor Paine may be sustained or refuted by the critical consideration of this one "complete historical counterpart" of Christianity.

Professor Paine's first point (p. 39 ff.) is "the similarity between the teachings of Buddha and those of Christ." The Dhammapada "breathes a spirit of religion 'pure and undefiled' as realistic as the Sermon on the Mount or the parable of the sower." In a sense, this is true. If "religion" means simply ethics, then there are striking similarities between the teachings of Christ and Buddha which will deeply impress any one who does not look beneath the surface. But at bottom, the systems are as different as they can well be. Buddha was intent on avoiding *suffer-*

ing; Christ, on uprooting *sin*. Even when Buddha speaks of "sin," the context often shows what is in his mind, as, for example, in Dhammapada, 117: "If a man commits sin, let him not do it again; let him not delight in sin: *pain is the outcome of evil.*" Pain is the thing to be avoided. Hence repentance and forgiveness find no place in Buddhism. How can they, when Buddhism is entirely agnostic, and equally valid with atheist and theist?

It is this ethical or ethico-religious depth in the teachings of Jesus,—this recognition that the fundamental fact in man's moral history is the voluntary rupture of law, whether that of conscience or the recognized law of God, bringing with it guilt and the just fear of penalty, and calling for redemption and reconciliation,—that constitutes the impassable chasm between Buddha and Christ as moral teachers. Then, when the positive contents of moral instruction are examined, there is little likeness but a superficial one between the systems. Love is not the same in the two. Buddha's love is the mild good nature of one who has subdued all antagonisms and all personal interests; it is negative and has its root in *shunning evil*. Christ's love is the fundamental choice of an active nature, positively going forth in conferring benefits, who has made the interests of others his own interests, and its root is *aspiration after good*—nay, better, the acceptance of urgent obligation. And again, more important and distinctive yet, Christ's ethics are essentially religious, for the chief evil arising from sin which is to be removed is separation from God, and the chief good to be attained, his favor. In a word, Buddha would extinguish desires as the path to the greatest good—non-existence,—and Christ would quicken every activity into normal and well-regulated exercise and confer an eternal fullness of life. Obviously very different things may be expected in connection with two teachers thus fundamentally different.

But Professor Paine says that substantially the *same* things are to be found related of them. Let us see.

The first example cited is the temptation, preceded by a fast, ascribed to both Buddha and Christ. "The marvelous similarity of the account to that given in the gospels of Christ's fasting and temptation by the devil strikes every reader" (p. 42).

First, we need to remark that the occurrence of the story of a temptation in both these cases *is* a result of development. Temptation is a *fact*. Every one experiences it, and in particular every one who sets out to accomplish anything great will have his misgivings and his temptations. In ascribing temptation to both Buddha and Christ, the narratives of their lives are true to psychological necessity. Thought could not fail to develop in this channel.

But the accounts say more than, "He *must* have been tempted"; they say he *was* tempted, and in this and that way. Are the accounts historical, either or both, or are they both alike the sole product of fancy acting on the materials given it by thought? An examination of the story of Buddha's temptation will at once convince us of its un-historical character. I quote from Professor S. H. Kellogg's account:—

"When Mara [the tempting spirit] saw that the Bodhisat had taken this resolution [to become the saviour of the world], he came into his presence riding on an elephant two thousand four hundred miles high, appearing as a monster with five hundred heads, one thousand red eyes, and five hundred flaming tongues; he had also one thousand arms, in each of which was a weapon, no two of these weapons alike. With him also came an army of hideous demons, of every conceivable frightful form; an army so large that it extended on every side one hundred and sixty-four miles, and nine miles upward, while its weight was sufficient to overpoise the earth. First, Mara sent against the Bodhisat a terrific wind, which tore up the largest mountains, then a rainstorm, every drop the size of a palm tree; then a shower of burning rocks and mountains; then a shower of swords and spears and all manner of sharp weapons; then a shower of burning charcoal; then another of burning ashes; and then another of burning sand and another of burning filth; and then a

fourfold darkness. But the wind moved him not; the rain only refreshed him; the burning mountains became garlands of flowers; the weapons a shower of blossoms; the burning coals rubies; the fiery ashes fragrant sandal powder; the burning sand a shower of pearls; and the darkness a resplendent light."¹

This is all evident fiction, not to be compared for an instant with the extremely plain account of the temptation in Matt. iv. 1-11. If it be answered, that it is as evidently symbolical, and no more so than the placing of Jesus by the devil on the pinnacle of the temple, we reply that then all is *idea* in the Buddhist account, and we have no history behind it; while in the life of Christ the fact of a definite temptation at a definite time, in which the subjects of temptation were so and so, is added to the idea, *and no cause exists for doubting the story*. Certainly it is not a cause for such doubt that other men elsewhere invented a romance having the common human idea of temptation underlying it. The "marvelous similarity" of the accounts has, however, evaporated.

Professor Paine's reason for doubting this story of the Gospels is his explanation that it rose by "evolution." But the rejection of the miraculous in general is essential to his argument. When the historical figure of Jesus had faded from the distinct memory of men, then the tendency to create marvels produced the miracles of the New Testament. Some considerable time, of course, is required for this process. To get the trinitarian formula of Matt. xxviii. 19 Professor Paine is obliged to suggest (p. 231) that this Gospel "in its present shape was composed *well on* in the second century," although Harnack dates it at 70-75 ("*ausser einigen späteren Zusätzen*"). And the sensible conclusion from his argument is that miracles do not belong to the apostolic age or to the apostolic literature. But the conclusion, if drawn, would be wrong. The

¹ First printed in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1882, p. 463, and reproduced in his "The Light of Asia and the Light of the World," 1885.

four "undisputed" Epistles of Paul—Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, and Romans—bear the date of 53 (Harnack), and in 2 Cor. xii. 12 and Rom. xv. 19 Paul lays claim to the performance of miracles by himself. Miracles are thus brought down to within *twenty years* after the death of Christ. This leaves no time for the myth-building process.

But Professor Paine would not rest his evolutionary argument with the temptation. It applies to the incarnation also. Jesus, a mere man, was first worshiped, then said to be an incarnation of the god supposed to be in him. The same process was gone through with in the case of Buddha. It bears no greater or other relation to truth in one case than in the other.

But the parallel disappears on closer examination, and the argument with it. The "incarnation" of Buddha is merely *one* of the more than 550 births which he underwent. It is thus simply one example of transmigration—I was about to add, of *souls*; but Buddhism has no "soul," nothing but acts. Thus there is, in the original Buddhist theory, no place for divine worship of Buddha, or for the supposition that we have here an example of the incarnation of deity. Later polytheistic Hindooism may have added such elements, but "divine" with it meant little, since "god" meant exceedingly little.

Thus, on the Buddhist side, the parallel is destroyed. It is equally fragile upon the Christian side. There is no sound evidence that any group of disciples of Jesus, from the original apostles to any selected group of the second century, regarded him as a mere man. If the Synoptic Gospels are to be put down into the second century, and the Fourth into the second half of it, then it may be possible for Professor Paine by a liberal application of hypothesis to prove this, or any other "fact" that he may wish; but his discussions, being founded on totally subjective

grounds, will convince only himself. It will remain that every Christian circle, so far as we have record, believed Christ to be a divine being come to earth for our salvation. This was the incarnation—not a polytheistic god come into man for the fiftieth, hundredth, or five-hundredth time, but God, once for all, by an almost inconceivable condescension, become a man. The argument for his divinity went from what he *appeared* to be to what he *was*; but belief transfigured what he appeared to be by what faith accepted him to be. The divinity of Christ was not a later growth by evolution, but a primitive belief founded on original revelation.

This evolution, according to Professor Paine, goes still further. Having made both Buddha and Christ divine, the same process gave to both a virgin (p. 71) birth by miraculous conception. But the parallel mostly disappears, again, when the narratives are examined. Compare this account, which I draw from Kellogg, with the opening chapter of Luke:—

“The queen had been married to Raja Suddhodana many years, but they had never had a child, although she was now more than forty years of age. But on this occasion she fell asleep and dreamed a dream. She dreamed that the four archangels, the guardians of the world, lifted her up in her couch, carried her to the Himalaya mountains, and placed her under the shade of the great Sala tree, seven leagues in height. Then their queens came and bathed, anointed, and perfumed her, and carried her to a silver hill into a golden palace, in which they placed her on a celestial couch. Then she saw the future Buddha, who in the form of a white elephant was wandering near by, approach her, and, holding in his silvery trunk a white lotus flower, thrice doing obeisance, he seemed to enter her right side. And thus, we are told, was the Buddha conceived.”

The fundamental difference of the Ethnic trinities and the Christian trinity is no less unmistakable. Professor Paine, who is always candid and honest, however mistaken, states it as clearly as any one can. He says:—

“The Ethnic trinities are modified or readjusted to meet new circumstances or influences, while still preserving their trinitarian character.

The names and offices of the three members of the triad are subject to change. The earlier Accadian trinity becomes reorganized among the Babylonians, and the Babylonian trinity in turn is amended by the Assyrians. Egypt had numerous local trinitarian cults. There was one triad at Memphis, another at Thebes, another at Abydos, and almost every district had its local triad. Even in the same locality a triad had a fluxive character, at least so far as names and functions were concerned. The number three itself was sometimes invaded or its significance extended. In some Egyptian localities a fourth god was added, though usually of a subordinate character" (p. 35).

Two points suggest themselves in reference to this extract. The Ethnic trinities are "fluxive," while the Christian trinity since Constantinople (381) has been perfectly unchangeable. Professor Paine maintains, it is true, that it has undergone much change, having had a crowd of lesser deities added to it by the elevation of saints to the rank of demi-gods, and having been extended to a tetrad by the addition of the Virgin Mary, "the Queen of Heaven." But this argument drawn from the corruptions of the Roman Church will seem like an example of special pleading to most readers. We cannot deny the vagaries of the development of superstition; but these are surely examples of "degeneration," and have no place in an argument from evolution. To be sure, Professor Paine does not make distinctions between progressive and retrogressive developments; but the distinction exists. No sound Christian evolution has as yet affected the results of Constantinople, as was shown, in reply to Professor Paine, in my former article. The unchangeability of the Christian trinity marks its unique character.

And then, while you have "triads," as Professor Paine well calls them, adopting the looser designation of the earlier church, you have no *trinity*, and no approach to the doctrine of one God existing in three eternal personific factors. The doctrine of the trinity certainly developed, but the features of the development, and the result, show that altogether different elements were at work from those

which came to view in the Ethnic religions. First among these is the *sense* and *belief* of a divine revelation as to the nature of God, to which the church has regarded itself bound. This fundamental point of departure is lacking in those boundless speculations which Professor Paine details. Here is the root of the ultimate difference,—of the sobriety and matter-of-fact character of the Christian representations, and of the extravagant, uncertain, and transitory character of the pagan.

We have now said enough to illustrate our main contention, that Professor Paine has been confounding things that totally differ because a verbal similarity can be asserted in reference to them. His argument that all trinities are evolutions of the same value, to be successful, requires substantial identity of results and of processes. Neither of these requirements is met, and the argument fails.

There are a multitude of minor matters on which a word might be added; but it would generally be at a cost of space disproportionate to the gain. We turn, therefore, finally, to follow out more fully a line of thought already hinted at,—that the real significance of the Ethnic trinities is in confirmation of the Christian trinity.

Professor Paine ascribes two main causes for the evolution of doctrines of a trinity, the idea of *generation* and that of *mediation*. I am not prepared, for my part, to give any special weight to the first of these ideas in connection with the Christian trinity. It is true that the Greek fathers at one point made a great deal of the generation of the Son, and thus introduced an apparent likeness between the Christian and Ethnic developments. But the origin of this idea was not in the natural process of generation, viewed with awe, and ascribed to the gods because so mysterious and great in itself. That is a heathen process of thought, which gets its illustration and historical explanation from the phallic worship of the present day. It has

its rise largely in the sinful tendencies and practices of mankind. The root of the Christian discussion of generation was in bad biblical exegesis, by which the phrase "Son of God" was supposed to be applied in the New Testament to the divine nature of Christ, whereas in fact it always denotes the historical, divine-human Jesus. The idea of generation was early neutralized by Origen's addition of the epithet "eternal"; and met its final and complete disposal, as far as the exertion of any actual influence on the theory of the trinity is concerned, when Augustine brought out the equality of the persons of the trinity, and removed the remaining traces of the old subordinationism. "Eternal generation" continues still to form an object of definition in some systems of dogmatics, but is always defined as not being generation at all. It never belonged to the really operative ideal forces of the development.

We have, therefore, of the two points of departure which Professor Paine suggests, only one, the latter, as common to the Ethnic trinities and the Christian, the idea of *mediation*. He says himself: "The need of a mediating and intercessory being between man and God . . . has been echoed by all human souls from the beginning of time" (p.26); and regards it as deeply rooted in the nature of man. It is of this fact that we ask the meaning. What is the significance for truth of the persistence of this idea in all men, working its way out in various expression in sacrifices for sin, and even extending to the formulation of doctrines of God?

The old answer used to be that there was in the universe the fit supply for every constitutional demand of man. Given a demand that was founded in the very constitution of a human being—such as that for water, for truth, for mediation between the sinner and an offended God,—there *must* be the gratification of that demand.

The new answer, elaborated by Mr. Fiske in the terms of evolution, is apparently different, but really the same.

Here is an idea—of mediation—that is found everywhere where men have come to think, or even dimly to feel, upon religious subjects. Guilt feels its distance from God, shrinks from his offended gaze, and seeks to interpose some one, priest or god, who, while not strange to the deity, will be acquainted with the condition of man and sympathetically inclined towards him. He forms trinities upon this basis, that he may have a mediator who is truly a god; and his trinities, with all their “fluxive” characteristics are profoundly persistent, and determine the form of his theologies and of his worship. They are profoundly influential in his religious, moral, and even civil development—they essentially affect civilization.

Now if any truth is made out by evolution, it is the correspondence of every form to its environment. If you find a web-footed bird domesticated in any district, you may know that somewhere there water is to be found. Without the environment of water, the bird could never have been produced. If you find man possessed of the conviction that there is *law* to which he is responsible, you may be sure that he is in an environment which contains law as one of its elements; for, otherwise he could never have been produced in that environment with such a conviction. To say anything else, is to say that there is no high and great meaning in evolution,—that it is a mere matter for pigeons and moles and fancy sheep, not for man, or for the universe, or the great relations and things with which eternity is concerned. If there is any large scope to evolution, if it is the method by which the universe is approaching its goal, and if that goal has a great meaning in it worthy of God, and is not destined forever to confound the researches of truth-loving men who scrutinize it to detect its meaning and become vivified with its hope, then it will pertain to these inner and secret things of the soul as well as to the form of the ear and the powers of the eye.

It is, then, because there is a real, objective condemnation of sin in the universe, an objective wrath of God against the sinner, that alarms arise in his heart, and the need of a mediator is thus deeply felt. And to the need the supply will be given. It is because of divine provision of a mediator in fact that the need of a mediator is felt,—the environment calling out the sense of need, for all things arise from the environment of any form. And the constant reversion in thought to the idea of a trinity is thus, again, a proof of the real existence of a trinity.

The trinitarian doctrines of Plotinus and Hegel become of importance, therefore, to the argument, though not in the way Professor Paine suggests. Hegel, to be sure, he does not discuss, though in many ways a more suggestive example than Plotinus. But both of them are examples of the necessity to thought of a trinitarian conception of the nature of the Absolute. Neither of them has produced anything which resembles the Christian trinity, although Hegel supposed himself to have arrived at that doctrine by the path of independent speculation. The undefined Infinite, which in this form of being equals nothing, must objectify itself by the creation of an antithesis, and thereby pass to a synthesis in which it first becomes conscious of itself. Through this process, repeated an infinite number of times, the universe develops as it is. And these three, Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis, are the Father, Son, and Spirit of Christian theology. Nothing could be less successful than this as a rationale of the trinity, for God is no unconscious Nothing, passing by the immanent forces of a pantheistic development into successive stages of existence. But it is at least an attempt to solve the mystery of divine consciousness by a trinitarian hypothesis, and points to the solution of this puzzle which is given by the doctrine of the trinity. Professor Paine is very contemptuous in his treatment of the idea suggested by

the phrase "social trinity"; but he has not sounded its depths. Even Dr. Martineau, with whom Professor Paine so generally agrees in teaching, believed something objective to be necessary to the divine consciousness, and therefore posited the eternal existence of the world! He is another illustration of the persistence of the trinitarian idea, although in an imperfect form. And all these persistencies show that there is something in the environment of the mind that corresponds. That which the mind is thus continually groping after in multifarious ways, is objectively existent in the triune nature of the eternal God.

The two books of Professor Paine combine to produce the impression that all trinitarian development, pagan and Christian, is chaotic, irrational, and worthless. We think this general impression is correct as to the development of other doctrines of trinities, for they are all gropings after truth with no sound point of departure and no definite goal. But it is not correct as to the Christian doctrine. A brief review of the history of the Christian evolution will exhibit this. At almost every point we shall directly contradict Professor Paine, both in statement of facts and in our view of their true combination and meaning. But this is because we shall hold to the documents of the history, and give them the dates and authorship to which they are assigned by the best objective critics. It is Professor Paine's misfortune as an historical reasoner that he requires for his purposes such a distortion and dislocation of the historical *data* that an objective thinker cannot follow him. We hope that the simple reasonableness of the picture of Christian development we shall draw will do much to convince the reader that it is correct.

The doctrine of the trinity, as a developed doctrine, is not found in the New Testament: only the elements of the doctrine are there. Even these were only gradually communicated and received. The Old Testament doctrine

of one God, in opposition to every form of polytheism, was steadfastly maintained, and even perfected and intensified by the teachings of Jesus. But little by little the truth as to Jesus' own nature was perceived and appropriated by the minds of his disciples. The stages of this appropriation are well marked in the successive layers of the New Testament record. In the Synoptic Gospels the picture of the man Jesus occupies the canvas, but hints of his heavenly preëxistence and of his glory as ruler and judge of the world are not wanting. Paul first in the apostolic group developed the logical consequences of the glory which the risen Christ possesses, and taught in clear terms his creative activity at the beginning of the world and his divine form of existence in eternity. John brought the biblical testimony into its perfect form. Taking a word in common use among the thinkers of the day and "converting" it (as some one has said, "converted men needed a converted language"), he set forth the doctrine of the eternal Logos, "in the beginning *with* God," and himself "God," who created all things, and finally becoming man, dwelt among us, taught, was crucified, rose, ascended to the Father. And he presents also the personal work of the Holy Spirit, an omnipresent and omniscient Sanctifier. Into the unity of the one God, this triplicity of divine agents, who were one with one another, had to be brought.

The church stumbled at first in attempting to solve this problem; and, no wonder! Ignatius and others, at the earliest point in the development of the church, repeated all the elements of the doctrine, but made no synthesis of them. Justin Martyr, impressed by the Johannine forms, because, no doubt, himself much influenced by the philosophies from which both Paul and John had borrowed terms, sought by aid of the term Logos, expressing the eternal wisdom of God, to explain the generation of the Son, another God and yet not another, but fell into incon-

sistent forms of speech. For a time the word Son applied to the divine Logos by these thinkers, contrary to the usage of the New Testament, added to the confusion. Strong representations of the subordination of the Son to the Father were employed, and too strong expressions of his personal distinctness. But, little by little, the atmosphere cleared. The generation was seen to be an "eternal generation." The central problem—the consistency of the fully acknowledged divinity of the Son with the divine in the Father and with the unity of God—could now be attended to. The Monarchians, who would maintain the "monarchy," or strict unity, of God at all hazards, first said that the course of church thinking was wrong, and that Christ was a mere man. This denial of one of the acknowledged elements of the doctrine met with no favor: it was too flatly against the word of revelation. Then came forward the "modalistic" Monarchians, of whom Sabellius is the most famous representative, and affirmed that the divine in Christ was identical with the Father. The one God, they said, had three modes of manifesting himself, appearing now as Father, now as Son, and now as Spirit. The triad was a *successive* triad. But this, as destroying the eternal preëxistence and the present redeeming activity of the ascended and reigning Christ, was soon rejected. These "modes" are eternal modes, these "faces" turned towards the world are eternal faces (*πρόσωπα*), persons. Then came the final controversy. Arius heard something said in the church at Alexandria that seemed to him to smack of Sabellianism, and led to his earnest opposition. Like all his greater predecessors, he had no doubt of the divinity of the Son, and he now sought to give it a better explanation. He began with the idea of generation. The Father alone was ingenerate. Hence the Son had a beginning. "There was a time when he was not." He is in nature a creature, created as the medium and agent of cre-

ation, who subsequently assumed a human body and became our Redeemer, and who, for his great service and perfect character, has been exalted to deity, and now reigns with the Father. This solution, again, was rejected. There was a beginning of the doctrine and a standard in the original revelation, and that taught the eternal and true deity of the Son, who could not be "advanced" to deity—a conception of deity substantially pagan. Hence, at Nice in 325, the church fathers fell back on the only other logically possible supposition as to Christ's divine nature, and taught that he was *consubstantial* with the Father,—having the same substance with the Father, true deity, and yet in some respect different from him,—which is the precise doctrine of John's prologue, "with God" and "God." This was the final settlement of the question. For more than fifty years the disputes continued to rage, for the result of the Council was beyond the status of conviction and understanding in the church, and clearness and assured certainty could be obtained only by full discussion. But ultimately, at Constantinople in 381, the result was reaffirmed, and it remains yet undisturbed, and was even *verbally incorporated* in 1883 by a committee of American Congregationalists in the creed they wrote for the Congregational churches. A God, numerically one, but existing in three eternal personific factors—this in modern phrase is the one permanent and unchanged doctrine of Nice and of the church.

Here is evolution. A highly abstract product of thought is gradually arrived at by logical processes in which the original elements of revelation are carefully guarded. It is true because founded on revelation, which is the communication by God of truth as to himself. It is also seen to be true because it is a true evolution,—a reaction and continuous adjustment of inner life to outer relations, a coming of the church into harmony with objective fact.