

P R E F A C E.

THE following Lectures are issued under all the disadvantages which attend posthumous publication. They were delivered by the late Professor Christie in the Spring of 1880 ; and it was his intention to prepare them for publication in the course of the past winter. This purpose he did not live to accomplish ; and the work has thus failed to receive the Author's final revision. No alterations have been made on the MS., except such occasional modifications of diction as would naturally be made in revising a work for the Press.

It is believed that the publication of the Lectures, apart from their intrinsic value, will be welcomed as an appropriate memorial of departed worth by a large circle of friends who mourn the removal of the author in the midst of his strength and usefulness.

ABERDEEN, *May*, 1890.

LECTURE I.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION.

To discuss the Historical Development of Religion, and to indicate the forces acting to produce the results which history records, is a task of much complexity, and the conclusions which may be reached must of necessity be liable to more or less question. According to the theory from which we start will be the views entertained of the various incidents. One will see the supernatural in everything exclusively, and will ignore any other element. Another will eliminate the supernatural altogether, and see nothing but the operation of natural forces. In one case all is miracle, in the other nothing is so. Without discussing such extreme theories, they may be set down *primâ facie* as too extreme for either to include the whole truth. The theory on which I propose to discuss religious phenomena assumes the

operation of both natural and supernatural forces—not always balanced alike, yet always acting in conjunction.

The proper sphere of religion is the supernatural. It deals with matter beyond natural cognisance, and therefore must be based on Revelation. To what extent, or in what sense, there is Natural Religion may be subject of debate. Such truths as it includes are inferentially reached by reasoning back from effects to their cause. From the nature of such a process the conclusions lack that certainty and sanction which are required in order that they may be trusty guides for direction in duty, or a firm basis on which to rest man's religious hope. Supernatural Religion does not, however, despise them. If it does not reveal them, in the strict acceptation of the term, it inspires them, assumes them, recognises them, lends to them the weight of its own authority, clears them from dubiety and dimness, and breathes into them a life and power which they do not in themselves possess. Thus Religion—properly supernatural—acts on and through the natural. In its historical development, therefore, there is a constant co-operation of the

two elements or factors—the one fundamental, real and efficient, the other acted upon, yet not altogether passively, but itself active and modifying, promoting or retarding the other. Thus a consideration of Supernatural and Natural Religion authenticates the existence of the two elements whose historical operation it is proposed to trace.

Again, the religious ideal, concrete religion, is most perfectly realised in the duplex nature of Christ. He is its concrete ideal. He is God-Man, possessing perfectly and distinctly the Divine and human natures, which in Him alone work perfectly and with perfect harmony, in perfect balance and equilibrium. This analogy of the "Author and Finisher of our faith" confirms the view which assumes the two elements as requisite for a complete theory of Religion. And in the constitution of man, who is the special subject of Religion, there is both a natural and a supernatural element—something in virtue of which he properly belongs to the world of nature, but something also which raises him above it—the image of God stamped upon his soul. The Pauline Psychology assumes as much in its tripartite division of man's nature into

body, soul (living principle), and spirit. The former two he has in common with animate beings, the last is peculiar to himself. In it lies man's alliance with God and man's susceptibility for religion, and without it he could neither receive, assimilate, nor apply the religious idea.

It may often be difficult to draw an exact line between the Human and Divine when analysing a particular fact or incident in the history of Religion, or to define precisely where the one begins or the other ends, but for all purposes of utility their proper action may be sufficiently distinguished. Sometimes the one and sometimes the other will be the more apparent and in predominant force, and give a distinctive character to the action accordingly. On the whole, however, they will be found working together in such balance that each will have its fair and proper influence.

The duality of forces which are assumed as conditioning the phenomena of Religion, we have spoken of as Natural and Supernatural, or Human and Divine. They may be viewed in different aspects according to the form in which they enter into the action. Thus

regarded in an informative point of view, or according to the mode in which they reach their conclusions or set forth their principles, they may be spoken of as Reason and Revelation. Or regarded as to their mode of producing their results, they may be distinguished as Freedom and Authority, according as man in the former case acts more within his own competency, or in the latter defers to a superior, and, as it were, external influence. In whatever aspect, however, the two forces may be regarded, their direct action, interaction, and cross action are observable in the whole progress of religious history whether of act or opinion; and, taking these elements as our foundation or postulate, we shall have to set forth the part they played in the religious history of our race, confining our view especially to that Religion which is based on the Revelation we accept, which gradually unfolded its principles through the pre-Christian ages, and which as a revelation came to perfection in the age of Christ and His Apostles, while its final and full consequences are reached only at the consummation of all things.

The conditions of the problem must lead us to

anticipate that, while the progress shall virtually be continuous, yet it will not always be manifestly so. We are not to expect a steady unchecked advance. Periods will occur of great impulse, but there will likewise be periods of check and even of apparent retrogression, periods of ebb as well as of flow, when religion seems to come back to the point from which it started. This arises from the presence of the human factor and from its improvement, or mis-improvement, of the Divine provision. The same general cast of thought recurs in ages far removed from each other in time. The mind of man, ever ready to push its enquiries into new fields, is after all bounded by a horizon, which, if it is wide, is yet not boundless. History repeats itself. Hence the great similarity which ages far removed from each other often strikingly present. Similar causes produce similar, if not identical, results. Innate affinities of intellect, likeness of culture, correspondence in surrounding circumstances, such influences lead to cycles of reproduction and to a parallelism between periods which might seem so far apart as to exclude the idea of a causative connection. Age on age passes through kindred processes; and in the human mind,

as in nature, there are certain archetypal forms which dominate and confine the process of development, and which limit and condition all its strivings. Man moves within a circle. There may be much variation in form, but the irrepressible tendency is to adhere to the archetype. The process of evolution is counteracted by a contrary process of retro-volution. Plato and Kant are far sundered in time, yet they are alike in stating the ground law of pure reason in opposition to empiricism. Hume and Berkely arrive at like conclusions with the Greek Sophists. The propositions of Abelard and Spinoza may be read in almost parallel passages. The system of Schelling is but a more scientific presentation of that ideal Pantheism upon which primitive Orientalism delighted contemplatively to dwell. The world of ideas is like that circumscribed globe on which man dwells. At most it may be circumnavigated. However many the discoveries of the voyager, he must come back again in a returning circle to the point from which he set forth.

This law of reproduction, so imperative in the spheres both of matter and mind, is nowhere more manifest than in the sphere of Theology. Theology

is philosophy seeking scientific unity with a historical evolution, and striving to find the laws which underlie the conjunction of the Divine with the Human. But no limited intellect can grasp the whole question at once. Apart from the New Testament Revelation no single age has attempted such a Herculean task. Consequently each age, according to circumstances, has taken up some one or other leading feature of religious thought and made that its speciality and distinctive characteristic. The early dogmatic period of Christianity is marked by the controversy of Arius. The problem of Freewill and Necessity distinguishes that of Augustine. In the latter era of Scholasticism, the dispute between Nomination and Realism underlies profound views of original sin and redemption. The theology of the Reformation is swayed by the great principle of Justification through Faith. Each period has its own question. Ideas which one day are of vital interest are quite relegated into the background the next. Yet, amid all these fluctuations, we ever behold the law of reproduction, the old questions are repeated in new form, and the reigning tendencies of belief and unbelief are cast in similar mould. Socinus

developes the germ of Arius. Calvin reproduces Augustine. The writings of the Greek fathers anticipate the tenets of Arminius. The High Church movement revives the views of Cyprian and Vincentius. A steadily progressive movement is not therefore to be expected in the History of Religion. There is now vigour; then feebleness, now ebb, and then flow.

The action of the two co-ordinate, or rather co-operating, forces (Natural and Supernatural), in different religious periods, it will be our object to set forth and illustrate. In some the Divine principle—Revelation, Authority—was the preponderant force. In others, it seems to withdraw from special prominence, and to give play to the action of Reason and Humanism. Through all the period embraced within the Old Testament Revelation there was a continued, if not at all times an equally intense, supernatural force in exercise. Then followed a period of supernatural quiescence, when Inspiration ceased, during which Humanism was at liberty to digest the past, and to exercise itself unfettered upon the truths already made known or suggested through special Revelation. This was the period of Reason dealing with the materials

supernaturally provided, whether in explicit and authoritative terms, or in historical narratives interpenetrated by Divine causation. Then there is the brief, comparatively speaking, but intense period of Christian Revelation. The Supernatural Revelation spoke its last words explicatory of the past, infinitely suggestive for all future time, and left them for the exercise of the human mind in all ages. To this there succeeded the Apologetic period, when the young Christianity had not only to defend itself against the prejudice and clamour of the vulgar, and the brute force of a hostile Imperialism, but when it had to encounter the assault of Reason, when the keenest intellects of Christians, as well as of unbelievers, were devoted to the critical study of questions propounded for their consideration. The new Revelation had to vindicate its pre-eminent claims, or, at least, its propositions had to be freely examined and fully discussed before any general and formal pronouncement could be agreed upon. This again was succeeded by the Dogmatic period (A.D. 400 to A.D. 600), the period of settling in express terms the cardinal doctrines which had undergone exhaustive discussion in the previous age, and were, therefore,

now fit to be formulated in precise language expressive of the results and conclusions of full controversy. As in the Apologetic age Reason was the more prominent force, so in this the *ultima ratio* was Authority—Revelation. The necessary consequence was the closing of debate on the main principles of Christian faith, at least in connection with the controversies which had hitherto prevailed. Dogmatic authoritative decisions and definitions discourage the reopening of questions which they profess to have settled. Consequently the Dogmatic period naturally introduced a season of religious quiescence continuing until the intellectual revival into activity during the age of Scholasticism—a period of the deepest interest, although, from its immediately preceding antagonism to the Reformation, it lies under something of obloquy as favouring Rationalism in contradistinction to that Scripturalism which the next era initiated, and which has been the prevailing characteristic of our own, and still more of the immediately preceding age. This Scholastic age treated the accepted dogmas in a rationalistic form, but did not pretend to alter their substance as they had previously

come to be accepted. It was pre-eminently a dialectical age, expository rather than inventive. Then follows a revival of the Divine element at the period of the great Reformation in the 16th century. We cannot call it wholly a return to the dicta of Revelation, for the intellectualism of the preceding period could not be entirely eliminated. But preponderantly it implied a return to the dicta of God's Word, and sought to establish religious truth on its authority. Under this phase of religious feeling the Word obtained the normative position which it had attained almost a thousand years before. The Written as opposed to the Traditional came into the first place. It was no longer a case of free speculation on the cases provided by Revelation. It became the age rather of Exegesis—an exegesis which, however, did not exclude the authority of the ancients, but more or less consciously deferred to them.

As during the 200 years of Apologetism the doctrines of the Christian faith were discussed without being authoritatively settled, so for a period somewhat similar (perhaps not so long) in duration the Reformation discussion continued. Within the 16th

and 17th centuries the great Churches of Christendom settled themselves as regards the faith. Their Confessions were drawn up in the shape in which they are now accepted. Again, a period of religious quiescence followed, until during the last and especially the present century the old questions have been reopened even to their lowest foundations. Now we have the contentions of all previous ages in full vigour, however diverse and antagonistic, whether they may appeal to Authority or claim the exercise of Rational Freedom, whether tending to the Divine or to the Human. Chaos seems to have returned, and the earnest cry of honest and anxious souls is "Who will show us any good?" The answer to be given is the same as of old—"Lord, lift Thou upon us the light of Thy countenance!" Long ago, Augustine interpreted this need of our nature in the well-known words, "Thou hast made us for Thee, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee." Of the two elements involved in man's nature and in the religious history of his race, the Divine must predominate. Only when he yields himself to this shall he partake of the joy of that consummation time when "God shall be all in all."

This brief sketch will suggest how varied and complex is the history of the subject with which we deal, how alteration succeeds alteration from age to age, how similar in complexion are periods far distant from each other, how now the Divine and now the Human forces attain alternately conspicuous prominence. The dominating force which gives unity and continuity to the whole is the Divine; the more varying force is the Human, according as it asserts itself, or humbly feels its incapacity to solve the great problems of Religion. Now it grapples with the highest problems as in the Titanic war against the gods; now it is cast down and gives up the contest, like the giant Antæus in the grasp of Hercules—thrown prone on the top of his mother earth—yet again recruiting his strength to renew by and by the unequal conflict. With varying fortune the struggle is continued. God strives to elevate the Human towards His own level: Humanism strives to bring down the Divine to its level. Progress (if such there be) goes on by conflict. The consummation only comes when “God shall be all in all.” In so far as relates to the *apparatus criticus*, i.e. the sources of

information on which we base our argument, and from which we unfold it—that is substantially the earlier Old Testament Scriptures, and primarily the Pentateuch. The issues around which controversies of the present day rage—whether these books in their present form are a late recension, or of the very archaic age to which we have been accustomed to refer them—whether they are substantially a harmony of various documents, or whether they are referable to the authorship to which they have been usually ascribed—whether they are homogeneous, or a harmony of heterogeneous elements—whether some are of early and others of a much later age—all this does not come within the compass of our present argument. These are questions of criticism, and do not touch the points with which we have to deal. We take the Old Testament Scriptures as informative both regarding fact and principle—as declaratory both of the Divine and human, the supernatural and natural elements in the evolution of religious historical development. But we must notice also that the main purpose of our Scriptures is not to be historical, but to be didactic, not to narrate facts, inci-

dents, but to convey spiritual lessons. We have no continuous history. The sacred writers are not annalists, they only present certain facts of history, by no means in continuous sequence, and not for the purpose of presenting them as facts, but of making them the vehicles for communicating and illustrating ethical and religious truths.

In accordance with the theory of Scripture just enunciated it follows that the Divine element will be brought into special prominence, while the human element will be left in the background. The human conditions were contemporary, and would be assumed as known and familiar. What the sacred writer had to do was to present the facts with their spiritual interpretation. He had to point the view of the observer to the principles which underlay the objective facts, and would therefore naturally allude to the facts only for the purpose of interpreting their spiritual meaning. This meaning was his prime object, not the fact, which was only a casual illustration of the principle. Consequently the History of Religion, so far as it is contained in the canonical Scriptures, is fragmentary. The narrative is disjointed. Historically it is incon-

tinuous. This furnishes abundant scope for the objectors to a historical basis for religious doctrine. At the same time it proposes an equally powerful incentive to the spiritual commentator to read between the lines, to magnify allusions which a dogmatic influence in old times put into the background without consideration—in short to welcome, instead of repudiating, all the side lights which modern research has provided for filling up the *lacunae* (so called) of inspired narrative. Even in the New Testament historical basis of the Christian faith this fact is very clearly elucidated. Not to speak of the Acts, which give historical accounts of the planting and spread of Christianity, but in which it is obvious that the spiritual intention predominates over the historical, that the writer is writing Christianity and not the annals of Christianity, and that he is not giving a biography of Peter and John in the first part, nor of Paul in the latter and far more extensive portion of his Book; and not to speak of allusions to facts in the epistolary portion of the New Testament, mentioned only for their spiritual meaning, nothing can be more plain than that the primary object of these

Scriptures is not annalistic detail, but exposition of principles—in fact, that the writers contemplated not a History, but a Philosophy of Sacred History. The historical detail is the medium for enunciating grand, ever-pervading principles which underlie, and are illustrated by the facts, incidents, and transactions of a specific period. But such period has no monopoly for the display of those principles. *Mutatis mutandis*, they recur in all ages, and not merely in those included within the compass which Christian consciousness has stamped with peculiar, authoritative, and canonical sacredness as specially inspired.

No more striking example of the principle we have ventured to enunciate can be adduced than that part of the New Testament which has the fullest historical details, and which professes to give in most complete and circumstantial manner the life of Jesus. We have four narratives. Of these, only two profess to describe incidents connected with His birth, childhood, and life previous to His public ministry. In details they differ. It is clear that Matthew and Luke wrote with a didactic purpose. Cognisant of the facts (so largely romanced upon in the Apocryphal gospels)

they relate different incidents obviously with a didactic aim. We find it difficult to piece them together into continuous consistent biography, while we find no difficulty whatever in educing from them certain principles and lessons suitable for all times and all ages of man, illustrative of Him who to the fulness of Godhead added the perfection of manhood with all its weakness, sin only excepted. After the entrance on the public ministry the four biographies run parallel, and yet a harmony of them is very difficult, if not impossible, to the full satisfaction of a critical even though not captious mind. Yet not one statement by any of the biographers need be regarded as untruthful. Indeed the very difficulty of harmonising them confirms our faith, unless we insist on that mechanical theory of inspiration which excludes the action of the human element altogether. We are bound to expect that different narrators should shew divergences in their narratives. Their eye was fixed more on the principles illustrated than on the facts by which they were illustrated. As to principles, they must, if honest, differ in the means of illustration. They were not tied to strictness of chronological suc-

cession. Each presented the facts according to his own conception of the spiritual lessons he sought to inculcate. Based on a historical foundation the facts in all would be substantially the same, yet, according to the special intention of each, these facts would be selected and presented. Prominence would be given to some things by one which would be little more than alluded to by another, if alluded to at all. Under all the circumstances in which the Evangelists wrote, we can easily conceive a unity, yet variety, in the presentation of concrete Christianity in Christ, which will abundantly account for those critical difficulties in regard to the Evangelical narratives, of which scepticism has not been slow to take advantage, but which, on due consideration, will tend to confirm rather than discredit their veracity. A Divine unity (when we look deep enough) is found to be in perfect accordance with human variety. The two principles, Human and Divine, fall into their proper place, and are recognised, not as antagonistic, but as complementary.

It thus appears that with all the wealth and variety of detail in the four Evangelical narratives of Christ's life, we yet feel ourselves deficient in materials for con-

structing a continuous biography of the Lord Jesus. How much more must this apply to the sparse notices of early religious history, going back to primeval times and traversing, not a triennium, but milleniums. In the historical records of Religion, which profess to trace it in its principal development from the origin of man down to the fulness of the time, shall we expect complete historical clearness, continuity, and consistency? In so far as principles are concerned we are entitled to look for such. In so far as illustrative narrative is concerned we have no right to expect it. On the contrary, we are bound to expect dislocation, incontinuity, episodic and not annalistic narrative. Facts are narrated only in so far as they convey lessons. Much is assumed of a knowledge which has long perished, or which can only be recalled by patient research, or which is alluded to in the most unostentatious and passing manner. From this it follows that it is not only allowable, but necessary to accept all external information which may aid us in realising contemporary human conditions—all the side lights which can be brought to bear on the elucidation of circumstances contained in the sacred story. What-

ever serves to present to us the co-existent state of things in any particular connection, in supplement to what the sacred narrative contains, helps towards a more rational and profitable conception of the position on which we are to form a judgment—further, in short, our more adequate apprehension of the co-operation of the Divine and human elements in the historical development in fact and faith of our Heavenly Religion.