

## II. The Godhead

### A. The Trinity

016.

Lecture, *The Catholic Columbian*, December 25, 1875

*This series titled "Lecture in St. Joseph's Cathedral" was unsigned, incomplete, and poorly edited. But we are sure Bishop Rosecrans was the speaker, for on the first page of the December 11 issue is the notice, "The Bishop's lectures at the Cathedral Sunday evenings, draw appreciative audiences." The Sunday prior to publication, December 19, was probably its date of delivery.*

#### LECTURE IN ST. JOSEPH'S CATHEDRAL.

No. IV

#### **The Unity and Trinity of God.**

God exists necessarily from all eternity. He is Immutable, Almighty, Omniscient, essentially Just and Holy, the Maker and Center of all things outside of Himself. There can be but one such Being. He is the Center of all Space, the Immovable Pivot round which the Ages revolve, at His bidding, from their beginning, when the Angels were made, thenceforth forever. To Him the vast fields of space, through which the stars are ever moving since He started them, are but as a point, and the ages they measure by their wheelings is as a single instant. Whatever he made them for, it was not for any need He had of them. The shining Choirs of Angels, the generations of men, the vast bulk of material creation brought Him no new knowledge, or gain, or pleasure. He is sufficient to Himself. This much we know, analyzing our own conceptions of WHO He is. But He has revealed Himself as one in Essence, and at the same time, three in person. The Mystery of the Trinity is the groundwork of Catholic Faith. In speaking of it, observe, I do not pretend to explain its nature. I believe, because the Church teaches it. What an instruction can do is to make plain the Church's teaching.

In one God there are three equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This expresses the Catholic dogma as it is sometimes worded, God is one in essence, three in Person.

His essence is one, not in a loose, vague way, but in the strictest sense.

We call things "one" *when they are of the same species*, as different men, or birds, or quadrupeds, are of one nature specifically.

*When they are mingled together*, as different liquids making one, or different ingredients forming a single medicine.

*When persons agree*, they are said to be "one," as a company, a "circle in society," a "community." This is moral unity.

The Essence of God is not one in the sense of there being a whole race of them, one in general qualifications, as the Greeks and Romans feigned; nor one because the

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Father, Son and Holy Ghost have to be mixed together in order to make up the Divine Nature; nor one because they agree in sentiment, knowledge and will; but one as being *absolutely identical*. The essence of the Father is not *like* that of the Son and Holy Ghost, not *mixed with* it, not *inclined like* it, but precisely the same as it. The identical essence or nature which is the Father's is the Son's and the Holy Ghost's. The essence of the three is numerically the same.

The Persons in the Trinity are not separate from one another, though distinct. One connotes or bespeaks the other. Father cannot be named without calling up the idea of Son, and Son cannot sound in our ears without compelling us to think whose Son is He, and we cannot think of Holy Ghost without thinking at the same time of those from whom He proceeds. In created things relations are abstractions. The man who is a father bears the relationship of paternity. But he is who he is, outside of that relationship. In the Divine Trinity, the relationship is real--*it is the PERSON*. The Father *is* Paternity, the Son, *sonship*, the Holy Ghost the *outbreathing* of Love, subsisting, or personified. This is what St. Paul means when he speaks of the Father as Him from whom "all Paternity is named in Heaven and on earth."

The Patriarchs and Prophets knew that there were more Persons than one in God. In Genesis the phrase, "Let us make man according to our own image and likeness," indicates at the same time the unity of essence and the plurality of Persons. "Come, let us go down and put confusion of tongues upon them," is of the same nature. The apparition of the Second Person to the Patriarchs and His real presence in the glory of the Tabernacle points to the same knowledge.

The phrase of the Psalmist: "By the Word of God the Heavens were formed, and from the breath of His mouth is all their substance," does not seem to prove that the Prophet knew the Trinity. On the contrary, it would seem that the verse of the Psalm follows the usage of repeating in the second clause what was said in the first, and that both mean the *fiat* of the Omnipotent when "He said, and they were made; He ordered and they were created." It was only in the fullness of time that the full doctrine of the Trinity was revealed. The Son Incarnate reserved to Himself the revelation of this mystery to His chosen Apostles. They were to go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And to them He told the incomprehensible secret of the Three Divine Persons in a single Essence. "This is Eternal Life," He said, "that they know Thee, the only true God, and whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." He gave them this eternal life.

As there are two orders of things in the Divine Trinity, so there are two orders of words to express our conception of them. The words are those that refer to what is one, absolute, singular, in GOD, and those that express what is manifold and relative. Of the first order are "*essence*," "*substance*," "*nature*," "*being*." Of the second are, "*Person*," "*hypostasis*," and the definite names, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. ESSENCE is from

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*esse*, "to be." This name is applied to Almighty God by Himself, "I AM WHO AM," Say to them "HE WHO IS sent me to you." Substance means also what is absolute in the divine nature. The Platonic school held that the *idea* is fundamental. The Aristotelic would maintain that the *sensible* is first. Hence the controversy about the substance and hypostasis. The Aristotelians would have it that hypostasis was the Reality of the Divine Substance, and consequently was singular. But the Platonists who held that *essence* is real and *hypostasis* relative, maintained but one *substance* in the Trinity.

It was this that St. Jerome wrote from Antioch about, asking St. Damasus, Pope, to settle the question, Were there three or one Hypostasis in God?

Person is defined to be that in a rational nature to which all its actions are attributed. It is that in one who thinks, feels, wills or acts, which says, "I act," "I think," "I feel," "I will." The original meaning in the Pagan Latin of "Representation on the Stage," is left out of sight in Christian Theology. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do not represent, but sustain the Divine Essence. "The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; but there are not three Gods, but only One."

Among the early Christians the Doctrine of the Trinity belonged to the Discipline of the Secret. It, together with the Doctrine of the Real Presence, and the Sacrifice of the Mass was one of the "Holy Things" not "to be given to dogs." It was not, however, so secret but that St. Justin could explain it in defending Christians from the charge of Atheism before the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Let us render thanks to God, who, in His mercy has revealed to us His incomprehensible nature, and by faith and humility, draw near to the Father through the mediation of His Son and the gift of the Holy Ghost, to whom be glory and praise forever. *Amen.*

### **B. Divine Providence**

017.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, September 22, 1855

### **"Man Proposes, but God Disposes"**

The chief consolation of the Christian in this rude, brawling world, is faith in the proposition which we have placed at the head of this article. God rules over this world-and He is strong and wise, to disappoint both the fears of His friends and the hopes of His enemies. All that happens, with the exception of sin, happens by the positive disposition of God: and so wisely has He foreseen and provided against the effects of sin, that even these do no harm except to the sinner. God wills not, but only permits, the injustice of the oppressor, the lies of the calumniator, the dishonesty of the swindler, the anger of the murderer; yet he wills that the oppressed have occasion of merit, by patience under wrong, that the calumniated participate in the ignominy, to buy a share

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in the glory, of His Son--that the cheated and impoverished be detached from the treasures which fade--that the murdered, then and there, end his career of trial, to begin his career of retribution.

This providence of God, which, both faith and reason teach to extend over all the effects of finite causes, watches in a peculiar manner over those who have the happiness of being in His Church. In the Church, more strikingly than elsewhere, "man proposes, and God disposes." "Man proposes" in his folly and malice, "God disposes" in His mercy and justice.

Often in times of peace the Catholic falls in love with the wealth, the social pleasures, the ambitious designs of the world; and, in his folly, he proposes to enjoy these, and yet not forfeit heaven. A mishap overtakes him--he is stripped of his good name by calumny, of his wealth by commercial disaster, and poor, unregarded, and despised, he turns to God and dies. With him God disposes in mercy.

Again: other classes of men band together against God and His Church; they plot and scheme and toil to annihilate her; they fill dungeons and load racks and gibbets with her adherents--unto each and every one of whom God, in His infinite mercy, has decreed his imprisonment, his torture, his death--and as they walk the desolated and blood-stained earth, smile at the thought that their triumph is consummated. But the Almighty is above, and time goes on resistless. One by one the persecutors perish by the sword or treachery of their old allies, by the judgment of God, or by natural death, and in the full tide of their hatred against truth, go forth to meet the Judge whom they have persecuted. With these "God disposes," in His justice. The dispositions of His justice to the one and His mercy to the other class, are complete, consummated only in the unseen world. There only, is His triumph over His foe awfully perfect, His protection of His friends sweetly consummated.

Yet even here, where injustice, and wrong, and falsehood so often triumph, we see--like a ray of steady light gleaming through chaos--in the experience of the world, a manifestation of what we are to expect when the time comes for rendering all accounts.

The bodies of persecuted and persecutors remain upon earth, while their souls live in "the home of their eternity." The corpses of God's enemies moulder in forgotten or detested graves; while the bones of the martyrs are placed upon altars, are encased in gold and silver reliquaries, are carried in solemn procession in times of pestilence and famine--are honored and venerated as God's friends, the Church's heroes, and the world's benefactors. So God is pleased to show us the justice and irresistible might of His disposings; and the tide of falsehood and injustice, ever flooding the present, must roll on ever and leave bare the truths and innocence of the past.

It may be that God designs now to try us Catholics of the United States with a general persecution; it may be that he will permit excited passions and inflammatory calumnies to produce their natural effect of violence and bloodshed all over the Union.

## 18 - The Sifting of the Wheat

Should He do so, we need not trouble ourselves with "proposing"--let Him "dispose." We have nobody's burthen but our own to carry, nobody's life but our own to lose, nobody's deeds but our own to answer for; and, as all *must be* in the hands either of God's mercy or His justice, all we have to do is, having purged ourselves of all sin, to nestle down softly under the wings of His love.

018.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, October 29, 1853

### **The Sifting of the Wheat.**

In the old fashion of winnowing grain we have often noticed the energy with which the winnower hurled the chaff and grain together into the air. From his manner you would judge that he intended to cast away from him entirely and leave to the mercy of the winds the whole mass. Yet his only object was to cast it far up into the air in order that the wind may sweep away all the chaff, and the effect of his action was a more thorough cleaning of the wheat the more furiously it was tossed.--Such, it seems to us, is the providence of God, in the calamities with which He visits His Church. He casts far from Him, as it were in wrath, both the evil and the good. He hurls far away into the winds of adversity, both those who "worship Him in spirit and in truth," and those who by a bad practice belie the sanctity of their belief. But, like the winnower He has no intention of losing the wheat. He knows the strength of the gale and that it will only bear away the chaff, leaving the wheat to be "gathered into the garner." And so, when the adversity is over we find the good and the evil separated. The good are chastened and purified and elevated above earthly things; the bad are carried by the gale into the barren deserts of infidelity, or open heresy. In the hour of her prosperity the Church is courted by worldlings. Aspirants to power fawn upon her in order to acquire place, and Judases creep into the very sanctuary in search of gold. Fashion kneels before her altars with assumed devotion; and pleasure makes the sign of the cross at the beginning of voluptuous revels. But when adversity comes, the good and the earnest are left alone. The ambitious seek distinction in the ranks of her enemies; the avaricious aim at the pay of champions against her. The vain win applause by flippantly decrying her; and the sensual stifle their remorse of conscience by insulting her in the midst of their beastly orgies. So God purifies His Church; so from time to time during the ages He places the world, the flesh and the devil outside the walls of His holy city. He allows her to lose credit with the world, influence, power, wealth; and forthwith the place seekers, the gold-hunters, the fashion-courtiers--an unclean herd,--like the swine mentioned in the Gospel, as constrained "to run violently into the sea," issue tumultuously and in hot haste from her midst, and rush into the ocean of unbelief.

This we have seen and do see, every day. What a herd of impure wretches, who

## 19 - The Passing Hour

had drawn a sacrilegious subsistence from the sanctuary were unmasked in the late misfortune of the Church in Italy! See the terrible career of those men who, had no political convulsion ever taken place in Italy, to reduce ecclesiastical wealth and dignity, would have hidden their wickedness from their acquaintances, and lived and died in the outward communion of the Church! Without adversity, the Church would yet have ministering at her altars, (frightful thought!) such men as Achilli and Gavazzi; and participating of the sacrament of love, such ministers of hate as Mamiani and Cicerowhaichio.

So in this country, we are indebted to adversity that our Catholics are so fervent and earnest, and so little afflicted by the sight of scandals in their midst. The Church in America is exposed on every side to attacks, as the oak on the mountain's brow has to buffet with every wind of heaven. And as that oak is stripped of its withered leaves, and has its sapless twigs carried away as fast as they decay, so the Church is cleansed by adverse circumstances from the contact of the unprincipled and [is] preserved from the profanation of hypocrites.

019.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, January 24, 1857

### **The Passing Hour.**

The Christian maxim to use well the present leaving the past to slumber on till the judgment, and the future covered with its impenetrable veil, though generally understood as an admonition to earnest action, can be also interpreted as an injunction to wise contemplation. Each moment as it flies, is to the thoughtful mind, fraught with instruction. For the moments and the events which mark them, are in the hands of God, who "sweetly, but irresistibly disposes all things." They are His words of warning, of reproof, of invitation, of tenderness to the soul. It is no blind destiny, or mere mechanical law, that appointed to the stars their tracks through space, that sends our changing seasons, by turning now one pole, now the other of our little earth up to be warmed by the sun, that regulated the vicissitudes of the human race, that controls the passions of men tempering them so wisely that order exists without trammeling free will, and virtue is respected in the midst of corruption, but it is a living, personal being, the author of all, and of all intelligent creatures, the Father. God spreads the layers of snow now upon the bleak hills, and binds the river with its crystal chain, as in summer He clothed the same hills with green, and the fields with golden harvests, and sent the waters of the streams dancing in the sun-light, or murmuring through the night on towards the ocean. Each mighty, and each minute event in the universe of life, save only the immediate actions of the perverse free will, falls out according to His decrees, is produced by His power, and has assigned its time and place by His wisdom.

## 20 - Divine Providence Governs the World

The God of nature and of grace is one and indivisible. The same, who of old "walked" in the garden of Eden, who "spoke" for ages, "by the prophets in these last days by His Son," who manifested a love for us greater than which no man can show by becoming a man, and "laying down his life" for us, is the ruler of material nature, and the arbiter of all destinies.

The deep faith of Catholic nations in this truth has found utterance in those processions, and deeds of public penance practiced in times of common calamity, by nations where faith still prevails.

When the earthquake was rocking cities to and fro, or the plague was sweeping off its victims, or the tornado was desolating fields, and prostrating the habitations of men, the people assembled, in chanting penitential words went to the church, hoping that He who scourged without might pardon within, that He who frowned in the commotion of the elements, might smile upon His people through the soft light of the sanctuary where He loves to dwell.

Our present hour is one of calamity. It teaches us all a lesson of penance. It teaches to the rich the duty of charity, to the poor the necessity of patience, to all the folly of seeking content in a life subject to such calamities, and of forgetting that "here we have no abiding habitation."

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*The present calamity alluded to in the last paragraph is explained by an editorial, probably penned by Father Purcell, that appeared on January 17. The winter was "fearful," the river was frozen, the factories for the most part had suspended work, and heating coal was very expensive for the poor, who represented half the population of Cincinnati. Efforts by the fuel companies and the railroads to relieve the suffering were being thwarted by businessmen who bought the wood and fuel as it arrived and resold it at a profit.*

020.

Editorial, *The Catholic Columbian*, August 15, 1878 (1)

### **[Divine Providence Governs the World.]**

It is very dangerous for a Catholic to begin to practice "policy" in his religion. The greatest blunderers of the age are those writers who speak of religious orders, great popes, bishops and preachers, as if they had been contrived by some human cunning, and had done a work which a critic could comprehend and explain. The world is governed by God's Providence. Individual men do not create the tide on which they ride into prominence. Religious orders do not originate but follow the spirit which makes their members give themselves to God. The German schoolmaster was a philosopher who said, "*Mundus gubernatur Providentia Dei et confusione hominum.*" [The world is governed by the Providence of God and the confusion of men.]

021.

Editorial, *The Catholic Telegraph and Advocate*, June 13, 1857

### Thanklessness.

Farmers are almost proverbially croakers. A few weeks ago, nearly all the newspapers contained lugubrious accounts of failures in the fruit and grain crops. From every section of our Mississippi Valley, there came stories of men and cattle starving, in prospective, and auguries of half-crops, and total failures. At that time there was an abundance of melancholy speculation and argument and murmuring in journals and conversations, about the frosts, the rains, the storms, &c. Suddenly the season became unmistakably propitious. The cold weather caused the wheat to "spread." The rains fertilized the soil, and at the coming of summer heat, every species of vegetation took a quick and luxuriant growth. We have every prospect now of great crops. So, the subject of harvests is forgotten; and until the farmers begin to croak over low prices, the papers will hear little from them

This is but one instance of the unfairness of our conduct towards God. So long as we have a chance to murmur at His providence, His dealings towards us are the continual topic of our discourse--but when we have reason to be thankful, even for worldly benefits, our hearts grow cold and our tongues silent. We say little of our good health, kind friends, pleasant prospects, abundant comforts, but we are never tired of talking about our headaches, and toothaches, and unjust enemies, and sorrowful anticipations, and wants and troubles.

What makes pride and sensuality abominable, is that they enslave and pervert the noblest faculty of the soul--reason. Under their tyranny the power of discerning truth, becomes an engine for originating error. An illustration of this is the *carpe diem* philosophy, as old as the forbidden fruit. "Our days are few, *therefore* let us, feast and riot. Life is short, *therefore* let us spend it in thoughtless gaiety, unmindful of the morrow." What perverse reasoning, or rather, what incoherent raving! "The days" in which we are to find the true God, and fulfill His law, and prepare to meet our inexorable Judge, "are few," and therefore, you fritter them away in folly. The right conclusion would be, *therefore* away with the stupid revels, in which the soul is made the bond-slave of the body's caprices, and let us labor and watch, and suffer patiently, and do good untiringly. "Life is short," therefore eternity is at hand, the judgment is near, and the door that stands tremblingly ajar to close heaven or hell to us, is almost within reach--therefore let us despise the honors and pleasures and riches that end with life, and think only on those that are stable and shall endure forever.

It is time for us to learn to take God's view of matters, and when all goes well with us thank Him continually--and when we are crossed learn to wonder that we *ever* have our way.



### **C. The Divinity of Christ**

**022.**

*The Divinity of Christ, Chapter I*

*Bishop Rosecrans delivered many sermons and lectures as priest and auxiliary bishop of Cincinnati. Among these, according to The Catholic Telegraph of the time, was a series on the Divinity of Christ delivered in St. Peter's Cathedral in May and June of 1859. That series probably was the basis for this first section of his book.*

#### **What Think Ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?**

To any American attempting to work out the problem of life, the question at the heading of this chapter occurs, at the very outset. A Chinese, or a South Sea Islander, who has never heard the name of Jesus Christ, might dive into his own thoughts or interrogate material nature to find truth; but those who know of Him, of His claims to be the teacher and saviour of all men, can not, without doing violence to their consciences, neglect to investigate those claims. We shall, therefore, state them and the grounds upon which they rest, at once. Jesus Christ is, in Himself, one Divine Person, having two distinct, complete, and perfect natures: the Divine and Human. The Divine nature He had from all Eternity; the Human nature he took in His Incarnation. To us, therefore, He is creator, redeemer, teacher, saviour, judge. Such is the Catholic Faith.

Of all these propositions the first is the most important, viz : JESUS CHRIST is a Divine Person. To prove it, therefore, shall be our chief aim.

No one can tell what arguments prove Jesus Christ to be God without knowing what "God" means. One must enter into the consideration of this subject with his conception of Divinity sharply defined. Sometimes the word is taken for "object of worship," as in the expressions: "the God of this world," "heathen gods;" meaning "those things which the world and the heathen worship;" and, perhaps, it would be correct to say--God is that Being who is the rightful object of supreme worship. But then who is He? Reflect, reader, on your own conceptions; for I gather the answer to this question as much from your thoughts as from my own. In the first place, whoever is worthy of absolute worship must be a distinct, definite, personal being, who has his own thoughts, will, aims, and understanding. I can not hold myself amenable to an abstraction any more than I can bow down to wood and stone. In the next place, he must have no imperfections; for I can not worship what I can criticize. Therefore He must be eternal in duration, immutable in essence, infinite in power, wisdom, and holiness, and all-pervading in presence.

Space is very vast, so vast as to confuse the imagination trying to travel from star to star in its azure fields. But there is a limit to it--the last orbit of the outermost star--int he end. But thought it were a million times multiplied, God is greater.

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Time, the measure of succession, reaches back to an antiquity that seems to defy computation; but God is immeasurably older. Time will end, but God will never end. Whatever is made is changeable: from the flower that blooms and fades in a day to the sun that shines through countless ages, to finish its work at last; but God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. To him, no knowledge, no love, no event of any kind is either new or old. In Him is no past or future, but only an un-changeable now.

We witness exhibitions of power in nature that appall us: in the ocean, in tempests, earthquakes, and in the motion of the stars. But God's power knows no limit; "He can do all things, and nothing is hard or impossible to Him."

Science explores much; but God knows all things. Whatever is, or is thought, is open to His view. "He that made the eye, can He not see?" and "He that contrived the ear, will He not hear?"

His holiness is spotless. He can not disregard justice. He must punish crime and reward innocence. He must have a care for the things He has made.

To be God is to be infinitely removed from all that is created; to be infinite in essence, omniscient, all-powerful, all-holy, all-wise, all-happy, all-good, unchangeable: and this is meant when it is said Jesus Christ is God.

He is the Maker of all that is created: Angels, men, animals, and the worlds they inhabit; and, as He made them from choice, He is their absolute owner and supreme Master. In His sight they are nothing; having no rights but to adore, and receive with thanks, what He is pleased to bestow.

We venerate angels for their holiness and power; we reverence good men because they are friends of God: but we adore God. We annihilate ourselves before Him, and say: "Behold, O Creator, the work of Thy hands. Dispose of me in body and soul, in time and in eternity, as Thou wilt; for there is none to rise up and question Thy work."

The submission of the understanding implied in adoration is Faith, whereby we believe all that God teaches, because He teaches it.

The submission of our desire for happiness is Hope, whereby we look upon God as our sole Helper.

The submission of our will is Charity, whereby we love God supremely, and all other good for His sake.

Idolatry, the most hideous of crimes, consists in making God equal to some creature.

Therefore when we say Jesus Christ is God we remove Him infinitely from all comparison with any man or angel, or any possible created being; we make Him infinitely greater than all of them put together. In Catholic Theology Mary the Mother of Jesus is the greatest of created beings; the nearest to God in power, wisdom, beauty, grace. But MARY is nothing in comparison with God, just as the bird that flies highest

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does not come near the stars.

When you think of God, then, reader: think of Him as exceeding all conception, as one higher than all that is lofty, vaster than all space, more ancient than Heaven and chaos, stronger than all forces, wiser than all wisdom you can fancy, more living than all you know of life, holier than what seems to you spotless. Think of Him as the One who "alone is Holy, alone is the Lord." JESUS CHRIST is He.

The argument to establish this conclusion is as follows:

Jesus Christ says He is God;

But His testimony is true;

Therefore He is God.

**023.**

*The Divinity of Christ, Chapter II*

### **The Major Premise.**

#### **Jesus Christ Says He is God.**

I assume the books of the New Testament as a true history of what Jesus Christ said; and out of many shall instance but one or two occasions in which He says He is God. The first of these is in the tenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John.

At the Feast of the Dedication a great crowd of Jews accosted Jesus in a public place, and demanded of Him an explicit declaration concerning Himself. He answered them by declaring, in unmistakable language, that He was of one nature with God the Father. Here is the entire passage:

24. The Jews, therefore, came round about him, and said to him: How long dost thou hold our souls in suspense: if thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.

25. Jesus answered them: I speak to you, and you believe not; the works that I do in the name of my Father, they give testimony of me:

26. But you do not believe, because you are not of my sheep.

27. My sheep hear my voice: and I know them, and they follow me:

28. And I give them life everlasting: and they shall not perish For ever, and no man shall snatch them out of my hand.

29. That which my Father hath given me, is greater than all: and no one can snatch *them* out of the hand of my Father.

30. I and the Father are one.

31. The Jews then took up stones, to stone him.

Now that the saying "I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE" means ONE in essence or nature, is clear, (1.) from the words themselves, (2.) from the argument used, (3.) from the understanding of the bystanders, and (4.) from the reiteration of it by our Lord.

1. From the words. When two are called one, in any other respect than essence or

being, the respect is always added to the one as a qualification. Thus, persons are said to be one in affection, in aims, in blood, and the like. But when the word one is used without qualification it can mean nothing else than *one being* or nature.

2. From the argument. Our Lord's argument to prove that no man shall snatch His sheep from His hand, is as follows:

"My Father--God-- is greater than all that is not God;  
But I and my Father are one;  
Therefore no man shall snatch them from my Hand."

This argument would be sophistical if He were not one in essence with the Father, for then His omnipotence would not follow from the omnipotence of His Father: as He evidently makes it follow.

3. The understanding of the bystanders. The Jews understood Him to say that He was one in essence with God: for they took up stones to stone Him for blasphemy; because that "being a man He made Himself God."

4. From His reiteration. The Jews understood Him precisely as He meant to be understood; for He reiterated His declaration, declaring that the Father had endowed Him with His own sanctity inseparable from His nature, and sent Him into the world; that is, consented to His taking flesh; and appeals to His works to show that "the Father is in Him and He in the Father," (John x. 38.) And "they sought therefore to take Him; but He escaped out of their hands." (*Ib.* 39.)

If He saw that they mistook His meaning would He not have explained?

Again: In St. John, viii, 58, Jesus closes a conversation with certain Jews, by an emphatic assertion of His divinity: "Amen, amen, I say to you: Before Abraham was made, I AM."

"I am" is the name given to himself, by Almighty God, when He appeared to Moses. EXOD. iii, 14.

Its appropriateness will appear to any one reflecting on the nature of God and of time. Time is successive duration. The revolutions of the hands around the face of a clock; of the earth on its axis; of the planets in their orbits, constitute hours, days, years: multiples of these make ages; and the Latins designate the existence of all that knows beginning, development, change, extinction, as *saecula*. Where there is succession there must be three phases of duration: past, present, future. But in God there is no succession. He could not change without growing better or worse; and if He could grow better or worse He would not be God: so the distinguishing attribute of God is essential, unchangeable Being; and this is designated by the phrase, I AM WHO AM.

So again the Jews understood Him: "They took up stones to cast at Him." And He did not explain but, "hid himself and went out of the temple."

Again: St. John the Evangelist learned the doctrine of Christ from Himself. And He opens his Gospel with the words:

## 23 - Jesus Christ Says He is God

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

"The same was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made by Him."

That is, he ascribes to Jesus Christ in as brief and clear terms as can be conceived: Eternity of Being--in the Beginning was the Word; Divinity of Nature—"and the WORD WAS GOD;" and Creating power--all things were made by Him.

The same idea was reasserted and developed with wonderful power in the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.

Jesus continually exacted the acts of faith, adoration, and obedience which are due to God alone. "He that loveth father or mother, or houses or lands more than ME, is not worthy of ME." [Matt. X. 37.] "If any man will follow Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." [Mark viii. 34.] "If thou wouldst be perfect, go and sell all thou hast and come and follow Me." [Matt. xix.24.]

"This is eternal life, that they may know Thee and whom thou hast sent, JESUS CHRIST." (John xvii. 3.) All power is given to ME in Heaven and on earth," (*Ib.* xxviii. 18.) If you love ME keep My commandments." (*Ib.* xiv. 15.)

And He rewarded all who rendered these acts to Him. Simon Peter said "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God;" and Jesus answered, "Blessed art thou." (Matt. xvi. 16, 17.) The woman having an issue of blood confessed His divinity by kissing the hem of His garment, and he said, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." (Matt. ix. 22.) The centurion confessed Him master of diseases, as he was master of his soldiers; and Jesus commended him, saying, "Verily, verily, I have not found such faith in Israel." (Matt. viii. 10). The Samaritan woman wondered at His knowledge (John iv. 26), and He assured her that He was the fount of life eternal.

To the waves He said, "Peace, be still;" to the devils in possessed bodies, He spoke words of command; before Pilate he said, "I am a king;" [Matt.xxvii.11.] Before the high priest, "I am the Son of God!" [Matt. xxvi. 64.] Wherever He was He always spoke as one having authority; in fact Monsieur RENAN, the last Julian who has undertaken a contest with THE GALLILEAN, admits that in the latter years of His life Jesus *imagined Himself the Son of God.* [Renan's "Life of Christ."]

No one indeed can read the scriptures, and other records of Christian tradition, without being satisfied that Jesus taught Himself to be God, and was so understood by both friends and enemies. That charge was one of those that produced His condemnation; and Salvador, a Spanish Jew of the seventeenth century, contends that the condemnation was purely legal, for that reason.

We know that St. Stephen was stoned to death for asserting His divinity. [Acts vi.] We know that all the Apostles went abroad, over the world, confiding in the belief of His divine power, preaching and working miracles. We know that all the Church

believed in that Divinity with such unanimity that when Arius arose, in the fourth century, to deny it, he found not a friend in the episcopate.

With such an array of testimony before us it seems astonishing that any one was ever found to deny that Jesus taught Himself to be God. What use is there in examining particular texts, and quibbling about the Greek or the Vulgate of this or that passage, in order to raise doubts? The whole stream of Christian tradition runs in that direction. The belief in His power to work miracles, the doctrine of the Mass, of the Sacraments, of the office of the Church, of pardon for sin through a mediator, are all founded on the belief that Christ is God.

Jesus Christ therefore said He was God.

**024.**

*The Divinity of Christ, Chapter III*

### **The Minor Premise.**

#### **Jesus a Credible Witness.**

Whether JESUS CHRIST is God or not, is a question of fact, not of speculation. Were it of speculation, we never could settle it. All we know of God is that He is infinitely perfect, and therefore incomprehensible. Hence, from our understanding of any particular being, we can not tell whether He is God or not, unless on his word.

Jesus Christ has given us His word that He is God--and His testimony is true.

I can not discuss here the law of testimony, at length and technically. I merely refer to its main features: such as are patent to a common understanding.

A witness is credible when it does not appear that he is either deceived or deceiving. An asserter is always presumed to be right until he is proved to be wrong. Now a witness can be shown to have been deceived, by his general character, the nature of his assertions, and by counter- testimony.

Thus, when you know a man to be in the habit of blundering, pay but little attention to what he says. If he tells you the river is on fire, or that Smith, with whom your sensible friend said he was conversing an hour before, has been dead a week, you laugh at him, because you know he is deceived. In like manner, when a rogue tells you something, you suspend your assent; all the more if you see that he would profit by deceiving you, and you would have no means of finding him out.

A witness can be impeached, therefore, in two ways: first, by showing that he is a block-head, and has been imposed upon; and secondly, by showing that he is a rogue, and could make it profitable to himself to lie.

Can the testimony of Jesus Christ, that He is God, be impeached in either way? Let us examine:

Monsieur Renan says that Jesus was an enthusiast, and deluded himself into the

belief that he was the son of God; but in saying so he outrages truth and piety. For even we can see, from what He said and did, that our Lord was exceedingly wise; He taught a system of dogma both deep and coherent, and a morality at once simple and perfect; He astonished the scribes by His learning, and baffled all the lawyers in their efforts to entrap Him. But the beginning of all wisdom is self-knowledge.

Therefore Christ knew Himself, His own powers, capabilities, nature, and position. Therefore to suppose Him deceived when He said He was God is an outrage upon truth.

Moreover, in all His life He never showed any vehement human emotion more than three times: once, when He scourged the money-changers out of the temple (Matt. xxi. 12, 13 ; Luke xi. 15, 16, 17): once, when He wept over Lazarus (John xi. 35); and once, when He was suffering His agony in the garden (Matt. xxvi. 38; Mark xiv. 33, 34; Luke xxii. 44): but in none of these was there anything like enthusiasm or self-exaltation. He was always the type of the perfect man; the very incarnation of truthfulness, justice and charity. It outrages common sense to suppose that such a man did not know the difference between creature and Creator, eternal and temporal, the Infinite Substance of the Immaculate Deity and the perishable nature of man: but could, in later life imagine that he was God if it were not true.

2. Nor does Jesus, when He says He is God, deceive.

In the first place, His modern enemies admit that He was good and holy, and that He laid down His life for justice. But he would not be good or holy were He capable of deception. Liars shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven. Can any one believe that He who taught the way to Heaven lost it Himself by crime? If Jesus Christ deceived, then the Jews were right in putting Him to death for blasphemy. But this hypothesis is too impious to brook discussion. Moreover, He had no motive for deceiving. Assume that He did not speak the truth: then he must have had some interest to serve by lying. But what interest can be conceived of that would not have been better served by saying the opposite of what He said? He lived with the poor, did good as secretly as He could, made no party for Himself, incurred the hatred of the powerful and influential, and suffered a felon's death--for which of the world's three gifts, think you: honor, money, or bodily pleasure? He renounced them all, from the Manger to the Cross.

"He coveted honor," says Monsieur Renan, "and made the Cross His chariot of fame." Mawkish sentimentalism! The Cross would never have been His chariot of fame if He had not risen from the dead. Had He remained in it His tomb would never have been glorious. Had He desired honor, when the multitude sought to seize Him and make Him king, He would not have fled away and remained alone. He would have conciliated the Scribes and Pharisees, and spoken fair words to the Roman Proconsul. But He had to assert His Divinity; and even before the judges who were panting for his condemnation, when adjured He answered, "I am the Son of God: And the high priest

rent his garments and said, What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, you have heard the blasphemy. What think ye? And they answered, He is guilty of death:" that is for making Himself the Son of God. (Matthew xxvi. 64.)

How easy it would have been for Him to gain honor with them by simply explaining that they had misunderstood him.

How many motives, of the kind which actuate men in the world, He had to say that He was not the Son of God. And to say it, not one but its truth.

025.

*The Divinity of Christ, Chapter IV*

### **Miracles.**

But apart from the consideration of His personal character, there are irresistible guarantees for the veracity of Jesus Christ in His miracles. To these He often alluded, in language such as in John x: 38, He addressed to the Jews, "If you believe not Me, believe My works."

But of miracles we must speak somewhat at length.

There are two infidel theories about miracles: one is, that they are impossible; and the other of "Monsieur Renan, Member of the Institute", that "no one has ever been proved.

The first theory ought to own David Hume as its author, for he spent much in dressing it. It proceeds from a ratiocination of the following character: The physical laws of the universe are unalterable; but miracles suppose an alteration of these physical laws; therefore miracles are impossible. On this theory a man named Combe wrote a book on the "Constitution of Man," in which he enlarged greatly on phrenology and other aids to destiny--and which has been sold cheap, and largely circulated among the people.

Now what is a physical law which is so like that of the Medes and Persians? An example from chemistry and natural philosophy will answer. It is a "law" that water will freeze at 33° and boil at 212° Fahrenheit. It is a "law" that the equivalent of three forces is required for an equilibrium. It is a "law" that falling bodies descend with accelerated motion. It is a "law" that acids and alkalis neutralize each other. Is that the law? Why, one would suppose that to be not the law, but the phenomenon itself. That is the way that nature acts, not the way it *must* act; and natural law means nothing more than the way in which nature ordinarily works. Now, with this idea of natural law--and is it not the correct one?--what becomes the immutability of the laws that govern the world? A miracle is then a sensible effect out of the ordinary of nature, and no more impossible than any thing else extraordinary. Is it impossible for God to set aside routine?



But look a little deeper into this idea of physical law. Of all things that exist or happen, God is the principal cause. Of second causes there are two classes: free and necessary. Necessary causes, such as material motion, heat, cold, vegetable and animal growth, are those whose action is determined by their nature. But the efficiency of a cause is not a general regulation or predetermined system, but an active principle within it. It is not the physical law that boils the water, but the fire under the kettle. It is not the pre-determined arrangement that makes the grass grow and the flowers bloom; but it is the action of light and heat and other agencies, weighed, measured, and distributed by Providence. You can not count the thousand hues, the variations of shape, grain, texture, size, of the rose as you scatter its leaves; but He who made them had to count them, had to consider and weigh each particular of the intricate work. The action of second necessary causes is therefore but one remove from the immediate action from God; the efficiency is all from Him. A miracle is also from Him, and no harder to do than His ordinary works. It is a miracle to heal the sick without medicine; but no harder than to give the healing power to medicine. It is a miracle to raise a dead man to life; yet no harder than to make what was nothing a living man. In general, it is a miracle to produce marked changes in the material world in an extraordinary way; but no harder than to produce them in the ordinary way.

All phenomena in the physical world come from God. Miracles have this distinctive among them: that they come from God, not as the working of the machinery of the world for the general design, but as intended to arrest attention and call the thoughts to Him. In a great army each one goes on, heedless of the roar and bustle, until his name is called by his commander: so in this world, amid the working of innumerable causes, and succession of countless events, we would go on our way, unless God, by some extraordinary event would stop us, saying as it were, "Wait, I want to speak to you!"

From this conception of miracle it is easy to dispose of Mr. Renan's assertion, that no miracle has ever been proved because none was ever wrought before a discriminating audience. What did the ancient Jews know of the laws of nature, since discovered by the scientific men of France? How could those stupid peasants and mechanics tell whether what they saw was an effect wrought by God, or a result of a scientific operation. A miracle, to be well authenticated, would have to be performed in a room prepared for the purpose in the presence of learned naturalists, scientific physiologists, judicious philosophers; in a word, before a committee of the French "Institute" and the experiment repeated as often as called for.

This talk is folly. The spectators do not know a miracle to be from God, because they have previously taken the measure of all natural causes, and see that none of them could have produced it, but because, under the circumstances, it strikes them palpably, as a voice would, as coining from God. They are impressed with conviction without

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knowing how. When you see a steamboat you do not have to reason to convince yourself that it is not a wind-mill: so the witness of a miracle knows it by sight, though he may never have heard its definition. Multitudes witness and are irresistibly drawn to believe it to be the work of God; and the foundation of their belief is in the last analysis--the foundation of all belief: the veracity of rational nature and of God. Therefore, in testifying to miracles, a fool may be as wise as the whole French *Institut*.

Thus, a fair understanding of what is a miracle, and what are natural laws, is a full answer to all *a priori* objections against the popular belief on the subject.

A miracle can be wrought only by the personal intervention of God. If wrought, then, to substantiate any assertion, it makes Him the author of that assertion. Herein it differs from all jugglery, all effects of sorcery, or of natural though hidden causes: that it irresistibly inclines the honest beholders to attribute it directly to God, and makes them stand trembling and saying: Speak, Lord; thy servants hear. Nor is it pertinent to discuss the question, whether they would be so affected if they were more scientific, or of a different disposition in any other respect. The point is: God places them in circumstances, in which they can not rationally resist the conviction that He is speaking to them; and, therefore, makes Himself the surety of what they believe.

This is the way in which the miracles of Jesus Christ prove that He is God. And chief among them is the miracle of His Resurrection from the Dead, of which we shall speak without further introduction.

### 026.

*The Divinity of Christ, Chapter V*

#### **Christ's Resurrection the Proof of His Divinity.**

Human science can accomplish much. It can analyze the forces of material nature and enslave even the mightiest of them to its uses; but it can not create life or baffle death. Though but a moment is consumed in the passage from life to death, yet that moment is enough to place a measureless gulf between human power and the dead. When the heart ceases to beat, when the mirror held over the mouth of the invalid is not moistened, when there is no tremor in the flesh, no quivering of the nerves, the physicians put away their instruments, the nurses gather up their phials and napkins and sponges, and clear the room. Close the eyes, you that were the oldest friend, raise the windows to air the room, give notice of the funeral. That is a corpse on the bed. Wealth, influence, friendship, science can never make that heart stir again. God, who created it, alone could give it life. He alone can start the blood coursing through the veins again, light up the eyes once more, and make the white lips, now clammy compressed on the projecting teeth, move, and say, "I have passed through the shadow and come back." So the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead proves Him

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to have been God; therefore true in all He taught either by his own lips or through the Church. His enemies had made sure of His death. One of the soldiers had pierced His side, and straightway there gushed forth water and blood. They had laid His body in a sepulcher, and sealing its mouth with a great stone, had stationed guards to watch it. The chief priests and scribes, satisfied with their work, had congratulated one another more than once over the triumph of their policy. Pilate had expressed his relief that the riot was at last over, and the city quiet if not calm. The Apostles and disciples, scarcely recovered from their flight, were skulking in private houses or stealing into the country two by two, bewildered with the shattering of their hopes, and scarce thinking of returning to their nets. The pious women wept together and counted over their scanty means to get enough to buy spices and perfumes for the corpse. It was given up by friends and foes that he was dead.

For Him, therefore, to rise from the dead, to put fresh warm life in that clammy flesh, to send living blood once more through those veins, to walk upon the earth once more, to gather his disciples together and teach them again, to explain to them what He meant by allowing Himself to be crucified, to declare to them what He was going to do for them and what He wanted them to do for Him, demonstrated, beyond question, His divine nature. It confounded the Jews, as they acknowledged when they told Pilate that should His body be removed "the last error would be worse than the first." (Matthew xxvii. 64.) It reassured all those who might become His disciples, to the end of time; and, as He retained the scars of His wounds as signs of His glory, it changed the red blood drops from His wounds into red roses in His wreath of triumph.

When Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary and reputed son of Joseph of Nazareth, in Galilee, began to preach a new doctrine, not merely to the peasants and artisans, his social equals, but also in the hearing of the inhabitants of cities; when He denounced the vices of those in power, and told them that the pride of life and love of money had quenched in them the light of conscience, and that they were guiding the people to destruction, they had a right to demand of Him by what authority He spoke these things: He conceded the right, and appealed to the miracles He wrought as proof that God was with Him, when private persons were to be convinced; but as a sign to the whole nation He gave His Resurrection from the dead.

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh for a sign, but no sign shall be given them save the sign of the Prophet Jonas; as Jonas was three days in the whale's belly, so the Son of Man shall be three days in the bowels of the earth." (Matthew xii. 39, 40.)

"What sign showest Thou to us, that Thou dost these things?" the Pharisees asked Him when He scourged the money changers from the Temple. He answers, "Destroy this Temple," (He spoke of the temple of His body), "and in three days I will rebuild it." (*ib.* ii. 19.) That is: Kill Me, for demeaning myself as the Son of God, and in three days I

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will bring Myself back into life again, in proof that I had the right to so demean Myself.

In working His other miracles He seems to have had a special motive for each: He changed the water into wine at the nuptial feast in Galilee to show His respect for His Mother's prayer; He raised Lazarus from the dead out of compassion for the grief of his sister; He called the young man of Naim back to life to console the widowed mother.

When he was transfigured he enjoined secrecy on the three Apostles who had seen His glory until after His Resurrection: "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." (Matthew xvii. 9.) The Resurrection was to be the test-miracle. He appeared before the Jews, saying: "I am the son of God, the creator of Abraham and Moses, the author of knowledge, the dictator of law, the judge of men. I am the way, the truth, and the life; without me there is no salvation. You cling to Moses. He bore testimony of me, and his work is now done, his testament abolished. I am the Only Begotten Son of God, unto Whom all power is given on earth and in Heaven. In proof of My truth I shall rise from the dead. I will deliver Myself up to My enemies, and unresisting let them exhaust their malice on Me: they will scatter My disciples, blacken My reputation, outrage My person, take My life, guard My sepulcher: and when their power to do harm has reached its limits I will baffle them all, I will take back the life I laid down, the good name I allowed to be blackened, gather together the disciples that were scattered, establish My Church to overthrow Judaism and paganism, and live on through the ages triumphing, as I have triumphed over human craft and violence, to the end of time."

This was the test of His truth: "You shall know that I am God by My rising from the dead."

With this declaration as it were on His lips, Jesus died and was buried. Now it is manifest that if He did rise from the dead God would thereby become responsible for His saying, "I am the Son of God," and so for all else that He taught and did; and if He continued in the grave that He was an impostor, and unreliable in all His teachings, or as St. Paul tells the Corinthians, "If Christ has not risen our preaching is vain, your faith is vain." (1 Corinthians xv. 17.)

So the chiefs of the synagogue understood the matter, and they determined to prevent the belief of His Resurrection from ever gaining a foothold in the public mind. They were not so absorbed in the satisfaction that His death gave them as to forget precautions against His outcast followers; and so, like all men who undertake a contest against God, they made themselves useful in furthering His designs by elaborately trying to defeat them.

The Apostles were so stunned and paralyzed by fear and grief that they never once thought of looking forward to the Resurrection of Jesus. All that He had told them about it had made but little impression on their minds, so little that some of them would not believe even after He had risen; and the pious women, when they found the

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sepulcher open and empty, thought the body had been stolen, and said piteously, "They have taken my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." So God needed witnesses to prove the body had not been stolen; and the craft of the synagogue, falling into its own snare, furnished them.

"We remember," said they to Pilate, "that this seducer said, while He was alive: 'after three days I will arise.'" (Matthew xxvii. 63.) He is pledged before all the people to come back to life. Now if the body should happen to disappear, and His disciples should give out that He was risen, the tumults would be renewed and redoubled in the city: the last error would be worse than the first. The courtly Pilate, despising their malignity, but deferring to their position, answered, "You have guards, go and watch the sepulcher with as many soldiers as you wish." And these guards were witnesses, the most unexceptionable, to the fact of His Resurrection. The Apostles were shivering with fear in their hiding places, would never have dared to undertake to steal the body. Had they undertaken it they could not have eluded the guard. The fraud attempted by the Pharisees, when they bribed the guards to say that while they slept the disciples stole the body refutes itself, since if they were sleeping how could they know that His disciples or any one else stole the body? In fact, the chief priests do not seem to have insisted much on this open imposture; for, when the Apostles, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, announced in the streets of Jerusalem that they were witnesses of the Resurrection, and consequently of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the leaders of the doomed people of the deicidal city never attempted to convict them of imposture, never squarely took up the question of their veracity but apprehended them and imprisoned them as disturbers of the peace, as teachers of strange doctrines, and such like vague charges.

Josephus, himself a Jew, attests that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a tradition among his people, and Tertullian assures us that Pontius Pilate, in conscience a Christian, sent an account of all these things to Tiberius Cæsar.

You find not many now-a-days who deny very vehemently the fact of Christ's Resurrection; but multitudes who disregard the significance of the fact.

The chief priests understood its meaning fully. They saw at a glance that if Jesus of Nazareth arose, as He said He would, He must be, as He said He was, the Son of God. His doctrine must then be true, His Church must have authority, His Sacraments must be efficacious, His worship obligatory on all. So also did the Apostles understand it.

When they were called they left their nets and avocations to follow Him, they were drawn by a charm they did not want explained. In His company they lived in a rapture of wonder at His wisdom, His miracles, His doctrine, from day to day. They knew not what to expect next from Him; but they felt that they had entered upon a new and glorious era. The morning breath of the opening age thrilled them; and, as with

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populations on the threshold of mighty changes, their hopes were vague visions of peace and plenty, and justice and truth, rather than settled plans tending to clearly defined ends. They heard Him speak of rising from the dead in proof of His divinity; but as they believed in His divinity already they scarcely heeded what he said: so when they came up to Jerusalem, where all things that were written concerning the Son of Man were to be accomplished, their hearts beat high with expectation. They did not note what He said of suffering, they felt so sure He was going to a triumph. There might be a tumult in the city. The Scribes and Pharisees might attempt to harm Him, but the people would rise and rescue Him, and, enthroning Him, inaugurate the new age. So, when they found that, instead of eluding His pursuers, He was captured by them; instead of being defended He was assailed by the people; instead of being enthroned as a king He was crucified as a felon; their hearts sank within them, and their hopes were buried in His sepulcher. "It is all over," they murmured through their tears to one another, in their hiding places; "the vision of beauty has vanished in blood; the sky of the future is veiled in blackness." Go back, and look for your boats and nets on the shores of the lake of Galilee. "You thought it was He who was to redeem Israel," and you were princes in His kingdom of justice. Go back to your labor; Cæsar shall be king; Pilate, proconsul; the Scribes and Pharisees, the rulers; and, as of old, injustice will grow fat; corruption riot in high places; and the poor struggle hopelessly on to their only rest-the grave.

When Mary Magdalen, and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, coming with sweet spices, found the tomb open, and were told by a man clothed in a white robe: He is not here, He is risen, they did not give way to joy, but they "went out and fled from the sepulcher, for fear and trembling had seized upon them." (Mark xvi. 8.) And when they told these things to the Apostles, their words seemed as idle tales and were not believed. But Peter and John started to examine for themselves, and, as they went hope dawned faintly in their hearts, and they ran in eagerness. Peter, stooping down at the mouth of the sepulcher, saw the linen clothes lying by themselves, yet still did not believe what seemed too good to be true; but only "returned, wondering in himself at what had happened."

The two disciples, going to Emmaus, were simply amazed at what the women had said about not finding the body in the tomb; but were slow of heart to believe, although they felt their hearts burning within them while Jesus talked to them along the way.

At last, when he appeared to the women, to Peter, to John, to the two disciples, to the eleven locked in a room together, conviction was forced upon them: as the word now is, the Lord has risen indeed, passed from lip to lip every heart grew tremulous, as if rising and falling on the waves of an ocean of joy; every eye moistened with delicious tears. That joy was not sensual, not because they could again see Him, hear Him, touch

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Him; nor friendly, arising from the knowledge that He could suffer no more; but spiritual, because their faith in His divinity was sealed by His Resurrection, their hopes of the golden reign, in the glad future, sprang with His body from the tomb.

St. Thomas declared he would never believe what the rest were telling him until he saw the print of the nails in His hands, and put his hand into the pierced side. And when Jesus, with ineffable sweetness, had made him look at the hands and feet, and touch the sacred wounds, the confession of the conquered doubter was simply, "MY LORD AND MY GOD." (John xx. 28.)

To the Apostles, as to the Jews, "Christ is risen" meant "Christ is God."

In a sermon of St. Paul's, recorded in Acts xiii, that Apostle declares that God raising Jesus from the dead fulfilled what is written in the second Psalm: "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." That is, Jesus, by rising from the dead, demonstrates that it is of Him these words were spoken: and again, in Romans, i, 4, he says, that according to eternal predestination, the Redeemer is "demonstrated to be the Son of God, in power, by the Resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the Acts of the Apostles St. Luke calls the preaching of the Gospel "bearing witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ." "With mighty power the Apostles bore witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts iv.33.)

When there was question of filling the place from which Judas had fallen in the Apostolate, St. Peter rose up and said: "Wherefore of these men who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day wherein He was taken up from us; one of these must be made a witness, with us, of His resurrection." (Ib. i. 21,22.)

That was the great point to be established. To change the face of the earth; to baffle an atheist philosophy; to refute corrupt religious theories; to overcome the shafts of licentious evil; shatter the idols and overturn the altars of the pagan world, the Apostles were not to argue, refute, ridicule, speculate, theorize; but simply *bear witness* to the Resurrection of Christ. Hence those who died for the faith were not called opinionists, but martyrs; that is *witnesses* of the Resurrection.

That established, all else followed that they taught. If He rose He was God. If He was God He did not come into the world to philosophize and theorize; but to teach the truth, lay down the law, to give pardon and grace, to be author and finisher of our Faith.

### 027. *The Divinity of Christ*, Chapter VI

#### **Christianity as a Historical Fact.**

No self-deluding fanatic or designing impostor could ever have produced such an effect as Christianity. Its historical existence proves its supernatural character. As

conqueror of the world, Rome once set her foot upon the neck of kings, and held more than half the nations subject by her arms. Now she has a wider dominion, a mightier power by Religion. That power she has wielded more than eighteen hundred years. The work it has wrought is divine. Therefore its author is God. The work that power wrought is the conversion of the world to Christianity.

Before Christianity appeared, the vast majority of mankind were buried in intellectual and moral darkness. The best and purest minded knew not what to believe, or what to do. Study brought only doubt and perplexity. Plato and Socrates could detect errors in others but did not avoid them in themselves. And, as the lights of the people were darkness, fancy can not paint how great was that darkness in the people themselves.

They made their own gods to suit their passions, which they indulged without restraint or remorse. Their most sacred worship consisted of rites too obscene to be described, and too beastly to be thought on. Every crime found a justification in some theory, or in the example of some god. Having lost faith in God, whose justice is inexorable, and whose power is resistless, they turned all His gifts into means of crime. Every faculty of mind and body, every relation of life, every human sentiment and affection became an avenue of corruption. "To debauch and be debauched," says Tacitus, "WAS THE AGE."

Jesus Christ had therefore to work a change in the ideas, the aims, the affections, and all the customs of society. He had to roll back the torrent of fashion. The false religion, to be overthrown, was interwoven with all the framework of society. The exploits of the false gods were household words everywhere. Daily the altars smoked with the blood of victims. Daily the consecrated groves were visited by gorgeous processions. Events were dated from the annual *Saturnalia* and *Bacchanalia*; the feasts of Ceres and Jupiter Ammon. Poetry had thrown its drapery of beauty over mythology, and every wood and lake and fountain was associated with some outgrowth of the prevailing superstition. In feasts and social gatherings, libations were made to the gods, and dishes of meat that had been offered in the temples were served up to the guests.

It is hard to measure the influence of fashion. The great mass of men hold their opinions and maxims of life from custom. "Everybody thinks so," is, to ninety-nine out of every hundred, an ultimate reason for thinking so. Few have the courage to stand up against it, even in little matters. Leaders, or the world's heroes, never brave it, but only try to guide it.

But the preacher of JESUS CHRIST had to oppose it not in small matters and in one point, but in the greatest matters and in every point. He had to oppose the received opinions of the age as to the nature of God, the manner of worship, the nature and true happiness of man, the constitution of society, the principles of government, the maxims of individual and social life: in a word, "he had to renew the face of the earth."



The first element of the power of fashion that rose angrily up against the new doctrine and the new preachers was prejudice, or that inclination which men have to reject, without examination, whatever tends to disturb their present persuasions. How strong an influence this is in human society, the history of all inventions, of new works in literature, new opinions in politics amply illustrates.

Judea was the most despised of all countries by the Gentiles, Nazareth was a proverb of evil among the Jews, and the preachers of Christianity were of the lowest and rudest class of Galileans. These men, without any knowledge of literature or of the world, without any friends among the powerful, without any natural gifts of address or eloquence, had to encounter and overcome the prejudices of all classes.

The Emperor was prince and pontiff. The change in religion therefore would sap the foundations of the government. So the empire and all the officers of the empire, from highest to lowest, declared war to the knife on the Galilean; and the war was a personal matter with each one of innumerable dependents on government service throughout the whole empire.

The pagan priesthood formed a very numerous and powerful body hostile to the new faith. They, with their dependents and devotees, might be said to constitute the entire population; and each one had all the holy and all the sordid feelings of his nature enlisted against the innovation.

The learned men of the time were of course interested in maintaining their ascendancy and the character of their wisdom.

The ignorant were interested by their religious feelings.

In a word, all the interests of society, of rulers and ruled, of learned and unlearned, of priest and politician, of nobles and tradesmen, were arrayed against the innovators.

And with what were these simple men of Galilee to overcome the vast aggregate of these seemingly insurmountable obstacles?

Infidels say the doctrines of Christianity are unreasonable. The Trinity, the Incarnation, the atonement, the second coming of Christ to judge the world, they say are absurdities. For the argument let it be so. Then these twelve men of Galilee had to transform the world by making it adopt absurd dogmas. They did transform the world by what they preached. Is not the finger of God here?

Again: The morality of Christ's religion is not pleasing to the natural heart. Men who follow the bent of their inclinations do not run after opportunities for practicing self-denial, temperance, chastity, poverty. Yet the twelve fishermen converted the world to the morality of the Cross. Is not the finger of God here?

The argument may be summed up in the following syllogism:

The conversion of the world to Christianity was an effect to which no human causes bear any proportion;

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But that effect was actually produced;  
Therefore God wrought it; or,  
Therefore Jesus Christ is God.

To consider special arguments against the conclusion thus demonstrated is almost useless. For, the core of all the objections against the divinity of Christ is *an unwillingness to believe on any testimony, and for any reason.*

The unwillingness is not so much an objection to Christ's divinity, as to ANY DIVINITY WHATEVER being concerned in the affairs of men. Protestantism, as an intellectual movement "the denial of authority," as Guizot called it--is fast reaching its logical level, the denial of God's government of the world. This is evident not merely from the theories and speculations of avowed infidels, but also from the writings and conduct of those calling themselves Christian teachers. I say not this in vituperation of preachers, but as an undeniable fact. The preachers, like those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, are not specimens of extraordinary depravity. They have adopted their profession, and have their theological principles furnished them, which have no logical connection with God or the eternal world; and so they preach what they happen to be interested in, and call it religion; they address their congregations with closed eyes, and call it prayer. God is not talked of in their houses of worship; His rights are not insisted on; His excellencies are not set forth, but man's. Sermons are but summaries of the news, or views of "the situation," and prayers little else than the statements of political platforms.

What dictates this course of action but the profound though unacknowledged conviction, that religion is no reality, no revelation of the living God, but only a sentiment of the people? That it is not something to kneel to, to learn from and live by, but something that may be lawfully modified, cut down, increased or rejected altogether, according to the drift of public feeling?

The men of the present age do not *want Christ to be God*, confused, as their minds are, with a mixture of truth and error. He is, to them, the type of the old order of things, of fixed belief, of humility, self-denial, and patient waiting for eternity, while they have a phantom, of progress, revolution, development, and spontaneous felicity to allure them; and feeling that their choice is to make one of these live and the other die, they say, with the Jews of old, "Not this one, but Barabbas."

This remark is to be understood of those men on whose minds the principles of Protestantism exercise a controlling interest. The great mass of Americans, and indeed of all using the English language, are nearly free from any such influence, and are, as far as religion is concerned, in a state of nature. Protestantism can not well be taught where there are no monasteries to rob, no vows of chastity to escape from, no church revenues to seize on, as stimulants to study, and so our common people are simply without faith, and often yearning to believe. They have no objection to Christ's divinity,

only such as their leaders suggest; and their leaders suggest whatever will serve as a pretext for rejecting it.

The more of these objections one considers, the more manifest will this appear.

"It is not possible," is one of them, "Christ can not be God."

But what is true is possible. Now, Jesus Christ, who is worthy of belief, has said that He is God. Therefore it *is* possible, and Christ *can* be God. "But then, if so, the same person is creator and created, mortal and immortal, passible and impassible, a creature of contradictions." No. But a Person of two Natures, in one of which he is divine and in the other human; which presupposed, there is no contradiction at all.

But how can a person be at the same time divine and human? The *personality* is not at the same time divine and human, but divine: having a divine and human nature.

How could the human nature be without its personality? The human nature is not without its personality; but its personality is, from the beginning of its existence, the Son of God.

Yet it is not possible, because we can not see how it can be.

Did you ever reject a proposition that you wanted to believe for the reason that you can not see how it can be?

You did not know until you studied chemistry and physiology--and then your knowledge amounts to little more than verbiage--*how* food nourishes; yet you accepted the proposition and acted upon it. You do not know, now, *how* grass grows; yet you believe it. You do not know how one portion of Asia came to be called China, yet, you believe it. You do not know how the leader of the revolutionary armies happened to be Washington; yet you believe it. The man who invented that principle that nothing is to be believed until it is explained, had barely wit enough to need more; for how can you put forth any explanation of any phenomenon, that will not itself need to be explained, until you get back to God, the primal truth?

Your astronomers explain the seasons: "The obliquity of the two planes of the equator and the ecliptic varies the angle at which the rays of the sun strike the earth's surface." Exactly. But *why* should this angular variation produce that effect? "Because nature is so constituted," you answer. Well, then, ask me why there are three persons and one substance in God; why Jesus Christ is both God and man; why the Redeemer's body and blood are in the SACRAMENT; why Baptism cleanses from sin; and I answer, with your own formula, "Because it, has been so constituted." Whoever has sense enough to wish to understand what lies about him, should have enough to see that he can not understand all that lies about him.

"Then I must give up my reason," you say. No, you must not give up your reason--no jot or tittle of it; but you must give up your ridiculous pretense of being able to comprehend every thing; you must yield this point--that God can tell you some things you did not know before.

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When, in your childhood, you sat and listened, rapt and wondering to the man who told you of far off lands, of customs that you could not understand, or of deeds in times gone by, you believed what he said without surrendering your reason. So, when God, to whom the mightiest of us is less than a child, deigns to discourse to us of the far off lands on high, of His own incomprehensible nature, and wonderful works, we listen and believe; and our reason is enlightened, not destroyed. The fondest believer in old wives' fables never made so gross a surrender of his judgment, as the man who refuses to be taught of God, lest his reason be enthralled.

It is very true that I do not comprehend the mystery of the Incarnation; but it is not necessary for me to comprehend it provided I believe it to be so. I do not see *how* God could be made man; but I need not see *how*, as I have not to do it. It is sufficient for me that the author of it knew how to do it. I do not see how that fountain gushed up, in the spot I reached travel-worn and thirsty; but I will quench my thirst there, nevertheless.

"But," says the unbeliever, "mysteries are contradictions, and to believe a contradiction is to give up reason."

Every proposition is the assertion (or negation--it matters not which--as far as this explanation is concerned), of identity between a subject and a predicate. Where you can analyze the subject, and thus see its identity with the predicate, you are said to comprehend the proposition. Thus, that a whole is greater than any one of its parts, you can infer from the conception of *wholeness*. But where you do not know enough of the subject to analyze it, you can only find out that the given predicate belongs to it by being told so--on authority. Thus, all you know about it *a priori* is Napoleon I. might have crossed the Alps; but, from history, you know he did cross them. So of God, you know, by analysis, that He is all-wise, all-powerful, infinitely good, etc.; but you do not know any more. You do not know how many persons there are in Him, nor how He made and redeemed the world. On these points you must submit to be informed by Him. These are mysteries.

A mystery is a proposition, the identity of whose predicate and subject has to be evident on authority. There are innumerable such in five dollars' worth of newspapers, not one of which you reject because you can not see the *how* of it.

But if you do not reject the statements of men because you do not see how they can be true, *a fortiori* you have no logical right to reject the statements of God. The objections, therefore, are futile, and the truth stands.