

Mysteries of Religion and Science [Part I]

by
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Chapter I

MYSTERY is the angel which comes to us in the still hours of the night, or the solitary musings of the day, and whispers to us words of wondrous import. She always bears about her a charm and a power of fascination which at once arrests our attention and we are all eye and all ear to her movements and her voice.

A distinguished writer has said, "No sound mind is ever perplexed by the contemplation of mysteries. Indeed, they are a source of positive satisfaction and delight. If nothing were dark - if all around us and above us were clearly seen, the truth itself would appear stale and mean. Every thing truly great must transcend the powers of the human mind, and hence, if nothing were mysterious, there would be nothing worthy of our veneration and worship. It is mystery, indeed, which lends such unspeakable grandeur and variety to the scenery of the moral world; without it all will be clear it is true, but nothing will be grand. There would be lights but no shadows, and around the very lights themselves there would be nothing soothing and sublime, in which the soul might rest and the imagination revel." The truth of this sentiment commends itself to the experience of all. If there were no dark, impenetrable mysteries spreading away before the mind, taxing its energies and calling forth its mightiest efforts to pierce the gloom, there would soon be a stagnation of thought, and a Dead Sea would roll its leaden monotonous waves around us forever. It is affirmed by him who bears the appellation of the wisest man that ever lived, that "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing," and hence we infer that the very mystery with which we are surrounded, and which enshrouds the universe of matter and mind, more effectually develops the glory of God and enhances our bliss, than if there were no mysteries to excite our attention and wonder.

There is much that we know not and cannot know in relation to God, nature, mind and matter; and the essence of the entities of the vast universe around us, above us, and below us, must elude the grasp and comprehension of the most acute and subtle intellect. Some mysteries will be forever hidden by impervious shadows, and though the mind may eternally progress in knowledge, there will be depths which no line can fathom, and heights which no ken can explore. The prince of philosophers after a long life devoted to the study of nature's mysteries, and who had evolved some of the most important principles of modern science said in his closing hours, "I have been wandering upon the shore, interested and gratified in picking up a smooth round pebble here, and a beautifully variegated shell there, while the vast and boundless ocean of truth unexplored stretched out before me." How true that mind in its most cultivated and mature condition is but in its infancy, that man at his best estate has but just entered upon the threshold of knowledge, and through the partly drawn curtain has but just caught a glimpse of the unknown wonders in the vast domain of science and religion. This fact instead of suppressing inquiry and investigation should prompt to more increased exertions. Because but

little comparatively can be known, and we are enshrouded in mystery, having only in our groupings caught the thread which leads through ever dark and interminable labyrinths, shall we, therefore, stop or hesitate in our pursuit? In the vast and various departments of human science, shall the dark robed angel of mystery that flits across our path terrify us and prevent our search? Never. Rather let her be the alluring angel that beckons us onward.

We have no sympathy for the infidel doctrine, that where mystery begins religion ends, if by the assertion we are to understand, where there is mystery there is no religion. If by mystery we understand what is above the comprehension of human reason, the same remark will apply with equal force to science itself, and we may retort upon the infidel philosopher, and say, where mystery begins science ends, because there are mysteries in science as profound and incomprehensible as any of the mysteries of religion. The idea that because a thing is mysterious no truth or fact can be elicited from it is a most pernicious and destructive idea, and one that no solid mind will consider worthy of a moment's consideration. To say that we are not to give credence to that which is incomprehensible, is to assume a principle which would take away the very foundations of all the modes of existence in the universe, and drive every inquirer after truth out in a crazy uncharted vessel upon an ocean in which there are no soundings, and to which there is no shore.

Religion like science, her affianced bride, reveals some things above the conception of human reason, but not inconsistent or contradictory to any of her teachings; and Coleridge has justly remarked, "If there be anything in the system of religion that contradicts reason, it does not belong to the household of faith." The highest, clearest faith in the mysteries of science and religion is compatible with reason in her loftiest exercise, and to say that because we cannot comprehend a doctrine of religion, we will therefore reject it as unworthy of belief, is the same as to say we cannot conceive of infinite space, and therefore there is no such thing as infinite space. The foundations of faith in religion are as immovably established as the foundations of faith in science, so far at least as compatibility with reason is concerned, and to destroy these foundations would leave the man of science in as hopeless a condition as the believer in divine revelation.

It is not what is really mysterious in religion or science that has caused the mind of the sincere inquirer after truth to stagger, or has produced infidelity or want of faith in their doctrines or assumptions, but the attempt to shroud in mystery that which is plain and comprehensible when rightly interpreted. Some, prompted by the mere love of mystery, have been induced to throw a veil over plain intelligible truth, while others to obviate the absurdity of cherished dogmas have sought refuge in mystery, and they are alike enemies to truth and reason, and are responsible for much of the error and infidelity that exist in the world. The volume of nature and the volume of revelation are both spread out before us for study. They alike contain truths which the feeblest intellect can comprehend. Others are more difficult, and can only be understood by minds disciplined by severe study; yet the more recondite are as clear to the comprehension of cultivated reason, as those which are most simple are plain to the uncultivated, and no more mystery belongs to one than the other. The mystery does not consist in the want of consonance with

reason, nor yet in anything necessarily dark and insolvable inhering in the subject, but in the want of intellectual power to solve or comprehend it. The milky way, which, to the wondering eyes of earth's millions in ages and centuries past, seemed like snow flakes scattered along the pavement of the sky, would forever have remained a mystery as to what it was, had not science extended the boundary of her discoveries, and resolved those ethereal flakes into solid globes of matter - suns of systems immensely larger than our own.

Though we would not rush with reckless and inconsiderate daring

"where angels fear to tread,"

or rudely seek to tear off the veil, or draw aside the curtain which has concealed the mysteries of the world from the eyes of the vulgar, yet we propose in a calm, quiet and courageous manner to bring what little ability we may possess to the investigation of those mysteries which for ages have excited the wonder of the world. We hold that nothing within the reach and range of thought, whether as pertaining to religion or science, mind or matter, time or eternity, is interdicted from the scrutiny of man, and that while in the language of the poet

"Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,"

man is also justified who seeks to explore the vast arcana, though it contain mysteries profound as eternity. It is only to nature which God has bound fast to the laws of necessity, that he says, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther." To the human intellect as an emanation from the Almighty mind, he has given a freedom equal to his own, and a scope boundless as eternity. Man was "created in knowledge," and to know all that lies within the province of knowledge this side of Omniscience itself, is the destiny of mind. The sin of primitive mind did not consist in aspirations for knowledge, even such as would raise him to a god, and impart to him a godlike power of intellect. His was a mind created to "search all things, even the deep things of God," and thus employed, "wisdom was justified of her child," It was not the intellect that led man astray from the laws of his being and happiness, but perversion of the affections, or their withdrawal from the source and centre of bliss, and allowing them to flow towards an object less than God. Just as the earth would lose its light and heat and beauty, by being withdrawn from the sun and wander on in darkness forever from the central orb; so man withdrew from God his Sun and source of light and holiness and love, and brought upon himself darkness, despair and death.

Nowhere in the whole volume of revelation or nature is the prohibition to be found, interdicting the mind from its researches. The knowledge resulting from the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree - the power to distinguish between the good and evil - was not the curse threatened, it was a mere accident growing out of the infraction, and the information received through this act constituted no valuable accession to the domain of knowledge. God has spread out the vast universe for man as a theater upon which he may enter without let or hindrance, and with reason to guide him in his researches, he may enter every avenue and explore

every recess. We have in obedience to this indication launched our little bark upon the vast and boundless ocean of thought, and though clouds and darkness may come down and settle around us and close us in on every side, impeding our progress and forbidding our advance, yet with reason and revelation for our guide, we shall make as best we can our reckonings, and steer our course whither they may direct.

TRUTH. - The light which truth sheds upon human steps is the only certain guide through this valley of tears. It is not only the "foundation of every, virtue," but will guide to the highest happiness.

Chapter II The Mystery of God

WE shall not attempt to prove the existence of a great first eternal cause; for though there be no innate ideas of the existence of God, yet all nations, in every stage of mental development from the most ignorant and besotted up to the most thoroughly refined and educated, acknowledge his existence. It is as foreign to our subject as it is unnecessary in itself, to enter upon any argument either a priori or a posteriori, to prove the existence of a fact which as naturally impresses itself upon the conviction and consciousness of every intelligent being as the light of the sun. The labors of theologians in the field of metaphysical investigation, to prove a universally self-evident fact, have not only demonstrated the utter uselessness of the undertaking, but have made most apparent the truth of the assertion, that some will seek to be wise above what is written. Revelation in no part of its record or in any of its dispensations has attempted any thing of the kind. The existence of God from first to last is assumed as a fact not only not requiring any proof, but which could not be made more clear and palpable by any arguments that might be adduced. If holy men whose minds were pervaded by the infinite Spirit, and whose pens were touched with holy fire, entered upon no investigation or line of argument to prove the existence of God, it is, to say the least of it, a needless attempt on the part of uninspired man; nay more, it savors much of that bold and reckless temerity which prompts man with thoughtless presumption to invade a sanctuary where seraphs would fear to go.

Indeed, as well might one with a rush light attempt to reveal the sun or enhance its brightness, as for any man, no matter how deeply versed in scholastic or theological lore, by the scintillations of his learning or logic, his wisdom or wit, to reveal the existence or throw light upon the character of God. It becomes a question of grave importance, and one which we submit to the metaphysicians and divines of the Christian school, whether the very speculations which have been indulged in, have not, instead of satisfying the inquiring mind, in many instances produced the very skepticism which they were intended to remove. We would give to reason the largest liberty and the widest scope. We would allow it in its researches to grasp after the infinite and thus come up to the development of its highest power, but at the same time we would not forget that the human intellect has its limit, and there are bounds which it cannot pass. However great may be the

approximation towards the infinite, there must forever be an impassable gulf. Inspiration pervading and controlling human reason kept it within its God-appointed range, and never allowed it to waste its energies on objects beyond its grasp on the one hand, or those which were unnecessary and useless on the other. Instead therefore of attempting to prove the existence of God, the entire record is founded upon an assumption of the fact, and gives to the world simply a narrative of his acts. As before remarked then, our work is not to prove the existence of that great eternal Being who has pavilioned himself in darkness. With the Bible we admit the fact, and it is to the mystery of this fact that we call attention.

That there is a God is the great central fact of the Universe. The causeless and dateless existence of this wondrous being must forever be involved in mystery. We travel back through time and include the various epochs of the world's history in our journey. The period of a thousand years takes us through fields of light, the brightest and most glorious period of the world's history, the era embracing the rapid approximation to the culminating point of Christianity. Another millennium, but it is one embracing periods of darkness and gloom. From the twilight of the reformation we enter shadows, and they lengthen and deepen until we reach the midnight of the dark ages. Anon, the darkness decreases and faint glimmerings of light are seen in the valley. Onward we urge our way, the night is passed and the day has come. The "Sun of Righteousness" himself pours his beams upon the world, and nations and kings gaze upon his brightness. It is the day of Christ, another cycle begins. We enter the land of prophets and walk over the ruins of an ancient God appointed dynasty, embracing its wonderful history to this day unwritten, because its destiny is not yet fulfilled. We travel on through its astounding miracles up to its mysterious origin, and contemplate, as we journey, the surrounding and cotemporary dynasties that have passed away, and whose history is only to be found in the records of the past. Monuments rise from deserted plains in grim colossal grandeur, to tell of their greatness and to mark the place of their graves. At length we reach the last cycle, the last as we travel back but the first in the order of time. Nineveh and Babylon, mighty cities, unrivalled for strength and splendor by any succeeding age. Tyre, Sodom and Petra are full of commerce and luxury and art, and their marts and streets and palaces echo to the shouts of thousands. All is silent now. The Mediterranean dashes its sweeping tide over Tyre, the Dead Sea rolls its leaden bitter waters over Sodom, and the drifting sands and wandering Arabs of the desert hold possession of the proud city of Edom. We are in the land of the patriarchs, a world of waters is before us and we cross the flood. Gloomily rises before us the huge unsightly tower of Babel, confusion reigns, for the earth has corrupted its way, and violence and blood are in the land. From generation to generation we travel up to Adam and wander with him, not a fugitive accursed, among the bowers of Eden, and pluck its flowers and eat its fruits. Birds of brightest plumage and sweetest song are here, and here are beautiful forms of living creatures who come and sport in the presence of their lord and master. This blooming Paradise echoes not only with the voice of bird and beast and man, but the voice of God has sounded in tones of fatherly love through all its sylvan shades.

So far for the history of man, but time has left other records. We walk over the green sward of the earth, and smile upon its youthful face, and kiss its virgin flowers, as though it had just sprung from the hand of its Creator and started on its bright career amid the worlds. But this face, like the smile of beauty which often conceals a sorrowful heart, has beneath it a gloom. Eden blooms and all is joy, but deep down in the bosom of earth are marks of hoary age and sad decay. Let us go beyond this fair exterior and examine within. Let us dig a grave in the dust of Eden, and search in its abyss for the relics of buried life which existed before Adam's dust was fashioned into man. The history of man is passed, and we must seek for a higher chronology than the planting of Eden. The first formation takes us beyond the period of six thousand years, and as they descend into the earth and examine the remains embedded in its crust, and the extent of its strata formed by slow sedimentary processes, we sweep over not only thousands but millions of years. Extinct species of plants and extinct orders of animals present themselves to view as if collected by a naturalist into a great and well arranged cabinet, while we pursue our downward track indicating uncounted periods of time. Proceeding onward, we approach a region older than death, because older than life itself, without any forms whatever of vegetable or animal existence. Before us are trackless, ages. What untold periods must have been consumed in the formation of the immense granite rind, miles upon miles in extent, who can tell? And that mighty molten sea which rolls within this rocky rampart, when it commenced its surges what mind can fathom? Or when the globe came whirling from the Creator's hand, a molten mass of primeval fire in that "beginning" of which the sacred record speaks when it breaks the silence of ancient night and first pours light upon man's darkened vision. Who can count the number of the years?

But we leave this globe of fire and rock and earth, and soar to the nearest star and ask its history. Here silence reigns, or if it have inhabitants we may not hold converse with them, they speak a tongue we understand not. On and on we take our flight and soar

"From world to luminous world afar,"

until we make the circuit of the solar system and rest our wearied wings in the brightness of the sun, the centre as well as the first creation of the system which bears its name. Surveying all, we ask, when did these "morning stars sing together and shout for joy" over the period of their birth? But we have scarcely entered upon the threshold of creation. Suns innumerable, and systems which no arithmetical power can reach, rise before us and spread away in distances which no ken of man or telescope can discover. In the vast infinity of space there are stars whose light shot forth at their creation, so distant that their rays have not reached the earth, and there are bright orbs rolling on in their destined tracks, created centillions of ages ago, whose rays never will reach the earth even after millenniums of ages have pawed away.

Mystery deep and awful is around us. We have started from the less and ascended to the greater, from a mere speck like the earth to worlds of matter millions of times greater in magnitude. We have seen the works in part - how small a part - of the Great Creator, but where shall we find his beginning? With the old seer of earth, "we go backward, but he is not there, we go forward, but we cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but we cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand that we cannot see him." Beyond the earth we find the universe peopled with angels, if not with men, myriad hosts running up through all gradations of angelic nature, and the hierarchies of heaven occupying "thrones and dominions, and principalities and powers," but where is he, and whence came he, who made them all? "Who by searching can find out the Almighty to perfection. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us, we cannot attain unto it. It is higher than heaven, what can we do, deeper than hell, what can we know?" What line shall measure, what plummet fathom the abyss of this mystery? What power can penetrate the deep awful solitude of that eternity in which he dwells! What hand shall lift the veil from the "High and Holy One who inhabiteth that eternity?" Who shall describe the existence of him who is "without beginning of days or end of years," from eternity to eternity the AL-AEON who is in and through and over all, the blessed forever? None can enter the secret place of his pavilion or find out the hidings of his power. None can know his "counsels, for they are of old even from eternity," and they shall stand for ever. The reasons that impelled him to create the world of matter and the world of mind, find their origin only in himself, and shall forever be beyond the search and scrutiny of men and angels. The knowledge which we now have in part, but which in eternity shall be perfected, will never enable us to fathom the infinite mind to such an extent that we shall know the motives which prompted him to create the universe and its intelligences, nor will any intellection or spiritual insight, clear and far reaching as it may be, enable us to unravel the mysteries of that creation. As we have no line by which we can measure eternity, so we can have no mental power by which to scan the mind of the infinite God.

Nothing can be so clear as the fact of the existence of a great eternal self-existent Being, from whom all things have emanated and to whom all things are allied, as an endless series of effects from this first great cause. This fact is as thoroughly impressed upon all intelligences, as the laws of matter upon material objects, or the laws of mind upon intellectual. The consciousness of this fact as much inheres in mind as attraction and cohesion inhere in matter; but the mystery of the fact will for ever remain a mystery, and so far as anything pertaining to its revelation is concerned, it is unapproached and will be unapproachable for ever.

Chapter III

The Mystery of Jehovah's Attributes

IN our last Chapter we considered the mystery of the Divine existence; we shall now call attention to the mystery of the Divine attributes. All the attributes of God are co-eternal with his existence, even as matter and its attributes are co-existent, and as we cannot conceive of matter in any of its forms without connecting therewith its essential attributes, no more can we conceive of God only as in possession of those attributes essential to his nature and existence. Progress and development can only be predicated of creatures; perfection, absolute and eternal, from which nothing can be taken and to which nothing can be added, essentially and necessarily belong to the Creator. What he was away back in the infinitely remote periods of his own eternity existing alone, that he is this moment, and what he is now that he will be for ever, unchanged and unchangeable.

As the existence of this eternal Being is a mystery, so alike is the mode of that existence, and as the human mind never will be able to tell the origin of this mysterious Being, neither can it define the mode of his existence; both are alike involved in an impenetrable veil. In contemplating the latter however, we are not left as in the former without data or information on which to base our opinions and conjectures. The path of our investigation is illumined by light from heaven, Revelation instructs us in relation to the attributes of the eternal self-existent One.

In our dissertations on the attributes of God we shall not attempt to pursue any theological order, and shall first invite attention to his infinite knowledge. The fact of such possession is frequently and variously asserted in Divine revelation, and the mind, indeed, apart from, any revelation on the subject, at once infers such a possession in a being who is the cause of all things in the world of matter and mind. With him all facts, all events and all things in the eternity, past, in the time present and in the eternity to come are known with infallible certainty, so that with him, so to speak, there is no succession of ideas, no past, no present or future, but one eternal present, in which all things from eternity to eternity are seen and known as clearly and certainly as one may know his present thoughts and what is transpiring around him. What the infinite mind sees and knows in the future is not seen and known contingently, without foresight or expectation. This is a mere theological expression which is as destitute of propriety as it is of relevancy in a discussion on the Divine attributes. Knowledge with God is an absolute state of mind dependent upon no contingency whatever. To say that he has all knowledge and yet that some things are known by him contingently, is quite as ridiculous as to say though he is omniscient yet there are some things he does not know. Equally ridiculous is the speculation of some theologians, who to avoid a difficulty in the way of their creed, affirm that there are some things which God does not choose to know. The capacity or ability to know all things are very different, as much so as the difference between the finite and the infinite. This infinite knowledge is of necessity, and nothing can come up upon the boundless horizon of the future that has not been and is not now and ever will be present in the Divine mind as a palpable reality. Though no event can transpire simply because it was known to God, yet as known to him it must come to pass and could not by any possibility be otherwise.

Before the first atom was created or the first mind shot forth its intellectual fires through all the endless series of physical and intellectual creations, there has not been a single motion of the one or a thought of the other, and there never will be, that was not known to God from all eternity. The first thought of the first angelic mind that ever existed was known from eternity. The moment of man's birth and the moment of his death were known with infallible certainty from everlasting. Every thought, emotion, volition and action of every moment of our lives in time and forever were known unto God. Man may resolve and re-resolve and counter-resolve, he may determine, pre-determine and then change his mind, but his resolves and purposes and final acts are just such and only just such as they were seen and known of God before he had a beginning. Any other view than this would deprive the infinite mind of omniscience and make Jehovah like ourselves, dependent upon contingencies and the reception of knowledge through the media of the senses or the intellect as the case may be. It must be obvious that any addition to the knowledge of God, by the occurrence of any event whatever in the future, would necessarily argue progress which cannot be predicated of infinite knowledge or absolute perfection, and would be equivalent to the affirmation that God does not know all things in the future as well as the present and past.

Some have attempted to evade the doctrine of the Divine omniscience in relation to the future by asserting that God cannot know what is not the subject of knowledge. Hence, it is said he cannot know a thing as existing before it does exist. We reply, of course not, as this is in itself a contradiction and absurdity. There is no limit to the Divine omniscience but in that which implies a contradiction and an absurdity. Though it is possible for God to know all things, just as it is possible for him to do all things, yet he cannot know what is in itself an absurdity, nor can he do what is wrong. Whatever will transpire in the future, he knows as future. There is a difference however between divine knowledge and divine power, the latter to become active must be preceded by volition, but not so with knowledge, as that is a state of the Divine mind wholly independent of volition.

Omniscience is a full and perfect knowledge of all future events. This knowledge extends through all time and through all eternity, and not only embraces a perfect cognizance of all things which shall yet come to pass, but of all things which have transpired through all the cycles of eternity back to the first entity in the universe of God. Before matter was created or a single change had taken place in the modes of its existence, before the earth, was made a habitation for man out of whose dust he was fashioned, all the scenes that would be enacted upon it, together with the nature and consequences of all the actions, and the names and characters and destinies of all the actors were perfectly known to God. So far as this world is concerned, a succession of events embracing a period of six thousand years has transpired, the nature of which with their proximate and ultimate consequences were known from all eternity. Taking our stand point at the beginning we look out upon the earth as a vast theatre, and behold successively the several acts of the grand drama of life, performed according to the precise order and manner in which they existed in the mind of God. There was not in all the past a single prelude, interlude or afterpiece, incidental or accidental, that was not perfectly known to the

omniscient mind as certainly as if they had been written out in a programme and occurred in the order laid down; and nothing shall occur in the future, even to the "fall of a sparrow," that is. not a matter of the same certain definite knowledge. The seduction of Satan in Eden, whereby he sought the ruin of its sinless inhabitants, was precisely such as Omniscience saw before that rebel angel left his first estate and was cast-out of heaven. Our first parents fell from their state of holiness and happiness in their thoughts, emotions, and volitions, just in the very manner and at the very time it was foreseen of God. The heart of Cain was excited to envy and conceived the dreadful deed which resulted in the death of his righteous brother, and sent himself a murderer and fugitive accursed over the earth, just as God foresaw the sad and melancholy event. The antediluvians were filled with all manner of wickedness, and covered the land with violence and blood so that their crimes reached heaven and called for vengeance, just as Jehovah foresaw them before Cain fled "to the land eastward from Eden." The faith and righteousness of Noah, the building of the ark and the destruction of the human race by a flood, all came to pass as forever known. The disgrace of Noah, the wickedness of Ham, and the curse of Canaan and his descendents forever, all transpired not as foreordained but as foreknown forever. The wonderful and tragic events in the life of Abraham and Lot, the gross unnatural wickedness of the Sodomites and the dreadful destruction of the cities of the Plain, the fate and fortune of Joseph, and all the events connected with his wonderful life in the court of Egypt; the birth, preservation, and exaltation of Moses, his flight to Arabia, his return to Egypt, the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, the astounding miracles, the deliverance of the Israelites, the passage of the Red Sea, and all the events connected with their wonderful desert wanderings until their entrance into Canaan; the life, fortunes and history of David, the perversity of Absalom, the fate of Saul and Jonathan, the numerous wars of the Israelites, their successes and defeats, and all the events connected with their wonderful history, as well as those which transpired among surrounding and cotemporary nations, the destruction of armies and cities, the rise and fall of empires were all known precisely as they came to pass, from all eternity.

All the events and circumstances connected with the birth of Christ, the sending of Pilate from Rome to Judea as Governor, the ministry of John, the baptism of Jesus, his temptation in the wilderness, all his miracles, parables, sermons and acts, his betrayal, denial, sentence, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension were all known unto God before angels fell or Adam sinned. The stoning of Stephen, the conversion of Saul, his ministry, imprisonment and martyrdom, together with all the actions of the apostles and all the cotemporaneous events, the taking of Jerusalem by Titus, the immense slaughter of the Jews, the preservation of the Christians, the banishment of John, including all events not here enumerated found in sacred, profane and unwritten history, the wonderful spread of the Gospel, the ten Pagan persecutions, the destruction of the Roman Empire, the events which occurred during the long dark night of a thousand years, the rise of Mahomedanism and Popery were all and singular known to the infinite God. The dawn of the Reformation, the struggles and successes of Luther and his coadjutors, the translation of the Scriptures, the burning of Tyndal and Wickliff, the Papal persecutions, the art of printing, the discovery of America, the revolt of the Colonies, the foundation of a Republic, all the wars and revolutions that have

occurred in all parts of the world, and all the events that have transpired and are now transpiring were in the Divine mind forever.

If any object to this particular and comprehensive knowledge of God on the ground of its being unnecessary or beneath the notice of the infinite mind, let them remember that the very necessity of the case requires it, and it could not by any possibility be otherwise. The Omniscient God who sees the end from the beginning, unto whom all things are naked and open, whose infinite eye takes in its universal gaze all time and all eternity, must know all things past, present and future. Every thought, every perception, every emotion, and every volition of our minds, whether awake or asleep, and every action of our lives from our entrance into the world to the present time, together with every thought, word and act of our lives, through the future period of our probation and through the endless duration of a future state were forever known to God. All the events that have befallen us, all the circumstances by which we have been surrounded and all the events that shall befall us, both as it regards their nature and the manner and time of their occurrence, are all known with absolute certainty, and as known they will come to pass as absolutely as if they had been decreed. This foreknowledge does not make them come to pass, nor yet does it argue that they might not have been otherwise, for had they been otherwise they would have been thus known. The period of time we have to live, the day, hour and moment of our death, and the manner of it, and all the attendant circumstances, and the destiny that awaits us in the future world are all known and were known before we had an existence with as much certainty as if they had been foreordained of God. The very nature of Jehovah as revealed in nature and revelation shuts us up to this belief. Nothing can be more clear and conclusive than the fact that if God be eternal, omniscient and omnipresent, there can be no place in the universe where he is not always present, and there can be no thing which he does not know. There is no escaping this conclusion without denying the existence and attributes of God, and the flimsy and puerile argument that omniscience is simply a capacity to know all things, just as omnipotence is a power to do all things; and hence, as God does not choose to do all things he may not choose to know all things as before stated, is an absurdity too gross and palpable for a moment's consideration. Such a statement may properly be affirmed of man, for there is no limit to his capacity to know, while there is a limit to his power to do, but to affirm it of God is a species of irreverence if not blasphemy, which we should shudder to utter. What does such a statement require, but that the knowledge of God in relation to some things, and his ignorance of others shall depend upon his choice, which makes the whole hypothesis absurd and ridiculous, inasmuch as to be able to make a selection of those things he would choose to know, he must necessarily know the nature of those things concerning which he chooses to be ignorant. It is vastly better, honestly and frankly to acknowledge a difficulty which we may find impossible to reconcile with our preconceived notions of theology, than to endeavor by any sophistry to evade it, as all efforts of this description do ultimate injury to the common cause of truth. Theologians may draw out the finest spun theories interwoven with the nicest metaphysical subtleties, bewildering and confounding to minds not adequate to detect their fallacy; but truth needs not such foreign aid, she walks forth not like a spectre dimly seen in the misty twilight, with a veiled face and downcast eyes, but she stands erect,

unveiled, full-eyed and beautiful, shining in her own light. To see her is to know her, and to know her is to love her.

The question is not whether the certainty which exists in the mind of God in regard to all events which have come to pass or which shall come to pass is compatible with man's freedom or not, but whether there is such certainty in the divine mind. It is a question of fact and with that alone we are concerned. We should "Follow Truth where'er she leads the way," if in so doing we should cross and re-cross every path we have made in the wilderness of thought for a thousand years. If the temple which we have reared and in which we have enshrined the object of our worship prove to be an idolatrous temple, and our worship a false misplaced one, the sooner we behold it a heap of ruins the better. Truth is that "pearl of great price" which we should be anxious to purchase at any cost or sacrifice within our power. Better throw all our loves away than put out the only light that can shine in eternity.

As it regards the connexion or bearing of God's foreknowledge upon human events and actions, we confidently affirm there is not the remotest conceivable contact so far as causation is concerned in bringing them to pass ; and there can be no more connexion between foreknowledge and foreordination than there is between the volitions of a human mind and the revolutions of a planet, the transit of a star, or the circuit of a comet. The idea that a foreknowledge of every thing that will transpire, from the wreck of a nation to the fall of a bird, or from the conflagration of a world to the derangement of an atom, is attributing to the Almighty a trifling employment, can only be entertained by those who take a narrow and contracted view of his Providence, which extends to the minutest insect invisible to the naked eye, as specially as to the mastodon whose tread shakes the earth. In all God's illimitable empire there is nothing trifling or insignificant, and the same wisdom and power are displayed in the creation and preservation of an atom as a world, of an insect as an archangel.

Though all things come to pass as they were foreknown of God, yet there are some things that come to pass which were predetermined. These events of course are absolute and unavoidable. God predetermined the creation of the Universe with its suns and systems, and all the orders of intelligences from seraph to man. He also foreordained all the laws for the government of the physical and intellectual universe. He also determined the essential freedom of angels and men and endowed them with adequate power to obey all the laws of their being, and any other view of angels or men would make them beings of necessity, mere moral automata, entirely without moral character and without accountability. Hence, there could have been no such thing as sin in the world, unless indeed, we could conceive the horrid idea of making the Creator its author. It would be just the same as if matter should infract one of the laws by which it is governed, and should in consequence thereof be held accountable for the violation. The infinite knowledge of Jehovah took in the fall of angels and men as the result of an abuse of their freedom, and all the provisions growing out of that fall, as well as all the consequences, were alike predetermined. But though all thin is true, yet in man's nature, duty, and mysterious destiny, there are no dark inflexible decrees fixing

from all eternity his fate. No terrible iron barrier frowns across his pathway to the world beyond. The same freedom to rise from the fall with gracious help provided by infinite love is his, and in the inception and development of this scheme of restoration a more glorious mystery has been opened up to man's vision than was ever before brought to the contemplation of the minds of angels.

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