

AUTHORS INTRODUCTION TO A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY
Dr. John Gill



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Apology

Having completed an Exposition of the whole Bible, the Books both of the Old and of the New Testament; I considered with myself what would be best next to engage in for the further instruction of the people under my care; and my thoughts led me to enter upon a Scheme of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity, first the former and then the latter; the one being the foundation of the other, and both having a close connection with each other.

Doctrine and Influence

Doctrine has an influence upon practice, especially evangelical doctrine, spiritually understood, affectionately embraced, and powerfully and feelingly experienced; so true is what the Apostle asserts, that the "Grace of God", that is, the Doctrine of the Grace of God, "that bringeth Salvation", the good news, the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, which is peculiar to Gospel Doctrine, "hath appeared to all men", Gentiles as well as Jews, in the external ministry of the word; teaching us, to whom it comes with power and efficacy in the demonstration of the Spirit, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world", Tit 2:11,12. Where there is not the doctrine of faith, the obedience of faith cannot be expected. Where there is not the doctrine of the Gospel, and men have not learned Christ, they live for the most part as if there was no God in the world, and give themselves up to work all sin with greediness. And on the other hand, doctrine without practice, or a mere theory and speculative knowledge of things, unless reduced to practice, is of no avail; such are only "vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds, profess to know God in word, but in works deny him, have a form of godliness without the power of it, a name to live but are dead."

Doctrine and Practice

Doctrine and practice should go together; and in order both to know and do the will of God, instruction in doctrine and practice is necessary; and the one being first taught will lead on to the other. This method of instruction the Apostle Paul has pointed out to us in some of his Epistles, especially in the Epistle to the Ephesians; in which he first treats of Election, Predestination, Adoption, Acceptance in Christ, Redemption and Pardon of Sin, Regeneration and other doctrines of grace, and of the Privileges of the Saints under the Gospel dispensation; and then enforces the several duties incumbent on them as men and Christians, respecting them in their several stations, in the church, in their families, and in the world. So the Apostle instructed Timothy, first to "teach" the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, the doctrine that is according to godliness and productive of it, and then to "exhort" and press men to the duties of religion from evangelical motives and principles. And he also enjoined Titus to affirm the doctrines of the Gospel with constancy and certainty, to this end, "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." 1Tim 6:2,3 Tit 3:8. And now having finished my Scheme of Doctrinal Divinity, at the importunity of my friends I have been prevailed upon to publish it.

Systematical Divinity

Systematical Divinity, I am sensible, is now become very unpopular. Formulas and articles of faith, creeds, confessions, catechisms, and summaries of divine truths, are greatly decried in our age; and yet, what art or science soever but has been reduced to a system? physics, metaphysics, logic, rhetoric, &c.

Philosophy, Cartesian, Newtonian.

Philosophy in general has had its several systems: not to take notice of the various sects and systems of philosophy in ancient times; in the last age, the Cartesian system of philosophy greatly obtained, as the Newtonian system now does.

Astronomy (System of the Universe)

Astronomy in particular has been considered as a system; sometimes called the System of the Universe, and sometimes the Solar or Planetary System: the first that is known is what was brought by Pythagoras into Greece and Italy, and from him called the Pythagorean System; and which was followed by many of the first and ancient philosophers, though for many years, till late neglected; but has been of late ages revived, and now much in vogue: the next is the Ptolemaic System, advanced by Ptolemy; which places the earth in the centre of the universe, and makes the heavens, with the sun, moon, and stars, to revolve about it; and which was universally embraced for many hundreds of years, till the Pythagorean System was revived by Copernicus, two or three hundred years ago,

called, from him, the Copernican System.

Medicine, Law, Art Science a System

In short, medicine, jurisprudence or law, and every art and science, are reduced to a system or body; which is no other than an assemblage or composition of the several doctrines or parts of a science; and why should Divinity, the most noble science¹, be without a system? Evangelical truths are spread and scattered about in the sacred Scriptures; and to gather them together, and dispose of them in a regular orderly method, surely cannot be disagreeable; but must be useful, for the more clear and perspicuous understanding them, for the better retaining them in memory, and to show the connection, harmony, and agreement of them.

Formulas of Faith, Symbols or Creeds

Accordingly, we find that Christian writers, in ancient times, attempted something of this nature; as the several formulas of faith, symbols, or creeds, made in the first three or four centuries of Christianity; the “Stromata” of Clemens of Alexandria; the four books of Principles, by Origen; the divine Institutions of Lactantius; the large Catechism of Gregory Nyssene; the Theology of Gregory Nazianzen; the Exposition of the Apostles’ Symbol, by Ruffinus; and the Enchiridion of Austin, with many others that followed: and since the Reformation, we have had bodies or systems of divinity, and confessions of faith, better digested, and drawn up with greater accuracy and consistence; and which have been very serviceable to lead men into the knowledge of evangelical doctrine, and confirm them in it; as well as to show the agreement and harmony of sound divines and churches, in the more principal parts of it: and even those who now cry out against systems, confessions, and creeds, their predecessors had those of their own; Arius had his creed; and the Socinians have their catechism, the Racovian Catechism; and the Remonstrants have published their confession of faith; not to take notice of the several bodies of Divinity, published by Episcopius, Limborch, Curcellaeus, and others. The Jews, in imitation of the Christians, have reduced their theology to certain heads or articles of faith; the chief, if not the first that took this method, was the famous Maimonides, who comprised their religious tenets in “thirteen” articles: after him R. Joseph Alba reduced them to three classes, the Existence of God, the Law of Moses, and the Doctrine of Rewards and Punishments.

Ten Commandments (Decalogue)

But what makes most for our purpose, and is worthy of our example, are the Scripture Compendiums or Systems of Doctrine and Duty. What a compendium or body of laws is the “Decalogue” or “Ten Commands”, drawn up and calculated more especially for the use of the Jews, and suited to their circumstances! a body of laws not to be equalled by the wisest legislators of Greece and Rome, Minos, Lycurgus, Zaleucus, and Numa; nor by the laws of the Twelve Roman Tables, for order and regularity, for clearness and perspicuity, for comprehensiveness and brevity; being divided into two tables, in the most perfect order; the first respecting the worship of God and the duties owing to him, and the other respecting men and the mutual duties they owe to each other.

The Lord’s Prayer

As prayer is a very principal and incumbent duty on men with respect to God, our Lord has given a very compendious directory, as to the matter of it, in what is commonly called the “Lord’s Prayer”; which consists of petitions the most full, proper, and pertinent, and in the most regular order.

Articles of Faith

And as to articles of faith or things to be believed, we have a creed, made mention of in Heb 6:1,2 consisting of six articles; repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. These are commonly thought to be so many articles of the Christian faith; but I rather think² they are so many articles of the Jewish Creed, embraced and professed by believers under the Jewish dispensation; since the Christian Hebrews are directed to consider them as the principles of the doctrine of Christ, as an introduction, and as leading on to it, and which were in some sense to be “left” and not “laid again”; they were not to stick and stop here, but to go on to perfection, by searching into and embracing doctrines more sublime and perfect, revealed in the Gospel; at least they were not to be any longer instructed in the above articles

1 “Quo enim et nobilior caeteris omnibus disciplinis est theologia, eo magis accurate sunt ejus dogmata noscenda, ac methodice etiam percipienda”; Amesii Paraenesis ad Studios. Theolog.

2 See my Exposition of Heb. vi. 1, 2.

in the manner they had been, but in a clearer manner, unattended with legal ceremonies, to view them and make use of them. Thus for instance, they, the believers, Christian Hebrews, were not to learn the doctrine of repentance from slain beasts or to signify it by them, as they had been used to do; for every sacrifice brought for sin, which they were no longer obliged to, was a tacit confession and an acknowledgment of sin, and that they repented of it, and deserved to die as the creature did; but now they were to exercise evangelical repentance in the view of a crucified Christ, and remission of sin by his blood: and whereas they had been taught to have “faith towards God”, as the God of Israel, they were now moreover to believe in Christ as the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Saviour of lost sinners, without the intervention of sacrifices. See Joh 14:1. The “doctrine of baptisms”, is to be understood of the divers baptisms, or bathings among the Jews, spoken of in Heb 9:10, which had a doctrine in them, teaching the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ to wash in for sin and for uncleanness; which they were no more to learn in this way, but to apply immediately to the blood of Christ for it. And the doctrine of “laying on of hands” respects the laying on of the hands of the priests and people on the head of the sacrifices, which instructed in that great and evangelical truth, the transfer and imputation of sin to Christ, offered up in the room and stead of his people; and which was to be taught and learnt no longer in that manner, since Christ was now made sin for his people, and had had their sins imputed to him, which he had bore in his own body on the tree: and as for the doctrines of the “resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment”, they were such as distinguished Jews and Gentiles, which latter were greatly strangers to a future state; and though they were common to Jews and Christians, yet the believing Hebrews were not to rest in the knowledge they had of these, as enjoyed under the former dispensation; but to go on to perfection; and to press forward towards a greater share of knowledge of them and of other more sublime doctrines; since life and immortality were brought to light by Christ in a clearer and brighter manner through the Gospel. But all that I mean by this is, that the principal doctrines of faith under the Jewish dispensation are reduced to a system; though to be improved and perfected under the Gospel dispensation. Those articles were but few; though Gregory³ observes, that according to the increase of times, the knowledge of saints increased, and the nearer they were to the coming of the Saviour the more fully they perceived the mysteries of salvation: and so the articles in the formulas and symbols of the first Christians were but few, suitable to the times in which they lived, and as opposite to the errors then broached; and which were increased by new errors that sprung up, which made an increase of articles necessary; otherwise the same articles of faith were believed by the ancients as by later posterity, as Aquinas concludes by saying⁴: “Articles of faith have increased by succession of times, not indeed as to the substance, but as to the explanation and express profession of them; for what are explicitly and under a greater number believed by posterity, all the same were believed by the fathers before them, implicitly and under a lesser number.”

Doctrine of the Trinity

It is easy to observe, that the first summaries of faith recorded by the most ancient writers went no further than the doctrine of the Trinity, or what concerns the Three Divine Persons; the doctrines of the heretics of the first ages being opposed to one or other of them: but when other heresies sprung up and other false doctrines were taught, it became necessary to add new articles, both to explain, defend, and secure truth, and to distinguish those who were found in the faith of the Gospel from those that were not.

Mention is made in the New Testament of a “form of doctrine delivered”, and a “form of sound words” that had been “heard” and was to be “held fast”, and of a proportion or analogy of faith, according to which ministers were to prophesy or preach; the first of these is spoken of in Rom 6:17 ---”But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you”; which is not to be understood of the Scriptures or written word delivered unto them; but of the Gospel and the doctrines of it preached by the apostle in the ministry of the word to the Romans, which they had yielded the obedience of faith unto, and which was tupov, a “type”, or pattern, as the word is rendered, Heb 8:5 and an “example”, 1Tim 4:12 according to which they were to conform their faith and practice; and which in the next place referred to, 2 Tim 1:13 is called upotupwsiv, translated a “pattern”, Eph 1:16 a form exactly expressed, always to be had in view, to be attended to, and followed; and a delineation, such as a picture or the outlines of a portrait given by painters to their learners, always to be looked unto and imitated; and such a form the apostle proposed to Timothy, carefully to respect and give information of to others as a rule

³ Homil. 16. in Ezek. apud Aquin.

⁴ Summa Theolog. Sec. sec. qu. i. artic. 7.

of faith and practice⁵; which cannot be understood of the Scriptures, though of what is agreeable to them; since it is what Timothy had “heard” of the apostle, either in his private conversation, or in his public ministry, even a set of Gospel doctrines collected out of the Scriptures and confirmed by them, reduced into a system; and thus the apostle himself reduces his ministry to these two heads, “repentance towards God”, and “faith towards the Lord” Jesus Christ, Acts 20:21. And a rich summary and glorious compendium and chain of Gospel truths does he deliver, Rom 8:30 worthy, as a form and pattern, to Gospel ministers to attend unto, and according to it to regulate their ministrations. Once more, the apostle speaks of a “proportion” or an “analogy of faith”, in Rom 12:6. “Whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith”; by which “faith” Calvin, on the text observes, are meant the first axioms of religion, to which whatsoever doctrine is not found to answer is convicted of falsehood. And so Piscator, upon the words, according to the analogy of faith, that is, so as that the interpretation of Scripture we bring is analogous to the articles of faith, that is, agreeing with them and consenting to them, and not repugnant: and Parseus on the text is more express saying: “Analogy, is not the same as “measure” (Rom 12:3) for measure is of one thing measured, but analogy is between two things that are analogous; but the apostle seems to describe something more, namely, to prescribe a rule by which all prophesying is to be directed; therefore by faith others understand the rule of Scripture and the axioms of faith, such as are comprehended in the Symbol of the Apostolic faith (or the Apostles’ Creed) which have in them a manifest truth from the Scriptures. “Analogy” is the evident harmony of faith and consent of the heads (or articles) of faith, to which whatever agrees is true, and whatever disagrees is false and adulterate. This is the rule of all prophesying (or preaching); therefore, according to the rule of the sacred Scripture and the Apostles’ Creed, all interpretations, disputations, questions, and opinions in the church, are to be examined, that they may be conformable thereunto.”

Apostle’s Creed

And though what is now called the Apostles’ Creed might not be composed by them, nor so early as their time; yet the substance of it was agreeable to their doctrine, and therefore called theirs; and there was a “regula fidei”, a rule of faith, very near it in words, received, embraced, and professed very early in the Christian church; which Tertullian⁶ gives in these words, “The rule of faith is truly one, solely immoveable and irreformable (not to be corrected and mended); namely, of believing in the only God Almighty, the maker of the world, and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead on the third day, received into heaven, sitting now at the right hand of the Father, who will come to judge the quick and dead by or at the resurrection of the dead.”

And such a set of principles these, as or what are similar to them and accord with the word of God, may be called the analogy of faith. And a late writer ⁷ observes on the word “analogy”; “The analogy of faith, our divines call the sum of heavenly doctrine concerning articles of faith, taken out of such passages of Scripture, where, as in their proper place, they are treated of in clear and plain words. “Upon the whole, it seems no ways incongruous with the sacred writings, but perfectly agreeable to them, that articles and heads of faith, or a summary of gospel truths, may be collected from them, to declare explicitly our belief of them, to strengthen the faith of others in them, to show our agreement in them with other Christians in the principal parts of them, and to distinguish ourselves from those who oppose the faith once delivered to the saints.

Article Words Limited To Scripture

It is strongly pleaded, that articles and confessions of faith, in which men are to agree, should be expressed in the bare words of the sacred Scriptures, and that nothing should be considered as a fundamental article that is matter of controversy: as to the latter, if that was admitted, there would be scarce any article at all left us to believe; for what is there almost that is believed, but what is controverted by some, nor any passage of Scripture brought

⁵ Calvin on the passage has these words,

“The apostle seems to me to command Timothy that he be tenacious of the doctrine he had learned, not only as to the substance, but as to the figure of the oration, (or form of speech or set of words used) for upotupwsiv, the word used, is a lively expression of things as if presented to the eye; Paul knew how easy is a lapse or deflection from the pure doctrine, and therefore solicitously cautioned Timothy not to decline from the form of teaching he had received.”

⁶ De virgin. veland. c. 1. vid. praescript. haeret. c. 13.

⁷ “Analogiam fidei nostrates dicunt summam coelestis doctrinae de articulis fidei e talibus scripturae petitam locis, ubi claris et perspicuis verbis ac, seu in propria sede, de iis agitur”, Stockii Clavis Ling. s. Nov. Test. p. 627.

in support of it, but the sense of it is called in question, or perverted? for as Clemens of Alexandria⁸ says, “I do not think there is any scripture so happy as to be contradicted by none. “As to the former, that we are to be tied up to the bare words of Scripture concerning any doctrine of faith delivered in them; though we ought to entertain the highest esteem of the words of Scripture, and have the greatest value for them, as being clothed with such majesty, and having such an energy in them, which the words that man’s wisdom teacheth have not; yet our sense of them cannot be expressed but in words literally varying from them: and it should be settled what is meant by bare words of Scripture, whether of the original text, Hebrew and Greek, or of any translation, as English, &c.; if the words of a translation, a man cannot be sure that this always does express the sense of Scripture, especially in passages difficult and controverted; if of the original, then both he that makes the confession, and they to whom it is made, ought to understand Hebrew and Greek; and even every member of a church where a confession of faith is required in order to communion; and if this is to be made in the bare words of Scripture, be it in the words of a translation, without an explanation of their sense of them in other words, it might introduce into a Christian community all sorts of errors that can be named, which would be utterly inconsistent with its peace, concord, harmony, and union: moreover, to be obliged to express ourselves only in the words of Scripture, would be:

1. To destroy all exposition and interpretation of Scripture; for without words different from, though agreeable to, the sacred Scriptures, we can never express our sense of them, nor explain them to others according to the sense we have entertained of them; and though no scripture is of private interpretation, or a man’s own interpretation, so as to be obliging on others, yet by this means it will become of no interpretation at all, private or public, of a man’s own or of others. It is indeed sometimes said that “Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture”, and which in some respects is true; as when, for the better understanding of a passage of Scripture, another more clear and explicit is set unto it and compared with it, and which serves to throw light on it and give a clearer discernment of it, and of its true sense; but then that light, discernment, and sense, cannot be expressed but in words literally different from them both.

2. To be obliged to express ourselves about divine things in the bare words of Scripture, must tend to make the ministry and preaching of the word in a great measure useless; for them a minister of the word would have nothing else to do but to repeat or read some select passages of Scripture relating to any particular subject, or collect a string of them, which refer to the same subject, and deliver them without attempting any illustration of them, or making use of any reasonings from them, to explain or strengthen any point of doctrine contained in them; so that the people in common may as well, in a manner, stay at home and read the Scriptures in their private houses, as to attend on public ministrations. Surely the apostle Paul, when he: “reasoned out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached was Christ, Act 17:2,3” must in these his reasonings, explanations, and allegations, use his own words; which though they accorded with the Scriptures, must literally vary from them out of which he reasoned, and by which he elucidated and confirmed his arguments concerning the Messiahship of Jesus, his suffering of death, and resurrection from the dead: and though he said no other as to substance than what Moses and the prophets said concerning Christ, yet in words different from theirs. According to this scheme all public ministrations must be at an end, as well as all writing in defence of truth and for the confutation of errors; yea:

3. This must in a great measure cramp all religious conversation about divine things, if not destroy it. To what purpose is it for them that fear God to meet frequently and speak often one to another about the things of God and truths of the Gospel, if they are not to make use of their own words to express their sense of these things by them? and how in this way can their Christian conferences be to mutual edification? how can they build up one another in their most holy faith? how can weaker and less experienced Christians receive any advantage from more knowing and stronger ones, if only they are to declare their sense of things in the bare words of Scripture?

4. Indeed, as Dr. Owen says⁹, if this is the case, as it would be unlawful to speak or write otherwise than in the words of Scripture, so it would be unlawful to think or conceive in the mind any other than what the Scripture expresses: the whole of what he says on this subject is worth repeating:

“To deny the liberty, yea, the necessity hereof, (that is, of making use of such words and expressions, as it may be, are not literally and formally contained in Scripture, but only are unto our conceptions and apprehensions

8 Stomat. l. 1. p. 277.

9 The Doctrine of the Trinity vindicated, p. 21.

expository of what is so contained) is to deny all interpretation of the Scripture, all endeavours to express the sense of the words of it unto the understandings of one another, which is, in a word, to render the Scripture itself altogether useless; if it is unlawful for me to speak or write what I conceive to be the sense of the words of scripture and the nature of the thing signified and expressed by them, it is unlawful for me also to think or conceive in my mind what is the sense of the words or nature of the things; which to say is to make brutes of ourselves, and to frustrate the whole design of God in giving unto us the great privilege of his word.”

5. In this way, the sentiments of one man in any point of religion cannot be distinguished from those of another, though diametrically opposite;

Arian and Athanasian

So an Arian cannot be known from an Athanasian both will say, in the words of Scripture, that Christ is the “great God”, the “true God”, and “over all God blessed for ever”; but without expressing themselves in their own words, their different sentiments will not be discerned; the one holding that Christ is a created God, of a like but not of the same substance with his Father; the other, that he is equal with him, of the same nature, substance, and glory: and he that believes the latter, surely it cannot be unlawful to express his belief of it in such words which declare the true sense of his mind.

Sabellian Unitarian, Trinitarian

So a Sabellian or Unitarian and a Trinitarian, will neither of them scruple to say in Scripture terms what Christ says of himself and his Father, “I and my Father are one”; and yet the former holds, they are one in person or but one person; whereas the latter affirms, that they are one in nature and essence, but two distinct persons; and surely it must be lawful so to express himself, if this is the real sentiment of his mind. A Socinian and an Antisocinian will join in saying that Christ the “Word is God”, and that he is the “only begotten of the Father”, and the “only begotten Son of God”; and yet the one maintains that he is only God by office, not by nature, and that he is the only begotten Son of God by office or by adoption; when the other believes that Christ is God by nature, and that he is the Son of the Father by natural and eternal generation, being begotten by him. It is necessary therefore they should make use of their own words to express their sentiments by, or how otherwise should it be known that they differ from one another? And indeed this seems to be the grand reason why it is urged with so much vehemence, by some, that only Scripture words and phrases should be made use of, that their erroneous tenets may not be detected and exposed; for, as a learned man has observed¹⁰, such as cavil at the formulas (of sound doctrine used by the orthodox) and plead they should be very short, and composed in the bare words of Scripture “eos aliquid monstri alere”, these nourish and cherish some monstrous notion, as the experience of all ages testify. And sometimes such persons take detached passages of Scripture from different places, and join them together, though they have no connection and agreement with each other; and such a method Irenaeus¹¹ observes the ancient heretics took, who made use of passages of Scripture: “that their figments might not seem to be without a testimony; but passed over the order and connection of the Scriptures, and loosened the parts of truth as much as in them lay; and who fitly compares such to one who should take the effigy of a king made of jewels and precious stones by a skilful artificer, and loosen and separate them, and of them make the form of a dog or a fox.”

6. It does not appear that those men who are so strenuous for the use of Scripture phrases only in articles of religion, have a greater value for the Scriptures than others; nay, not so much; for if we are to form a judgment of them by their sermons and writings, one would think they never read the Scriptures at all, or very little, since they make such an infrequent use of them: you shall scarcely hear a passage of Scripture quoted by them in a sermon, or produced by them in their writings; more frequently Seneca, Cicero, and others; and it looks as if they thought it very impolite, and what might serve to disgrace their more refined writings, to fill their performances with them: and after all, it is easy to observe that these men, as the Arians formerly, and the Socinians more lately, carry on their cause, and endeavour to support it by making use of unscriptural words and phrases; and therefore it is not with a very good grace that such men, or those of the same cast with them, object to the use of words and phrases not syllabically expressed in Scripture; and the rather since the Arians were the first that began to make use of unscriptural phrases, as Athanasius affirms¹². The Athanasians had as good a right to use the word omoousiov

¹⁰ Witsius in Symbol. Exercitat. 2. s. 21. p. 21.

¹¹ Adv. Haeres. l. 1. c. 1. p. 33.

¹² Synod. Nicen. contr. haeres. Arian. decret. p. 417.

as the Arians *omoioousiov*, and thereby explain their sense and defend their doctrine concerning the person of Christ, and his equality with God, against the latter, who introduced a phrase subversive of it; and the Calvinists have as good authority to make use of the word “satisfaction” in the doctrine of expiation of sin and atonement for it, as the Socinians and Remonstrants have for the use of the word “acceptilation”, whereby they seek to obscure and weaken it. Words and phrases, though not literally expressed in scripture, yet if what is meant by them is to be found there, they may be lawfully made use of; as some respecting the doctrine of the Trinity; of these some are plainly expressed, which are used in treating of that doctrine, as “nature”, Gal 4:8 “Godhead”, Col 2:9 “Person”, the person of the Father, and the person of Christ, Heb 1:3 2Co 2:10 2 Co 4:6 and others clearly signified, as “essence”, by the name of God, “I am what I am”, Ex 3:14 the “unity” of divine persons in it, Joh 10:30 a “Trinity” of Persons in the unity of Essence, 1 Jo 5:7 the “generation” of the Son by and of the Father, Ps 2:7 Joh 1:14,18 and others respecting some peculiar doctrines of revelation, concerning the state of men and the grace of Christ; as the “imputation of Adam’s sin” to his posterity, Rom 5:19 and the “imputation of righteousness”, i.e. of Christ’s to them that believe, which is nearly syllabically expressed in Rom 4:6 and the “imputation” of sin to Christ, who “was made sin”, i.e. by imputation, 2 Cor 5:21. And the “satisfaction” of Christ for sin, in all those places where it is signified that what Christ has done and suffered in the room and stead of his people is to the content of law and justice, and God is well pleased with it: and these are the principal words and phrases objected to, and which we shall not be prevailed upon to part with easily. And indeed, words and phrases, the use of which have long obtained in the churches of Christ, and the sense of them, is well known, and serve aptly to convey the sense of those that use them; it is unreasonable to require them to part with them, unless others, and those better words and phrases, are substituted in their room; and such as are proposed should not be easily admitted without strict examination; for there is often times a good deal of truth in that saying, “qui fingit nova verba, nova gignit dogmata”; he that coins new words, coins new doctrines; which is notorious in the case of Arius; for not only Alexander¹³, his Bishop charged him with saying, without scripture, and what was never said before, that God was not always a Father, but there was a time when he was not a Father; and that the Word was not always, but was made out of things that were not; and that there was a time when he was not a Son: but Eusebius¹⁴, a favourer of his, also owns that the inspired writings never used such phrases, to *ex ouk ontwn, kai to, hn pote ote ouk hn*, that Christ was “from non-entities”, from things that are not, i.e. was made out of nothing; and that “there was a time when he was not”; phrases, he says, they had never been used to.

The subject of the following Work being “Theology”, or what we call Divinity, it may be proper to consider the signification and use of the word, and from whence it has its rise. I say, what we call “Divinity”; for it seems to be a word, as to the use of it in this subject, peculiar to us; foreign writers never entitle their works of this kind. “Corpus” vel “systema” vel “medulla Divinitatis”, a body or system or marrow of Divinity, but “Corpus” vel “systema” vel “medulla Theologiae”, a body or system or marrow of Theology. The word “Divinitas”, from whence our word Divinity comes, is only used by Latin writers for Deity or Godhead; but since custom and use have long fixed the sense of the word among us, to signify, when used on this subject, a Treatise on the science of divine things, sacred truths, and Christian doctrines, taken out of the scriptures; we need not scruple the use of it. The Jews seem to come nearest to us in the phrase which they use concerning it, calling it¹⁵, *tyhlah vel twhlah tmkx* “a Science of Divinity”, or a “divine Science”; that is, a Science or doctrine concerning divine things; concerning God; concerning his divinity and things belonging to him and which, in the main, is the same as to sense with the word “Theology”, as will be seen hereafter and here, before we proceed any further, it may not be improper to observe, the distinction of the Jewish Theology, or the two parts into which they divide it. The first they call *tyvarb hvem* the work of Bereshith or the creation; for Bereshith being the first word in #Ge 1:1. “In the beginning God created”, they frequently use it to signify the whole work of the creation; so that this part of their Theology respects the creatures God has made, and the nature of them whereby the invisible things of God, as the apostle says, are discerned, even his eternal power and Godhead; and this is their “physics” or “natural Theology”. The other branch is called *hbkrm hvem* the “work of the chariot”¹⁶, which appellation is taken from the vision in #Eze 1:1-28 of the four living creatures in the form of a chariot, which is the more abstruse and mysterious part of their Theology;

13 Apud Socrat. Hist. l. 1. c. 6. vid. Sozomen. Hist. l. 1. c. 15.

14 Apud Theodoret. Hist. l. 1. c. 12.

15 Vid. Buxtorf. Talmud. Lex. Col. 752.

16 Vid. Maimon. praefat. ad More Nevochim, par. 1.

Metaphysics or Supernatural Theology

and may be called their “metaphysics” or “supernatural Theology”; and which treats of God, and of his divine attributes; of the Messiah; of Angels, and the souls of men; as in the Book of Zohar, and other cabalistic writings. But to go on.

“Theology” is a Greek word, and signifies a discourse concerning God and things belonging to him; it was first in use among the heathen poets and philosophers, and so the word “Theologue”. Lantantius says¹⁷, the most ancient writers of Greece were called “Theologues”; these were their poets who wrote of their Deities, and of the genealogies of them; Pherecydes is said to be the first that wrote of divine things; so Thales says¹⁸, in his letter to him, hence he had the name of “Theologue”¹⁹; though some make Museus the son of Eumolphus, the first of this sort²⁰; others give the title to Orpheus. Pythagoras, the disciple of Pherecydes, has also this character; and Porphyry²¹, by way of eminence, calls him “the Theologue”; and who often in his writings speaks of the “Theologues”²²; and this character was given to Plato; also Aristotle²³ makes mention of the “Theologues”, as distinct from naturalists, or the natural philosophers; and Cicero²⁴ also speaks of them, and seems to design by them the poets, or the authors of mystic Theology.

Egyptian Theology

The Egyptians had their Theology²⁵, which they communicated to Darius, the father of Xerxes; and so had the Magi and the Chaldeans; of whom Democritus is said to learn Theology and Astrology²⁶. The priests of Delphos are called by Plutarch²⁷, the “Theologues” of Delphos. It is from hence now that these words “Theology” and “Theologues” have been borrowed, and made use of by Christian writers; and I see no impropriety in the use of them; nor should they be thought the worse of for their original, no more than other words which come from the same source; for though these words are used of false deities, and of persons that treat of them; it follows not but that they may be used, with great propriety, of discourses concerning the true God, and things belonging to him, and of those that discourse of them. The first among Christians that has the title of “Theologue”, or “Divine”, is St. John, the writer of the book of the Revelation; for so the inscription of the book runs “the Revelation of St. John the Divine.” In the Complutensian edition, and so in the King of Spain’s Bible, it is “the Revelation of the holy Apostle and Evangelist, John the Divine.” Whether this word “Theologue” or “Divine”, was originally in the inscription of this book, I will not say; but this may be said, that Origen²⁸, a very early Christian writer, gives to John the title of the Divine, as it should seem from hence; and Athanasius²⁹, in his account of the sacred writings, calls the book of the Revelation, “the Revelation of John the Divine; “and who also styles him, “John the Evangelist and Divine.” These words “Theologue” and “Theology”, are to be met with frequently in the ancient Fathers, in following ages, and in all Christian writers to the present times. Upon the whole, it appears that “Theology”, or “Divinity”, as we call it, is no other than a science or doctrine concerning God, or a discoursing and treating of things relating to him; and that a “Theologue”, or a “Divine”, is one that understands, discourses, and treats of divine things; and perhaps the Evangelist John might have this title eminently given to him by the ancients, because of his writing concerning, and the record he bore to Christ, the logov, the essential Word of God, to his proper Deity, divine Sonship, and distinct personality. Suidas³⁰ not only calls him the Divine and the Evangelist, but says, that he wrote “Theology”; by which he seems to mean the book of the Revelation, which book some have observed contains a complete body of Divinity. Here we are taught the divine authority and excellency of the sacred scriptures; that

17 De Ira c. 11.

18 Apud Laert. l. 1. in vita ejus.

19 Ib. in vita Pherecydis.

20 Ib. Prooem.

21 De Abstinencia, l. 2. c. 36. et de antro Nympharum.

22 De Abstinencia, l. 2. s. 43, 44, 47, et de antro Nympharum.

23 Metaphysic. l. 12. c. 6. 10.

24 De Divinatione, l. 3. c. 21. vid. Plato de Repub. l. 2. p. 605.

25 Diodorus Sic. l. 1. p. 85.

26 Laert. l. 9. in vita ejus.

27 De defect. Orac. p. 417. vid. ib. 410, 436.

28 Homil. 2. in Evangel. Joan. 1. 1.

29 Synops. s. Script. p. 65, 132.

30 In voce Iwauhs et in voce Nouuas.

there is but one God, and that he only is to be worshipped, and not angels; that God is the Triune God; that there are three Persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that God is eternal, the Creator, and Preserver of all things; that Christ is truly God and truly man; that he is Prophet, Priest, and King; that men are by nature wretched, blind, naked, poor, and miserable; that some of all nations are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; and that they are justified and washed from their sins in his blood; the articles of the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the sad estate of the wicked, and the happiness of the saints may be observed in it.

And as we are upon this subject, it may not be amiss if we take a brief compendious view of the state of Theology; or, if you please, Divinity, from the beginning of it to the present time. Theology may be considered either as “natural”, which is from the light of nature, and is attained unto through the use and exercise of it, or “supernatural”, which is come at by divine Revelation.

“Natural” Theology may be considered either as it was in Adam before the fall, or as in him and his posterity since the fall. Adam, before the fall, had great knowledge of things, divine as well as natural, moral and civil; he was created in the image of God, which image lay in knowledge, as well as in righteousness and holiness; before he came short of this glory, and lost this image, or at least was greatly impaired and obliterated in him by sin, he knew much of God, of his nature and attributes, of his mind and will, and the worship of him; he had knowledge of the persons in God, of a Trinity of persons who were concerned in the creation of all things, and in his own; and without which he could have had no true knowledge of God, nor have yielded the worship due to each divine person: not that all the knowledge he had was innate, or sprung from the light of nature within himself; but in it he was assisted, and it was capable of being increased by things without, as by symbols, the tree of life in the midst of the garden, &c. by positive precepts relating to the worship of God, and obedience to his will, as the prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the institution of marriage, &c. and through a constant and diligent contemplation of the works of creation: nor can we suppose him to be altogether without the benefit and advantage of divine Revelation; since he had such a near and immediate intercourse and converse with God himself; and some things he could not have known without it: as the creation of the world, the order and manner of it; his own formation out of the dust of the earth; and the formation of Eve from him, that she was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, and was designed of God to be his wife, and an helpmeet to him, and who should be the mother of all living; with other things respecting the worship of God, and the manner of it, and the covenant made with him as a federal head to all his posterity that should spring from him. These, with many other things, no doubt, Adam had immediate knowledge of from God himself.

But this kind of Theology appeared with a different aspect in Adam after his fall, and in his posterity; by sin his mind was greatly beclouded, and his understanding darkened; he lost much of his knowledge of God, and of his perfections, or he could never have imagined that going among the trees of the garden would hide him from the presence of God, and secure him from his justice. What a notion must he have of the omnipresence of God? and what also of his omniscience, when he attempted to palliate and cover his sin by the excuse he made? And he immediately lost his familiar intercourse with God, and communion with him, being drove out of the garden: and as for his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, they appear to be in the same case and circumstances, without God in the world, without any true knowledge of him, and fellowship with him; they appear to be in the image of the earthly and sinful Adam, and not to have the image of God upon them; they are alienated from the life of God, and their understandings darkened as to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things; and though there are some remains of the light of nature in them, by which something of God may be known by them, even his eternal power and Godhead, by considering the works of creation, or else be inexcusable; yet whatever they know of him in theory, which does not amount to a true knowledge of God, they are without a practical knowledge of him; they glorify him not as God, and serve the creature more than the Creator; yea, what knowledge they have of God is very dim and obscure; they are like persons in the dark, who grope about, if happily they may feel after him, and find him; and what ridiculous notions have they entertained of Deity? and what gods have they reigned for themselves? and have fallen into impiety and idolatry, polytheism and atheism: being without a divine Revelation, they are without the true knowledge of the worship of God; and therefore have introduced strange and absurd modes of worship; as well as are at a loss what methods to take to reconcile God, offended with them for their sins, when at any time sensible thereof; and what means and ways to make use of to recommend themselves to him; and therefore have gone into practices the most shocking and detestable. Being destitute of a

divine Revelation, they can have no assurance that God will pardon sin and sinners; nor have they any knowledge of his way of justifying sinners by the righteousness of his Son; which are doctrines of pure Revelation: they can have no knowledge of Christ as Mediator, and of the way of peace and reconciliation, of life and salvation by him, and so can have no true knowledge of God in Christ; “for this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.” There is no saving knowledge of God without Christ; wherefore the light of nature is insufficient to salvation; for though by it men may arrive to the knowledge of a God as the Creator of all things, yet not to the knowledge of Christ as the Saviour of men; and without faith in him there can be no salvation: and though men may by means of it know in some instances what is displeasing to God, and what agreeable to him, what to be avoided, and what to be performed; in which knowledge they are yet deficient; reckoning such things to be no sins which are grievous ones, as fornication, polygamy, suicide, &c. yet even in the things they do know, they do not in their practice answer to their knowledge of them; and did they, they could not be saved by them; for if by obedience to the law of Moses none are justified and saved, then certainly not by obedience to the law and light of nature; none can be saved without faith in Christ, and his righteousness; there is no pardon but by his blood; no acceptance with God but through him: things that the light of nature leaves men strangers to. But of the weakness and insufficiency of natural Theology to instruct men in the knowledge of divine things, destitute of a divine revelation, perhaps more may be said hereafter, when the Theology of the Pagans may be observed.

Supernatural Theology

“Supernatural” Theology, or what is by pure Revelation, may be next considered, in its original rise and progress; and as it has been improved and increased, or has met with checks and obstructions.

The state of this Theology may be considered as it was from the first appearance of it, after the fall of Adam, to the flood in the times of Noah, or throughout the old world. What gave rise unto it, and is the foundation of it, is what God pronounced to the serpent: “It (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”: these words contain the principal articles of Christian Theology; as the incarnation of the Messiah, the Saviour of men; who should be “the seed of the woman”, made of a woman, made flesh, and become a partaker of the flesh and blood of those he was to save: and this seems to be understood by our first parents; hence it is thought that Eve imagined that this illustrious person was born of her, when she brought forth her firstborn, saying, “I have gotten a man the Lord”, as some choose to render the word; as Enos, the son of Seth, afterwards was expected to be the Redeemer of the world, according to the Cabalists³¹; and therefore was called Enos, “the man”, the famous excellent man; as they say. Likewise the sufferings and death of Christ in the human nature, by means of the serpent Satan; treading on whom, he, like a serpent, would turn himself, and bite his heel; wound him in his human nature, his inferior nature, called his heel, and so bring him to the dust of death. When the Messiah, by his sufferings and death, would “bruise” his “head”, confound his schemes, destroy his works; yea, destroy him himself, the devil, who had the power of death; and abolish that, and make an end of sin, the cause of it, by giving full satisfaction for it; and so save and deliver his people from all the sad effects of it, eternal wrath, ruin, and damnation. This kind of Theology received some further improvement, from the coats of skin the Lord God made and clothed our first parents with, an emblem of the justifying righteousness of Christ, and of the garments of salvation wrought out by his obedience, sufferings, and death; signified by slain beasts; and which God puts upon his people, and clothes them with, through his gracious act of imputation; and hence they are said to be “justified by blood”: and to which may be added the hieroglyphic of the cherubim and flaming sword, placed at the end of the garden, to observe or point at the tree of life; representing the prophets of the Old, and the apostles and ministers of the New Testament, being placed and appointed to show unto men the way of salvation by Christ the tree of life. And what serves to throw more light on this evangelical Theology, are the sacrifices ordered to be offered up; and which were types of the sacrifice of Christ; and particularly that which was offered up by Abel, who, “by faith” in the sacrifice of Christ, “offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”; which also was a lamb, the firstling of his flock, and pointed at the Lamb of God, who by his sacrifice takes away the sins of his people. Within this period of time men seem to have increased in light, as to the worship of God, especially public worship; for in the times of Enos, the grandson of Adam, men “began to call upon the name of the Lord”. Prayer to God, and invocation of his name, were, no doubt, used before; but men increasing, and families becoming more numerous, they now met and joined together in carrying on social and public worship: and though there were corruptions in practice, within this

³¹ Reuchlin, Cabalae. l. 1. p. 740.

period of time; wicked Cain, whose works were evil, and who set a bad example to his posterity, he and they lived together, separate from the posterity of Seth, indulging themselves in the gratification of sinful pleasures; and it is said, that in the times of Jared, some descended from the holy mountain, as it is called, to the company of Cain, in the valley, and mixed themselves with them, and took of their daughters for wives; from whence sprung a race of giants and wicked men, who were the cause of the flood. Lamech gave into the practice of bigamy; and Pseudo-Berosus says³², that Ham lived a very vicious and profligate life before the flood; yet there does not appear to have been any corruption in doctrine and worship, or any idolatry exercised. Some indeed have pretended³³ that in the days of Enos images were invented, to excite the minds of creatures to pray to God by them as mediators; but this is said without any foundation.

The next period of time in which supernatural Theology may be traced, is from the flood, in the times of Noah, to the giving of the law to Israel, in the times of Moses. Noah was instructed in it by his father Lamech, who expected³⁴ great comfort from him; and, as some think, in spiritual as well as in civil things, Gen 5:29 however, he instructed him in the true religion, as it was received from the first man, Adam; and it was taught by Noah, and the knowledge of it conveyed to his posterity, partly in the ministry of the word by him; for he was a “preacher of righteousness”, even of evangelical righteousness, “of the righteousness of faith”; of which he was an heir, and therefore no doubt preached the same to others: and partly by the sacrifices he offered, which were of clean creatures he had knowledge of the distinction of; and which sacrifices were of a sweet savour to God, and were typical of the purity of Christ’s sacrifice for sin, and of the acceptance of it to God, which is to him of a sweet smelling savour. Moreover, the waters of the flood, and the ark in which Noah and his family were preserved, were a type of an evangelical ordinance, the ordinance of baptism; which is an emblem of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; by which men are saved: for Noah and his family going into the ark, where, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up below, and the windows of heaven opened above, they were like persons covered in water, and immersed in it, and as persons buried; and when they came out of it, the water being carried off, it was like a resurrection, and as life from the dead; “the like figure”, or antitype “whereunto”, the Apostle says, “even baptism, doth also now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” signified thereby, 1 Pe 3:21 likewise the rainbow, the token of the covenant; which, though not the covenant of grace, yet of kindness and preservation; was an emblem of peace and reconciliation by Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace; and may assure of the everlasting love of God to his people, and of the immoveableness of the covenant of his peace with them, Isa 54:9,10. In the line of Shem, the son of Noah, the knowledge of this kind of Theology was continued: Noah’s blessing of him is thought by the Cabalists³⁵, to contain his earnest desire that he might be the Redeemer of men. However, God was the Lord of Shem, known, owned, and professed by him; and he was the father of all the children of Eber. According to the Jews³⁶ Shem had a divinity school, where the sons of Japheth, becoming proselytes, dwelt; and which continued to the times of Isaac; for he is reported to go thither to pray for Rebecca³⁷. Eber also, according to them, had such a school; where Jacob³⁸ was a minister, servant, or disciple; and so had Abraham in the land of Canaan; and his three hundred trained servants are supposed to be his catechumens; and also in Haran, where Abraham, it is said³⁹, taught and proselyted the men, and Sarah the women: however, this we are sure of, that he instructed and commanded his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment, Gen 18:19. Moreover, as the gospel was preached unto Abraham, Gal 3:8 there is no doubt but that he preached it to others; and as he had knowledge of the Messiah, who should spring from him, in whom all nations of the earth would be blessed, and who saw his day and was glad; so his grandson Jacob had a more dear and distinct view of him, as God’s salvation, as the Shiloh, the peace maker and prosperous one, who should come, before civil government was removed from the Jews; and when come, multitudes should be gathered to him, Gen

32 Antiq. l. 3. p. 25.

33 Juchasin, fol. 134. 2. Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 4. 2.

34 Reuchlin. lb

35 Reuchlin. ut supra.

36 Targum Jon. in Gen. ix. 27.

37 Targ. Jerus. et Jon. in Gen. xxv. 22.

38 Targ. Onk. et Jon. in Gen. xxv. 27.

39 Bereshit Rabba, s. 39. fol. 35. l.

49:10-18. Idolatry within this period first began among the builders of Babel: some say in the days of Serug⁴⁰; it was embraced by the Zabians in Chaldea, and obtained in the family of Terah, the father of Abraham. The worship of the sun and moon prevailed in the times of Job, in Arabia; who lived about the time of the children of Israel being in Egypt, and a little before their coming out of it; who do not appear to have given into the idolatry of that people. As for Job and his three friends, it is plain they had great knowledge of God and divine things; of the perfections of God; of the impurity of human nature; of the insufficiency of man's righteousness to justify him before God; and of the doctrine of redemption and salvation by Christ, Job 14:4 25:4,5 19:25,26 33:23,24.

The next period is from the giving of the law to Israel, by the hand of Moses, to the times of David and the prophets; in which supernatural Theology was taught by types; as the passover, the manna, the brazen serpent, and other things; which were emblems of Christ and his grace, and salvation by him: and by the sacrifices instituted, particularly the daily sacrifice morning and evening, and the annual sacrifices on the day of atonement; which besides all others, were typical of, and led the faith of men to the expiation of sins, to be made by the sacrifice of Christ: the whole ceremonial law, all that related to the priests, their garments, and their work and office, had an evangelical signification; it was the Jews' gospel, and which led them to Christ, and to an acquaintance with the things of Christ; and to what make him, his grace and righteousness, necessary to salvation; as the evil nature of sin; the insufficiency of men to make atonement for it; to fulfil the law, and bring in a righteousness answerable to it: Moses wrote of Christ, of his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, either by type or prophecy: the song of Moses in Deu 32:1-52 and of Hannah, 1Sa 2:1-10 very clearly speak of the perfections of God, of his works of providence and grace, and of the Messiah. According to the Jews, there was a divinity school in the times of Samuel. Naioth in Ramah is interpreted⁴¹ an house of doctrine, or school of instruction, of which Samuel was president; where he stood over the prophets, teaching and instructing them, 1 Sa 19:18,19 Such schools there were in later times, at Bethel, and Jericho and Gilgal; even in the times of Elijah and Elisha; where the sons or disciples of the prophets were trained up in the knowledge of divine things, 2 Ki 2:3,5 4:38 in such a college or house of instruction, as the Targum, Huldah, the prophetess dwelt at Jerusalem, 2 Ki 22:14. There were within this time some checks to the true knowledge and worship of God, by the idolatry of the calf at Sinai; of Baalpeor, on the borders of Moab; and of Baalim and Ashtaroth and other deities, after the death of Joshua, and in the times of the Judges.

The period from the times of David including them, to the Babylonish captivity, abounds with evangelic truths, and doctrines of supernatural Theology. The Psalms of David are full of spiritual and evangelic knowledge; many intimations are given of the sufferings and death of Christ, of his burial, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God; and on which many blessings of grace depend, which could never have been known but by divine revelation. And the prophets which followed him speak out still more clearly of the incarnation of Christ; point out the very place where he was to be born, and the country where he would preach the gospel, to the illumination of those that sat in darkness. They plainly describe him in his person, and offices, the sufferings he should undergo, and the circumstances of them, and benefits arising from them; they bear witness to the doctrines of pardon of sin through him, and justification by him; and of his bearing sin, and making satisfaction for it: in short, a scheme of evangelic truths may be deduced from the prophetic writings; and, indeed, the great apostle Paul himself said no other things than what the prophets did. There were some sad revolts from the true God, and his worship, within this compass of time, in the reigns of some of the kings of Israel and Judah; as the idolatry of the calves in the reign of Jeroboam, and others of the kings of Israel; and the idolatries committed in the times of Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, kings of Judah, which issued in the captivities of both people.

The period from the Babylonish captivity to the times of Christ, finish the Old Testament dispensation. At the return of the Jews from captivity, who brought no idolatrous worship with them, there was a reformation made by Ezra and Nehemiah, with the prophets of their time; or who quickly followed, as Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi; who all prophesied of Christ the Saviour, and of the salvation that should come by him; with the several blessings of it; and speak of his near approach, and point at the time of his coming, and the work he should do when come. But after the death of these prophets, and the Holy Spirit departed, and there was no more prophecy, supernatural Theology began greatly to decline; and the truths of revelation were neglected and despised; and the doctrines and traditions of men were preferred to the word of God, that was made of none effect by them. The sect

40 Suidas in voce abraam et in voce serou c.

41 Targum in 1 Sam. xix. 19, 20.

of the Sadducees, a sort of free thinker, rose up; who said there was no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit: and the sect of the Pharisees, a sort of free willers, who set up traditions as the rule of mens' worship, and which rose to an enormous bigness in the times of Christ, who severely inveighed against them; and which in later times were compiled and put together in a volume, called, the "Misnah", their "Traditional", or Body of Traditions: and this, in course of time, occasioned a large work finished in Babylon and from thence called the "Babylonian Talmud"; which is their "Doctrinal", or Body of Doctrine; full of fables, false glosses and interpretations of scriptures; and which is the foundation of the erroneous doctrines and practices of the Jews to this day.

And here I shall take leave to transcribe the interpretation of the vision In Zec 5:6-11. given by that learned man. George Eliezer Edzard⁴², it being very ingenious and uncommon, and much to our present purpose. This learned man observes that the preceding vision of the "flying roll", describes the sad corruption of manners among the Jews, in the three or four former ages of the second temple; doctrine remaining pretty sound among them; which corruption of manners was punished by the incursions of the Lagidae and Seleucidae, kings of Egypt and Syria, into Judea, as the vision represents. The following vision of a woman sitting in an Ephah, and shut up in it, and then transported by two other women into the land of Shinar; he thus interprets: by the "woman", who, by way of eminency, is called "wickedness"; is to be understood the impious and false doctrine devised by the Pharisees and Sadducees; and other corrupt doctors of the Jews in the latter times of the second temple, and handed down to posterity; compared to a woman, because it had nothing manly, nothing true, nothing solid in it; and moreover, caused its followers to commit spiritual fornication, and allured to it by its paints, flatteries, and prittle prattle: and it is called "wickedness" because not only the less fundamentals, but the grand fundamentals, and principal articles of faith, concerning the mystery of the Trinity, the Deity of the Son of God, and of the holy Spirit, the person and office of the Messiah, were sadly defiled by it; and in the room of them were substituted, traditions, precepts, and inventions of men; than which greater impiety cannot be thought of; and which issued in the contempt and rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, sent as the Saviour of the world; and in the persecution of the preachers of the gospel, and putting a stop to the course of it, as much as could be; and which drew with it a train of other sins. The Ephah, he thinks, designs the whole body of the people of the Jews, throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; which Ephah was first seen as "empty", Zec 5:6 and this being a dry measure, with which wheat and such like things were measured, the food of the body, a proper type of the heavenly doctrine, the food of the soul: by the emptiness of the Ephah, is intimated, that sound doctrine, about the time of the Messiah's coming, would be banished out of Judea, and the neighbouring parts; and most of the inhabitants thereof would be destitute of the knowledge of the pure faith. And the wicked woman "sitting in the midst of the Ephah", and filling it, not a corner of it, but the whole; and is represented not as lying prostrate, but sitting; denotes the total corruption of doctrine, its power and prevalence, throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; obtaining in all places, synagogues, schools, and seats, and pulpits, and among all sorts of inhabitants; the few being crushed who professed the sound doctrine of the Trinity, and of the person and office of the Messiah. And whereas a "talent of lead" was seen "lifted up"; this signifies the divine decree concerning the destruction of the Jews and their polity by the Romans; which should be most surely executed on them, for their corruption of doctrine, and for sins that flowed from thence. The "lifting" up of the talent not only prefigured the near approach of the judgment, but the setting it before the eyes of the people, to be beheld through the ministry of Christ, and his apostles, before it was executed; that while there was hope, if it might be, some might be brought to repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the true Messiah; but this failing of success, the talent was "cast into the ephah", and upon the woman in it, signifying the destruction of the Jews; of which the angel that talked with Zachariah the prophet, and who was no other than the Son of God, was the principal author; Vespasian, and the Roman army under him, being only ministers and instruments. Not that hereby the woman, or the corrupt doctrine, was wholly extinguished; but it was depressed, and weakened, and reduced, and was among a few only, great numbers of the doctors and disciples of it being slain, and many of both classes being exiled; the temple and city burnt, heretofore the chief seat of it, and the schools throughout Judea destroyed, in which it was propagated. But in process of time the Jews restored some schools in Palestine, as at Jabneh, Zippore, Caesarea, and Tiberias, in the last of which R. Judah Hakkadosh compiled the "Misnah", about A. D. 150. and after that came out the "Jerusalem Talmud", A. D. 230. and. after the death of the above Rabbi, his chief disciples went into Babylon, and carried with them the greatest part of the doctors and their scholars out of

42 Praefat. ad Annotat. in Tract. Beracot.

Palestine: so that doctrine by little and little disappeared in Judea, and entirely about the year 340, when R. Hillel died, the last of those promoted doctors in the land of Israel: and after this scarce anything was heard of the schools and wise men of Palestine; but schools continued in Babylon for many ages; and this is what is meant, in the last part of the symbolic vision of Zechariah, by the Ephah being carried by two women into the land of Shinar, that is, Babylon: by these “two women” are meant the Misnic and Gemaristic doctors; the two heads of which were Raf and Samuel, who went into Babylon a little after the death of R. Judah, the saint, and carried the woman, false doctrine, along with them, these are said to have” wings like storks”, fit for long journeys, to fly with on high, and with swiftness, into remote parts; and fitly describes the above persons transporting their false doctrine into the remote parts of Babylon, far from Palestine; carrying great numbers from thence, which they did without weariness, and with as much celerity as they could: and “the wind” being “in their wings”, denotes the cheerfulness with which the Jewish Rabbins pursued their studies till they had finished their design, the Talmud, which they could not perfect without the impulse and help of an evil spirit, signified by the wind. And here in Babylon they “built an house” for their false doctrine, erected various schools, in which it was taught and propagated; and so it was “established” and “set on its own base”, and continued for eight hundred and twenty years or more. This is the sense which this learned man gives of the vision; on which I shall make no more remarks than I have done, by saying it is ingenious and uncommon, and suits with the subject I am upon, which introduced it, and opens the source of the corruption of doctrine among the Jews, and shows the continuance of it, and the means thereof.

Having traced supernatural theology, or divinity, to the times of Christ; Let us a little look back upon the theology of the Pagans before we proceed any further. At, or a little after, the building of Babel, and the dispersion of the people, idolatry began to appear; the knowledge of the true God was greatly lost, and the worship of him neglected. Some say this began in the days of Serug, but perhaps it might be earlier: the first objects of it seem to be the sun and moon ; which it is certain obtained in the times of Job; and then their kings and heroes, whom they deified after death; and which at length issued in a multiplicity of gods throughout the several nations of the earth; and what of truth remained among them was disguised with fables; or, to use the apostle’s phrase, they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator and their foolish hearts being darkened. The theology of the Pagans, according to them-selves, as Scaevola⁴³ and Varro⁴⁴, was of three sorts,—1. Mystic, or Fabulous, which belonged to the poets, and was sung by them.—3. Physic, or Natural; which belonged to the philosophers, and were studied by them,—S. Politic, or Civil, which belonged to princes, priests, and people; being instituted by the one, exercised by the other, and enjoined the people, The first of these may well be called Fabulous, as treating of the theogony and genealogy of their deities; in which they say such things as are unworthy of deity; ascribing to them thefts, murders, adulteries and all manner of crimes; and therefore this kind of theology is condemned by the wiser sort of heathens as nugatory and scandalous; the writers of this sort of theology were Sanchoniatho, the Phoenician; and of the Grecians, Orpheus, Hcsiod, Plerecydes, &c. The second sort, called Physic, or Natural, was studied and taught by the philosophers; who, rejecting the multiplicity of gods in trod used by the poets, brought their theology to a more natural and rational form; and supposed that there was but one supreme. God, which they commonly make to be the sun ; at least as an emblem of him; but at too great a distance to mind the affair?: of the world, and therefore devised certain demons, which-they considered as mediators between the supreme God and man: and the doctrines of these demons to which the apostle is thought to allude in 1 Tim. iv. 1. were what the philosophers had a concern with, and who treat of their nature, office, and regard to men; as did Thalcs, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics. The third part, called Politic, or Civil, was instituted by legislators, states-men, and politicians: the first among the Romans was Numa Pompilius; this chiefly respected their gods, temples, altars, sacrifices, and rites of worship, and was properly their idolatry; the care of which belonged to the priests; and this was enjoined the common people, to keep them in obedience to the civil state. Thus things continued in the Gentile world, until the light of the Gospel seat among them : the times before that were times of ignorance, as the apostle calls them; ignorant of the true God, and of the worship of him; and of the Messiah, and salvation by ‘state is truly described, Eph. ii. 12. that they were then without Christ, alien from the commonwealth Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

43 Apud. Augustine de Civ. Dei, 1. 4. c. 27.

44 A pudd. Ib. 1. 8. c.5.

And consequently, their theology was insufficient for the salvation of them.

But to return to supernatural theology, where we left it, having traced it to the times of Christ; and through whose ministry, and that of his forerunner, and of his apostles, it revived, and appeared in all its purity, splendor; and glory. John was a man sent from God to bear witness to the light that was just rising, even the Sun of righteousness, the Day Spring from on high; the great Light, that should lighten those that sat in darkness with a supernatural light;” He declared kingdom of heaven, or Gospel dispensation, was at hand, and just ushering in, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin, arid administered that Gospel ordinance. “ God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, had spoke to the fathers by the prophets, now spoke to men by his Son :” Christ his only begotten Son, who lay in his bosom, came and declared him; who and what he was, and what was his mind and will : he brought the doctrines of grace and truth with him; and spoke such words of grace, truth, and wisdom, as never man spoke in his doctrine was not human, but divine; it was not his own as man, he received it from his Father, and delivered it to his apostles; who having a commission from him to preach it, and being qualified for it, with the gifts and graces of his Spirit in great abundance, they went into all the world and preached the Gospel to every creature; and diffused the savour of his knowledge in every place; they had the deep things of God revealed unto them; things which could never have been discovered by the light of nature; nor were revealed in the law of Moses; things “ which eye had not seen nor ear heard, nor never entered into the heart of man;” which the reason of men could never have discovered; “ they spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” In the books of the New Testament are written, as with a sunbeam, those truths of pure revelation, the doctrines of a Trinity of divine persons in the Godhead; of the eternal Sonship, distinct personality and Deity of Christ, and of his several offices as Mediator; and of the distinct personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit and of his operations of grace upon the souls of men; of the everlasting and unchangeable love of the Three divine Persons to the elect; of the predestination of them to the adoption of children; and of their eternal election in Christ to grace and glory; of the covenant of grace made with them in Christ, and the blessings of it; of redemption by Christ, full pardon of sin through his blood, free justification from sin by his righteousness, and plenary satisfaction for it by his atoning sacrifice; of regeneration, or the new birth; effectual calling; conversion, and sanctification, by the efficacious grace of the Spirit; of the saints’ final perseverance in grace to glory, and of the resurrection from the dead, and of a future state of immortal life and happiness: all which are brought to light by the Gospel of Christ. And these are the sum and substance of supernatural theology, and the glory of it. And whilst the apostles continued, and other ministers of the word raised up in their times, these doctrines were held fast, and held forth with great clearness and perspicuity; but, as the historian says⁴⁵, after the holy company of the apostles had ended their lives, and that generation was gone, which was worthy to hear the divine wisdom, then a system of impious error took place, through the deceit of false teachers; false doctrine was attempted to be introduced, in opposition to the truth of the Gospel, which had been preached; not one of the apostles remaining to oppose it. _ The doctrines of divine revelation, Satan, by his emissaries, set himself against to undermine and destroy, were the doctrines of the Trinity; the Incarnation of Christ of a virgin; his proper Deity, as by some, and his real Humanity, as by others; his eternal Sonship, or his being begotten of the Father before all worlds. The school at Alexandria, from whence came several of the Christian doctors, as Pantaanus, Clemens, Origen, &c. served very much to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel; for though it mended the Platonic philosophy, it marred the Christian doctrine; and laid the foundation for Arianism and Pelagianism, which in after times so greatly disturbed the church of God. As many of the fathers of the Christian Church were originally Pagans, they were better skilled in demolishing Paganism than in building up Christianity; and indeed they set themselves more to destroy the one than to illustrate and confirm the other: there was a purity in their lives, but a want of clearness, accuracy, and consistency in their doctrines: it would be endless to relate how much the Christian doctrine was obscured by the heretics that rose up in the latter part of the first century, and in the second, as well as after, by Sabelhans, Photinians, Samosatensians, Arians, Eutychians, Nestorians, Macedonians, Pelagians, &c. though God was pleased to raise up instruments to stop their progress, and preserve the truth, and some-times very eminent ones; as Athanasius against the Arians, and Austin against the Pelagians. The Gospel in its simplicity, through the power of divine grace attending it, made its way into the Gentile world, in these first centuries, with great success; and Paganism decreased before it and which in the times of Constantine received a fatal blow in the

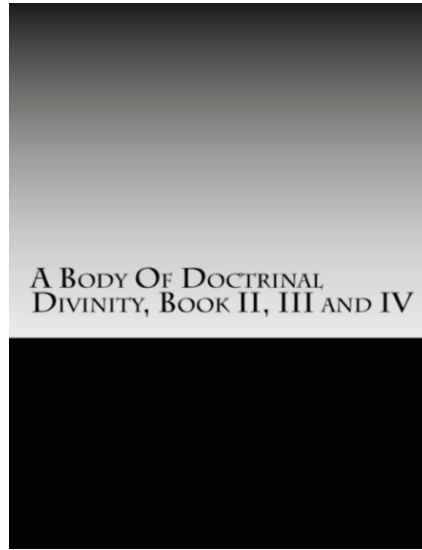
45 Eesippus apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl. 1. 3. c.32.

Roman empire; and yet by degrees Pagan rites and ceremonies were introduced into the Christian church; and what with them, and errors in doctrine, and other things concurring, made way for the man of sin to appear; and that mystery of iniquity, which had been secretly working from the times of the apostles, to show its head openly; and brought in the darkness of Popery upon almost all that bore the Christian name. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, flourished a set of men called Schoolmen; these framed a new sort of divinity, called from them Scholastic Theology; the first founder of which some make to be Damascene, among the Greeks; and others Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, among the Latins; though generally Peter Lombard is reckoned the father of these men; who was followed by our countryman Alexander Hales; and after him were Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas; and after them Duns Scotus, Durandus, and others; their divinity was founded upon and confirmed by the philosophy of Aristotle; and that not understood by them, and wrongly interpreted to them; for as they could not read Aristotle, in his own language, the Greek, they were beholden to the Arabic interpreters of him, who led them wrong. Their theology lay in contentious and litigious disputations; in thorny questions, and subtle distinctions; and their whole scheme was chiefly directed to support antichristianism, and the tenets of it; so that by their means popish darkness was the more increased, and Christian divinity was banished almost out of the world and was only to be found among a few, among the Waldenses and Albigenses, and the inhabitants of the valleys of Piedmont, and some particular persons and their followers, as Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; and so things continued till the reformation begun by Zuinglius and Luther, and carried on by others; by whose means evangelical light was spread through many nations in Europe; the doctrines of the apostles were revived, and supernatural theology once more lift up its head; the reformed churches published their confessions of faith, and many eminent men wrote common places, and systems of divinity; in which they all agreed in the main, to support the doctrines of revelation; as of the Trinity, and the Deity of the divine persons in it, those of predestination and eternal election in Christ, of redemption by him, pardon of sin by his blood, and justification by his righteousness.

But Satan, who envied the increasing light of the Gospel, soon began to bestir himself, and to play his old game which he had done with so much success in the first ages of Christianity; having been for a long time otherwise engaged, to nurse up the man of sin, and to bring him to the height of his impiety and tyranny, and to support him in it: and now as his kingdom was like to be shook, if not subverted, by the doctrines of the Reformation; he, I say, goes to his old work again; and revives the Sabellian and Photinian errors, by the Socinians in Poland; and the Pelagian errors, by the Arminians and Remonstrants in Holland; the pernicious influence of which has been spread in other countries; and, indeed, has drawn a veil over the glory of the Reformation, and the doctrines of it. And the doctrines of pure revelation are almost exploded; and some are endeavouring to bring us, as fast as they can, into a state of paganism, only somewhat refined: it is a day of darkness and gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness; the darkness is growing upon us, and night may be expected; though for our relief it is declared, "that at evening time it shall be light." Almost all the old heresies are revived, under a fond and foolish notion of new light; when they are no other than what have been confuted over and over; and men please themselves that they are their own inventions, when they are the devices of Satan, with which he has deceived men once and again; and when men leave the sure word, the only rule of faith and practice, and follow their own fancies, and the dictates of their carnal minds, they must needs go wrong, and fall into labyrinths, out of which they cannot find their way: "to the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let us therefore search the Scriptures, to see whether doctrines advanced are according to them or not, which I fear are little attended to. Upon the whole, as I suggested at the beginning of this Introduction, I have but little reason to think the following Work will meet with a favourable reception in general; yet if it may be a means of preserving sacred truths, of enlightening the minds of any into them, or of establishing them in them, I shall not be concerned at what evil treatment I may meet with from the adversaries of them; and be it as it may, I shall have the satisfaction of having done the best I can for the promoting truth; and of bearing a testimony to it.

FURTHER READING

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY, BOOK 1.



By Dr John Gill DD

BOOK I

Of God, His Works, Names, Nature, Perfections And Persons.

BOOK II

Of The Acts And Works Of God

BOOK III

Of The External Works Of God

BOOK IV

Of The Acts Of The Grace Of God Towards And Upon His Elect In Time.

BOOK V

Of The Grace Of Christ In His States
Of Humiliation And Exaltation, And In The Offices Exercised By Him In Them.

BOOK VI

Of The Blessings Of Grace, And The Doctrines Of It.

BOOK VII

Of The Final State Of Man

[Books I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII
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