

these absolute attributes are predicated of all that is in God. It would be hardly too much to say that they are as often and as distinctly referred to the Son as to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit as to the Son. No one can carefully read the Scriptures without seeing that the supreme Name which binds this class of primary perfections into one is given to the Three Persons distinctively and in their unity. The one Jehovah—the Eternal, Infinite, Immutable Spirit—is the Three-one God. Proofs have already been given of this most fundamental truth, on which hangs the whole fabric of the Christian revelation. And, in harmony with it, we have done well to study the doctrine of the Trinity before entering on that of the Divine attributes.

4. They are the basis on which rest, or the source from which spring, all our other ascriptions to the Divine Being as related to the universe. In other words, the perfections to which we next pass are these in another form and application: not other perfections, but the same as exhibited towards the creature. In dwelling upon the attributes of the Divine essence, as they are brought within the range of their finite operation, it must always be remembered that the essential, immanent, incomprehensible prerogatives form the awful background of every representation. If the Divine Being gives His character and works a human exhibition—if, by what is called anthropomorphic language, He speaks **AS A MAN**, or adopts creaturely language—His eternal and infinite nature is behind as the standard and regulator of all: a truth of boundless importance, too often forgotten.

Basis of  
all other  
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butes.

#### ATTRIBUTES RELATED TO THE CREATURE

The attributes which connect the Supreme Being with the created universe, or which derive their new names and applications from that connection, are such as may be understood by the terms Freedom, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Wisdom, and Goodness. To blend them all in one proposition: The God of the universe is a self-determining Agent, using unbounded power, which is everywhere operative, is guided by infinite knowledge,

Relative  
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displayed in perfect wisdom, under the law of never-failing benevolence. It must be remembered that, while including all and excluding nothing that may be regarded as belonging to the perfections of the Supreme revealed in His works, we keep as yet out of view the modifications of some of these attributes, especially of the first and last, which are introduced in the relation of God to moral agents in probation as such.

## Freedom.

## THE FREEDOM OF GOD.

We cannot pass from the absolute God to the God of the universe without paying our homage to the Freedom of the Divine will as assigning the sufficient reason why anything not God exists at all. This is the anti-Pantheistic attribute.

Will in  
God.Ephes. i.  
11.Freedom  
of Divine  
Will.

1. When we ascribe to God a will, we begin at once, as we have not done before, to study His spiritual nature in the light of our own, as created after His image. Whatever else we regard as characteristic of an intelligent spirit, we cannot exclude from it self-determination, implying a faculty of willing or deciding its own course of conduct, the exercise of the will as expressed by purpose, and the result in act. These are summed up and assigned to God in one saying of the Apostle : *Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*, where we have the *θέλημα*, or will in exercise, the *βουλή*, or determination of that will, and the issue as the act of the *ἐνεργοῦντος*. St. Paul makes all things absolutely the result of this will in the Deity, and he only sums up in one remarkable expression the unanimous testimonies of all Scripture. It is important to remember that we speak here of a will in God in the strictest sense of the term, not including the other attributes of God which may be more or less closely connected with it : such as His power and His complacency or love.

2. The freedom of the Divine will might seem to need no proof. But, in regard to an attribute which forms as it were the link between the absolute perfections and the perfections related to the creature, this needs to be correctly understood. It means that the reason of the purpose and act of God going towards the

creature is to be sought only in Himself: the will indeed is in the necessity of His essence, like the attributes already considered, but it is itself under no necessity. We may think indeed of a freedom in the eternal essence which is absolute necessity; and of an absolute necessity which is perfect freedom. So it is sometimes said that God wills Himself necessarily. This is an expression which is capable of a sound interpretation; but only if the will includes complacency. A perfect spirit must have a perfect will, and in a sense will its own perfection; but it is not, strictly speaking, more true to say that God wills Himself than to say that He is His own cause or CAUSA SUI

3. Though the cause of all things not God is to be sought in His free will, in the eternal purpose of the Holy Trinity as an absolute essence, we cannot even speak of the freedom of that will without descending at once into the creaturely universe, the result of His free volition. There could be no necessity to create; no necessity to create what is created; no necessity to uphold. The existence of all things according to the infinite variety of their constitution, in parts and as a whole, is a display of the freedom of the Divine Artificer. The necessity of the laws of nature is the freedom of the God of nature.

Requires  
the  
Creature

4. Although the relation of this attribute to moral beings will have to be considered again hereafter when the Divine perfections are viewed in the light of redemption, yet it is right to view it here in relation to the moral government of God over His creatures as such. Here once more we must observe that absolute necessity is perfect freedom; and we cannot conceive otherwise than that all intelligent beings are created under the obligation of obedience to a law of holiness. His moral will is the free expression of His holy nature. The ground of our obligation to goodness is simply the ground of our obligation to obey that will which is God Himself. But we dare not say with equal confidence that all moral intelligences are created by a free necessity which must make them probationary beings. Here comes in the liberty of the Divine will in another and more unrestricted sense. It has pleased Him to make His creatures free; and to suspend their ultimate destiny on the right use of freedom. From this it follows that, in the mystery of the eternal will, its own liberty is

Moral  
Govern  
ment.

bound up with that of the creatures. As it is no disparagement to the Divine power that it cannot do what cannot be done, nor to the Divine Omniscience that it knows contingent things as contingent, so it is not inconsistent with the absoluteness of the Divine will that its decrees are sometimes adapted to the conditionalities of events. However derogatory it may seem to what is called the Sovereignty of God, the freedom of the supreme will is linked with conditional events, and is conditional with them. The entire Scripture proclaims this from beginning to end, and the history of all the dealings of Heaven with men confirms it.

1 Tim. ii. 4. That God, *Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*, nevertheless does not actually save all men. Probation would cease to be probation were not the freedom of the Divine will adjusted to the freedom of the human. False views of the absolute and unconditioned pervade the philosophy of religion ; and they are nowhere more obnoxious than here.

**The Freedom of Righteousness.**

5. Lastly, this attribute of God as presiding over the creaturely universe is the attribute of a perfect Being ; and we may be sure that what would be contrary to morality in our own use of the will ought never to be imputed to the Author of our nature. It is possible to make the Divine freedom conflict with some other equally necessary attributes which we have yet to mention. His liberty cannot be His creatures' bondage : His freedom cannot be their necessity. There is a sense in which absolute sovereignty in God is not only consistent with His perfection, but essential to it. He is free to appoint the conditions and circumstances of the probation of every human or intelligent being ; to reveal when He will, and according to what measures, His hidden purposes, or His decretive will, or good pleasure, as distinguished from His preceptive will or command. His preceptive will itself is under the government of freedom : positive precepts may be given or withheld, may be appointed and withdrawn, may be modified or relaxed, or suppressed altogether. But the freedom of God cannot decree the unconditional misery of any creature that He has formed, even for the manifestation or supposed manifestation of what may be called the glory of His justice.

Panthe-  
ism. 6. Finally, leaving these reflections, which belong to a later stage, let us return to the more immediate application of this

attribute. It is placed first in the order of perfections which connote the created universe because it is really the first in the order of our thought. Without it the formula God and the universe has no meaning. It translates the Eternal from the region of abstract necessity and uniformity of existence into the reality of a Personal Spirit acting with free intelligence. It accounts for all things as they have been, as they are, and as they will be. Before it the Moipa, or Fate, of eternal necessity binding the universe vanishes. Before it Pantheism flies, which allows no personal will either in God or in what seems, but seems only, to be His creation. Before it also, when rightly interpreted, recedes, or ought to recede, every system that makes the probation of intelligent creatures only the circuitous evolution of a fixed purpose called the sovereign will of God.

Christian Pantheism.

## OMNIPOTENCE.

Omni-potence.

The Divine Omnipotence follows hard on the Divine Freedom : indeed it is but the expansion of the result of will in effect ; in this case its expansion to infinity. It is the attribution to God of power to do all that He wills to do ; according to the simple formula of the prophet : *There is nothing too hard for Thee. He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.* He can do all that He wills to do ; He wills to do all that He does. *Potest quod vult*, in its application to the Deity, is sound theology ; though the converse, that He wills all that He can, is to be rejected. Proceeding from this principle, we may dwell on a few important inferences.

Jer. xxxii. 17.  
Ps. cxv. 3

1. The omnipotence of God is the ground and secret of all Causality. efficiency, or what we call causality. No argument, however specious, can rob us of the indestructible conviction that there is such a power in the nature of things as we call cause : that there is a connection between events which is more than mere sequence. As in regard to almost every attribute of God, but in this case with more than usual distinctness, we perceive in ourselves the finite reflection of the Infinite. We are conscious of producing effects as ourselves their cause. From that, remembering two things, we rise to the Divine Omnipotence. First, the range of our direct causation is exceedingly limited : very decisive so far as it extends,