

1
2 "The Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively"

3 *Oxford University Sermons* sermon 2

4 St. John Henry Newman

5 April 13, 1830

6 "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with
7 our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;
8 (For the Life was manifested, and we have seen It, and bear witness, and show unto
9 you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That
10 which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship
11 with us." 1 John i. 1-3.

12 {16} THE main purpose of our Saviour's incarnation, as far as we are permitted to know
13 it, was that of reconciling us to God, and purchasing for us eternal life by His sufferings
14 and death. This purpose was accomplished when He said, "It is finished," and gave up
15 the ghost.

16 2. But on His rising from the dead, He extended to us two additional acts of grace, as
17 preparatory to the future blessing, and of which, as well as of our resurrection, that
18 miracle itself was made the evidence. "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the
19 name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In this commission to His
20 disciples was intimated, on {17} the one hand, His merciful design of "gathering together
21 in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," by the gracious operation of the
22 Holy Spirit; and on the other hand, His intended grant of a system of religious truth,
23 grounded on that mysterious economy of Divine Providence in which His own
24 incarnation occupies the principal place.

25 3. It is proposed, in the following discourse, to treat of a subject connected with the
26 latter of these two great Christian blessings—viz. to attempt to determine the relation
27 which this revealed system of doctrine and precept bears to that of Natural Religion,
28 and to compare the two together in point of practical efficacy. The other and still greater
29 mercies of the Christian Covenant have been mentioned only, lest, in discussing the
30 subject of religious knowledge, any disregard should be implied of those fundamental
31 doctrines of our faith, the Atonement, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the
32 Church.

33 4. Now, in investigating the connexion between Natural and Revealed Religion, it is
34 necessary to explain in what sense religious doctrines of any kind can with propriety be
35 called natural. For from the abuse of the term "Natural Religion," many persons will not
36 allow the use of it at all.

37 5. When, then, religion of some sort is said to be *natural*, it is not here meant that any
38 religious system has been actually traced out by unaided Reason. We know of no such
39 system, because we know of no time or country in which human Reason was unaided.
40 {18} Scripture informs us that revelations were granted to the first fathers of our race,
41 concerning the nature of God and man's duty to Him; and scarcely a people can be

42 named, among whom there are not traditions, not only of the existence of powers
43 exterior to this visible world, but also of their actual interference with the course of
44 nature, followed up by religious communications to mankind from them. The Creator
45 has never left Himself without such witness as might anticipate the conclusions of
46 Reason, and support a wavering conscience and perplexed faith. No people (to speak
47 in general terms) has been denied a revelation from God, though but a portion of the
48 world has enjoyed an authenticated revelation.

49 6. Admitting this fully, let us speak of *the fact*; of the actual state of religious belief of
50 pious men in the heathen world, as attested by their writings still extant; and let us call
51 this attainable creed Natural Religion.

52 7. Now, in the first place, it is obvious that Conscience is the essential principle and
53 sanction of Religion in the mind. Conscience implies a relation between the soul and a
54 something exterior, and that, moreover, superior to itself; a relation to an excellence
55 which it does not possess, and to a tribunal over which it has no power. And since the
56 more closely this inward monitor is respected and followed, the clearer, the more
57 exalted, and the more varied its dictates become, and the standard of excellence is ever
58 outstripping, while it guides, our obedience, a moral conviction is thus at length obtained
59 of the unapproachable nature {19} as well as the supreme authority of That, whatever it
60 is, which is the object of the mind's contemplation. Here, then, at once, we have the
61 elements of a religious system; for what is Religion but the system of relations existing
62 between us and a Supreme Power, claiming our habitual obedience: "the blessed and
63 only Potentate, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no
64 man hath seen or can see"?

65 8. Further, Conscience implies a difference in the nature of actions, the power of acting
66 in this way or that as we please, and an obligation of acting in one particular way in
67 preference to all others; and since the more our moral nature is improved, the greater
68 inward power of improvement it seems to possess, a view is laid open to us both of the
69 capabilities and prospects of man, and the awful importance of that work which the law
70 of his being lays upon him. And thus the presentiment of a future life, and of a judgment
71 to be passed upon present conduct, with rewards and punishments annexed, forms an
72 article, more or less distinct, in the creed of Natural Religion.

73 9. Moreover, since the inward law of Conscience brings with it no proof of its truth, and
74 commands attention to it on its own authority, all obedience to it is of the nature of Faith;
75 and habitual obedience implies the direct exercise of a clear and vigorous faith in the
76 truth of its suggestions, triumphing over opposition both from within and without;
77 quieting the murmurs of Reason, perplexed with the disorders of the present scheme of
78 things, and subduing the appetites, {20} clamorous for good which promises an
79 immediate and keen gratification.

80 10. While Conscience is thus ever the sanction of Natural Religion, it is, when improved,
81 the rule of Morals also. But here is a difference: it is, as such, essentially religious; but in
82 Morals it is not necessarily a guide, only in proportion as it happens to be refined and

83 strengthened in individuals. And here is a solution of objections which have been made
84 to the existence of the moral sense, on the ground of the discordancy which exists
85 among men as to the excellence or demerit of particular actions. These objections only
86 go to prove the uncertain character (if so be) of the inward law of right and wrong; but
87 are not, even in their form, directed against the certainty of that general religious sense,
88 which is implied in the remorse and vague apprehension of evil which the transgression
89 of Conscience occasions.

90 11. Still, unformed and incomplete as is this law by nature, it is quite certain that
91 obedience to it is attended by a continually growing expertness in the science of Morals.
92 A mind, habitually and honestly conforming itself to its own full sense of duty, will at
93 length enjoin or forbid with an authority second only to an inspired oracle. Moreover, in
94 a heathen country, it will be able to discriminate with precision between the right and
95 wrong in traditionary superstitions, and will thus elicit confirmation of its faith even out of
96 corruptions of the truth. And further, it will of course realize in its degree those peculiar
97 rewards of virtue which appetite cannot comprehend; and will detect in {21} this world's
98 events, which are but perplexities to mere unaided Reason, a general connexion
99 existing between right moral conduct and happiness, in corroboration of those
100 convictions which the experience of its own private history has created.

101 12. Such is the large and practical religious creed attainable (as appears from the extant
102 works of heathen writers) by a vigorous mind which rightly works upon itself under (what
103 may be called) the Dispensation of Paganism. It may be even questioned whether there
104 be any essential character of Scripture doctrine which is without its place in this moral
105 revelation. For here is the belief in a principle exterior to the mind to which it is
106 instinctively drawn, infinitely exalted, perfect, incomprehensible; here is the surmise of a
107 judgment to come; the knowledge of unbounded benevolence, wisdom, and power, as
108 traced in the visible creation, and of moral laws unlimited in their operation; further,
109 there is even something of hope respecting the availableness of repentance, so far (that
110 is) as suffices for religious support; lastly, there is an insight into the rule of duty,
111 increasing with the earnestness with which obedience to that rule is cultivated.

112 13. This sketch of the religious knowledge not impossible to Heathen Philosophy, will be
113 borne out by its writings, yet will be only obtained by a selection of the best portions of
114 them. Hence we derive two conclusions: that the knowledge was *attainable*—for what
115 one man may attain is open to another; on the other hand, that, in general, it was
116 not *actually attained*—for else there would be no need of so confined a {22} selection of
117 them. And thus we are carried on to the inquiry already proposed—viz. *where* it was
118 that Natural Religion failed in practical effect, and how Revealed Religion supplies the
119 deficiency. Out of the many answers which might be given to this question, let us
120 confine ourselves to that which is suggested by the text.

121 14. Natural Religion teaches, it is true, the infinite power and majesty, the wisdom and
122 goodness, the presence, the moral governance, and, in one sense, the unity of the
123 Deity; but it gives little or no information [Note 1] respecting what may be called
124 His *Personality*. It follows that, though Heathen Philosophy knew so much of the moral

125 system of the world, as to see the duties and prospects of man in the same direction in
126 which Revelation places them, this knowledge did not preclude a belief in fatalism,
127 which might, of course, consist in unchangeable moral laws, as well as physical. And
128 though Philosophy acknowledged an intelligent, wise, and beneficent Principle of
129 nature, still this too was, in fact, only equivalent to the belief in a pervading Soul of the
130 Universe, which consulted for its own good, and directed its own movements, by
131 instincts similar to those by which the animal world is guided; but which, strictly
132 speaking, was not an object of worship, inasmuch as each intelligent being was, in a
133 certain sense, himself a portion of it. Much less would a conviction of the Infinitude and
134 Eternity of the Divine Nature lead to any just idea of His {23} *Personality*, since there
135 can be no circumscribing lineaments nor configuration of the Immeasurable, no external
136 condition or fortune to that Being who is all in all. Lastly, though Conscience seemed to
137 point in a certain direction as a witness for the real moral locality (so to speak,) of the
138 unseen God, yet, as it cannot prove its own authority, it afforded no argument for a
139 Governor and Judge, distinct from the moral system itself, to those who disputed its
140 informations.

141 15. While, then, Natural Religion was not without provision for all the deepest and truest
142 religious feelings, yet presenting no tangible history of the Deity, no points of His
143 personal character [[Note 2](#)] (if we may so speak without irreverence), it wanted that
144 most efficient incentive to all action, a starting or rallying point,—an object on which the
145 affections could be placed, and the energies concentrated. Common experience in life
146 shows how the most popular and interesting cause languishes, if its head be removed;
147 and how political power is often vested in individuals, merely for the sake of the
148 definiteness of the practical impression which a personal presence produces. How,
149 then, should the beauty of virtue move the heart, while it was an abstraction? "Forma
150 quidem honestatis, *si oculis cerneretur*, admirabiles amores excitaret sapientiæ;" but, till
151 "seen and heard and handled," It did but witness against those who disobeyed, while
152 {24} they acknowledged It; and who, seemingly conscious where their need lay, made
153 every effort to embody It in the attributes of individuality, embellishing their "Logos," as
154 they called It, with figurative actions, and worshipping It as the personal development of
155 the infinite Unknown.

156 16. But, it may be asked, was Heathen Religion of no service here? It testified, without
157 supplying the need;—it bore testimony to it, by attempting to attribute a personal
158 character and a history to the Divinity; but it failed, as degrading His invisible majesty by
159 unworthy, multiplied and inconsistent images, and as shattering the moral scheme of
160 the world into partial and discordant systems, in which appetite and expedience
161 received the sanction due only to virtue. And thus refined philosophy and rude natural
162 feeling each attempted separately to enforce obedience to a religious rule, and each
163 failed on its own side. The God of philosophy was infinitely great, but an abstraction; the
164 God of paganism was intelligible, but degraded by human conceptions. Science and
165 nature could produce no joint-work; it was left for an express Revelation to propose the
166 Object in which they should both be reconciled, and to satisfy the desires of both in a
167 real and manifested incarnation of the Deity.

168 17. When St. Paul came to Athens, and found the altar dedicated to the Unknown God,
169 he professed his purpose of declaring to the Heathen world Him "whom they ignorantly
170 worshipped." He proceeded to condemn their polytheistic and anthropomorphic {25}
171 errors, to disengage the notion of a Deity from the base earthly attributes in which
172 Heathen religion had enveloped it, and to appeal to their own literature in behalf of the
173 true nature of Him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." But, after thus
174 acknowledging the abstract correctness of the philosophical system, as far as it went,
175 he preaches unto them Jesus and the Resurrection; that is, he embodies the moral
176 character of the Deity in those historical notices of it which have been made the medium
177 of the Christian manifestation of His attributes.

178 18. It is hardly necessary to enter into any formal proof that this is one principal object,
179 as of all revelation, so especially of the Christian; viz. to relate some course of action,
180 some conduct, a life (to speak in human terms) of the One Supreme God. Indeed, so
181 evidently is this the case, that one very common, though superficial objection to the
182 Scriptures, is founded on their continually ascribing to Almighty God human passions,
183 words, and actions. The first chapter of the book of Job is one instance which may
184 suggest many more; and those marks of character are especially prominent in
185 Scripture, which imply an extreme opposition to an eternal and fated system, inherent
186 freedom of will, power of change, long-suffering, placability, repentance, delight in the
187 praises and thanksgivings of His creatures, failure of purpose, and the prerogative of
188 dispensing His mercies according to His good pleasure. Above all, in the New
189 Testament, the Divine character is exhibited to us, not merely as love, or mercy, or
190 holiness (attributes which have a {26} vagueness in our conceptions of them from their
191 immensity), but these and others as seen in an act of *self-denial*—a mysterious quality
192 when ascribed to Him, who is all things in Himself, but especially calculated (from the
193 mere meaning of the term) to impress upon our minds the personal character of the
194 Object of our worship. "God so loved the world," that He *gave up* His only Son: and the
195 Son of God "*pleased not Himself.*" In His life we are allowed to discern the attributes of
196 the invisible God, drawn out into action in accommodation to our weakness. The
197 passages are too many to quote, in which this object of His incarnation is openly
198 declared. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "He that hath seen
199 Him, hath seen the Father." He is a second Creator of the world, I mean, as
200 condescending to repeat (as it were) for our contemplation, in human form, that distinct
201 personal work, which made "the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God
202 shout for joy." In a word, the impression upon the religious mind thence made is
203 appositely illustrated in the words of the text, "That which was from the beginning, which
204 we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and
205 our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (For the Life was manifested, and we have
206 seen It, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the
207 Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we
208 unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."

209 19. No thought is more likely to come across and {27} haunt the mind, and slacken its
210 efforts under Natural Religion, than that after all we may be following a vain shadow,
211 and disquieting ourselves without cause, while we are giving up our hearts to the

212 noblest instincts and aspirations of our nature. The Roman Stoic, as he committed
213 suicide, complained he had worshipped virtue, and found it but an empty name. It is
214 even now the way of the world to look upon the religious principle as a mere peculiarity
215 of temper, a weakness, or an enthusiasm, or refined feeling (as the case may be),
216 characteristic of a timid and narrow, or of a heated or a highly-gifted mind. Here, then,
217 Revelation meets us with simple and distinct *facts* and *actions*, not with painful
218 inductions from existing phenomena, not with generalized laws or metaphysical
219 conjectures, but with *Jesus and the Resurrection*; and "*if Christ be not risen*" (it
220 confesses plainly), "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Facts such
221 as this are not simply evidence of the truth of the revelation, but the media of its
222 impressiveness. The life of Christ brings together and concentrates truths concerning
223 the chief good and the laws of our being, which wander idle and forlorn over the surface
224 of the moral world, and often appear to diverge from each other. It collects the scattered
225 rays of light, which, in the first days of creation, were poured over the whole face of
226 nature, into certain intelligible centres, in the firmament of the heaven, to rule over the
227 day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. Our Saviour has in
228 Scripture all those abstract titles of moral excellence bestowed upon Him which
229 philosophers {28} have invented. He is the Word, the Light, the Life, the Truth, Wisdom,
230 the Divine Glory. St. John announces in the text, "The Life was manifested, and
231 we *have seen* it."

232 20. And hence will follow an important difference in the moral character formed in the
233 Christian school, from that which Natural Religion has a tendency to create. The
234 philosopher aspires towards a divine *principle*; the Christian, towards a Divine *Agent*.
235 Now, dedication of our energies to the service of a person is the occasion of the highest
236 and most noble virtues, disinterested attachment, self-devotion, loyalty; habitual
237 humility, moreover, from the knowledge that there must ever be one that is above us.
238 On the other hand, in whatever degree we approximate towards a mere standard of
239 excellence, we do not really advance towards it, but bring it to us; the excellence we
240 venerate becomes part of ourselves—we become a god to ourselves. This was one
241 especial consequence of the pantheistic system of the Stoics, the later Pythagoreans,
242 and other philosophers; in proportion as they drank into the spirit of eternal purity, they
243 became divine in their own estimation; they contrasted themselves with those who were
244 below them, knowing no being above them by whom they could measure their
245 proficiency. Thus they began by being humble, and, as they advanced, humility and
246 faith wore away from their character. This is strikingly illustrated in Aristotle's description
247 of a perfectly virtuous man. An incidental and unstudied greatness of mind is said by
248 him to mark the highest moral excellence, and truly; but the genuine nobleness of the
249 {29} virtuous mind, as shown in a superiority to common temptations, forbearance,
250 generosity, self-respect, calm high-minded composure, is deformed by an arrogant
251 contempt of others, a disregard of their feelings, and a harshness and repulsiveness of
252 external manner. That is, the philosopher saw clearly the tendencies of the moral
253 system, the constitution of the human soul, and the ways leading to the perfection of our
254 nature; but when he attempted to delineate the ultimate complete consistent image of
255 the virtuous man, how could he be expected to do this great thing, who had never seen
256 Angel or Prophet, much less the Son of God manifested in the flesh?

257 21. At such pains is Scripture, on the other hand, to repress the proud self-complacency
258 just spoken of, that not only is all moral excellence expressly referred to the Supreme
259 God, but even the principle of good, when implanted and progressively realized in our
260 hearts, is still continually revealed to us as a Person, as if to mark strongly that it is not
261 our own, and must lead us to no preposterous self-adoration. For instance, we read of
262 Christ being formed in us—dwelling in the heart—of the Holy Spirit making us His
263 temple; particularly remarkable is our Saviour's own promise: "If a man love Me, he will
264 keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will *come unto him, and make our*
265 *abode with him.*"

266 22. It may be observed, that this method of personation (so to call it) is carried
267 throughout the revealed system. The doctrine of the Personality of the Holy Spirit has
268 just been referred to. Again, the doctrine {30} of original sin is centred in the person of
269 Adam, and in this way is made impressive and intelligible to the mass of mankind. The
270 Evil Principle is revealed to us in the person of its author, Satan. Nay, not only thus, in
271 the case of really existing beings, as the first man and the Evil Spirit, but even when a
272 figure must be used, is the same system continued. The body of faithful men, or
273 Church, considered as the dwelling-place of the One Holy Spirit, is invested with a
274 metaphorical personality, and is bound to act as one, in order to those practical ends of
275 influencing and directing human conduct in which the entire system may be considered
276 as originating. And, again, for the same purpose of concentrating the energies of the
277 Christian body, and binding its members into close union, it was found expedient, even
278 in Apostolic times, to consign each particular church to the care of one pastor, or
279 bishop, who was thus made a personal type of Christ mystical, the new and spiritual
280 man; a centre of action and a living witness against all heretical or disorderly
281 proceedings.

282 23. Such, then, is the Revealed system compared with the Natural—teaching religious
283 truths historically, not by investigation; revealing the Divine Nature, not in works, but in
284 action; not in His moral laws, but in His spoken commands; training us to be subjects of
285 a kingdom, not citizens of a Stoic republic; and enforcing obedience, not on Reason so
286 much as on Faith.

287 24. And now that we are in possession of this great gift of God, Natural Religion has a
288 use and importance {31} which it before could hardly possess. For as Revealed Religion
289 enforces doctrine, so Natural Religion recommends it. It is hardly necessary to observe,
290 that the whole revealed scheme rests on nature for the validity of its evidence. The
291 claim of miraculous power or knowledge assumes the existence of a Being capable of
292 exerting it; and the matter of the Revelation itself is evidenced and interpreted by those
293 awful, far-reaching analogies of mediation and vicarious suffering, which we discern in
294 the visible course of the world. There is, perhaps, no greater satisfaction to the Christian
295 than that which arises from his perceiving that the Revealed system is rooted deep in
296 the natural course of things, of which it is merely the result and completion; that his
297 Saviour has interpreted for him the faint or broken accents of Nature; and that in them,
298 so interpreted, he has, as if in some old prophecy, at once the evidence and the lasting
299 memorial of the truths of the Gospel.

300 25. It remains to suggest some of the conclusions which follow from this view, thus
301 taken, of the relation of Revealed to Natural Religion.

302 (1.) First, much might be said on the evidence thence deducible for the truth of the
303 Christian system. It is one point of evidence that the two systems coincide in declaring
304 the same substantial doctrines: viz., as being two independent witnesses in one and the
305 same question; an argument contained by implication, though not formally drawn out, in
306 Bishop Butler's Analogy. It is a further point of evidence to find that Scripture completes
307 {32} the very deficiency of nature; and, while its doctrines of Atonement and Mediation
308 are paralleled by phenomena in the visible course of things, to discern in it one solitary
309 doctrine, which from its nature has no parallel in this world, an Incarnation of the Divine
310 Essence, an intrinsic evidence of its truth in the benefit thus conferred on religion.

311 26. (2.) Next, light is thus thrown upon the vast practical importance of the doctrines of
312 the Divinity of our Lord, and of the Personality of the Holy Spirit. It is the impiety, indeed,
313 involved in the denial of these, which is the great guilt of anti-Trinitarians; but, over and
314 above this, such persons go far to destroy the very advantages which the Revealed
315 system possesses over the Natural; and throw back the science of morals and of
316 human happiness into that state of vagueness and inefficiency from which Christianity
317 has extricated it. On the other hand, we learn besides, the shallowness of the objection
318 to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, grounded on its involving a plurality of Persons in the
319 Godhead; since, if it be inconceivable, as it surely is, how Personality can in any way be
320 an attribute of the infinite, incommunicable Essence of the Deity, or in what particular
321 sense it is ascribed to Him, Unitarians, so called (to be consistent), should find a
322 difficulty in the doctrine of an Unity of Person, as well as of a Trinity; and, having ceased
323 to be Athanasians, should not stop till they become Pantheists.

324 27. (3.) Further, the same view suggests to us the peculiar perverseness of schism,
325 which tends to undo the very arrangement which our Lord has made, for {33} arresting
326 the attention of mankind, and leading them to seek their true moral good; and which (if
327 followed to its legitimate results) would reduce the world to the very state in which it
328 existed in the age of the heathen moralist, so familiar to us in this place, who, in opening
329 his treatise, bears witness to the importance of a visible Church, by consulting the
330 opinions of mankind as to the means of obtaining happiness; and not till disappointed in
331 sage and statesman, the many and the educated, undertakes himself an examination of
332 man's nature, as if the only remaining means of satisfying the inquiry.

333 28. (4.) And hence, at the same time, may be learned the real religious position of the
334 heathen, who, we have reason to trust, are not in danger of perishing, except so far as
335 all are in such danger, whether in heathen or Christian countries, who do not follow the
336 secret voice of conscience, leading them on by faith to their true though unseen good.
337 For the prerogative of Christians consists in the possession, not of exclusive knowledge
338 and spiritual aid, but of gifts high and peculiar; and though the manifestation of the
339 Divine character in the Incarnation is a singular and inestimable benefit, yet its absence
340 is supplied in a degree, not only in the inspired record of Moses, but even, with more or

341 less strength, as the case may be, in those various traditions concerning Divine
342 Providences and Dispensations which are scattered through the heathen mythologies.

343 29. (5.) Further, a comment is hence afforded us on the meaning of a phrase perplexed
344 by controversy—that {34} of "preaching Christ." By which is properly meant, not the
345 putting Natural Religion out of sight, nor the separating one doctrine of the Gospel from
346 the rest, as having an exclusive claim to the name of Gospel; but the displaying *all* that
347 Nature and Scripture teach concerning Divine Providence (for they teach the same
348 great truths), whether of His majesty, or His love, or His mercy, or His holiness, or His
349 fearful anger, through the medium of the life and death of His Son Jesus Christ. A mere
350 moral strain of teaching duty and enforcing obedience fails in persuading us to practice,
351 not because it appeals to conscience, and commands and threatens (as is sometimes
352 supposed), but because it does not urge and illustrate virtue in the Name and by the
353 example of our blessed Lord. It is not that natural teaching gives merely the Law, and
354 Christian teaching gives the tidings of pardon, and that a command chills or formalizes
355 the mind, and that a free forgiveness converts it (for nature speaks of God's goodness
356 as well as of His severity, and Christ surely of His severity as well as of His goodness);
357 but that in the Christian scheme we find *all* the Divine Attributes (not mercy only, though
358 mercy pre-eminently) brought out and urged upon us, which were but latent in the
359 visible course of things.

360 30. (6.) Hence it appears that the Gospels are the great instruments (under God's
361 blessing) of fixing and instructing our minds in a religious course, the Epistles being
362 rather comments on them than intended to supersede them, as is sometimes
363 maintained. Surely it argues a temper of mind but partially moulded {35} to the worship
364 and love of Christ, to make this distinction between His teaching and that of His
365 Apostles, when the very promised office of the Comforter in His absence was, not to
366 make a new revelation, but expressly "to bring all things to their remembrance" which
367 "*He* had said to them;" *not* to "speak of Himself," but "to receive of Christ's, and show it
368 unto them." The Holy Spirit came "to glorify Christ," to declare openly to all the world
369 that *He* had come on earth, suffered, and died, who was also the Creator and Governor
370 of the world, the Saviour, the final Judge of men. It is the Incarnation of the Son of God
371 rather than any doctrine drawn from a partial view of Scripture (however true and
372 momentous it may be) which is the article of a standing or a falling Church. "Every spirit
373 that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*, is not of God; ... this is that
374 spirit of anti-Christ;" for, not to mention other more direct considerations, it reverses, as
375 far as in it lies, all that the revealed character of Christ has done for our faith and virtue.
376 And hence the Apostles' speeches in the book of Acts and the primitive Creeds insist
377 almost exclusively upon the history, not the doctrines, of Christianity; it being designed
378 that, by means of our Lord's Economy, the great doctrines of theology should be taught,
379 the facts of that Economy giving its peculiarity and force to the Revelation.

380 31. May it ever be our aim thus profitably to use that last and complete manifestation of
381 the Divine Attributes and Will contained in the New Testament, {36} setting the pattern
382 of the Son of God ever before us, and studying so to act as if He were sensibly present,

383 by look, voice, and gesture, to approve or blame us in our private thoughts and all our
384 intercourse with the world!

385 (Preached on Easter Tuesday morning, April 13, 1830, in the Author's own preaching
386 turn.)

387 Notes

388 1. [This seems to me too strongly said, and inconsistent with what is said *infra*, vi. 10.
389 Vide Essay on Assent, v. i.]

390 2. The author was not acquainted, at the time this was written, with Mr. Coleridge's
391 Works, and a remarkable passage in his Biographia Literaria, in which several portions
392 of this Sermon are anticipated. It has been pointed out to him since by the kindness of a
393 friend, [Mr. Thomas D. Acland.]—Vide Biogr. Lit. vol. i. p. 199.