Christ’s life and the spiritual experiences of the early Christians. It was not an ontological or even theological doctrine, and will be identified by no competent exegete with the dogma of the Divine Trinity set forth in the oecumenical creeds. The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity—the propositions in the symbols of Nice, Constantinople, and Toledo relative to the immanent distinctions and relations in the Godhead— were not drawn directly from the New Testament, and could not be ex­pressed in New Testament terms. They were the pro­ducts of reason speculating on a revelation to faith—the New Testament representation of God as a father, a redeemer, and a sanctifier—with a view to conserve and vindicate, explain and comprehend it. They were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman metaphysics. The evolution of the doctrine of the Trinity was far the most important fact in the doctrinal history of the church during the first five centuries of its post-apostolic existence. To trace and describe it fully would be almost to exhibit the history of Christian thought during these centuries. It had neces­sarily an immense influence on the development of theism. The acceptance of the catholic doctrine of the Trinity implied the rejection of pantheism, of abstract monotheism, of all forms of monarchianism or unitarianism. It decided that theistic development was not to be on these lines or in these directions. At the same time the dogma itself was a seed for new growths of theistic thought, and demanded a development consistent with its own nature. It is a doctrine, not as to the manifestations and revela­tions of Godhead, but as to their ground and explanation, the constitution of Godhead, a doctrine as to a trinity of essence, which accounts for the Trinity of the gospel dis­pensation. It affirms the unity of God, but requires us to conceive of His unity, not as an abstract or indeter­minate self-identity, not as “sterile, monotonous simpli­city,” but as a unity rich in distinctions and perfections,— the unity of an infinite fulness of life and love, the unity of a Godhead in which there are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a trinity of persons, a diversity of properties, a variety of offices, a multiplicity of operations, yet sameness of nature, equality of power and glory, oneness in purpose and affection, harmony of will and work. It finds its dogmatic expression as to what is ultimate in it in the formula—One substance in three persons, of which the first eternally generates the second, and the third eternally proceeds from the first and second. Now, manifestly, however much such a doctrine as this may have satisfied thought on a revelation as to the Godhead, it cannot have exhausted or completed it. If it answered certain ques­tions it raised others, and these more speculative and pro­found than those which had been answered. What is meant by affirming God to be “ substance ” or “ in three persons ”*?* What is meant by divine “ generation ” or “ procession ” *?* How are the substance and persons related *?* How are the persons distinguished and inter­related ? These and many kindred and connected ques­tions reason became bound to discuss by its adoption of the doctrine of the Trinity. This obligation could only be temporarily and partially evaded or concealed by represent­ing the doctrine as “ a mystery ” to be accepted simply on authority or with blind faith. Data of the doctrine may have been given to faith, but the doctrine itself was the work of reason, and on no ground not plainly absurd could that work be held to have terminated in 589 a.d. As soon as an inspired record is left at all, as soon as any speculation is allowed on its contents, as soon as the pro­cess of forming doctrine is permitted to begin, all conceiv­able right to stop the movement anywhere is lost. By the blending, however, of trinitarianism with theism the whole character of the latter was, of necessity, profoundly changed. A trinitarian theism must be vastly different from a Unitarian as regards practice. It must be equally so as regards theory. It must be far more speculative. By its very nature it is bound to undertake speculative labours in which a simply Unitarian theism will feel no call to engage.@@1

It was the general conviction of the early Christian writers that formal proofs of the Divine existence were neither necessary nor useful. In their view the idea of God was native to the soul, the knowledge of God intuitive, the mind of man a mirror in which, if not rusted by sin, God could not fail to be reflected. The design argument, however, came early into use and was frequently employed. More speculative modes of reasoning were resorted to by Dionysius of Tarsus, Augustine, and Boetius. The unity of God had to be incessantly affirmed against polytheists, Gnostics, and Manichæans. The incomprehensibility of God and His cognoscibility were both maintained, although each was sometimes so emphasized as to seem to obscure the other. That the knowledge of God may be reached by the three ways of *causality, negation,* and *eminence* was implied by the pseudo-Dionysius, although only explicitly announced by Scotus. Neither any systematic treatment of the Divine attributes nor any elaborate discussion of single attributes was attempted. The hypothesis of eternal creation found a vigorous defender in Origen, but met with the same fate as the dualist hypothesis of un­created matter and the pantheistic hypothesis of emana­tion. Of all the patristic theologians Augustine was undoubtedly the most philosophical apologist and ex­ponent of theism. He alone attempted to refute agnos­ticism, and to find a basis for the knowledge of God in a doctrine of cognition in general. On the large, difficult, and as yet far from adequately investigated subject, the influence of Platonic and Aristotelian, Stoic and Academic, Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic speculation on the for­mation of the Christian *doctrina de Deo,* it is, of course, impossible here to enter.@@2

Mohammed (570-632) founded a monotheistic religion which spread with amazing rapidity through Arabia, Syria, Persia, North Africa, and Spain, and gave, almost wherever it spread, a mighty impulse to the minds and wills of men. It was received as the gift of special inspiration and revelation, although its creed contained little of moment on which reason would seem to be incompetent to decide. It had obvious merits, and must be admitted to have rendered real and important services to culture, religion, and humanity, but had also conspicuous faults, which have done much injury to individual, domestic, and national life. If the latest were always the best, it would be the most perfect of the three great theistic religions of the world; but it is, in fact, the least developed and most defective. Instead of evolving and extending, it marred and mutilated the theistic idea which it borrowed. In­stead of representing God as possessed of all spiritual fulness and perfections, it exhibited Him as devoid of the divinest spiritual attributes. It recognized His transcendent exaltation above His creatures, but not His sympathetic presence with His creatures ; apprehended vividly His almighty power, His eternity, His omnipres­ence and omniscience, but only vaguely and dimly His moral glory, His love and goodness, His righteousness

@@@1 Baur, *Ch. Lehre v. d. Dreieinigkeit,* &c., 1841-43 ; Meier, *Lehre v. d. Trinität in hist. Entwicht.,* 1844.

@@@2 Roesler, *Philosophia Veteris Eccl. de Deo,* 1782; and the histories of Christian doctrine by Hagenbach, Neander, Shedd, Bonifas, Sheldon, Harnack, &c. ; Gangauf, *Des h. Augustinus speculative Lehre von Gott,* 1884.