

On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge (Continued)

by J.H. Newman

The principle of reserve in communicating religious knowledge is a fundamental aspect of Christian tradition, emphasizing the importance of reverence, caution, and authenticity in revealing religious truth.

Scripture: Proverbs 25:2, Matthew 13:11, Romans 16:25, 1 Corinthians 2:7, 1 Corinthians 4:1, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:26, 1 Timothy 3:9

Topics: "Sacred Scripture", "Church Tradition"

Description

The preacher, Origen, delves into the testimony of the Ancient Church, emphasizing the principle of reserve in revealing religious truths, which is not based on heathen practices but on Scripture alone. The early Church's testimony and practices align with this principle, seen in the *Disciplina Arcani* and the interpretation of Scripture with hidden meanings. The Ancient Church's reverence and caution in handling sacred truths are perfectly analogous to Jesus' example of revealing truths gradually. Origen and other Fathers connect this principle not only to Scripture but also to the mysteries of creation and sacraments, reflecting a great religious principle and rule of conduct.

Transcript

PART IV.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

1. No argument adduced against the principle: history of the subject in the writer's mind.
2. Testimony of the early Church full and extensive.
3. The existence of what has been termed the *Disciplina Arcani*.
4. Indications of the principle independent of any known definite system.
5. The *Disciplina* a rule of moral nature.
6. The whole subject connected with a great religious principle and rule of conduct.
7. Catholic mode of interpreting Scripture founded on the same.

8. High authority for this mode of Scriptural interpretation.
9. Reverence and caution observable in the Fathers.
10. Reserve in revelation not confined to GOD'S word.
11. Origen's mode of considering the subject as moral not intellectual.
12. The same discussed at length by St. Clement of Alexandria.
13. The testimony of the Ancient Church to the doctrine of Christ Crucified.
14. The practice and principle of the Ancient Church perfectly analogous to our LORD'S example.

PART V.

THE PRINCIPLE OPPOSED TO CERTAIN MODERN RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

1. The nature of the objections which have been made.
2. On preaching the word most effectually.
3. On teaching the doctrine of the Atonement.
4. Danger in forming a plan of our own different from that of Scripture.
5. Statement of the case from plain moral principles.
6. All Scripture in perfect harmony as opposed to this modern system.
7. On eloquent preaching and delivery.
8. This peculiar system a worldly system.

PART VI.

THE SYSTEM OF THE CHURCH, ONE OF RESERVE.

1. The principle considered with reference to ourselves.
2. The holiness of GOD'S House of Prayer.
3. Sacraments, Church Ordinances, and practices.
4. The Church realizes its kingdom is secret.
5. This Reserve the best preservative of sound Church principles.
6. Caution necessary with respect to the latent senses of Scripture.
7. Secret religious duties, conversation, and controversy.
8. Untenable objections on the ground of our present position.

9. This sacred principle more than ever needed.

10. Want of reverence now prevailing.

11. Summary of the whole subject.

PART IV.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANCIENT CHURCH.

1. No Argument adduced against the principle: history of the subject in the writer's mind.

THE writer made every inquiry of friends before the late Tract on this subject was published, to ascertain to what objections it was liable; and since the publication, he has looked out with great interest for everything that has issued against it, with the expectation of finding either arguments adduced, which would militate against the principle itself, or such as would be calculated to show that, allowing the principle to be true, it was not capable of bearing out the conclusions to which it has been applied: for, by means of such objections, the writer had hoped either, by answering and explaining them, to draw out and establish more clearly his main principle; or else to be assisted in seeing that the case should not be proved; under which circumstance he trusts he should be ready to acknowledge it. But to his great disappointment he has found nothing of this kind; he is not aware of one single argument adduced that touches the question; but much vague declamation, and strong alarms expressed, because the view interferes with certain peculiar religious opinions, or on account of some motives attributed to the writer's friends, or on other similar grounds, which in fact (even were they true) in no way affect him or this principle. That those who will not afford the subject a patient consideration should not agree with him, does in truth only confirm the argument which the writer wishes to maintain; which is mainly this, that religious truth cannot be known without serious attention. If there is something sacred and divine in this rule of reverential forbearance it cannot be thus controverted; nor has it in any way been put forth with any party feeling, nor will any one say it has been treated by us in a spirit of controversy: the sole object being to know, by what means we may best arrive at truth, and promote religion in the world.

But independently of these objections, the writer has himself felt that there was much in the subject that needed explanation, and which was liable to misconstruction. He felt it at the time of publishing the former treatise, and has done so ever since. And some friendly notices, which have mentioned this, have not expressed it more strongly than he has been himself impressed with it: partly from not fully seeing how far the inferences might lead him, which were deducible from a principle that he considered as true; and partly from some of his original observations on the subject having been mislaid and lost at the time of the publication, comprising the whole of the proof from antiquity which is here given; and as the inquiry has from its very nature occasioned some unavoidable misapprehensions, perhaps he could not better explain his sentiments than by recording the history of them in his own mind.

The opinion was not at first formed from a knowledge of any system of the kind in sacred antiquity, nor from observing that the principle was so fully maintained throughout the whole of the Holy Scriptures as he has since found it to be, much less from any speculative theory adopted in the study; but from his own dealings with mankind in the care of a parish, and his observation of the conduct of others who, he thought, had most experience and good sense and singleness of heart in winning men to the truth.

Much pain was occasioned him, and much injury he thought was done to the cause of the Gospel, in those who, from habit or want of consideration, acted otherwise. It appeared to him that, though his mode of proceeding was contrary to that which such persons require, yet it was according to the maxims of Scripture: and often oppressed, as we cannot but feel, while thus acting, at being considered by some almost without the pale of the Christian covenant, yet his own natural sense of right, delicacy, and even Christian expediency, and much more his notion of the Gospel itself, could never allow him to act differently; considering that in the care of himself he had more to guard against insincere profession, and unreal systems of thought and feeling in religion than any thing else; and that in others also he had nothing so much to seek for as true honesty and seriousness of mind, respecting a state so awful as that which Christianity represents ours to be.

It appeared to him that there was no subject upon which we were so much and so earnestly cautioned throughout the Gospels as this (especially through all the Sermon on the Mount, and in our LORD'S last discourses in St. John,) and that in the world at present the standard of things was so external, that there was more than ever danger of false pretension,-of an unreality, a want of thorough simplicity and seriousness, a secret looking to the world, such as would eat out the very heart of religion.

Thoughts of this kind were constantly in his mind: not that he had any notion whatever of a system, or indeed of any great and extensive principle, nor even did his feelings assume any definite shape so as to support themselves by arguments and decisive reasons why his sentiments and practice were unlike those of certain others; but he only felt that in acting otherwise in occasional instances of various kinds, he was doing violence to something sacred and to natural modesty; and that the obloquy he was subject to he shared with those of whose fidelity he could not doubt, such as Bishop Butler and Bishop Wilson.

And indeed when continually engaged in these and the like thoughts, he had felt inexpressibly relieved and comforted at finding those whom he could most value not only quite free from all this, but watchful against it in themselves and others. Perfectly one and of a piece with this appeared to him the uniform tendency of Holy Scripture, when viewed with a reference to this subject, as has been shown in the previous part of this treatise. And in reading the ancient writers with this view he found throughout, if they did not fully explain the whole of our LORD'S conduct on this principle, yet they incidentally allowed it, and bore the fullest evidence to the opinions he has stated.

So much so indeed that the doctrine, which appears new and strange to many of us in the present day, would have been one with which they were quite familiar. The inferences implied, and the practices recommended, would have been considered by the Ancient Church as a matter of course, and this it is our present object to show.

2. Testimony of the early Church full and extensive.

But before entering on this part of the subject, which was before accidentally omitted, let us be understood in our appeal to antiquity. The principle has not been founded, as some have stated, on the primitive practice, but on Scripture alone. And our appeal to Catholic antiquity would be sufficient were it only to prove that it is not opposed to our opinion; but so far is this from being the case, that, on the contrary, we shall find that it fully supports it in a variety of ways. We shall find scattered intimations of this kind pervade all primitive writings: but that more particularly there were two customs which embody and strongly put forth the principle. The first an external system of discipline, designated by the Latins the Discipline of the Secret, according to which they kept back in reserve the higher doctrines of our Faith until persons were

rendered fit to receive them by a long previous preparation. The other an universal rule in the explanations of GOD'S Word, which is founded on the supposition that it contains mystical meanings disclosed only to the faithful.

To these two points therefore we would especially draw attention in our appeal to Catholic Antiquity; first of all that not only what we have supposed respecting our LORD'S concealing His Divine presence is confirmed both by the express allusions of the Fathers, but also by their adopting into the Church a mode of acting, which appears to us extraordinary, and which either took its rise from this circumstance (i. e. of Scriptural example), or was founded upon a great religious principle. Secondly, that they universally seem to suppose that there is in Holy Scripture something which is throughout analogous to what we have traced out in the history of our LORD'S life, so that there is an unity of action and manner of a very remarkable kind in the two cases. They suppose that our blessed LORD is as it were, throughout the inspired writings, hiding and concealing Himself, and going about (if I may so speak reverently) seeking to whom He may disclose Himself: that there are many things in Scripture which might appear common and ordinary accounts, relating to passing events, or words which appear to speak only of temporal wisdom; that our LORD is walking therein and concealing His divinity: in the same manner that we have supposed that in our LORD'S ordinary walk and mode of life among men He very studiously and remarkably concealed His ineffable majesty under the appearance of common humanity, accompanied with great goodness. Though these two points are different yet they involve one common principle.

But when we come to produce the proof from the ancient Church that we are putting forth no new doctrine, we find it a task really very difficult, from the very abundance of the matter; the principle is thoroughly and entirely infused into their whole system; their words, their notions, their practices, thoroughly breathe of it, so as to indicate a state of thought and feeling perfectly at variance with those modern systems, whether that (improperly) called Evangelical, or the cold and barren (equally miscalled) orthodoxy of the last age; so as to show an entire and essential difference in tone and spirit. The proof is difficult, for one hardly knows how to produce it; if we were to bring forward, generally, sentiments from the Fathers which imply it, it would occupy volumes; and besides this, the testimony is so varied in its nature that it makes an attempt appear desultory. It is like attempting to describe some strong impression of the mind, which is shown in the body in every part; every limb, and every gesture may be indicative of it, and yet it may be rather expressed by the whole than by any part, and to select one, would not adequately serve the purpose. So does the principle pervade the body of the Church, appearing now in one part, and then in another; now in action, now in demeanour, now in expression, and often in all together, and yet in so subtle a manner as to defy description. The Fathers speak of it as our LORD'S mode of conduct; they speak of it still more, as St. Paul's in all his teaching; they speak of it as a rule of Scripture, as a principle in morals; their practice with regard to others, and their studies, both alike imply it. There is, perhaps, not one among the Fathers with whom one would not find, on this subject, that sympathy and understanding which it is in vain to seek for among moderns, at least, among those who are imbued with a spirit alien to the Church.

The spirit and practice of the Ancient Church is like the genuine and retiring modesty of first love in contrast with the feeble loudness and noisy display of a counterfeit, which would fain renew feelings it has lost: "with their mouth they show much love."

The instances we have to adduce, must therefore necessarily be various in their character, and may appear to allude to things in themselves distinct; one to a secret sense in Scripture, another to a moral rule of action, another to a rule of Church discipline, and another to an historical fact respecting our LORD or

His Apostles. But it must be observed, that it is this very diversity which most establishes the point in question; namely, that it is a great moral and religious principle, or which these are incidental manifestations: for either of these points proved singly, might be supposed to be only the effect of imagination, or a train of circumstances that might be otherwise accounted for: but a concurrence of the whole in points, each of which is contrary to our at present received notions, can only be referred to a general principle. Besides which, this very variety opens to us a subject of exceeding interest, namely, our blessed LORD acting towards mankind through the whole of His Church, in a manner strikingly in harmony with His personal conduct in the days of His Incarnation.

3. The existence of what has been termed the *Disciplina Arcani*.

Now first of all with regard to the *Disciplina Arcani*: what has been said would naturally lead one to conclude that it owed its origin to a most sacred source. It seems so perfectly in accordance with all that has been noticed of our LORD'S conduct, (in Tract No. 80. Part I.) that His example and mode of teaching will constantly account for its origin in a manner that nothing else will. And moreover, that alone will suggest a reason why the principle should have become so universal, without any apparent reference to that definite system of Church discipline.

But even were we to suppose, as some have imagined, that the practice of the *Disciplina* had its origin in religious or philosophic mysteries among the heathen: even this by no means destroys our argument respecting the principle itself as a rule in religion or morals; for the very existence of those mysteries themselves remains to be accounted for. If the principle we maintain is a truth of GOD, and strongly stamped on His revelation, such a principle must be founded on our moral and spiritual nature, and therefore of course may be expected to be found among mankind; this would account for its existence in Egypt and early Greece. But there is great reason to believe that the pagan mysteries took their rise from something more holy than themselves. One cannot seriously reflect on Herodotus' account of Egypt, and the mysterious awe with which he forbears to speak of certain things in religion, without apprehending that there is much more in it than any system of man's invention; that amidst the extensive corruption of primitive religion which took place in that country, there still remained an indefinable fear, which would only find its correspondence in the sense handed down of the awfulness of the true GOD. So that at all events, were we to allow for a momentary supposition that this *Disciplina* had an heathen origin, the very existence of these pagan mysteries would serve greatly to establish the principle as a law in our moral nature.

But it has been well said, that to suppose the doctrines of the Holy Catholic Church owed their origin to the practices of heathen philosophy, is as if a person were to imagine that the sun owed its light to a reflection of the moon in the waters; and this we should be doing, if we allowed the secret discipline of the early Church to have owed its origin to any heathen custom. But the principle of reserve on which it is founded, is thoroughly consistent throughout with all the methods of revelation, and quite consistent in itself in all its extensive developments in the Church. If we grant it to be true that there are no proofs for the existence of the *Disciplina* itself before the middle or the end of the second century, this would only prove that it might not have appeared as a definite system; it may have been wrong, as is the case of other institutions, that it should have assumed a precise form and name at all; or the circumstances of the Church preceding it may not have required it should do so, from the Christians being necessarily of a strong and marked character to be Christians at all, while the Church was herself struggling into existence.

Yet had we a close and accurate account of the manner in which the Apostles dealt with individuals as we have of our LORD Himself, we might have found in them a continuation of His own mode of teaching, as there remarked by the close attention which the narrative admits of. Some indications of it are at once obvious in the Acts of the Apostles; for instance, the great danger we have supposed to accompany the revelation and acknowledgment of the Presence of GOD, is at once exemplified in the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, and the awful rebuke addressed to Simon Magus.

But the very obscurity which hangs about the practices of the early Church, the silence in which many things are left, seems to indicate something of this principle. How little from the Epistles of St. Paul, or any other records of the first ages, do we learn of any of the forms of discipline which the Church doubtless then observed? and afterwards the mention of the Secret Discipline seems to be often but incidental. Indeed, it is by no means evident that even Justin Martyr does not allude to it, it is well known that he applies the word *φωτισμοσ* or illumination, to Baptism, a word afterwards used with reference to the instruction in Christian doctrine imparted at that Sacrament, and the light then bestowed. Add to which we know our LORD was for forty days conversing with His disciples of the things concerning the kingdom, of which nothing is publicly written or declared: in these things it was, as St. Peter says of the Resurrection, they were disclosed, "not unto all the people, but to certain witnesses chosen of GOD." We find, moreover, that the heretics of the first age maintained that their doctrines were of that more sacred kind which our LORD and His Apostles had divulged to certain favoured disciples. Although there was no truth in these allegations, and no proof of a divine authority for the *Disciplina*, yet is it not likely that the false assumption of the former, as well as the latter system, may have taken their rise in some great truth, viz. our LORD'S mode of communicating knowledge to His disciples, and a certain reserve in disclosing Himself?

Add to this the extraordinary ignorance of the heathen writers respecting Christianity, and the strong indications which all must have noticed throughout St. Paul's Epistles, that he discloses and withholds Christian knowledge and mysteries, according to the meetness of those to whom he was writing to receive them.

If intimations of these things are but faint in the first age of Christianity, yet in the next they derive the most ample confirmation throughout the works of St. Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and most of the succeeding Fathers; their mode of speaking of religion, of interpreting Scripture, always seems to imply this principle of reserve. The *Disciplina Arcani* is spoken of, not as some ecclesiastical system founded on motives of expediency, as is now often supposed, or arising from the circumstances of the times, or as merely directed towards the heathens; it is implied that this reserve is an universal principle in morals; that its assuming a strong and definite shape in the *Disciplina Arcani* is only an accidental development of it; that it is founded deep in our nature; that the system is to be traced throughout the heathen world in some shape or other, proving it to be of divine origin or arising out of some common principle; that it has the authority of our LORD Himself and His disciples; that it was practised by our LORD, not from the immediate and necessary exigencies of the occasion, but as a great law and rule of religious wisdom; that an awful and reverential sense of His thus disclosing Himself only according to the state of man's heart is the only key to the knowledge of His ways, either in His moral providences or His more direct revelations.

4. Indications of the principle independent of any known definite system.

The very silence of the first ages is on this subject in our favour; and a few passages that do allude to it, are themselves so interesting, and so much tend to confirm the view we have taken, that we cannot withhold a fuller reference to them, though they have already been alluded to. The Author of the Epistle to

Diognetus, which has been ascribed to Justin Martyr, says incidentally in the passages before spoken of, "having been myself a disciple of the Apostles, I am become a teacher of the Gentiles. The things which were delivered to me, I am the means to convey to those who are worthy, who have become disciples of the truth. For who is there that has a love for the Word, who does not seek clearly to know those things which were by the Word shown openly to the disciples, to whom He declared them, being Himself manifested to them, speaking with all freedom, not understood by the unbeliever, but conversing and explaining to the disciples. And they who were by Him esteemed faithful have become acquainted with these mysteries of the Father."

This simple and undersigned but distinct allusion to the teaching of our LORD Himself is much to be observed, and seems by the mention of the disciples to carry on, and connect with the system of the Church that reserve which has been noticed in the Gospels, and serves to explain in some degree that silence, so remarkable in the New Testament, of the things concerning the Church delivered to faithful men.

The passage quoted by Mr. Keble on the subject of tradition from the bishop Hippolytus bears an undesigned testimony to this principle also at an early period. "Take care," says that holy Father, "that these things be not delivered to unbelieving and blasphemous tongues. For the danger is not inconsiderable. But impart them to serious and faithful men who wish to live holily and justly with fear. For it is not without a purpose that the blessed Paul in his exhortation to Timothy says . . . 'Keep the deposit committed to thee;' and again 'what thou hast heard from me by many exhortations, commit these to faithful men, &c.' If therefore that blessed Saint delivered "these truths which were easily accessible to all, with religious caution, seeing by the Spirit that all have not faith; how much more shall we be in danger, if, at random and without distinction, we impart the oracles of GOD to profane and unworthy men."

This testimony not only sanctions the evidence of the pre-ceding extract, but inculcates the same as a moral duty incumbent on teachers of the truth. We have, again, the very high authority of St. Athanasius for knowing, that the disciples themselves did observe precisely a similar caution from the beginning to that which our LORD had observed towards them, and this testimony connects this reserve of the Ancient Church by an unbroken chain with our LORD Himself.

St. Basil bears testimony also to this having been the practice of the early disciples, and that it was founded on our LORD'S example. He mentions that there were "many things which they had received not from Scripture but from Apostolical tradition, communicated," he says, "in mystery and secrecy, and which their fathers had preserved in unobtrusive and modest silence, knowing rightly that this sacred reverence to mysteries was their best protection." He then alludes to the same having been the intention, when Moses allowed not the holy things in the temple to be seen by all, but kept the profane without, and admitted the more pure into the outer courts. After stating some circumstances of this kind in the law of Moses, such as the Levites set apart for sacred things, and the entering into the Holy of Holies with such circumstances of solemnity and awe; "in the same manner," he says, "the Apostles and Fathers, who prescribed the first rites of the Church, preserved the dignity of their mysteries in secrecy and silence. And even that obscurity which the Scripture makes use of is," he adds, "a species of the same reserve, rendering the understanding of its doctrines difficult of apprehension, and that for the benefit of ordinary readers."

5. The Disciplina a rule of a moral nature.

The evidence of these passages has been partly historical, and suggests the probability that the early system of reserve may have had some connection with our LORD'S example and authority; and partly as adducing the testimony of the Fathers respecting the practical wisdom of the rule. To the latter we may add the authority of Tertullian, in a passage before alluded to, and it is important as proving that, where he had occasion incidentally to allude to the *Disciplina*, he speaks of it as a rule of a moral nature. He strongly condemns the heretics for having no discipline whatever, or distinction observed in their assemblies and worship, even, he says, if heathen were present, they would "'cast that which is holy to dogs, and pearls before swine.' And this utter subversion of all discipline they called simplicity, and accused the care of the orthodox Christians as a mode of enticement." In the same passage he adds, that "discipline is an index of doctrine: they say that GOD ought not to be feared; therefore, every thing with them is free and open. But where is GOD not feared, but where He is not? and where GOD is not, truth is not; where there is no truth, of course there is no discipline. But where GOD is, there is the fear of GOD, which is the beginning of wisdom."

The next person whose agreement with us we may mention is St. Chrysostom. His authority is of the more weight, as he himself was so eloquent and bold a preacher, and not a mere student; so as to prove that the practice which this reserve implies is in no way opposed to the most earnest teaching of the truth. He speaks of it frequently as a rule important to be observed in communicating religious knowledge. He mentions it as his own practice (in his preface to St. Matthew). "Those that I perceive awake, and desirous to learn, I will endeavour to teach. Those that sleep and attend not, I will neither tell the difficulties nor their answers, in obedience to the Divine law: for it is written 'Give not that which is holy, to the dogs.'" He speaks of this law in another place, as similar to that of human friendship, which imparts secrets only to the most intimate friends. "Let them attend to this," he adds, "who make a sort of triumphal show of the secrets of the Gospel, and unto all indiscriminately display the pearls and the doctrine, and who cast the holy things unto dogs and swine by useless reasonings." He often speaks of it as St. Paul's practice; in his Commentary on the words of not casting pearls before swine, he says, "Paul intimates the same thing in saying, the natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT; for they are foolishness unto him, and in many other places he speaks of a corrupt life being the cause of their not receiving the more perfect doctrines, therefore he commands us not to open our doors to them." He has much more to the same effect on the teaching of St. Paul. And not to dwell on various passages in which St. Chrysostom incidentally alludes to the principle, one may be mentioned in which he speaks clearly of the *Disciplina* in the very connection we have supposed, as a mode of acting which had a reference to our LORD'S own example, "We close the doors," he says, "before we perform the mysteries, and keep out the uninitiated; not from any weakness we apprehend in them, but because the generality are not yet sufficiently advanced to be rightly disposed towards them. It was upon this very account that He Himself said many things unto the Jews in parables, because seeing they did not perceive. For this reason also Paul hath commanded us to know how we ought to answer each individual."

In the Catechetical Lectures of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, we may, of course, expect to find much on this subject; all that is requisite is to show that he considered this system, not as one intended merely for the self-defence of Christians, but as one intended for and contributing to the good of all parties, as a practical rule; and this he does most fully. In a passage more than once quoted of late years with reference to the *Disciplina*, he forbids the catechumens to communicate the knowledge which he says to those who are unprepared for it is highly injurious. He forbids those whom he is instructing to communicate to catechumens the things which were revealed to them. "If any should ask and say, What harm will there be in my being acquainted?" he adds, "They who are sick ask for wine; but if it be unseasonably afforded

them, it occasions frenzy; and from this two bad consequences ensue, the sick man dies, and the physician is blamed."

In another place he speaks of the secret discipline as closely connected with our LORD'S own teaching, as the example and authority on which it was formed. After speaking of the Gospel being hid from those that are lost, and saying that the GOD of the New as well as of the Old Testament concealed things in parables, he adds, "The sun renders blind the weak-sighted; not that it is the nature of the sun to make persons blind, but that the state of their eyes cannot bear its light. Thus it is that they whose hearts are diseased from unbelief, are not able to look upon the bright rays of Godhead. The LORD spake to those who were able to hear in parables, and those parables He explained privately to His disciples. The brightness of His glory was for those who were enlightened, the blinding for the unbelieving. These mysteries the Church now declares to one who ceases to be of the catechumens. It is not her custom to declare them to heathens. We often speak of many things covertly, that the faithful who know may understand, and others be not injured."

Origen, in like manner, speaks of the discipline then observed among Christians as a moral system, which was considered as best calculated to do good. And so far from its having any con-nexion with heathen practices, he speaks of it as opposed to them. Against Celsus, speaking of some heathen philosopher, he proceeds: "Let us see if the Christians have not a much wiser way of leading people to what is good and virtuous. For these ancient philosophers speak publicly, and make no discrimination of their hearers, but whosoever pleases may stand by and hear. But the Christians, as far as they are able, make a trial of the souls of those who wish to hear them; and first having privately brought their minds in tune, when they appear to have been sufficiently advanced by some evidence they have given of their desire to lead a good life, they then introduce them; and make a private distinction between those lately introduced, who have not yet received the sign of their purification, and those who, as far as in them lies, have indicated their determination to have no other principles of life but those of a Christian. And they have persons among them appointed to inquire into the lives and conduct of those who come to them, that they may prevent those who do things that are forbidden from coming into the common assembly; but those who are not such, they receive with their whole heart, and take pains daily to make them better."

And a little after, he proceeds, "For we endeavour, as far as we can, that our assemblies should be formed of serious persons; and things which are especially of a divine character we then venture to bring forward in our public discourses, when we have no want of understanding hearers; but we conceal and pass over in silence things which are more deep, from an audience who are figuratively said to require milk. For thus Paul writes to the Corinthians, who were not yet sufficiently recovered in their morals from their former heathen state: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able," &c. And the same Apostle, well aware of the more perfect food of the soul, and that that of new converts might be compared to milk, says, "Ye are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat; for every one that useth meat is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and vile."

In the same book we find Celsus reflecting against the Christians, and accusing them of inconsistency, for now, says he, "they cry out to those of clean hands and a pure heart, washed from all wickedness, to come and be initiated in their sacred purification, now, on the contrary, they call on the sinner, the foolish, the childish, the miserable-he shall receive the kingdom of GOD." To which Origen answers, that "it is one thing to invite the sick to be healed, and another those that are healthy to the knowledge of divine things."

Much more to this effect does Origen mention respecting the system then observed in the Church; and what is very observable, he not only does occasionally fully bear testimony to our supposition that our LORD did in the days of His flesh reveal Himself only so far as men were able to bear it, but he speaks of our LORD Himself in expressions that might very well by analogy and metaphor be applied to the secret discipline he describes. In the treatise last quoted, he says, that our SAVIOUR condescended to come down to the level of him who was unable to look upon the excessive luster and brightness of His divinity. He became flesh and spoke in a bodily manner until such a one, having received Him as such, by little and little was lifted up by the WORD, and was able to behold His former person. For there are different forms of the WORD, according as the WORD appears to each of them who are being trained to knowledge, in accordance with their respective moral habit and spiritual advancement, and different progress in virtue. So that it is not in the manner that Celsus has supposed that our GOD became changed in form. And when He went up into an high mountain, He showed Himself to them in another form, and far transcending that which they beheld, who remained below and were not able to follow to Him to the height. For they who were below had not eyes capable of beholding the glorious and divine transfiguration of the WORD, but indeed were scarce able to comprehend such as He was among them, so that of them who could not perceive His Divine beauty it is said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

6. The whole subject connected with a great religious principle and rule of conduct. From all that has been said it may, I think, be clearly seen with regard to the *Disciplina Arcani* that it could not have been a system suggested by heathen mysteries, but that it is so closely connected with Scripture, that allusions to it naturally rise out of, and again fall into Scriptural allusions, or some account of our LORD and His Apostles; so much so, as that all relating to it is perfectly consistent, and all of a piece with what they evidently considered to be the teaching of Holy Scripture.

If either of them is attacked Origen seems in defending the one to pass imperceptibly into a defence of the other, as if the method of the Church and the method of Holy Scripture were one and the same, mutually implying each other, as if the former gradually had its rise out of the latter, by means of an identity or similarity of conduct in the inspired Apostles or teachers in the early Churches; although the principle might have now assumed a more definite and marked character, from being formed into a system.

And these remarks would be more fully seen were we to quote the numerous passages in which the expressions of St. Paul are cited in allusion to it, particularly by Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Besides this very high and Divine character with which Origen invests the practice, he at times refers it to a principle of natural modesty, such as nature has clearly given us in many instances for our protection. Nor is this incidental mode of connecting this system of the Church with our LORD'S example at all confined to Origen, but frequent among other early writers; thus St.

Augustine speaking of where it is said that many "believed in CHRIST, but He trusted not Himself to them," says that "it is the same with the catechumens; they believe but are not admitted to the Eucharist." The practice is immediately applied as illustrating our SAVIOUR'S conduct. In another passage, St. Augustine speaks of himself as doubting how to act up this as a known and acknowledged duty. In his Enarration on Psalm 39, he applies to himself the words, "I said, I will take heed to my ways that I offend not in my tongue.

I will keep my mouth as it were with a bridle while the ungodly is in my sight. I held my tongue and spake nothing: I kept silence, yea, even from good words, but it was pain and grief to me." He applies this

passage to his own great difficulties and perplexities on this subject of reserve; that on the one hand he might not offend by an undue display of holy things so contrary both to Divine and Apostolic precept. For our LORD and St. Paul, he says, held back even from those who were exceedingly eager to learn those spiritual truths which were beyond them; and his advice to his hearer is, "Be not hastening to hear what you cannot receive, but improve in holiness that you may receive it."

On the other hand, he was anxious and struggling with the difficulty arising from the opposite duty, as one "set over the LORD'S household to give them their meat in due season." "Positus," he says, "in hãœc fluctuatione dicendi et tacendi; perclitans ne projiciat margaritas ante porcos; perclitans ne non eroget cibaria conservis."

If St. Augustine here speaks of this rule of reserve as a duty in individuals, Origen also speaks of it as a necessary circumstance in good men, inasmuch as the world cannot understand them. In the following passage He thus beautifully expresses it: "As the solar ray affects the countenance of him who looks to the sun, and it is not possible for any one to stand in the sun, and not himself to partake of its light; so must we suppose that he will become a partaker of GOD, who shall have meditated on the law of the Divine Word, and shall have given up his mind to become acquainted with GOD." "I suppose that this secret is declared in Exodus, when the countenance of Moses, after he had familiarly conversed with GOD, was so glorified, that the children of Israel were not able stedfastly to look upon the glory of it, and on this account he who attended on GOD took a veil to converse with His people. Thus every soul which is given up to GOD, and hath entered into His truth, beyond what is known to the many, and hath partaken of His Divinity, surpasses the comprehension of the multitude, so that it assumes a veil in order to direct inferiors, by discoursing on matters level to their comprehensions.

7. Catholic mode of interpreting Scripture founded on this principle.

Now the characteristic of truth is consistency and coherence, and mutual adaptation and relation in its various parts and developments; so that principles, which appear to have no immediate connexion in their origin and formation, are found when pursued to their consequences mutually to correspond with and imply each other: as cause and effect, as concave and convex in a circle, or as dependent parts of one great whole. Besides this practice of the secret discipline, there is another principle, almost, if not quite, universal in the Ancient Church, which is also equally opposed to modern opinion. I allude to that general custom among the Fathers of supposing that Scripture contains latent mysterious meaning beyond the letter, the apprehension of which is disclosed to a faithful life. And this practice, though in itself distinct, does in fact run up into that of the *Disciplina Arcani*, analogously to the way, in which miracles and parables are found to run up into each other as indications of one law. Both may be considered as a different development of the same principle. In both we have, what has been observed in the former part, "Wisdom going about seeking those that are worthy of her, to whom she may reveal her secrets." And a circumstance which particularly bears upon the present inquiry is this, that in speaking on this subject, as well as on the system we have before spoken of, ancient writers do incidentally illustrate or enforce their observations by the example of our LORD'S dealing with mankind.

Now this mode of interpretation is so general in the Ancient Church that something of the kind may be considered as the characteristic difference between the interpretation of Catholic Christians and those of heretical teachers; that the latter lower and bring down the senses of Scripture as if they were mere human words, while the former consider the words of Divine truth to contain greater meanings than we can fathom; and therefore amplify and extend their significations as if they were advancing onward, (like

the interpretations and various fulfilments of prophecy,) into deeper and higher meanings, till lost in ever increasing, and at length infinite light and greatness, beyond what the limited view of man is capable of pursuing.

8. High authority for this mode of Scriptural interpretation.

Nor does it appear at all unreasonable beforehand-before considering it as a matter of fact, that this should be the case: I mean that the Divine Word should be in its secret range thus vast and comprehensive, as the shadow of the heavens in still and deep waters. In things natural, GOD has not only disclosed to us, by experience and natural light, the mode of tilling the earth and all other things necessary for the support of our animal life and human comforts, but he has also afforded us some knowledge of the heavenly bodies; He has withdrawn the veil and opened something of the mysterious vastness, and ways, and order of things celestial. And in disclosing these, there is of course some great design of His Providence towards men; whether to humble them by showing something of the vastness of His power, or to raise and spiritualize their minds by the contemplation of it. Why, therefore, may He not in like manner in His word, besides that knowledge and practical wisdom, information, and warning, which is more in the letter of Holy Scripture as a lantern unto our feet-why may there not be also concealed and laid up something of the vastness and infinity of His counsels, things Divine and spiritual, which He may also open and reveal to men to carry on the purposes of His wisdom, and of their probation? In attempting too far to dive into it, to illustrate and apprehend its meanings, fallible men may of course greatly err from time to time, though the general principle on which they set out may be nevertheless from the SPIRIT of truth. Thus fallible men have erred and do err in their attempts to explain the heavenly bodies; and yet they may be right in the notion of the order and the vastness of the material heavens, though wrong in their particular explanations; and if they have erred, it has been in the littleness and unworthiness of their conceptions; the higher their conceptions have been, the more have they approached to the sublimity and infinity of GOD'S works.

But it might be said, that this mode of interpretation has arisen from the nature of the Hebrew language, in which each word contains many deep and ulterior meanings, which may be considered as types of each other. But this observation will, in fact, lead us to the same conclusion of its Divine character; it is indeed only going further into the subject, sending us back one step more in tracing the chain which reaches from GOD'S throne. For if the sacred language which the Almighty has chosen in order to reveal Himself to mankind is of this typical nature, it proves that such is the language of GOD; that in numerous analogies and resemblances, differing in time, importance and extent, but with one drift and scope, He is used to speak to us, blending figure with word spoken.

But when we come to the matter of fact as proved by the Scriptures themselves, the principle itself must be allowed as right, whatever limitations men may prescribe to the application or use of it. It is very evident how much our blessed LORD has Himself pointed out to us these deep and latent meanings, where we could not otherwise have ventured to suppose them to exist; as, for instance, in the sign of the prophet Jonah, and the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness. And in almost all His references to the Old Testament, our LORD has led us to seek for mines of secret information disclosed to the eye of Faith beyond the letter.

And it is to be observed that Scripture has not generally pointed out to us those instances in which an allegorical interpretation is most obvious and important, but often those in which it is less so; as if thereby, it rather suggested to us a general law, than afforded any direction respecting its limit and extent. If from

our LORD'S own example we pass to the writings of St. Paul, it is needless to mention the numerous striking instances in which he has unfolded to us the spiritual and high senses of the Old Testament. And passing from Apostles to Apostolical writers, we find the same system acknowledged, as it were incidentally, but almost universally. To say nothing of Barnabas's Epistle, and its peculiar character in this respect, which must have great weight as being the testimony of primitive antiquity, even though it be not apostolical, nor written by the companion of St. Paul, who has been called the great mustagwgoV. Even Clement of Rome, though his Epistle does not much admit of such allusions, yet has at least one remarkable instance of the kind, where he speaks of the scarlet thread held out by the harlot Rahab, as conveying a sign of "the blood of our LORD, by which there is redemption to all who trust and hope in GOD."

With regard therefore to this system of interpretation, we have in many instances Divine authority for it; and beyond where we have this authority, it might be thought that we have no sanction for such applications and explanations: in which case, it would be similar to the moral principles or doctrines that are deduced from Holy Scripture, which may be said to flow more or less clearly from the Word itself, and to be supported by analogy, natural consequence, or agreement with other passages; and these to be decided by the judgment of individuals, and that natural weight of authority which we allow to be due to the opinions of great and good men. But further than this, as with regard to moral principles of doctrine, so also with respect to such particular interpretations, it is perhaps the case, (as it has been well observed,) that for some of them there may be such a concurrent testimony in early and distinct Churches as to amount to a Catholic consent, which consent would of course have the same kind of sacred authority as would attend a similar agreement with respect to doctrine.

But all that is here required to be proved is, first that such a mode of interpretation is that of the Universal Church, and secondly, that it is implied thereby that it is GOD'S mode of dealing with mankind. And here again, as in the case of the Disciplina, the argument does not depend upon any vindication of the manner in which it may have been pursued in some cases. Even were it granted that the interpretations of Origen, Ambrose, and others were fanciful and untenable, as perhaps they sometimes are, yet it cannot be supposed that they were wrong in the general principle of interpretation, but in the effort of human understanding to fathom the depths of Divine wisdom in the particular instance. There may be much beyond the letter, but it may be presumption in uninspired man to say what it is,—"Let GOD be true but every man a liar." Sufficient for our purpose it is that such a method of considering Holy Writ is Catholic, not to say Apostolical and Divine.

9. Reverence and caution observable in the Fathers.

The mode in which it is spoken of by so early a writer as St. IrenÅ!us, is important; he is condemning fanciful expositions of the parables, proving thereby that it was an error that age was liable to, and, in so doing, thoroughly acknowledges the principle in the light in which we consider it, viz., that this knowledge is not to be attained by mere natural acuteness or critical sagacity, that GOD is throughout the teacher, that man is to wait on and reverently learn of Him. "Those things," he says, "in being most fully assured that the Scriptures are perfect, for they are spoken of by the WORD of GOD and His SPIRIT, but we as the last and the least in His Word and in His SPIRIT, must need His help for the knowledge of those mysteries. And it is not to be wondered as it in things spiritual and heavenly, and which are the subjects of Revelation, this should be the case, since even in those things which are before our feet (such as are in the natural creation, which are handled and seen by us and dwell about us) many things escape our knowledge, and these we commit to GOD." After mentioning some particulars of this kind in the natural

world, he says, "If therefore in the natural creation some things are laid up with GOD, and some come to our knowledge, where is the difficulty in supposing this to be the case, in those things which we seek to know in Scripture, since all the Scriptures are spiritual, and that some things according to the grace of GOD we should explain, and that others should be laid up with Him. So that GOD should be throughout the teacher, and man throughout should be learning of Him." "If therefore in the manner which I have mentioned we will lay up some of our questions with GOD, we shall persevere in maintaining our faith, and continue without danger, and find all Scripture which GOD has given us, to be in harmony. The parables will harmonize with things spoken openly, and things spoken openly explain the parables, and in variety of statements we shall perceive within us but a multiplicity of voices, combining together to form one accordant and harmonious melody."

This passage serves very admirably to set before us the very reverent and holy manner in which the Fathers looked on this principle of interpretation: and St. Augustine may speak for another age, in thoughts very similar, and alike expressive of the general tone of feeling in the Ancient Church on this subject. "Expect not," he says, "to hear from us those things which the LORD was then unwilling to say to His disciples, for as yet they could not bear them: but rather advance in charity, which is diffused in your hearts through the HOLY SPIRIT which is given you; that, being fervent in spirit and loving spiritual things, ye may be able to discern the spiritual light and spiritual voice which men cannot bear; not by any sign appearing unto your bodily eyes, nor by any sound which is heard by bodily ears, but by the inward sight and hearing. For that is not loved which is altogether unknown. But when that is loved which is known in howsoever small a part, then by that very love itself it is effected, that it should be better and more fully known. If therefore ye advance in charity, which the HOLY SPIRIT sheds in your heart, He will teach you all truth:" "not altogether in this life," he afterwards adds, "but so far in this life as shall be a pledge of fulness hereafter." Thus, it is well known, St. Augustine and others often speak. All imply a certain reverential sobriety to be most needful in approaching GOD'S word, lest we obtain harm instead of benefit thereby. In another passage, the same writer has occasion to condemn, like St. Irenaeus, those who otherwise attempted that knowledge. "The Evangelical Sacraments," he says, "which are signified in the sayings and actions of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, are not open to all, and some by interpreting them with too little diligence, and too little soberness, obtain oftentimes destruction instead of safety, and error instead of the knowledge of truth." In another place St. Augustine speaks to the same effect. "By many," he says, "and manifold obscurities and ambiguities are they deceived who read carelessly, conceiving one thing for another; but in some places they find not enough even to suggest false surmises: so obscurely do some things envelop themselves in thickest darkness. All of which, I doubt not, is a Divine provision, in order to subdue pride by labour, and to recall the intellect from its fastidiousness, to which those things generally appear mean which are easily investigated." And again, "Now no one doubts that both objects become known to us with greater delight by means of similitudes, and things that are sought for with some difficulty are discovered with more pleasure. Magnificently therefore, and healthfully for us hath the HOLY SPIRIT so adapted the sacred Scriptures, as to satisfy our hunger by passages more manifest, and by those that are more obscure to prevent fastidiousness. For generally out of those obscurities nothing is elicited but is elsewhere more plainly spoken."

10. Reserve in revelation not confined to GOD'S Word.

But the principle upon which ancient writers explain Scripture they do not apply to that alone, but to all the ways of GOD, and frequently connect this also with our LORD'S conduct. It is not Holy Writ only with them, but the visible creation also, and natural providence, and sacramental mysteries, which are the veils of

Divinity, through which and by which the ALMIGHTY speaks darkly to His creatures, concealing or disclosing Himself as they are found worthy. The words, by which they speak of these, might be applied also to what has been stated of our SAVIOUR'S conduct when manifested in the flesh.

Thus Chrysostom, in speaking of the Christian mysteries, applies to them words which he might at another time use of Holy Scripture, or of our LORD as seen through the veil of the flesh, in which alone He can be discerned by a purified sense enlightened from above.

"I hear," he says, "of the body of CHRIST, the unbeliever understands this in one way, and I in another. He knows not what he sees, as children when they see a book and cannot read. He who can read will find laid up in the letters a great power, whole lives and histories. He who cannot will hear a voice, and will converse with one at a distance, and again by means of letters, will speak to whom he wishes. So it is with the mysteries, the unbelieving in hearing hear not; but the believers, by the experience which they derive from the HOLY SPIRIT, see the power laid up and contained in them."

The illustration which Chrysostom here makes use of is not unlike an expression of Origen's, who, in reply to Celsus who says that he knew the Christian Religion, observes, as well as might a person conversant with the common people of Egypt, and who knew the hieroglyphical figures, say he understood the wisdom of the Egyptians.

And it may bring the analogy more closely home to us to observe, that these Catholic writers, in thus speaking, will often introduce the very expression of it being our LORD Himself who is thus manifesting Himself therein to the eye of faith; or veiling His glories from us, and withdrawing Himself from the multitude, or the thoughtless and indifferent inquirer. "Is it not the case," says St. Ambrose "that when we think over a passage in Scripture, in vain endeavouring to gain some explanation for it, while we are doubting and seeking, suddenly the most exalted doctrines seem to rise, as it were over the mountains before us, then over the hills He (i.e. CHRIST) appears unto us, and enlightens our minds, and pours into our understanding the knowledge of that which it had appeared difficult to comprehend. Therefore the WORD which was absent now becomes present in our minds. And again, when any thing appears to us rather obscure, the WORD is as it were withdrawn, and we long and look for His return, as of one gone away." In like manner does Augustine speak of the same great and all-extensive principle under a new analogy, that of the visible creation. Here also is it considered that we have "the presence of a GOD who hideth Himself," and indications that He is desirous to disclose Himself through that language, as far as we are able to bear it; in the same manner, as through the letter of the written Scriptures we behold Him as it were through a veil. "For we behold," He says, "the ample fabric of the universe containing the earth and heavens and all things that are therein. And from the greatness and beauty of this fabric the inestimable greatness and beauty of the Framer Himself, whom although as yet we know not, yet even now we love. For inasmuch as we cannot now behold Him by the purity of our hearts, He hath not ceased to set before our eyes His works, that seeing what we can, we may love: and may be thought worthy for that love itself at some time to behold that which we see not. But in all things that He hath spoken unto us (in His written Word) we must seek for the spiritual meaning, to ascertain which your desires in the name of CHRIST will assist us. By which, as by invisible hands, ye know at the invisible gate, that invisibly it may open to us, and ye invisibly may enter in, and invisibly be healed."

St. Cyril of Jerusalem carries on the same principle beyond the bounds of the visible creation, saying that in the invisible world also the Godhead is withdrawn from sight excepting so far as the SON may reveal; in a very beautiful and sublime passage, He intimates that not only to different states of men, in exact

proportion to a certain capability of receiving it, but to all created beings and the angels of Heaven, the SON reveals the FATHER, καὶ οὐκ ἔκαστος αὐτοῦ. He says that "although it be written that the angels behold the face of my FATHER, which is in heaven, yet even they see Him not as He is GOD, but only so far as they are capable of beholding Him. For JESUS Himself hath told us, 'No one hath seen the FATHER, but He who is of GOD, He hath seen the FATHER.' Angels therefore behold as far as they can, and thrones and dominions more than they; yet see not all His Majesty; they see as far as they are able to do, and as far as for them is needful. Together with the SON, so the HOLY SPIRIT also knoweth the FATHER. For no one knoweth the FATHER but the SON, and he to whom the SON shall have revealed Him. He seeth as is meet, and revealeth together with the SPIRIT and through the SPIRIT, according as each can contain GOD."

So variously and extensively, in sense so vast and sublime, do the Fathers acknowledge all the principles that we maintain, of the law by which GOD imparts the knowledge of Himself.

11. Origen's mode of considering the subject, as moral, not intellectual.

If again we come to Origen, who dwells so much on the latent senses of Scripture, we shall find that he speaks of them as means which he considers that GOD has of trying and teaching us, by a sort of reserve and gradual disclosure. This he takes for granted in all his commentaries: his common allusion is of higher meanings being revealed unto the perfect: the Bible is, with him, the field in which the unsearchable riches which are in CHRIST are the hidden treasure: its Divine precepts are the goodly pearls, but there is one of great price, and this is the secret knowledge of CHRIST. It is like an instrument in which the music is asleep, until it is brought out by a skilful hand, such as that of the Psalmist of Israel, when all Scripture is found in perfect harmony, at the sound of which the evil spirit flies: thus he speaks in his Commentaries. But we should do him injustice to suppose that he would consider Scripture, on that account, a sealed book to those unlearned in the school of CHRIST. In his letter to Gregory, he says, "that the chief means to enter into the secret sense of Scripture is to knock at the door by prayer." In another place, he exhorts those who find difficulties in Scripture, not to despair, or be weary in reading. "For," he says, "as incantations have a certain natural power, so that he that understands them not yet derives something from them according to the character of the sounds, whether it be to his hurt, or the healing of his body or soul; so let him understand that more powerful than any incantations are the words of Divine Scripture."

With observations of this kind respecting the secret sense of Scripture, he blends in other places some references to our LORD'S own teaching. Thus, in another place, speaking of the depth of wisdom contained in St. Paul's teaching, he says, "I will say nothing at present on all those things which throughout the Gospels are worthy of observation. Each of these passages contains much wisdom, such as is difficult of comprehension, not only to the multitude, but also to some persons of understanding, on account of the very profound meaning of the parables, which JESUS spake to those who were without: keeping the clear exposition of them for those who were more advanced in spiritual discernment, and who came to Him privately in the house. He who has perceived it, cannot but be full of admiration at the import of those expressions by which some are called those without, and others, those in the houses. And again, who would not be astonished at the frequent transitions of JESUS, if he be able to follow them? how for certain discourses or actions, or in order to His own transfiguration, He went up into a mountain. And how below He healed the sick, and such as were not able to ascend where His disciples were."

And in another place, where he is speaking to the same effect, viz. that JESUS explained all things privately to His disciples, such as He deemed more worthy than others of Heavenly wisdom, he remarks

that "Paul, in the account of gifts which are bestowed of GOD, puts wisdom in the first place, and knowledge the next in order, and faith in the third and lower place." This principle, indeed, thoroughly imbues all the works of this great writer. Whatever may have been his errors, and however rash some of his speculations, yet one cannot but be impressed at the deep and broad views which he discloses to us in Scripture, although they may be such as it is beyond man to follow, and he may have erred in attempting it. Still, though we may not on some occasions approve of them in the particular, yet he leaves a general sacred impression that in Scripture we are treading on holy ground.

From his very remarkable depth of thought and extensive insight into the wonders of nature and Revelation, he seems to have arrived at a sense of human ignorance. With the same vast and comprehensive view of the ways of Providence with our own great Butler, and a similar devotional piety, he seems to have wanted his practical sense and sobriety of judgment, and by a keen imagination to have been tempted to venture on those depths, which perhaps neither man nor angel is permitted to explore: yet, perhaps there is no writer who more constantly reminds us of the incompetency of the natural man to understand the mysteries of GOD. Thus, to use his own words, he says in his work against Celsus, "In the 17th Psalm it is said of

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jh-newman/on-reserve-in-communicating-religious-knowledge-continued/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net