Theological Essays

essays in theology

Charles Bradlaugh

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By

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HERESY: ITS UTILITY AND MORALITY

Chapter I. Introductory

WHAT is heresy that it should be so heavily punished? Why is it that society will condone many offences, pardon many vicious practices, and yet have such scant mercy for the open heretic, who is treated as though he were some horrid monster to be feared, hated, and, if possible, exterminated? Most religionists, instead of endeavoring with kindly thought to provide some solution for the difficulties propounded by their heretical brethren, indiscriminately confound all inquirers in one common category of censure; their views are dismissed with ridicule as sophistical and fallacious, abused as infinitely dangerous, themselves denounced as heretics and infidels, and libelled as scoffers and Atheists. With some religionists all heretics are Atheists. With the Pope of Rome, Garibaldi and Mazzini were Atheists. With the Religious Tract Society, Voltaire and Paine were Atheists. Yet in none of the above-named cases is the allegation true. Voltaire and Paine were heretics, but both were Theists. Garibaldi and Mazzini were heretics, but neither of them was an Atheist, though the latter had given color to the description by accepting the presidency of an Atheistical society.

With few exceptions, the heretics of one generation become the revered saints of a period less than twenty generations later. Lord Bacon, in his own age, was charged with Atheism, Sir Isaac Newton with Socinianism, the famous Tillotson was actually charged with Atheism, and Dr. Burnet wrote vigorously against the commonly received traditions of the fall and deluge. There are but few men of the past of whom the church boasts to-day, who have not at some time been pointed at as heretics by orthodox antagonists excited by party rancor. Heresy is in itself neither Atheism nor Theism, neither the rejection of the Church of Rome, nor of Canterbury, nor of Constantinople; heresy is not necessarily of any-ist or-ism. The heretic is one who has selected his own opinions, or whose opinions are the result of some mental effort; and he differs from others who are orthodox in this:--they hold opinions which are often only the bequest of an earlier generation unquestioningly accepted; he has escaped from the customary grooves of conventional acquiescence, and sought truth outside the channels sanctified by habit.

Men and women who are orthodox are generally so for the same reason that they are English or French--they were born in England or France, and cannot help the good or ill fortune of their birthplace. Their orthodoxy is no higher virtue than their nationality. Men are good and true of every nation and of every faith; but there are more good

and true men in nations where civilisation has made progress, and amongst faiths which have been modified by high humanising influences. Men are good not because of their orthodoxy, but in spite of it; their goodness is the outgrowth of their humanity, not of their orthodoxy. Heresy is necessary to progress; heresy in religion always precedes endeavor for political freedom. You cannot have effectual political progress without wide-spread heretical thought. Every grand political change in which the people have played an important part has been preceded by the popularisation of heresy in the immediately earlier generations.

Fortunately, ignorant men cannot be real heretics, so that education must be hand-maiden to heresy. Ignorance and superstition are twin sisters. Belief too often means nothing more than prostration of the intellect on the threshold of the unknown. Heresy is the pioneer, erect and manly, striding over the forbidden line in his search for truth. Heterodoxy develops the intellect, orthodoxy smothers it. Heresy is the star twinkle in the night, orthodoxy the cloud which hides this faint gleam of light from the weary travellers on life's encumbered pathway. Orthodoxy was well exemplified in the dark middle ages, when the mass of men and women believed much and knew little, when miracles were common and schools were rare, and when the monasteries on the hill tops held the literature of Europe. Heresy speaks for itself

in this nineteenth century, with the gas and electric light, with cheap newspapers, with a thousand lecture rooms, with innumerable libraries, and at least a majority of the people able to read the thoughts the dead have left, as well as to listen to the words the living utter.

The word heretic ought to be a term of honor; for honest, clearly uttered heresy is always virtuous, and this whether truth or error; yet it is not difficult to understand how the charge of heresy has been generally used as a means of exciting bad feeling. The Greek word [--Greek--] which is in fact our word heresy, signifies simply selection or choice. The heretic philosopher was the one who had searched and found, who, not content with the beaten paths, had selected a new road, chosen a new fashion of travelling in the march for that happiness all humankind are seeking.

Heretics are usually called “infidels,” but no word could be more unfairly applied, if by it is meant anything more than that the heretic does not conform to the State faith. If it meant those who do not profess the faith, then there would be no objection, but it is more often used of those who are unfaithful, and then it is generally a libel. Mahomedans and Christians both call Jews infidels, and Mahomedans and Christians call each other infidels. Each religionist is thus an infidel to all sects but his own; there is but one degree of heresy

between him and the heretic who rejects all churches. Each ordinary orthodox man is a heretic to every religion in the world except one, but he is heretic from the accident of birth without the virtue of true heresy.

In our own country heresy is not confined to the extreme platform adopted as a standing-point by such a man as myself. It is rife even in the state-sustained Church of England, and to show this one does not need to be content with such illustrations as are afforded by the Essayists and Reviewers, who discover the sources of the world's education rather in Greece and Italy than in Judea; who reject the alleged prophecies as evidence of the Messianic character of Jesus; who admit that in nature and from nature, by science and by reason, we neither have, nor can possibly have, any evidence of a deity working miracles; but declare that for that we must go out of nature and beyond science, and in effect avow that Gospel miracles are always *objects,* not *evidences*, of faith; who deny the necessity of faith in Jesus as savior to peoples who could never have such faith; and who reject the notion that all mankind are individually involved in the curse and perdition of Adam's sin; or even by the Rev. Charles Voysey, who declines to preach "the God of the Bible," and who will not teach that every word of the Old and New Testament is the word of God; or by the Rev, Dunbar Heath, who in defiance of the Bible doctrine, that

man has only existed on the earth about 6,000 years, teaches that unnumbered chiliads have passed away since the human family can be traced as nations on our earth; or by Bishop Colenso, who in his impeachment of the Pentateuch, his denial of the literal truth of the narratives of the creation, fall, and deluge, actually impugns the whole scheme of Christianity (if the foundation be false, the superstructure cannot be true); or by the Rev. Baden Powell, who declared "that the whole tenor of geology is in entire contradiction to the cosmogony delivered from Mount Sinai," and who denied a "local heaven above and a local hell beneath the earth;" or by the Rev. Dr. Giles, who, not content with preceding Dr. Colenso in his assaults on the text of the Pentateuch, also wrote as vigorously against the text of the New Testament; or by the Rev. Dr. Wall, who, unsatisfied with arguments against the admittedly incorrect authorised translation of the Bible, actually wrote to prove that a new and corrected Hebrew text was necessary, the Hebrew itself being corrupt; or by the Rev. Dr. Irons, who teaches that not only are the Gospel writers unknown, but that the very language in which Jesus taught is yet to be discovered, who declares that prior to the Ezraic period the literal history of the Old Testament is lost, who does not find the Trinity taught in Scripture, and who declares that the Gospel does not teach the doctrine of the Atonement; or by

the late Archbishop Whately, to whom is attributed a Latin pamphlet raising strong objections against the truth of the alleged confusion of tongues at Babel.

We may fairly allege, that amongst thinking clergymen of the Church of England, heresy is the rule and not the exception. So soon as a minister begins to preach sermons which he does not buy ready lithographed-sermons which are the work of his brain—so soon heresy more or less buds out, now in the rejection of some church doctrine or article of minor importance, now in some bold declaration at variance with major and more essential tenets. Even Bishop Watson, so famous for his Bible Apology, declared that the church articles and creeds were not binding on any man. “They may be true, they may be false,” he wrote. To-day scores of Church of England clergymen openly protest against, or groan in silence under the enforced subscription of Thirty-nine unbelievable Articles. Sir William Hamilton declares that the heads of Colleges at Oxford well knew that the man preparing for the Church “will subscribe Thirty-nine Articles which he cannot believe, and swears to do and to have done a hundred articles which he cannot or does not perform.”

In scientific circles the heresy of the most efficient members is startlingly apparent. Against the late Anthropological Society charges of Atheism were freely levelled; and although such a charge does not seem to be justified by any reports of their meetings,

or by their printed publications, it is clear that not only out of doors, but even amongst their own circle, it was felt that their researches conflicted seriously with the Hebrew writ. The Society was preached against and prayed against until it collapsed; and yet it was simply a society for discovering everything possible about man, prehistoric as well as modern. It had, however, an unpardonable vice in the eyes of the orthodox—it encouraged the utterance of facts without regard to their effect on faiths.

The Ethnological Society is kindred to the last-named in many of its objects, and hence some of its most active members have been direct assailants of the Hebrew Chronology, which limits man's existence to the short space of 6,000 years; they have been deniers of the origin of the human race from one pair, of the confusion of tongues at Babel, and of the reduction of the human race to one family by the Noachian deluge.

Geological science has a crowd of heretics amongst its professors, men who deny the sudden origin of fauna and flora; who trace the gradual development of the vegetable and animal kingdoms through vast periods of time; and who find no resting place in a beginning of existence, but are obliged to halt in face of a measureless past, inconceivable in its grandeur. Geology, to quote the words of Dr. Kalisch, declares "the utter impossibility of a creation of even the earth alone in six days." Mr. Goodwin says in the

"Essays and Reviews:" "The school-books of the present day, while they teach the child that the earth moves, yet assure him that it is a little less than six thousand years old, and that it was made in six days. On the other hand, geologists of all religious creeds are agreed that the earth has existed for an immense series of years—to be counted by millions rather than by thousands; and that indubitably more than six days elapsed from its first creation to the appearance of man upon its surface."

Mr. Richard Proctor says: "It has been shown that had past geological changes in the earth taken place at the same rate as those which are now in progress, one hundred millions of years at the very least would have been required to produce those effects which have actually been produced, we find, since the earth's surface was fit to be the abode of life. But recently it has been pointed out, correctly in all probability, that under the greater tide-raising power of the moon in past ages, these changes would have taken place more rapidly. As, however, certainly ten millions of years, and probably a much longer time, must have elapsed since the moon was at that favorable distance for raising tides, we are by no means enabled, as some well-meaning but mistaken persons have imagined, to reduce the life-bearing stage of the earth from a duration of a hundred millions of years to a minute fraction of such a period. The short life, but exceedingly lively

one, which they desire to see established by geological or astronomical reasoning, never can be demonstrated. At the very least we must assign ten millions of years to the life-bearing stage of the earth's existence."

Astronomy has in the ranks of its professors many of its most able minds who do not believe in the sun and moon as two great lights, who cannot accept the myriad stars as fixed in the firmament solely to give light upon the earth, who refuse to believe in the heaven as a fixed firmament to divide the waters above from the waters beneath, who cannot by their telescopes discover the local heaven above or the local hell beneath, although their science marks each faint nebulosity crossing, or crossed, by the range of the watcher's vision. To quote again from Mr. Goodwin:—"On the revival of science in the sixteenth century, some of the earliest conclusions at which philosophers arrived, were found to be at variance with popular and long established belief. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy, which had then full possession of the minds of men, contemplated the whole visible universe from the earth as the immovable centre of things. Copernicus changed the point of view, and placing the beholder in the sun, at once reduced the earth to an inconspicuous globule, a merely subordinate member of a family of planets, which the terrestrials had, until then, fondly imagined to be

but pendants and ornaments of their own habitation. The Church, naturally, took a lively interest in the disputes which arose between the philosophers of the new school, and those who adhered to the old doctrines, inasmuch as the Hebrew records, the basis of religious faith, manifestly countenanced the opinion of the earth's immobility, and certain other views of the universe, very incompatible with those propounded by Copernicus. Hence arose the official proceedings against Galileo, in consequence of which he submitted to sign his celebrated recantation, acknowledging that 'the proposition that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable from its place, is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical, because it is expressly contrary to the Scripture;' and that 'the proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world, nor immovable, but that it moves, and also with a diurnal motion, is absurd, philosophically false, and at least erroneous in faith.'"

Why is it that society is so severe on heresy? Three hundred years ago it burned heretics, till thirty years ago it sent them to jail; even in England and America to-day it is content to harass, annoy, and slander them. In the United States a candidate for the Governorship of a State, although otherwise admittedly eligible, was assailed bitterly for his suspected Socinianism. Sir Sidney Waterlow, standing for a Scotch seat, was sharply catechised as

to when he had last been inside a Unitarian Chapel, and only saved his seat by not too boldly avowing his opinions. Lord Amberley, who was “unwise” enough to be honest in some of his answers, did not obtain his seat for South Devon in consequence of the suspicion of heresy excited against him. It was chiefly to the *odium theologicum* that John Stuart Mill attributed his rejection at Westminster.

During the past few years we have had an attempt to revive the old persecuting spirit. Atheism has been held sufficient ground for depriving Mrs. Besant of the custody of her infant daughter. Heretical views were enough to cancel the appointment made by Lord Amberley for the guardianship of his children. The Blasphemy Laws have been once more put in force in different parts of England, and the Conservative party boast that they have been united in their effort to prevent an Atheist from exercising his political rights.

Sir William Drummond says: “Early associations are generally the strongest in the human mind, and what we have been taught to credit as children we are seldom disposed to question as men. Called away from speculative inquiries by the common business of life, men in general possess neither the inclination, nor the leisure to examine *what* they believe or *why* they believe. A powerful prejudice remains in the mind; insures conviction without the trouble of thinking; and repels doubt without the aid or

authority of reason. The multitude then is not very likely to applaud an author, who calls upon it to consider what it had hitherto neglected, and to stop where it had been accustomed to pass on. It may also happen that there is a learned and formidable body, which, having given its general sanction to the literal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, may be offended at the presumption of an unhallowed layman, who ventures to hold that the language of those Scriptures is often symbolical and allegorical, even in passages which both the Church and the Synagogue consider as nothing else than a plain statement of fact. A writer who had sufficient boldness to encounter such obstacles, and to make an appeal to the public, would only expose himself to the invectives of offended bigotry, and to the misrepresentations of interested malice. The press would be made to ring with declamations against him, and neither learning, nor argument, nor reason, nor moderation on his side, would protect him from the literary assassination which awaited him. In vain would he put on the heaven-tempered panoply of truth. The weapons which could neither pierce his buckler nor break his casque, might be made to pass with envenomed points through the joints of his armor. Every trivial error which he might commit would be magnified into a flagrant fault; and every insignificant mistake into which he might fall would be represented by the bigoted, or by the hireling

critics of the day as an ignorant, or as a perverse deviation from the truth."

Both by the Statute Law and Common Law, heresy is punishable, and many are punished for it even in the second half of the nineteenth century. Besides open persecution, there is the constant, unceasing, paltry, petty persecuting spirit which refuses to trade with the heretic; which declines to eat with him; which will not employ him; which feels justified in slandering him; which seeks to set his wife's mind against him, and to take away the affection of his children from him.

Chapter II. The Sixteenth Century

IT requires a more practised pen than mine to even faintly sketch the progress of heresy during the past three centuries, but I trust to give the reader an idea of its rapid growth and wide extension during the period in which, aided by the printing press, heresy has made the majority of its converts amongst the mass of the people. In earlier times heretics were not only few, but they talked to the few, and wrote to the few, in the language of the few. It is only during the last hundred years that the greatest men have sought to make heresy “vulgar;” that is, to make it common. One of our leading scientific men, about fifteen years ago, admitted that he had been reproved by some of his more orthodox friends, for not confining to the Latin language such of his geological opinions as were supposed to be most dangerous to the Hebrew records. The starting-point of the real era of popular heresy may be placed at the early part of the sixteenth century, when the memories of Huss and Ziska (who had really inoculated the mass with some spirit of heretical resistance a century before) aided Luther in resisting Rome.

Martin Luther, born at Eisleben in Saxony, in 1483, was one of the heretics who sought popular endorsement for his heresy, and who following the example of the Ulrich [Zwingli], of Zurich, preached to the people in rough plain words. While others were limited to Latin, he rang out in plain German his opposition to Tetzel and his protectors. Martin Luther is spoken of by orthodox Protestants as if he were a saint without blemish in his faith. Yet in justification of my ranking him amongst the heretics of the sixteenth century, it will be sufficient to mention that he regarded "the books of the Kings as more worthy of credit than the books of the Chronicles," that he wrote as follows:—"The book of Esdras I toss into the Elbe." "I am so an enemy to the book of Esther I would it did not exist." "Job spake not therefore as it stands written in his book." "It, is a sheer *argumentum fabulæ*." "The book of the Proverbs of Solomon has been pieced together by others." Of Ecclesiastes "there is too much of broken matter in it; it has neither boots nor spurs, but rides only in socks." "Isaiah hath borrowed his whole art and knowledge from David." "The history of Jonah is so monstrous that it is absolutely incredible." "The Epistle to the Hebrews is not by St. Paul, nor indeed by any Apostle." "The Epistle of James I account the writing of no Apostle," and it "is truly an Epistle of straw." The Epistle of Jude "allegeth sayings or stories which have no place in Scripture." "Of

Revelation I can discover no trace that it is established by the Holy Spirit." If Martin Luther were alive to-day, the Established Church of England, which pretends to revere him, would prosecute him in the English Ecclesiastical Courts if he ventured to repeat the foregoing phrases from her pulpits. What would Christian writers now say of the following passage, which occurs with reference to Melancthon, whom Luther boasts that he raised miraculously from the dead? "Melancthon," says Sir William Hamilton, to whose essay I am indebted for the extracts here given, "had fallen ill at Weimar from contrition and fear for the part he had been led to take in the Landgrave's polygamy: his life was even in danger." "Then and there," said Luther, "I made our Lord God to smart for it. For I threw down the sack before the door, and rubbed his ears with all his promises of hearing prayer, which I knew how to recapitulate from Holy Writ, so that he could not but hearken to me, should I ever again place any reliance on his promises." Martin Luther, with his absolute denial of free-will, and with his double code of morality for princes and peasants—easy for one and harsh for the other—may be fairly left now with those who desire to vaunt his orthodoxy; here his name is used to illustrate the popular impetus given to nonconformity by his quarrel with the papal authorities. Luther protested against the Romish Church, but established by the very fact the right for

some more advanced man than Doctor Martin Luther to protest in turn against the Lutheran Church. The only consistent church in Christendom is the Romish Church, for it claims the right to think for all its followers. The whole of the Protestant Churches are inconsistent, for they claim the right to think and judge against Rome, but deny extremer Nonconformists the right to think and judge against themselves. Goethe, says Froude, declares that Luther threw back the intellectual progress of mankind by using the passions of the multitude to decide subjects which should have been left to the learned. But at least some of the multitude once having their ears fairly opened, listened to more than the appeal to their passions, and examined for themselves propositions which otherwise they would have accepted or rejected from habit and without inquiry. Martin Luther's public discussions with pen and tongue, in Wittemberg, Augsburg, and Lichtenburg, and the protest he encouraged against Rome, were the commencement of a vigorous controversy, in which the public (who heard for the first time sharp controversial sermons preached publicly in the various pulpits by Lutheran preachers on free-will and necessity, election and predestination, etc.) began to take real part and interest which is still going on, and will in fact never end until the unholy alliance of Church and State is everywhere annulled, and each religion is left to

sustain itself by its own truth, or to fall from its own weakness, no man being molested under the law on account of his opinions on religious matters. While Luther undoubtedly gave an impetus to the growth of Rationalism by his own appeal to reason and his reliance on reason for himself, it is not true that he contended for the right of general freedom of inquiry, nor would he have left unlimited the privileges of individual judgment for others. He could be furious in his denunciations of reason when a freer thinker than himself dared to use it against his superstitions. It is somewhat remarkable that while on the one hand one man, Luther, was detaching from the Church of Rome a large number of minds, another man, Loyola, was about the same time engaged in founding that powerful society (the Society of Jesuits), which has done so much to check free inquiry and maintain the priestly domination over the human intellect. That which Luther commenced in Germany roughly, inefficiently, and perhaps more from personal feeling for the privileges of the special order to which he belonged than from desire for popular progress, was aided in its permanent effect in England by Bacon, in France by Montaigne and Descartes, and in Italy by Bruno.

Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, was born on the 22nd January, 1561, and died 1626. His mother, Anne, daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke, was a woman of high education, and certainly with some

inclinations favorable to Freethought, for she had herself translated into English some of the sermons on fate and free-will of Bernard Ochino, or Bernardin Ochinus, an Italian Reforming Heretic, alike repudiated by the powers at Rome, Geneva, Wittenberg, and Zurich. Ochino, in his famous disquisition "touching the freedom or bondage of the human will, and the foreknowledge, predestination, and liberty of God," after discussing, with great acuteness, and from different points of view, these important topics, comes to the conclusion that there is no outlet to the mazes of thought in which the honest speculator plunges in the endeavor to solve these problems. Although, like other writers of that and earlier periods, many of Bacon's works were published in Latin, he wrote and published also in English, and if I am right in numbering him as one of the heretics of the sixteenth century, he must be also counted a vulgar heretic—i.e., one who wrote in the vulgar tongue, who preached his heresy in the language which the mass understood. Lewes says: "Bacon and Descartes are generally recognised as the Fathers of Modern Philosophy, although they themselves were carried along by the rapidly-swelling current of their age, then decisively setting in the direction of science. It is their glory to have seen visions of the coming greatness, to have expressed in terms of splendid power the thoughts which were dimly stirring the age, and to have

sanctioned the new movement by their authoritative genius." Bacon was the populariser of that method of reasoning known as the inductive, that method which seeks to trace back from the phenomena of the moment to the eternal noumenon or noumena—from the conditioned to the absolute. Nearly two thousand years before, the same method had been taught by Aristotle in opposition to Plato, and probably long thousands of years before the grand Greek, pre-historic schoolmen had used the method; it is natural to the human mind. The Stagirite was the founder of a school, Bacon the teacher and populariser for a nation. Aristotle's Greek was known to few, Bacon's eloquent English opened out the subject to the many whom he impregnated with his own confidence in the grand progressiveness of human thought. Lewes says: "The spirit of his philosophy was antagonistic to theology, for it was a spirit of doubt and search; and its search was for visible and tangible results." Bacon himself, in his essay on Superstition, says: "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation, all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men: therefore Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to Atheism, as the time of Augustus Caesar, were civil

times; but superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile* (the first motive cause), that ravisheth all the spheres of government." It is true that he also wrote against Atheism, and this in strong language, but his philosophy was not used for the purpose of proving theological propositions. He said: "True philosophy is that which is the faithful echo of the voice of the world, which is written in some sort under the dictation of things, which adds nothing of itself, which is only the rebound, the reflexion of reality." It has been well said that the words "Utility and Progress" give the keynotes of Bacon's teachings. With one other extract we leave his writings. "Crafty men," he says, "contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man; and therefore, if a man write little, he need have a great memory; if he confer little, he need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematicis subtle; natural

philosophy deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend." He was the father of experimental philosophy. In one of his suggestions as to the force of attraction of gravitation may be found the first aid to Sir Isaac Newton's later demonstrations on this head; another of his suggestions, worked out by Torricelli, ended in demonstrating the weight of the atmosphere. But to the method he so popularised may be attributed the grandest discoveries of modern times. It is to be deplored that the memory of his moral weakness should remain to spoil the praise of his grand intellect.

Lord Macaulay, in the *Edinburgh Review*, after contrasting at some length the philosophy of Plato with that of Bacon, said:—"To sum up the whole: we should say that the aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a god. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew a good bow; but, like Acestes in Virgil, he aimed at the stars; and therefore, though there was no want of strength or skill, the shot was thrown away.

His arrow was indeed followed by a track of dazzling radiance, but it struck nothing. Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth and

within bowshot, and hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words and ended in words—noble words indeed—words such as were to be expected from the finest of human intellects exercising boundless dominion over the finest of human languages. The philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts.

In France the political heresy of Jean Bodin—who challenged the divine right of rulers; who proclaimed the right of resistance against oppressive decrees of monarchs; who had words of laudation for tyranicide, and yet had no conception that the multitude were entitled to use political power, but on the contrary wrote against them—was very imperfect, the conception of individual right was confounded in the habit of obedience to monarchical authority. Bodin is classed by Mosheim amongst the writers who sowed the seeds of scepticism in France; but although he was far from an orthodox man, it is doubtful if Bodin ever intended his views to be shared beyond the class to which he belonged. To the partial glimpse of individual right in the works of Bodin add the doctrine of political fraternity taught by La Boetie, and then this political heresy becomes dangerous in becoming popular.

The most decided heretic and doubter of the sixteenth century was one Santhez, by birth a Portuguese, and practising as a physician at Toulouse; but the impetus which ultimately led to

the spread and popularity of sceptical opinions in relation to politics and theology, is chiefly due to the satirical romances of Rabelais and the essays of Montaigne. “What Rabelais was to the supporters of theology,” says Buckle, “that was Montaigne to the theology itself. The writings of Rabelais were only directed against the clergy, but the writings of Montaigne were directed against the system of which the clergy were the offspring.”

Montaigne was born at Bordeaux 1533, died 1592. Louis Blanc says of his words: “Et ce ne sont pas simples discours d’un philosophe à des philosophes. Montaigne s’adresse à tous.” Montaigne’s words were not those of a philosopher talking only to his own order, he addressed himself to mankind at large, and he wrote in language the majority could easily comprehend. Voltaire points out that Montaigne as a philosopher was the exception in France to his class; he having succeeded in escaping that persecution which fell so heavily on others. Montaigne’s thoughts were like sharp instruments scattered broadcast, and intended for the destruction of many of the old social and conventional bonds; he was the advocate of individualism, and placed each man as above society, rather than society as more important than each man. Montaigne mocked the reasoners who contradicted each other, and derided that fallibility of mind which regarded the opinion of the moment

as infallibly true, and which was yet always temporarily changed by an attack of fever or a draught of strong drink, and often permanently modified by some new discovery. Less fortunate than Montaigne, Godfrey a Valle was burned for heresy in Paris in 1572, his chief offence having been that of issuing a work entitled “De Arte Nihil Credenti.”

Heresy thus championed in France, Germany, and England, had in Italy its sixteenth century soldiers in Pomponatius of Mantua, Giordano Bruno, and Telesio, both of Naples, and in Campa-nella of Calabria, a gallant band, who were nearly all met with the cry of “Atheist,” and were either answered with exile, the prison, or the faggot.

Pomponatius, who was born 1486 and died 1525, wrote a treatise on the Soul, which was so much deemed an attack on the doctrine of immortality despite a profession of reverence for the dogmas of the Church, that the work was publicly burned at Venice, a special bull of Leo X being directed against the doctrine.

Bernard Telesio was born at Naples in 1508, and founded there a school in which mathematics and philosophy were given the first place. During his lifetime he had the good fortune to escape persecution, but after his death his works were proscribed by the Church. Telesio was chiefly useful in educating the minds of some of the Neapolitans for more advanced thinking than his own.

This was well illustrated in the case of Thomas Campanella, born 1568, who, attracted by the teachings of Telesio, wrote vigorously against the old schoolmen and in favor of the new philosophy. Despite an affected reverence for the Church of Rome, Campanella spent twenty-seven years of his life in prison. Campa-nella has been, as is usually the case with eminent writers, charged with Atheism, but there seems to be no fair foundation for the charge. He was a true heretic, for he not only opposed Aristotle, but even his own teacher Telesio. None of these men, however, yet strove to reach the people, they wrote to and of one another, not to or of the masses. It is said that Campanella was fifty times arrested and seven times tortured for his heresy.

One Andrew de Bena, a profound scholar and eminent preacher of the Church of Rome, carried away by the spirit of the time, came out into the reformed party; but his mind once set free from the old trammels, found no rest in Luther's narrow church, and a poetic Pantheism was the result.

Jerome Cardan, a mathematician of considerable ability, born at Pavia 1501, has been fiercely accused of Atheism. His chief offence seems to have been rather in an opposite direction; astrology was with him a favorite subject. While the strange views put forward in some of his works served good purpose by provoking inquiry, we can hardly class Cardan otherwise than as a man whose undoubted genius

and erudition were more than counterbalanced by his excessively superstitious folly.

Giordano Bruno was born near Naples about 1550. He was burned at Rome for heresy on the 17th February, 1600. Bruno was burned for alleged Atheism, but appears rather to have been a Pantheist. His most prominent avowal of heresy was the disbelief in eternal torment and rejection of the common orthodox ideas of the devil. He wrote chiefly in Italian, his vulgar tongue, and thus effectively aided the grand march of heresy by familiarising the eyes of the people with newer and truer forms of thought. Bruno used the tongue as fluently as the pen. He spoke in Italy until he had roused an opposition rendering flight the only possible escape from death. At Geneva he found no resting-place, the fierce spirit of [Zwingli] and Calvin was there too mighty; at Paris he might have found favor with the King, and at the Sorbonne, but he refused to attend mass, and delivered a series of popular lectures, which won many admirers; from Paris he went to England, where we find him publicly debating at Oxford and lecturing on theology, until he excited an antagonism which induced his return to Paris, where he actually publicly discussed for three days some of the grand problems of existence. Paris orthodoxy could not permit his onslaughts on established opinions, and this time it was to Germany Bruno turned for

hospitality; where, after visiting many of the different states, lecturing freely and with general success, he drew upon himself a sentence of excommunication at Helmstadt. At last he returned to Italy and spoke at Padua, but had at once to fly thence from the Inquisition; at Venice he found a resting-place in prison, whence after six years of dungeon, and after the tender mercy of the rack, he was led out to receive the final refutation of the faggot. There is a grand heroism in the manner in which he received his sentence and bore his fiery punishment. No cry of despair, no prayer for escape, no flinching at the moment of death. Bruno's martyrdom may favorably contrast with the highest example Christianity gives us.

It was in the latter half of the sixteenth century, that Unitarianism or Socinianism assumed a front rank position in Europe, having its chief strength in Poland, with considerable force in Holland and England. In 1524, one Lewis Hetzer had been publicly burned at Constance, for denying the divinity of Jesus; but Hetzer was more connected with the Anabaptists than with the Unitarians. About the same time a man named Claudius openly argued amongst the Swiss people, against the doctrine of the Trinity, and one John Campanus contended at Wittenberg, and other places, against the usually inculcated doctrines of the Church, as to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

In 1566, Valentine Gentilis, a Neapolitan, was put to death at Berne, for teaching the superiority of God the Father, over the Son and the Holy Ghost. Modern Unitarianism appears to have had as its founders or chief promoters, Lælius Socinus, and his nephew Faustus Socinus; the first having the better brain and higher genius, but marred by a timid and irresolute character; the second having a more active nature and bolder temperament. From Cracow and Racow, during the latter half of this century, the Unitarians (who drew into their ranks many men of advanced minds) issued a large number of books and pamphlets, which were circulated amongst the people with considerable zeal and industry. Unitarianism was carried from Poland into Transylvania by a physician, George Blandrata, and a preacher Francis David or Davides, who obtained the support and countenance of the then ruler of the country. Davides unfortunately for himself, became too unitarian for the Unitarians; he adopted the extreme views of one Simon Budnæus, who, in Lithuania, entirely repudiated any sort of religious worship in reference to Jesus. Budnæus was excommunicated by the Unitarians themselves, and Davides was imprisoned for the rest of his life. As the Unitarians were persecuted by the old Romish and New Lutheran Churches, so they in turn persecuted seceders from and opposers of their own movement. Each man's history involved the widening out of

public thought; each act of persecution illustrated a vain endeavor to check the progress of heresy; each new sect marked a step towards the destruction of the old obstructive faiths.

About the close of the sixteenth century, Ernestius Sonerus, of Nuremberg, wrote against the doctrine of eternal torment, and also against the divinity of Jesus, but his works were never very widely circulated. Amongst the distinguished Europeans of the sixteenth century whom Dr. J.P. Smith mentions as either Atheists or favoring Atheism, were Paul Jovius, Peter Aretin, and Muretus. Rumor has even enrolled Louis X himself in the Atheistical ranks. How far some of these men had warranted the charge other than by being promoters of literature and lovers of philosophy, it is now difficult to say. A determined resistance was offered to the spread of heretical opinions in the South of Europe by the Roman Church, and it is alleged that some thousands of persons were burned or otherwise punished in Spain, Portugal, and Naples during the sixteenth century. The Inquisition or Holy Office was in Spain and Portugal the most prominent and active persecutor, but persecution was carried on vigorously in other parts of Europe by the seceders from Rome. [Zwingli], Luther, and Calvin, were as harsh as the Pope towards those with whom they differed.

Michael Servetus, or Servede, was a native of

Arragon, by profession a physician; he wrote against the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity, but was far from ordinary Unitarianism. He was burned at Geneva, at the instance of Calvin. Calvin was rather fond of burning heretical opponents; to the name of Servetus might be added that of Gruet, who also was burned at the instance of Calvin, for denying the divinity of the Christian religion, and for arguing against the immortality of the soul.

It is worth notice that while heresy in this sixteenth century began to branch out openly, and to strike its roots down firmly amongst the people, ecclesiastical historians are compelled to record improvement in the condition of society. Mosheim says: “In this century the arts and sciences were carried to a pitch unknown to preceding ages, and from this happy renovation of learning, the European churches derived the most signal and inestimable advantages.” “The benign influence of true science, and its tendency to improve both the form of religion and the institutions of civil policy, were perceived by many of the states.” The love of literature is the most remarkable and characteristic form of advancing civilisation. Instead of being the absorbing passion of the learned few, it becomes gradually the delight and occupation of increasing numbers. This cultivation of literary pursuits by the masses is only possible when enough of heresy has been obtained to render their scope of study wide enough to be useful. Rotterdam

gave life to the polished Erasmus, Valentia to Ludovico Vivez, Picardy to Le Fevre, and France to Rabelais.

In the latter half of this century, giants in literature grew out, giants who wrote for the people. William Shakspere wrote even for those who could not read, but who might learn while looking and listening. His comedies and tragedies are at the same time pictures for the people of diverse phases of English life and character, with a thereunto added universality of portrayal and breadth in philosophy, which it is hardly too much to say, that no other dramatist has ever equaled. Italy boasts its 'Torquato Tasso, whose “Jerusalem Delivered,” the grand work of a great poet, marks, like a mighty monument, the age capable of finding even in a priest-ridden country, an audience amongst the lowest as well as the highest, ready to read and sing, and finally permeated with the poet’s outpourings. In astronomy, the name of Tycho Brahe stands out in the sixteenth century like one of the first magnitude stars whose existence he catalogued.

Chapter III. The Seventeenth Century

THE seeds of inquiry sown in the sixteenth century resulted in a fruitful display of advanced opinions during the next age. In the page of seventeenth-century history, more names of men, either avowedly heretics, or charged by the orthodox with heresy, or whose labors can be shown to have tended to the growth of heresy, may probably be recorded than can be found during the whole of the previously long period during which the Christian Church assumed to dominate and control European thought. The seventeenth-century muster-roll of heresy is indeed a grand one, and gloriously filled. One of its early martyrs was Julius Caesar Vanini, who was burned at Toulouse, in the year 1619, aged 34, as “an impious and obstinate Atheist.” Was he Atheist, or was he not? This is a question, in answering which the few remains of his works give little ground for sharing the opinion of his persecutors. Yet many writers agree in writing as if his Atheism were of indisputable notoriety. He was a poor Neapolitan priest, he preached a sort of Pantheism; unfortunately for himself, he believed in the utility of public discussion on theological

questions, and thus brought upon his head the charge of seeking to convert the world to Atheism.

In 1611, two men, named Legat and Whitman, were burned in England for heresy. “But,” says Buckle, “this was the last gasp of expiring bigotry; and since that memorable day the soil of England has never been stained by the blood of a man who has suffered for his religious creed.”

Peter Charron, of Paris, ought perhaps to have been included in the sixteenth-century list, for he died in 1603, but his only known work, “La Sagesse,” belongs to the seventeenth century, in which it circulated and obtained reputation. He urged that religion is the accidental result of birth and education, and that therefore variety of creed should not be cause of quarrel between men, as such variety is the result of circumstances over which the men themselves have had no control; and he urges that as each sect claims to be the only true one, we ought to rise superior to all sects, and without being terrified by the fear of future punishment, or allured by the hope of future happiness, “be content with such practical religion as consists in performing the duties of life.” Buckle, who speaks in high terms of Charron, says: “The Sorbonne went so far as to condemn Charron’s great work, but could not succeed in having it prohibited.”

René Descartes Duperron, a few years later than Bacon (he was born in 1596, at La Haye, in Touraine,

died 1650, at Stockholm) established the foundations of the deductive method of reasoning, and applied it in a manner which Bacon had apparently carefully avoided. Both Descartes and Bacon addressed themselves to the task of substituting for the old systems, a more comprehensive and useful spirit of philosophy; but while Bacon sought to accomplish this by persuading men to experiment and observation, Descartes commenced with the search for a first and self-evident ground of all knowledge. This, to him, is found in consciousness. The existence of Deity was a point which Bacon left untouched by reason, yet with Descartes it was the first proposition he sought to prove. He says: “I have always thought that the two questions of the existence of God and the nature of the soul, were the chief of those which ought to be demonstrated rather by philosophy than by theology, for although it is sufficient for us, the faithful, to believe in God, and that the soul does not perish with the body, it does not seem possible ever to persuade the infidels to any religion unless we first prove to them those two things by natural reason.” To prove this existence of God and the immortality of the soul, Descartes needed a firm starting point, one which no doubt could touch, one which no argument could shake. He found this point in the fact of his own existence. He could doubt everything else, but he could not doubt that he, the thinking doubter, existed. His own existence was the

primal fact, the indubitable certainty, which served as the base for all other reasonings, hence his famous "Cogito ergo sum:"—I think, therefore I am. And although it has been fairly objected that Descartes did not exist because he thought, but existed and thought; it is nevertheless clear that it is only in the thinking that Descartes had the consciousness of his existence. The fact of Descartes' existence was, to him, one above and beyond all logic. Evidence could not add to the certitude, no scepticism could impeach it. Whether or not we agree with the Cartesian philosophy, or the reasonings used to sustain it, we must admire the following four rules which he has given us, and which, with the view of consciousness in which we do not entirely concur, are the essential features of the basis of a considerable portion of Descartes' system:—

"1. Never to accept anything as true but what is evidently so; to admit nothing but what so clearly and distinctly presents itself as true, that there can be no reason to doubt it.

"2. To divide every question into as many separate parts as possible, that each part being more easily conceived, the whole may be more intelligible.

"3. To conduct the examination with order, beginning by that of objects the most simple, and therefore the easiest to be known, and ascending little by little up to knowledge of the most complex.

"4. To make such exact calculations, and such

circumspections as to be confident that nothing essential has been omitted."

"Consciousness being the basis of all certitude, everything, of which you are clearly and distinctly conscious must be true; everything which you clearly and distinctly conceive, exists, if the idea involve existence."

It should be remarked that consciousness being a state or condition of the mind, is by no means an infallible guide. Men may fancy they have clear ideas, when their consciousness, if carefully examined, would prove to have been treacherous. Descartes argued for three classes of ideas—acquired, compounded, and innate. It is in his assumption of innate ideas that you have one of the radical weaknesses of his system. Sir William Hamilton points out that the use of the word idea by Descartes, to express the object of memory, imagination, and sense, was quite a new usage, only one other writer, David Buchanan, having previously used the word idea with this signification.

Descartes did not write for the mass, and his philosophy would have been limited to a much narrower circle had its spread rested on his own efforts. But the age was one for new thought, and the contemporaries and successors of Descartes carried the Cartesian logic to extremes he had perhaps avoided, and they taught the new philosophy to the world in a fearless spirit, with a boldness for which

Descartes could have given them no example. Descartes, who in early life had travelled much more than was then the custom, had probably made the personal acquaintance of most of the leading thinkers of Europe then living; it would be otherwise difficult to account for the very ready reception given by them to his first work. Fortunately for Descartes, he was born with a fair fortune, and escaped such difficulties as poorer philosophers must needs submit to. There is perhaps a per contra side. It is more than possible that if the needs of life had compelled him, Descartes' scientific predilections might have resulted in more immediate advantage to society. His philosophy is often pedantic to weariness, and his scientific theories are often sterile. The fear of poverty might have quickened some of his speculations [into] a more practical utterance. Buckle reminds us that Descartes "was the first who successfully applied algebra to geometry; that he pointed out the important law of the sines; that in an age in which optical instruments were extremely imperfect, he discovered the changes to which light is subjected in the eye by the crystalline lens; that he directed attention to the consequences resulting from the weight of the atmosphere, and that he detected the causes of the rainbow." "Descartes," says Saintes, "throwing off the swaddling clothes of scholasticism, resolved to owe to himself alone the acquisition of the truth which he so earnestly desired to possess.

For what else is the methodical doubt which he established as the starting point in his philosophy, than an energetic protest of the human mind against all external authority? Having thus placed all science on a philosophical basis, no matter what, he freed philosophy herself from her long servitude, and proclaimed her queen of the intellect. Hence everyone who has wished to account to himself for his existence, everyone who has desired to know himself, to know nature, and to rise to its author; in a word, all who have wished to make a wise use of their intellectual faculties, to apply them, not to hollow speculations which border on nonentity, but to sensible and practical inquiries, have taken and followed some direction from Descartes." It is almost amusing when philosophers criticise their predecessors. Mons. Henri Ritter denies to Descartes any originality of method or even of illustration, while Hegel describes him as the founder of modern philosophy, whose influence upon his own age and on modern times it is impossible to exaggerate. To attempt to deal fully and truly with Descartes in the few lines which can be spared here, is impossible; all that is sought is to as it were catalogue his name in the seventeenth-century list. Whether originator or imitator, whether founder or disciple, it is certain that Descartes gave a sharp spur to European thought, and mightily hastened the progress of heresy. It is not the object or duty of the present

writer to examine or refute any of the extraordinary views entertained by Descartes as to vortices. Descartes himself is reported to have said, “my theory of vortices is a philosophical romance.” Science in the last three centuries has travelled even more rapidly than philosophy; and most of the physical speculations of Descartes are relegated to the region of grandly curious blunderings. There is one point of error held by Descartes sufficiently entertained even to-day—although most often without a distinct appreciation of the position—to justify a few words upon it. Descartes denied mental faculties to all the animal kingdom except mankind. All the brute kingdom he re-garded as machines without intelligence. In this he was logical, even in error, for he accorded a soul to man which he denied to the brute. Soul and mind with him are identified, and thought is the fundamental attribute of mind. To admit that a dog, horse, or elephant can think, that it can remember what happened yesterday, that it can reason ever so incompletely, would be to admit that that dog, horse, or elephant, has some kind of soul; to avoid this he reduces all animals outside the human family to the position of machines. To-day science admits in animals, more or less according to their organisation, perception, memory, judgment, and even some sort of reason. Yet orthodoxy still claims a soul for man even if he be a madman from his birth, and denies it to the sagacious elephant, the

intelligent horse, the faithful dog, and the cunning monkey. His proof of the existence of Deity is thus stated by Lewes:—"Interrogating his consciousness, he found that he had the idea of God, understanding by God, a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, omnipotent. This, to him, was as certain a truth as the truth of his own existence. I exist: not only do I exist, but exist as a miserably imperfect finite being, subject to change, greatly ignorant and incapable of creating anything. In this, my consciousness, I find by my finitude that I am not the All; by my imperfection, that I am not perfect. Yet an infinite and perfect being must exist, because infinity and perfection are implied as correlatives in my ideas of imperfection and finitude. God therefore exists: his existence is clearly proclaimed in my consciousness, and can no more be a matter of doubt, when fairly considered, than my own existence. The conception of an infinite being proves his real existence; for if there is not really such a being, I must have made the conception; but if I could make it, I can also unmake it, which evidently is not true; therefore there must be, externally to myself, an archetype from which the conception was derived. All that we clearly and distinctly conceive as contained in anything, is true of that thing. Now we conceive, clearly and distinctly, that the existence of God is contained in the idea we have of him—Ergo, God exists."

It may not be out of place to note at this point, that the Jesuit writer, Father Hardouin, in his "Atheists Unmasked," as a recompense for this demonstration of the existence of Deity, places Descartes and his disciples, le Grand and Regis, in the first rank of atheistical teachers. Voltaire, commenting on this, remarks: "The man who had devoted all the acuteness of his extraordinary intellect to the discovery of new proofs of the existence of a God, was most absurdly charged with denying him altogether." Speaking of the proof of the existence of Deity: "Demonstrations of this kind," says Froude, "were the characteristics of the period." Descartes had set the example of constructing them, and was followed by Cud-worth, Clarke, Berkeley, and many others besides Spinoza. The inconclusiveness of the method may perhaps be observed most readily in the strangely opposite conceptions formed by all these writers of the nature of that Being whose existence they nevertheless agreed, by the same process, to gather each out of their ideas. It is important, however, to examine it carefully, for it is the very keystone of the Pantheistic system. As stated by Descartes, the argument stands something as follows:—God is an allperfect Being, perfection is the idea which we form of Him, existence is a mode of perfection, and therefore God exists. The sophism, we are told, is only apparent, existence is part of the idea—as much involved in it

as the equality of all lines drawn from the centre to the circumference of a circle is involved in the idea of a circle. A non-existent all-perfect Being is as inconceivable as a quadrilateral triangle. It is sometimes answered that in this way we may prove the existence of anything, Titans, Chimeras, or the Olympian gods; we have but to define them as existing, and the proof is complete. But this objection is summarily set aside; none of these beings are by hypothesis absolutely perfect, and, therefore, of their existence we can conclude nothing. With greater justice, however, we may say, that of such terms as perfection and existence we know too little to speculate. Existence may be an imperfection for all we can tell, we know nothing about the matter.

Such arguments are but endless *petitiones principii*—like the self-devouring serpent, resolving themselves into nothing. We wander round and round them in the hope of finding some tangible point at which we can seize their meaning; but we are presented everywhere with the same impracticable surface, from which our grasp glides off ineffectual.

Thomas Hobbes, of Malmesbury, is one of those men more often freely abused than carefully read; he was born April 5th, 1588, died 1679. He was “the subtlest dialectician of his time,” and one of the earliest English advocates of the materialistic limitation of mind; he denies the possibility of any

knowledge other than as resulting from sensation; his doctrine is in direct negation of Descartes' theory of innate ideas, and would be fatal to the orthodox dogma of mind as spiritual. "Whatever we imagine," he says "is finite. Therefore there is no idea, no conception of anything we call infinite." In a brief pamphlet on his own views, published in 1680, in reply to attacks upon him, he writes: "Besides the creation of the world there is no argument to prove a Deity," "and that it cannot be decided by any argument that the world had a beginning; but he professes to admit the authority of the Magistrate and the Scriptures to override argument. He says that he does not believe that the safety of the state depends upon the safety of the church." Some of Hobbes' pieces were only in Latin, others were issued in English. In one of those on Heresy, he mentions that by the statute of Edward VI, cap. 12, there is no provision for the repeal of all former acts of parliament "made to punish any matter of doctrine concerning religion."

In the following extracts the reader will find the prominent features of that sensationalism which to-day has so many adherents:—"Concerning the thoughts of man, I will consider them first singly, and afterwards in a train or dependence upon one another. Singly they are every one a representation or appearance of some quality or other accident of a body without us, which is commonly called an

object. Which object worketh on the eyes, ears, and other parts of a man's body, and by diversity of working produceth diversity of appearances. The original of them all is that which we call sense, for there is no conception in a man's mind which hath not at first totally or by parts been begotten upon the organs of sense. The rest are derived from that original." The effect of this is to deny any possible knowledge other than as results from the activity of the sensitive faculties, and is also fatal to the doctrine of a soul. "According," says Hobbes, "to the two principal parts of man, I divide his faculties into two sorts—faculties of the body, and faculties of the mind. Since the minute and distinct anatomy of the powers of the body is nothing necessary to the present purpose, I will only sum them up in these three heads—power nutritive, power generative, and power motive. Of the powers of the mind there be two sorts—cognitive, imaginative, or conceptive, and motive. For the understanding of what I mean by the power cognitive, we must remember and acknowledge that there be in our minds continually certain images or conceptions of the things without us. This imagery and representation of the qualities of the things without, is that which we call our conception, imagination, ideas, notice, or knowledge of them; and the faculty, or power by which we are capable of such knowledge, is that I here call cognitive power, or conceptive, the power of

knowing or conceiving." "All the qualities called sensible are, in the object that causeth them, but so many several motions of the matter by which it presseth on our organs diversely. Neither in us that are pressed are they anything else but divers motions; for motion produceth nothing but motion. Because the image in vision, consisting of color and shape, is the knowledge we have of the qualities of the objects of that sense; it is no hard matter for a man to fall into this opinion that the same color and shape are the very qualities themselves, and for the same cause that sound and noise are the qualities of the bell or of the air. And this opinion hath been so long received that the contrary must needs appear a great paradox, and yet the introduction of species visible and intelligible (which is necessary for the maintenance of that opinion) passing to and fro from the object is worse than any paradox, as being a plain impossibility. I shall therefore endeavor to make plain these points. That the subject wherein color and image are inherent, is not the object or thing seen. That there is nothing without us (really) which we call an image or color. That the said image or color is but an apparition unto us of the motion, agitation, or alteration which the object worketh in the brain, or spirits, or some internal substance of the head. That as in visions, so also in conceptions that arise from the other senses, the subject of their inference is not the object but the sentient." Strange

to say, Hobbes was protected from his clerical antagonists by the favor of Charles II, who had the portrait of the philosopher of Malmesbury hung on the walls of his private room at Whitehall.

Lord Herbert, of Cherbury (one of the friends of Hobbes) born 1581, died 1648, is remarkable for having written a book "De Veritate," in favor of natural—and against any necessity for revealed—religion; and yet at the same time pleading a sort of special sign or revelation to himself in favor of its publication.

Peter Gassendi, a native of Provence, born 1592, died 1655, was one of the opponents of Descartes and of Lord Herbert, and was an admirer of Hobbes; he advocated the old philosophy of Epicurus, professing to reject "from it everything contrary to Christianity." "But," asks Cousin, "how could he succeed in this? Principles, processes, results, everything in Epicurus is sensualism, materialism, Atheism." Gassendi's works were characterised by great learning and ability, but being confined to the Latin tongue, and written avowedly with the intent of avoiding any conflict with the church, they gave but little immediate impetus to the great heretical movement. Arnauld charges Gassendi with overturning the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, in his discussion with Descartes, and Leibnitz charges Gassendi with corrupting and injuring the whole system of natural religion by the wavering

nature of his opinions. Buckle says: “The rapid increase of heresy in the middle of the seventeenth century is very remarkable, and it greatly aided civilisation in England by encouraging habits of independent thought.” In February 1646, Boyle writes from London: “There are few days pass here, that may not justly be accused of the brewing or broaching of some new opinion. If any man have lost his religion, let him repair to London, and I’ll warrant him he shall find it: I had almost said too, and if any man has a religion, let him but come hither now and he shall go near to lose it.”

About 1655, one Isaac La Peyrere wrote two small treatises to prove that the world was peopled before Adam, but being arrested at Brussels, and threatened with the stake, he, to escape the fiery refutation, made a full recantation of his views, and restored to the world its dearly-prized stain of natural depravity, and to Adam his position as the first man. La Peyrere’s forced recantation is almost forgotten, the opinions he recanted are now amongst common truths.

Baruch D’Espinoza or Benedict Spinoza, was born Nov. 24, 1632, in Amsterdam; an apt scholar, he, at the early age of fourteen, had mastered the ordinary tasks set him by his teacher, the Rabbi Moteira, and at fifteen puzzled and affrighted the grave heads of the synagogue, by attempting the solution of problems which they themselves were

well content to pass by. As he grew older his reason took more daring flights, and after attempts had been made to bribe him into submissive silence, when threats had failed to check or modify him, and when even the knife had no effect, then the fury of disappointed fanaticism found vent in the bitter curse of excommunication, and when about twenty-four years of age, Spinoza found himself outcast and anathematised. Having no private means or rich patrons, and differing in this from nearly everyone whose name we have yet given, our hero subsisted as a polisher of glasses, microscopes, etc., devoting his leisure to the study of languages and philosophy. There are few men as to whom modern writers have so widely differed in the description of their views, few who have been so thoroughly misrepresented. Bayle speaks of him as a systematic Atheist. Saintes says that he laid the foundations of a Pantheism as destructive to scholastic philosophy as to all revealed religion. Voltaire repeatedly writes of Spinoza as an Atheist and teacher of Atheism. Samuel Taylor Coleridge speaks of Spinoza as an Atheist, and prefaces this opinion with the following passage, which we commend to more orthodox and less acute writers:—"Little do these men know what Atheism is. Not one man in a thousand has either strength of mind, or goodness of heart to be an Atheist. I repeat it—Not one man in a thousand has either goodness of heart, or strength of mind, to be an Atheist." "And

yet," says Froude, "both in friend and enemy alike, there has been a reluctance to see Spinoza as he really was. The Herder and Schleiermacher school have claimed him as a Christian, a position which no little disguise was necessary to make tenable; the orthodox Protestants and Catholics have called him an Atheist, which is still more extravagant; and even a man like Novalis, who, it might have been expected, would have said something reasonable, could find no better name for him than a 'Gott trunkener mann,' a God intoxicated man: an expression which has been quoted by every-body who has since written on the subject, and which is about as inapplicable as those laboriously pregnant sayings usually are. With due allowance for exaggeration, such a name would describe tolerably the transcendental mystics, a Toler, a Boehmen, or a Swedenborg; but with what justice can it be applied to the cautious, methodical Spinoza, who carried his thoughts about with him for twenty years, deliberately shaping them, and who gave them at last to the world in a form more severe than with such subjects had ever been so much as attempted before? With him, as with all great men, there was no effort after sublime emotions. He was a plain, practical person; his object in philosophy was only to find a rule by which to govern his own actions and his own judgment; and his treatises contain no more than the conclusions at which he arrived in this

purely personal search, with the grounds on which he rested them."

Spinoza, who was wise enough to know that it was utterly useless to expect an unfettered examination of philosophical problems by men who are bound to accept as an infallible arbiter any particular book, and who knew that reasonings must be of a very limited character which took the alleged Hebrew Revelation as the centre and starting point for all inquiry, and also as the circling limitation line for all investigation—devoted himself to the task of examining how far the ordinary orthodox doctrines as to the infallibility of the Old Testament were fairly maintainable. It was for this reason he penned his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus," wherein he says: "We see that they who are most under the influence of superstitious feelings, and who covet uncertainties without stint or measure, more especially when they fall into difficulty or danger, cannot help themselves, are the persons, who, with vows and prayers and womanly tears, implore the Divine assistance; who call reason blind, and human wisdom vain; and all, forsooth, because they cannot find an assured way to the vanities they desire." "The mainspring of superstition is fear; by fear too is superstition sustained and nourished." "Men are chiefly assailed by superstition when suffering from fear, and all they then do in the name of a vain religion is, in fact, but the vaporous product of a sorrowful spirit, the

delirium of a mind overpowered by terror." He proceeds: "I have often wondered that men who boast of the great advantage they enjoy under the Christian dispensation—the peace, the joy they experience, the brotherly love they feel towards all in its exercise—should nevertheless contend with so much acrimony, and show such intolerance and unappeasable hatred towards one another. If faith had to be inferred from action rather than profession, it would indeed be impossible to say to what sect or creed the majority of mankind belong." He laid down that "No one is bound by natural law to live according to the pleasure of another, but that every one is by natural title the rightful asserter of his own independence," and that "he or they govern best who concede to every one the privilege of thinking as he pleases, and of saying what he thinks." Criticising the Hebrew prophets, he points out that "God used no particular style in making his communications; but in the same measure as the prophet possessed learning and ability, his communications were either concise and clear, or on the contrary, they were rude, prolix, and obscure." The representations of Zechariah, as we learn from the accounts themselves, were so obscure that without an explanation they could not be understood by himself; and those of Daniel were so dark, that even when explained, they were still unintelligible, not to others only, but also to the prophet himself. He argues entirely against miracles,

as either contrary to nature or above nature, declaring any such to be “a sheer absurdity,” “merum esse absurdum.” Of the Scriptures themselves he points out that the ancient Hebrew is entirely lost. “Of the authors, or, if you please, writers, of many books, we either know almost nothing, or we entertain grave doubts as to the correctness with which the several books are ascribed to the parties whose names they bear.” “Then we neither know on what occasion, nor at what time those books were indited, the writers of which are unknown to us. Further, we know nothing of the hands into which the books fell; nor of the codices which have furnished such a variety of readings, nor whether, perchance, there were not many other variations in other copies.” Voltaire says of Spinoza: “Not only in the character of a Jew he attacks the New Testament, but in the character of a scholar he ruins the Old.”

The logic of Spinoza was directed to the demonstration of one substance with infinite attributes, for which one substance with infinite attributes he had as equivalent the name “God.” Some who have since followed Spinoza, have agreed in his one substance, but have denied the possibility of infinite attributes. Attributes or qualities, they urge, are attributes of the finite or conditioned, and you cannot have attributes of substance except as attributes of its modes. You have in this distinction

the division line between Spinozism and Atheism. Spinoza recognises infinite intelligence, but Atheism cannot conceive intelligence except in relation as quality of the conditioned, and not as the essence of the absolute. Spinoza denied the doctrine of freewill, as with him all phenomena are of God, so he rejects the ordinary notions of good and evil. The popular views of Spinoza in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were chiefly derived from the volumes of his antagonists; men learned his name because priests abused him, few had perused his works for themselves. To-day we may fairly say that Spinoza's logic and his biblical criticisms gave a vigor and force to the heresy of the latter half of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, a directness and effectiveness therebefore wanting. As for the Bible, there was no longer an affected reverence for every yod or comma, church traditions were ignored wherever inconsistent with reason, and the law itself was boldly challenged when its letter was against the spirit of human progress.

One of the greatest promoters of heresy in England was Ralph Cudworth, born 1617, died 1688. He wrote to combat the Atheistical tenets which were then commencing to obtain popularity in England, and was a controversialist so fair and candid in the statement of the opinions of his antagonists, that he was actually charged with heresy himself, and the epithets of Arian, Socinian, Deist,

and even Atheist were freely leveled against him. “He has raised,” says Dryden, “such strong objections against the being of a God and Providence, that many think he has not answered them.” The clamor of bigotry seems to have discouraged Cudworth, and he left many of his works unprinted. Cousin describes him as “a Platonist, of a firm and profound mind, who bends somewhat under the weight of his erudition.”

Thomas Burnett, born 1635, died 1715, a clergyman of the Church of England, though in high favor with King William and the famous Archbishop Tillotson, is said to have been shut out of preferment in the church chiefly, if not entirely, on account of his many heterodox views. He did not accept the orthodox notions on the Mosaic account of the creation, fall, and deluge. Regarding the account of the fall as allegorical, he argued for the ultimate salvation of everyone, and of course denied the doctrine of eternal torment. In a curious passage relating to the equivocations of a large number of the clergy in openly taking the oath of allegiance to William III, while secretly supporting James as King, Burnet says: “The prevarication of too many in so sacred a matter contributed not a little to fortify the growing Atheism of the time.”

As Descartes and Spinoza had been foremost on the continent, so was Locke in England, and no sketch of the progress of heresy during the

seventeenth century would be deserving serious regard which did not accord a prominent place to John Locke, whom G.H. Lewes calls “one of the Wisest of Englishmen,” and of whom Buckle speaks as “an innovator in his philosophy, and a Unitarian in his creed.” He was born in 1632, and died in 1704. Locke, according to his own fashion, was a sincere and earnest Christian; but this has not saved him from being furiously assailed for the materialistic character of his philosophy, and many have been ready to assert that Locke’s principles “lead to Atheism.” In politics Locke laid down, that unjust and unlawful force on the part of the Government might and ought to be resisted by force on the part of the citizens. He urged that on questions of theology there ought to be no penalties consequent upon the reception or rejection of any particular religious opinion. How far those were right who regarded Locke’s metaphysical reasoning as dangerous to orthodoxy may be judged by the following extract on the origin of ideas:—

“Follow a child from its birth and observe the alterations that time makes, and you shall find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think on. After some time, it begins to know the objects, which being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus it comes, by degrees, to know the

persons it daily converses with, and distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it; and so we may observe, how the mind by degrees improves in these, and advances to the exercise of those other faculties of enlarging, compounding, and abstracting its ideas, and of reasoning about them, and reflecting upon all these.

"If it shall be demanded then, when a man begins to have any ideas? I think the true answer is, when he first has any sensation. For since there appear not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in, I conceive that ideas in the understanding are coeval with sensation; which is such an impression or emotion, made in some part of the body, as produces some perception in the understanding. It is about these impressions made on our senses by outward objects, that the mind seems first to employ itself in such operations as we call perception, remembering, consideration, reasoning, etc.

"In time, the mind comes to reflect on its own operations, about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflexion. These are the impressions that are made on our senses by outward objects, that are extrinsical to the mind; and its own operation, proceeding from powers intrinsical and proper to itself, which, when reflected on by itself, becoming

also objects of its contemplation, are, as I have said, the original of all knowledge. Thus the first capacity of human intellect is, that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it, either through the senses, by outward objects, or by its own operations, when it reflects on them. This is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the ground-work whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world. All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that good extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations, it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which sense or reflexion have offered for its contemplation.

"In this part the understanding is merely passive; and whether or no it will have these beginnings, and, as it were, materials of knowledge, is not in its own power. For the objects of our senses do, many of them, obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds, whether we will or no; and the operations of our minds will not let us be without, at least, some obscure notions of them. No man can be wholly ignorant of what he does when he thinks. These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter, when they are imprinted, nor blot them out and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter,

or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it do therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions, and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them."

The distinction pointed out by Lewes between Locke and Hobbes and Gassendi, is that the two latter taught that all our ideas were derived from sensations, while Locke said there were two sources, not one source, and these two were sensation and reflexion. Locke was in style a more popular writer than Hobbes, and the heretical effect of the doctrines on the mind not being so immediately perceived in consequence of Locke's repeated declarations in favor of Christianity, his metaphysical productions were more widely read than those of Hobbes; but Locke really teaches the same doctrine as that laid down by Robert Owen in his views on the formation of character; and his views on sensation, as the primary source of ideas, are fatal to all notions of innate ideas and of freewill. Voltaire, speaking of Locke, says:—"'We shall, perhaps, never be capable of knowing whether a being purely material thinks or not.' This judicious and guarded observation was considered by more than one divine, as neither more nor less than a scandalous and impious declaration, that the soul is material and mortal. Some English devotees, after their usual manner, sounded the

alarm. The superstitious are in society what poltroons are in an army—they both feel and excite causeless terror. The cry was, that Mr. Locke wished to overturn religion; the subject, however, had nothing to do with religion at all; it was purely a philosophical question, and perfectly independent of faith and revelation." One clergyman, the Rev. William Carrol, wrote, charging Atheism as the result of Locke's teaching. The famous Sir Isaac Newton even grew so alarmed with the materialistic tendency of Locke's philosophy, that when John Locke was reported sick and unlikely to live, it is credibly stated that Newton went so far as to say that it would be well if the author of the essay on the Understanding were already dead.

In 1689, one Cassimer Leszynski, a Polish knight, was burned at Warsaw for denying the being and providence of a God; but there are no easy means of learning whether the charge arose from prejudice on the part of his accusers, or whether this unfortunate gentleman really held Atheistic views.

Peter Bayle, born at Carlat, in Foix, 1647, died in Holland, 1706, was a writer of great power and brilliancy and wide learning. Without standing avowedly on the side of scepticism, he did much to promote sceptical views amongst the rapidly growing class of men of letters. He declared that it was better to be an Atheist, than to have a false or unworthy idea of God; that a man can be at the same time an

Atheist and an honest man, and that a people without a religion is capable of good order. Bayle's writings grew more heretical towards the latter part of his career, and he suffered considerable persecution at the hands of the Church, for having spoken too plainly of the character of David. He said that "if David was the man after God's own heart, it must have been by his penitence, not by his crimes." Bayle might have added, that the record of David's penitence is not easily discoverable in any part of the narrative of his life.

Matthew Tindal, born 1656, died 1733, was, though the son of a clergyman of the Established Church, one of the first amongst the school of Deistical writers who became so prominent in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Dr. Pye Smith catalogues him as "an Atheist," but we know no ground for this. He was a zealous controversialist, and commencing by attacking priests, he continued his attack against the revelation they preached. He was a frequent writer, but his "Christianity as old as the Creation" is his chief work, and the one which has provoked the greatest amount of discussion. It was published nearly at the close of his life, and after he had seen others of his writings burned by the common hangman. Dr. Matthew Tindal helped much to shake belief in the Bible, those who wrote against him did much more; if no one had replied to Tindal, his attacks on revelation would have been read by

few, but in answering the heretic, Bishop Waterland and his *confrères* gave wider circulation to Tindal's heresy.

John Toland was born Nov. 30, 1670, at Londonderry, but was educated in Scotland. He died 1722. His publications were all about the close of the seventeenth and commencement of the eighteenth centuries, and the ability of his contributions to popular instruction may be judged by the abusive epithets heaped upon him by his opponents. While severely attacking the bulk of the clergy as misleaders of the people, and while also assailing some of the chief orthodox notions, he yet, either in order to escape the law, or from the effect of his religious education, professed a respect for what he was pleased to call true Christianity, but which we should be inclined to consider, at the least, somewhat advanced Unitarianism. At last, however, his works were ordered to be burned by the common hangman, and to escape arrest and prosecution he had to flee to the Continent. Dr. J. Pye Smith describes Toland as a Pantheist, and calls his Pantheisticon "an Atheistic Liturgy." In one of Toland's essays he laments "how hard it is to come to a truth yourself, and how dangerous a thing to publish to others." The publications of Toland were none of them very bulky although numerous, and as most of them were fiercely assailed by the orthodox clergy, they helped to excite popular interest in

England in the critical examination of the Scriptures and the doctrines therein taught.

Besides the few authors to whom attention is here drawn, there were numerous men who—each for a little while, and often coming out from the lower ranks of the people themselves—stirred the hitherto almost stagnant pool of popular thought with some daring utterance or extravagant statement. Fanatics some, mystics some, alchemists some, materialists some, but all crude and imperfect in their grasp of the subject they advocated, they nevertheless all helped to agitate the human mind, to render it more restless and inquiring, and thus they all promoted the march of heresy. One feature of the history of the seventeenth century shows how much philosophy had gained ground, and how deep its roots were striking throughout the European world—viz., that nearly all the writers wrote in the vulgar tongue of their country, or there were published editions of their works in that tongue. A century earlier, and but few escaped from the narrow bonds of learned Latin: two centuries before, and none got outside the Latin folios; but in this century theology, metaphysics, philosophy, and politics are discussed in French, German, English, and Italian. The commonest reader may peruse the most learned author, for the writing is in a language which he cannot help knowing.

There were in this century a large number of

writers in England and throughout Europe, who, taking the Bible as a starting-point and limitation for their philosophy, broached wonderful theories as to creation, etc., in which reason and revelation were sought to be made harmonious. Enfield, a most orthodox writer, in his "History of Philosophy," says: "Who does not perceive, from the particulars which have been related concerning these Scriptural philosophers, that their labors, however well intended, have been of little benefit to philosophy? Their fundamental error has consisted in supposing that the sacred Scriptures were intended, not only to instruct men in all things necessary to their salvation, but to teach the true principles of physical and metaphysical science." How pregnant the admission that revelation and science cannot be expected to accord—an admission which in truth declares that in all philosophical research it its necessary to go beyond the Bible, if not to go against it—an admission which involves the declaration, that so long as men are bound by the letter of the Bible, so long all philosophical progress is impossible.

In this century the English Church lost much of the political power it had hitherto wielded. It was in 1625, that William, Bishop of Lincoln, was dismissed from the office of Lord Keeper, and since his day no ecclesiastic has held the great seal of England, and to-day who even in the Church itself would dream of trying to make a bishop Lord Chancellor? The church

lost ground in the conflict with Charles; this it might perhaps have recovered, but it suffered irretrievable loss of prestige in its struggle with William.

Chapter IV. The Eighteenth Century

THE eighteenth century deserves that the penman who touches its records shall have some virility; for these records contain, not only the narrative of the rapid growth of the new philosophy in France, England, and Germany, where its roots had been firmly struck in the previous century, but they also give the history of a glorious endeavor on the part of a down-trodden and long-suffering people, weakened and degraded by generations of starvation and oppression, to break the yoke of tyranny and superstition. Eighteenth century historians can write how the men of France, after having been cursed by a long race of kings, who never dreamed of identifying their interests with those of the people; after enduring centuries of tyranny from priests, whose only gods were power, pleasure, and mammon, and at the hands of nobles, who denied civil rights to their serfs; at last, could endure no longer, but electrified into life by eighteenth-century heresy, “spurned under foot the idols of tyranny and superstition,” and sought “by the influence of reason to erect on the ruins of arbitrary power the glorious edifice of civil and religious liberty.” Why

Frenchmen then failed in giving permanent success to their heroic endeavor, is not difficult to explain, when we consider that every tyranny in Europe united against that young republic to which the monarchy had bequeathed a legacy of a wretched pauper people, a people whose minds had been hitherto wholly in the hands of the priests, whose passions had revolted against wrong, but whose brains were yet too weak for the permanent enjoyment of the freedom temporarily resulting from physical effort. Eighteenth-century heresy is especially noticeable for its immediate connexion with political change. For the first time in European history, the great mass commenced to yearn for the assertion in government of democratic principles. The French Republican Revolution, which overthrew Louis XVI and the Bastille, was only possible because the heretical teachers who preceded it had weakened the divine right of kingcraft; and it was ultimately unsuccessful, only because an overwhelming majority of the people were as yet not sufficiently released from the thraldom of the church, and therefore fell before the allied despotisms of Europe, who were aided by the Catholic priests, who naturally plotted against the spirit which seemed likely to make men too independent to be pious.

In Germany the liberation of the masses from the dominion of the Church of Rome was effected with the, at first, active believing concurrence of the

nation; in England this was not so. Protestantism here was the result rather of the influence and interests of the King and Court, and of the indifference of the great body of the people. The Reformed Church of England, sustained by the crown and aristocracy, has generally left the people to find their own way to heaven or hell, and has only required abstinence from avowed denial of, or active opposition to, its tenets. Its ministers have usually preached with the same force to a few worshippers scattered over their grand cathedrals and numerous churches as to a thronging crowd, but in each case there has been a lack of vitality in the sermon. It is only when the material interests of the church have been apparently threatened that vigor has been shown on the part of its teachers.

It is a curious fact, and one for comment hereafter, that while in the modern struggle for the progress of heresy its sixteenth-century pages present many most prominent Italian names, when we come to the eighteenth century there are but few such names worthy special notice; it is no longer from the extreme South, but from France, Germany, and England, that you have the great array of Freethinking warriors. Those whom Italy boasts, too, are now nearly all in the Idealistic ranks.

We commenced the list by a brief reference to Bernard Man-deville, a Dutch physician, born at Dordrecht in 1670, and who died in 1733; a writer

with great power as a satirist, whose fable of the "Bees, or Private Vices made Public Benefits," not only served as source for much of Helvetius, but had the double honor of an indictment at the Middlesex session, and an answer from the pen of Bishop Berkeley.

One of the early, and perhaps one of the most important promoters of heresy in the United Kingdom, was George Berkeley, an Irishman by birth. He was born on the 12th of March, 1684, at Kilcrin, and died at Oxford in 1753. It was this writer to whom Pope assigned "every virtue under heaven," and of whom Byron wrote:

> "When Bishop Berkeley said 'there was no r
> And proved it—'twas no matter what he saic
> They say his system 'tis in vain to batte:
> Too subtle for the airiest human head;
> And yet who can believe it?"

A writer in the "Encyclopædia Metropolitana" describes him as "the one, perhaps, whose heart was most free from scepticism, and whose understanding was most prone to it." Berkeley is here dealt with as one specially contributing to the growth of sceptical thought, and not as an Idealist only. Arthur Collier published, about the same time as Berkeley, several works in which absolute Idealism is advocated. Collier and Berkeley were mouthpieces for the

expression of an effort at resistance against the growing Spinozistic school. They wrote against substance assumed as the "noumenon lying underneath all phenomena—the substratum supporting all qualities—the something in which all accidents inhere." Collier and his writings are almost unknown; Berkeley's name has become famous, and his arguments have served to excite far wider scepticism than have those of any other Englishman of his age. Most religious men who read him misunderstand him, and nearly all misrepresent his theory. Hume, speaking of Berkeley, says: "Most of the writings of that very ingenious philosopher form the best lessons of scepticism which are to be found, either among the ancient or modern philosophers, Bayle not excepted. He professes, however, in his title page (and undoubtedly with great truth) to have composed his book against the sceptics, as well as against the Atheists and Freethinkers. But that all his arguments, though otherwise intended, are in reality merely sceptical, appears from this, that they admit of no answer, and produce no conviction."

Berkeley wrote for those who "want a demonstration of the existence and immateriality of God, or the natural immortality of the soul," and his philosophy was intended to check materialism. The key-note of his works may be found in his declaration: "The only thing whose existence I deny, is that which philosophers call Matter or corporeal

substance." The definition given by Berkeley of matter is one which no materialist will be ready to accept, i.e., "an inert, senseless substance in which extension, figure, and motion do actually exist." The "Principles of Human Knowledge" is the work in which Berkeley's Idealism is chiefly set forth, and many have been the volumes and pamphlets written in reply. Whatever might have been Berkeley's intention as to refuting scepticism, the result of his labors was to increase it in no ordinary degree. Dr. Pye Smith thus summarises Berkeley's views:—"He denied the existence of matter as a cause of our perceptions, but firmly maintained the existence of created and dependent spirits, of which every man is one; that to suppose the existence of sensible qualities and of a material world, is an erroneous deduction from the fact of our perceptions; that those perceptions are nothing but ideas and thoughts in our minds; that these are produced in perfect uniformity, order, and consistency in all minds, so that their occurrence is according to fixed rules, which may be called the laws of nature; that the Deity is either the immediate or the mediate cause of these perceptions, by his universal operation on created minds; and that the created mind has a power of managing these perceptions, so that volitions arise, and all the phenomena of moral action and responsibility. The great reply to this is, that it is a hypothesis which cannot be proved, which

is highly improbable, and which seems to put upon the Deity the inflicting on man a perpetual delusion."

The weakness of Berkeley's system as a mere question of logic is, that while he requires the most rigorous demonstration of the existence of what he defines as matter, he assumes an eternal spirit with various attributes, and also creates spirits of various sorts. He creates the states of mind resulting from the sensation of surrounding phenomena into ideas, existing independent of the ego, when in truth, man's ideas are not in addition to man's mind; but the aggregate of sensative ability, and the result of its exercise is the mind, just as the aggregate of functional ability and activity is life. The foundation of Berkeley's faith in the invisible "eternal spirit," in angels as "created spirits," is difficult to discover, when you accept his argument for the rejection of visible phenomena. He in truth should have rejected everything save his own mind, for the mental processes are clearly not always reliable. In dreams, in delirium, in insanity, in temporary disease of particular nerves of sensation, in some phases of magnetic influence, the ideas which Berkeley sustains so forcibly are admittedly delusions.

As in George Berkeley, so we have in Bishop Butler, an illustration of the endeavor to check the rapidly enlarging scepticism of this century. Joseph Butler was born in 1692, died 1752, and will be long known by his famous work on the "Analogy of

Religion to the course of Nature." In this place it is not our duty to do more than point out a few features of the argument, observing that this elaborate piece of special pleading for natural and revealed religion, is evidence that danger was apprehended by the clergy, from the spread of Freethought views amongst the masses. A popular reply was written to provide against the growing popular objection. Bishop Butler argues that "we know that we are endued with certain capacities of action, of happiness and misery; for we are conscious of acting, of enjoying pleasure, and of suffering pain. Now that we have these powers and capacities before death, is a presumption that we shall retain them through and after death; indeed, a probability of it abundantly sufficient to act upon, unless there be some positive reason to think that death is the destruction of those living powers." It may be fairly submitted, in reply, that here the argument from analogy is as utterly faulty, as if in the spring season a traveller should say of a wayside pool, it is here before the summer sun shines upon it, and will be here during and after the summer drought, when ordinary experience would teach him that as the pool is only gathered during the rainy season in the hollow ground, so in the dry hot summer days, it will be gradually evaporated under the blazing rays of the July sun. As to the human capacities, experience teaches us that they have changed with the condition

of the body; emotional feelings and animal passions, the gratification of which ensured temporary pleasure or pain, have varied, have been newly felt, and have died out in different periods and conditions of our lives, and the presumption is against the complete endurance of all these "capacities for action," etc., even during the whole life, and much more strongly, therefore, against their endurance after death. Besides which—continuing the argument from analogy—my "capacities" having only been manifested since my body has existed, and in proportion to my physical ability, the presumption is rather that the manifestation which commenced with the body will finish as the body finishes. Further, it is fair to presume that "death is the destruction of those living powers," for death is the cessation of organic functional activity; a cessation consequent on some change or destruction of organisation. Of course, the word "destruction" is not here used in any sense of annihilation of substance, but as meaning such a change of condition that vital phenomena are no longer manifested. But, says Butler, "we know not at all what death is in itself, but only some of its effects, such as the dissolution of flesh, skin, and bones, and these effects do in nowise appear to imply the destruction of a living agent." Here, perhaps, there is an unjustifiable assumption in the words "living agent," for if by living agent is only meant the animal which dies, then the destruction of

flesh, skin, and bones does fairly imply the destruction of the living agent, but if by living agent is intended more than this, then the argument is speciously and unfairly worded. But beyond this, if Bishop Butler's argument has any value, it proves too much. He says: "Nor can we find anything throughout the whole analogy of nature, to afford us even the slightest presumption that animals ever lose their living powers... by death." That is, Bishop Butler, applies his argument for a future state of existence, not only to man, but to the whole animal kingdom; and it may be fairly conceded that there is as much ground to presume that man will live again, as there is that the worm will live again, which, being impaled upon a hook, is eaten by the gudgeon, or that the gudgeon will live again which, threadled as a bait, is torn and mangled to death by a ravenous pike, or that the pike will live again after it has been kept out of water till rigid, then gutted, scaled, stuffed with savory condiments, broiled, and ultimately eaten by Piscator and his family. Bishop Butler's argument that because pleasure or pain is uniformly found to follow the acting or not acting in some particular manner, there is presumptive analogy in favor of future rewards and punishments by Deity, appears weak in the extreme. According to Butler, God is the author of nature. Nature's laws are such, that punishment, immediate or remote, follows nonobservance, and reward, more or less immediate,

is the result of observance; and because God is, by Butler's argument, assumed as the author of nature, and has therefore already punished or rewarded once, we are following Butler, to presume that he will after death punish or reward again for an action upon which he has already adjudicated. In his chapter on the Moral Government of God, Butler says: "As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes in the constitution of the world prove it to be the work of an intelligent mind, so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain distributed amongst his creatures prove that they are under his government—what may be called his natural government of creatures endowed with sense and reason." But taking Bishop Butler's own position, what sort of government is demonstrated by this argument from analogy? God, according to Bishop Butler's reasoning, designed the whale to swallow the Clio Borealis, which latter he designed to be so swallowed, but which he nevertheless invested with some 360,000 suckers, to enable it in its turn to seize the minute animalculæ on which it lives. God designed Brutus to kill Cesar, Orsini to be beheaded by Louis Napoleon. These, according to Butler, would be all under the special control of God's government. Bishop Butler's theory that our present life is a state of trial and probation is met by the difficulty, that while he assumes the justice and benevolence of God as moral governor, he has the fact that many exist

with organisations and capacities so originally different, that it is manifestly most unfair to put one and the same reward, or one and the same punishment for all. The Esquimaux or Negro is not on a level at the outset of life with the Caucasian races. How from analogy can anyone argue in favor of the doctrine that an impartial judge who had started them in the race of life unfairly matched, would put the same prize before all, none of the starters being handicapped? Bishop Butler's argument on the doctrine of necessity, is that which one might expect to find from a hired *nisi prius* advocate, but which is read with regret coming from the pen of a gentleman who ought to be striving to convince his erring brethren by the words of truth alone. He says, suppose a child to be educated from his earliest youth in the principles of "fatalism," what then? The reply is, that a necessitarian knowing that a certain education of the human mind was most conducive to human happiness, would strive to impart to his children education of that character. That a worse "fatalism" is inculcated in the doctrine of a foreordaining and ever-directing providence, planning and controlling every one of the child's actions, than ever was taught in necessitarian essays. That the child would be taught the laws of existence, and would be shown how certain conduct resulted in pleasure, and certain other conduct was during life attended with pain, and that the result of such

teaching would be far more efficacious in its moral results, than the inculcation of a present responsibility, and an ultimate heaven and hell, in which latter doctrine, nearly all Christians profess to believe, but nearly all act as if it were not of the slightest consequence whether any such paradise or infernal region exists.

Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, born October 1, 1672, died November 15, 1751, may be taken as one of the school of polished deistical writers, who, though comparatively few, fairly enough represents the religious opinions of the large majority of the journalists of the present day. In the course of Bolingbroke's "Letters on the Study of History" a strong sceptical spirit is manifested, and he speaks in one of "the share which the divines of all religions have taken in the corruption of history." In another he thus deals with the question of the Bible:—"It has been said by Abbadie, and others, 'that the accidents which have happened to alter the texts of the Bible, and to disfigure, if I may say so, the scriptures in many respects, could not have been prevented without a perpetual standing miracle, and that a perpetual standing miracle is not in the order of providence.' Now I can by no means subscribe to this opinion. It seems evident to my reason that the very contrary must be true; if we suppose that God acts towards men according to the moral fitness of things; and if we suppose that he acts arbitrarily, we can

form no opinion at all. I think these accidents would not have happened, or that the scriptures would have been preserved entirely in their genuine purity notwithstanding these accidents, if they had been entirely dictated by the Holy Ghost: and the proof of this probable proposition, according to our clearest and most distinct ideas of wisdom and moral fitness, is obvious and easy. But these scriptures are not so come down to us: they are come down broken and confused, full of additions, interpolations, and transpositions, made we neither know when, nor by whom; and such, in short, as never appeared on the face of any other book, on whose authority men have agreed to rely. This being so, my lord, what hypothesis shall we follow? Shall we adhere to some such distinction as I have mentioned? Shall we say, for instance, that the scriptures were originally written by the authors to whom they are vulgarly ascribed, but that these authors writ nothing by inspiration, except the legal, the doctrinal, and the prophetical parts, and that in every other respect their authority is purely human, and therefore fallible? Or shall we say that these histories are nothing more than compilations of old traditions, and abridgements of old records, made in later times, as they appear to every one who reads them without prepossession and with attention?"

It has been alleged that Pope's verse is but another rendering of Bolingbroke's views without his

"aristocratic nonchalance," and that some passages of Pope regarded as hostile to revealed religion, were specially due to the influence of Bolingbroke; and more than one critic has professed to trace identities of thought and expression in order to show that Pope was largely indebted to the published works of St. John.

David Hume was born at Edinburgh, 26th April, 1711, and died 1776. He created a new school of Freethinkers, and is to-day one of the most esteemed amongst sceptical authors. He was a profound thinker, and an easy, elegant writer, who did much to give a force and solidity to extreme heretical reasonings, which they had hitherto been regarded as lacking. His heretical essays have had a far wider circulation since his death than they enjoyed during his life. Many volumes have been issued in the fruitless endeavor to refute him, and all these have contributed to widen the circle of his readers. He adopted and advocated the utilitarian and necessitarian theory of morals, and wrote of ordinary theism and religion as arising from personification of unknown causes for general or special phenomena. He held and advanced the idea, which Buckle so fully states, and endeavors to prove in his "History of Civilisation"—viz., that general laws operate amongst peoples, and influence and determine their so-called moral conduct, much as other laws do the orbits of planets, the occurrences of eclipses, etc. His

arguments against miracles, as evidences for revealed religion, remain unrefuted, although they have been made the subject of many attacks. He contends, in effect, that in each account of a miraculous occurrence there is always more *prima facie* probability of error, or bad faith on the part of the narrator, than of interference with those invariable sequences known as natural laws, and there was really no reply in the conclusion of Dr. Campbell, to the effect that we have equally to trust human testimony for an account of the laws of nature and for the narratives of miracles, for in truth you never have the same character of human testimony for the latter as for the former. And, further, while in the case of human testimony as to natural events, it is evidence which you may test and compare with your own experience. This is not so as to miracles, declared at once to be out of the range of all ordinary experience. “Men,” he says, “are carried by a natural instinct or prepossession to repose faith in their senses. When they follow this blind and powerful instinct of nature, they always suppose the very images presented to the senses to be the external objects, and never entertain any suspicion that the one are nothing but representatives of the other. But this universal and primary opinion of all men is soon destroyed by the slightest philosophy, which teaches us that nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception. So far, then,

we are necessitated by reasoning to contradict the primary instincts of nature, and to embrace a new system with regard to the evidence of our senses. But here philosophy finds herself extremely embarrassed, when she would obviate the cavils and objections of the sceptics. She can no longer plead the infallible and irresistible instinct of nature, for that led us to quite a different system, which is acknowledged fallible, and even erroneous, and to justify this pretended philosophical system by a chain of clear and convincing argument, or even any appearance of argument, exceeds the power of all human capacity. Do you follow the instinct and propensities of nature in assenting to the veracity of the senses? But these lead you to believe that the very perception or sensible image is the external object—(Idealism.) Do you disclaim this principle in order to embrace a more rational opinion, that the perceptions are only representations of something external? You here depart from your natural propensities, and more obvious sentiments; and yet are not able to satisfy your reason, which can never find any convincing argument from experience to prove that the perceptions are connected with external objects—(Scepticism.)"

Charles de Secondat Baron de Montesquieu, born in 1689 near Bordeaux, died at Paris 1755, who earned considerable fame by his "Lettres Persanes," is more famous for his oft-referred to work "L'Esprit

des Lois." Victor Cousin describes him as "the man of our country who has best comprehended history, and who first gave an example of true historic method." In the publication of certain of his ideas on history, Montesquieu was the layer of the foundation-stone for an edifice which Buckle would probably have gloriously crowned had his life been longer. Voltaire, who sharply criticises Montesquieu, declares that he has earned the eternal gratitude of Europe by his grand views and his bold attacks on tyranny, superstition, and grinding taxation. Montesquieu urged that virtue is the true essence of republicanism, but misled by the mistaken notions of honor held by his predecessors and contemporaries, he declared honor to be the principle of monarchical institutions. Voltaire reminds him that "it is in courts that men, devoid of honor, often attain to the highest dignities; and it is in republics that a known dishonorable citizen is seldom trusted by the people with public concerns." Montesquieu wrote in favor of a constitutional monarchy such as then existed in England, and his work shadowed forth a future for the middle class in France.

Francois Marie Arouet Voltaire, born 20th February, 1694, at Chatenay, died 30th May, 1778, may be fairly written of as the man, to whose fertile brain and active pen, to whose great genius, fierce irony, and thorough humanity, we owe much more of the rapid change of popular thought in Europe

during the last century, than to any other man. His wit, like the electric flash, spared nothing; his love for his kind would have made him the protector of everything weak, his desire to protect himself from the consequences of his truest utterances often dims the hero-halo with which his name is surrounded. Born and trained amongst a corrupt and selfish class, it is not wonderful that we find some of their pernicious habits clinging to parts of his career. On the contrary, it is more wonderful to find that he has shaken off so much of the consequences of his education. Neither in politics nor in theology was he so very extreme in his utterances as many deemed him, for while he occasionally severely handled individual monarchs, we do not find him the preacher of republicanism. On the contrary, he is often severe against some of the advanced political views of Jean Jacques Rousseau. He nevertheless suggests that it might have been “the art of working metals which originally made kings, and the art of casting cannons which now maintains them,” and as a commentary on kingly conduct in the matter of taxation, declares that “a shepherd ought to shear his sheep and not to flay them.” In theological controversy he wrote as a Theist, and declares “Atheism and Fanaticism” to be “two monsters which may tear Society in pieces, but the Atheist preserves his reason, which checks his propensity to mischief, while the fanatic is under the influence of a madness

constantly urging him on." For the ancient Jews, and for the Hebrew records, Voltaire entertained so thorough a feeling of contemptuous detestation, that in his "Défense de mon Oncle," and his articles and letters on the Jews, we find utter disbelief in them as a chosen people, and the strongest abhorrence of their brutal habits, heightened in expression by the scathing satire of his phrases. To the more modern descendants of Abraham he said: "We have repeatedly driven you away through avarice; we have recalled you through avarice and stupidity; we still, in more towns than one, make you pay for liberty to breathe the air; we have, in more kingdoms than one, sacrificed you to God; we have burned you as holocausts—for I will not follow your example, and dissemble that we have offered up sacrifices of human blood; all the difference is, that our priests, content with applying your money to their own use, have had you burned by laymen; while your priests always immolated their human victims with their own sacred hands. You were monsters of cruelty and fanaticism in Palestine; we have been so in Europe."

Writing on miracles, Voltaire asks: "For what purpose would God perform a miracle? To accomplish some particular design upon living beings? He would then, in reality, be supposed to say —I have not been able to effect by my construction of the universe, by my divine decrees, by my eternal laws, a particular object; I am now going to change

my eternal ideas and immutable laws, to endeavor to accomplish what I have not been able to do by means of them. This would be an avowal of his weakness, not of his power; it would appear in such a being an inconceivable contradiction. Accordingly, therefore, to dare to ascribe miracles to God is, if man can in reality insult God, actually offering him that insult. It is saying to him—You are a weak and inconsistent being. It is therefore absurd to believe in miracles; it is, in fact, dishonoring the divinity."

Those who are inclined to attack the character of Voltaire should read the account of his endeavors for the Calas family. How, when old Calas had been broken alive on the wheel at Toulouse, and his family were ruined, Voltaire took up their case, aided them with means, spared no effort of his pen or brain, and ultimately achieved the great victory of reversing the unjust sentence, and obtaining compensation for the family. If, then, these Voltaire-haters have not learned to love this great heretic, let them study the narrative of his even more successful endeavors on behalf of the Sirvens; more successful, because in this case he took up the fight before an unjust judgment could be delivered, and thus prevented the repetition of such an iniquitous execution as had taken place in the Calas case. The cowardly slanders as to his conduct when dying are not worth notice; those spit on the grave of the dead who would not have dared to look in the face of the

living.

Claude Adrian Helvetius was born at Paris 1715, and died December, 1771. His best known works are "De l'Esprit," published 1758: "Essai sur l'Origine des Connaissances Humaines," 1746; "Traite des Systemes," 1749; "Traite des Sensations," 1758. Rousseau wrote in reply to Helvetius, but when the Parliament of Paris condemned the work "De l'Esprit," and it was in consequence burned by the common hangman, Rousseau withdrew his refutatory volume. Helvetius argues that any religion, of which the chiefs are intolerant, and the conduct of which is expensive to the state, "cannot long be the religion of an enlightened and well governed nation. The people that submit to it will labor only to maintain the ease and luxury of the priesthood; each of its inhabitants will be nothing more than a slave to the sacerdotal power. A religion to be good should be tolerant and little expensive. Its clergy should have no authority over the people. A dread of the priest debases the mind and the soul, makes the one brutish and the other slavish. Must the ministers of the altar always be armed with the sword of the State? Can the barbarities committed by their intolerance ever be forgotten? The earth is yet drenched with the blood they have spilled. Civil tolerance alone is not sufficient to secure the peace of nations. Every dogma is a seed of discord and injustice sown amongst mankind."

"Why do you make the Supreme Being resemble an eastern tyrant? Why make him punish slight faults with eternal torment? Why thus put the name of the Divinity at the bottom of the portrait of the devil? Why oppress the soul with a load of fear, break its springs, and of a worshipper of Jesus make a vile, pusillanimous slave? It is the malignant who paint a malignant God. What is their devotion? A veil for their crimes."

"Let not the rewards of heaven be made the price of trifling religious operations, which convey a diminutive idea of the Eternal and a false conception of virtue; its rewards should never be assigned to fasting, haircloth, a blind submission, and self-castigation. The men who place these operations among the virtues, might as well place those of leaping, dancing, and tumbling on the rope." "Humility may be held in veneration by the dwellers in a monastery or a convent, it favors the meanness and idleness of a monastic life. But ought humility to be regarded as the virtue of the people? No." Speaking of the Pagan systems, Helvetius says: "All the fables of mythology were mere emblems of certain principles of nature."

Baron d'Holbach, a native of the Palatinate, born January 1723, died 21st January, 1789, deserves special notice, as being the man whose house was the gathering place of the knot of writers and thinkers who struck light and life into the dark and

deadened brain of France. He is generally reputed to have been the author of that well-known work, the "System of Nature," which was issued as if by Mirabaud. This work, although it was fiercely assailed at the time by the pen of Voltaire, and by the *plaidorie* of the prosecuting Avocat-General, and has since been attacked by hundreds who had never read it, yet remains a wonderfully popular exposition of the power-gathering heresy of the century, and, as far as we are aware, has never received efficient reply. Probably next to Paine's works, it had in England during the second quarter of this century the widest circulation of any anti-theological book, this circulation extending through the manufacturing ranks. In the eighteenth century Mirabaud could, in England, only be found in the hands of the few, but fifty years had wondrously multiplied the number of readers.

Joseph Priestley was born near Leeds, 13th March, 1733, and being towards the latter part of his life driven out of England, by the persecuting spirit evinced towards him, and which had been specially excited by his republican tendencies, he died at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, on the 6th February, 1804. Originally a Church of England clergyman, his first notable inclination towards heterodoxy manifested itself in hesitation as to the doctrine of the atonement. He ultimately rejected the immortality and immateriality of the soul, argued for

necessitarianism, and earned considerable unpopularity by the boldness of some of his sentiments on political as well as theological matters. Priestley was one of the rapidly multiplying instances of heresy alike in religion and politics, but he provoked the most bitter antagonism. His works were burned by the common hangman, his house, library, and scientific instruments were destroyed by an infuriate and pious mob. Despite all this, his heresy, according to his own view of it, was not of a very outrageous character, for he believed in Deity, in revealed religion, and in Christianity, rather putting the blame on misconduct of alleged Christians. He said: “The wretched forms under which Christianity has long been generally exhibited, and its degrading alliance with, or rather its subjection to, a power wholly heterogeneous to it, and which has employed it for the most unworthy purposes, has made it contemptible and odious in the eyes of all sensible men, who are now everywhere casting off the very profession and every badge of it. Enlightened Christians must themselves, in some measure, join with unbelievers in exposing whatever will not bear examination in or about religion.” His writings on scientific topics were most voluminous; his most heretical volumes are those on “Matter and Spirit.”

Edward Gibbon was born at Putney, the 27th April, 1737, and died 16th January, 1794. He was a

polished and painstaking writer, aristocratic in his tendencies and associations, who had educated himself into a disbelief in the principal dogmas of Christianity, but who loved the peace and quietude of an easy life too much to enter the lists as an active antagonist of the Church. His works, especially the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," have been regarded as infidel in their tendency, rather from what has been left unsaid than from the direct statements against Christianity. The sneer at the evidence of prophecy, or the doubt of the reality of miraculous evidences, is guardedly expressed. It is only when Gibbon can couch his lance against some reckless and impudent forger of Christian evidences, such as Eusebius, that you have anything like a bold condemnation. A prophecy or a miracle is treated tenderly, and if killed, it is rather with over-affectionate courtesy than by rough handling. In some parts of his vindications of the attacked passages, Gibbon's scepticism finds vent in the collection and quotation of unpleasantly heretical views of others, but he carefully avoids committing himself to very distinct personal declarations of disbelief; he claims to be the unbiased historian recording fact, and leaving others to form their own conclusions. It would perhaps be most appropriate to express his convictions as to the religions of the world, in nearly the same words as those which he used to characterise the various

modes of worship at Rome: “All considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful.”

Pierre John George Cabanis, born at Conac, near Breves 5th June, 1757, died 6th May, 1808, following Condillac in many respects, was one of those whose physiological investigations have opened out wide fields of knowledge in psychology, and who did much to promote the establishment in France, America, and England, of a new school of Freethinkers. “Subject to the action of external bodies,” he says, “man finds in the impressions these bodies make on his organs, at once his knowledge and the causes of his continued existence, for to live is to feel; and in that admirable chain of phenomena which constitute his existence, every want depends on the development of some faculty; every faculty by its very development satisfies some want, and the faculties grow by exercise, as the wants extend with the facility of satisfying them. By the continual action of external bodies on the senses of man, results the most remarkable part of his existence. But is it true that the nervous centres only receive and combine the impressions which reach them from the bodies? Is it true that no image or idea is formed in the brain, and that no determination of the sensative organ takes place, other than by virtue of these same impressions on the senses strictly so-called? The faculty of feeling and of spontaneous movement

forms the character of animal nature. The faculty of feeling consists in the property possessed by the nervous system of being warned by the impressions produced on its different parts, and notably on its extremities. These impressions are internal or external. External impressions, when perception is distinct, are called sensations. Internal impressions are very often vague and confused, and the animal is then only warned by their effects, and does not clearly distinguish their connexion with the causes. The former result from the application of external objects to the organs of sense, and on them ideas depend. The latter result from the development of the regular functions, or from the maladies to which each organ is subject; and from these issue those determinations which bear the name of instincts. Feeling and movement are linked together. Every movement is determined by an impression, and the nerves, as the organs of feeling, animate and direct the motor organs. In feeling, the nervous organ reacts on itself. In movement it reacts on other parts, to which it communicates the contractile faculty, the simple and fecund principle of all animal movement. Finally, the vital functions can exercise themselves by the influence of some nervous ramifications, isolated from the system—the instinctive faculties can develop themselves, even when the brain is almost wholly destroyed, and when it seems wholly inactive. But for the formation of thoughts, it is

necessary that the brain should exist, and be in a healthy condition; it is the special organ of thought."

Thomas Paine, the most famous Deist of modern times, was born at Thetford, on the 29th January, 1737, and died 8th June, 1809. It will hardly be untrue to say that the famous "rebellious needleman" has been the most popular writer in Great Britain and America against revealed religion, and that his works, from their plain clear language, have in those countries had, and still have, a far wider circulation than those of any other modern sceptical author. His anti-theology was allied to his republicanism; he warred alike against church and throne, and his impeachment of each was couched in the plainest Anglo-Saxon. His name became at the same time a word of terror to the aristocracy and to the clergy. In England numerous prosecutions were commenced against the vendors of his political and theological works, and against persons suspected of giving currency to his views. The peace-officers searched poor men's houses to discover his dreaded works. Lancashire and Yorkshire artisans read him by stealth, and assembled in corners of fields that they might discuss the "Age of Reason," and yet be safe from surprise by the authorities. Heavy sentences were passed upon men convicted of promulgating his opinions; but all without effect, the forbidden fruit found eager gatherers. Paine appears to have been tinged with scepticism from his early boyhood, but it

was as a democratic writer that he first achieved literary fame. His "Age of Reason" was the culminating blow which the dying eighteenth century aimed at the Hebrew and Christian records. Theretofore scholarly philosophers, metaphysicians, and critics had written for their fellows, and whether or not any of the mass read and understood, the authors cared but little. Now the people were addressed by one of themselves in language startling in its plainness. Paine was not a deep examiner of metaphysical problems, but he was terribly in earnest in his rejection of an impossible creed.

Charles Francois Dupuis was born near Chaumont, in France, the 16th Oct, 1742, died 29th Sept, 1809. He played a prominent part in the great revolutionary movement, and was Secretary to the National Convention. His famous work, "L'Origine de tous les Cultes," is one of the grand heresy marks of the eighteenth century. Himself a Pantheist, he searched through the mythic traditions of the Greeks, the Egyptians, the Hindus, and the Hebrews, and as a result, sought to demonstrate a common origin for all religions. Dr. John Pye Smith classes Dupuis as an Atheist, but this is most certainly an incorrect classification. He did not believe in creation, nor could he go outside the universe to search for its cause, but he regarded God as *"la force universelle et eternellement active,* " which permeated and animated everything. Dupuis was an example of a new and

rapidly increasing class of Freethinking writers—i.e., those who, not content with doubting the divine origin of the religions they attacked, sought to explain the source and progress of the various systems. He urges that all religions find their base in the attempts at personification of some one or other, or of the whole of the forces of the universe, and shows what an important part the sun and moon have been made to play in the Egyptian, Greek, and Hindu mythologies. He argues that the fabulous biographies of Hercules, Bacchus, Osiris, Mithra, and Jesus, find their common origin in the sun-worship, thus cloaked and hidden from the vulgar in each country. He does not attack the Hebrew Records as simply inaccurate, but endeavors to show clear Sabaistic foundation for many of the most important narratives. The works of Dupuis and Dulaure should be read together; they contain the most complete amongst the many attempts to trace out the common origins of the various mythologies of the world. In the ninth chapter of Dupuis' great work, he deals with the "fable made upon the sun adored under the name of Christ," "*un dieu qui ait mangé autrefois sur la terre, et qu'on y mange aujourd'hui*" and unquestionably urges strange points of coincidence. It is only astrologically that the 25th of December can be fixed, he argues, as the birthday of Mithra and of Jesus, then born of the celestial Virgin. Our Easter festivities for the resurrection of Jesus are but

another form of the more ancient rejoicing at that season for Adonis, the sun-God, restored to the world after his descent into the lower regions. He recalls that the ancient Druidic worship recognised the Virgin suckling the child, and gathers together many illustrations favorable to his theory. Here we do no more than point out that while reason was rapidly releasing itself from priestly thraldom, heretics were not content to deny the divine origin of Christianity, but sought to trace its mundane or celestial source, and strip it of its fabulous plumage.

Constantine Francis Chasseboeuf Count Volney, born at Craon in Anjou, February 3rd, 1757, died 1820. He was a Deist. In his two great works, “The Ruins of Empires,” and “New Researches on Ancient History,” he advances many of the views brought forward by Dupuis, from whom he quotes, but his volumes are much more readable than those of the author of the “Origin of all Religions.” Volney appears to have been one of the first to popularise many of Spinoza’s Biblical criticisms. He denied the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. He wrote most vigorously against kingcraft as well as priestcraft, regarding all systems of monarchy and religion as founded on the ignorance and servility, the superstition and weakness of the people. He puts the following into the mouth of Mahommedan priests replying to Christian preachers: “We maintain that your gospel morality is by no means characterised by

the perfection you ascribe to it. It is not true that it has introduced into the world new and unknown virtues; for example, the equality of mankind in the eyes of God, and the fraternity and benevolence which are the consequence of this equality, were tenets formerly professed by the sect of Hermetics and Samaneans, from whom you have your descent. As to forgiveness of injuries, it had been taught by the Pagans themselves; but in the latitude you give to it, it ceases to be a virtue, and becomes an immorality and a crime. Your boasted precept, to him that strikes thee on thy right cheek turn the other also, is not only contrary to the feelings of man, but a flagrant violation of every principle of justice; it emboldens the wicked by impunity, degrades the virtuous by the servility to which it subjects them; delivers up the world to disorder and tyranny, and dissolves the bands of society—such is the true spirit of your doctrine. The precepts and parables of your Gospel also never represent God other than as a despot, acting by no rule of equity; than as a partial father treating a debauched and prodigal son with greater favor than his obedient and virtuous children; than as a capricious master giving the same wages to him who has wrought but one hour, as to those who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and preferring the last comers to the first. In short, your morality throughout is unfriendly to human intercourse; a code of misanthropy

calculated to give men a disgust for life and society, and attach them to solitude and celibacy. With respect to the manner in which you have practised your boasted doctrine, we in our turn appeal to the testimony of fact, and ask, was it your evangelical meekness and forbearance which excited those endless wars among your sectaries, those atrocious persecutions of what you call heretics, those crusades against the Arians, the Manichæans, and the Protestants, not to mention those which you have committed against us, nor the sacrilegious associations still subsisting among you, formed of men who have sworn to perpetuate them?[1] Was it the charity of your Gospel that led you to exterminate whole nations in America, and to destroy the empires of Mexico and Peru; that makes you still desolate Africa, the inhabitants of which you sell like cattle, notwithstanding the abolition of slavery that you pretend your religion has effected; that makes you ravage India whose domain you usurp; in short, is it charity that has prompted you for three centuries past to disturb the peaceful inhabitants of three continents, the most prudent of whom, those of Japan and China, have been constrained to banish you from their country, that they might escape your chains and recover their domestic tranquillity?"

During the early part of the eighteenth century, magazines and other periodicals began to grow

apace, and pamphlets multiplied exceedingly in this country. Addison, Steele, Defoe, and Dean Swift all helped in the work of popular education, and often in a manner probably unanticipated by themselves. Dean Swift's satire against scepticism was fiercely powerful; but his onslaughts against Roman Catholics and Presbyterians made far more sceptics than his other writings had made churchmen.

During the latter portion of the eighteenth century, a new phase of popular progress was exhibited in the comparatively lively interest taken in political questions by the great body of the people inhabiting large towns. In America, France, and England, this was strongly marked; it is, however, in this country that we find special evidences of the connexion between heresy and progress, as contradistinguished from orthodoxy and obstructiveness, manifested in the struggle for the liberty of the press and platform; a struggle in which some of the boldest efforts were made by poor and heretical self-taught men. The dying eighteenth century witnessed, in England, repeated instances of State prosecutions, in which the charge of entertaining or advocating the views of the Republican heretic, Paine, formed a prominent feature, and there is little doubt that the efforts of the London Corresponding Society (which the Government of the day made strenuous endeavors to repress) to give circulation to some of Paine's

political opinions in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the North, had for result the familiarising many men with views they would have otherwise feared to investigate. The step from the “Rights of Man” to the “Age of Reason” was but a short stride for an advancing inquirer. In France the end of the eighteenth century was marked by a frightful convulsion, but in the case of France, the revolution was too sudden to be immediately beneficial or enduring, the people were as a mass too poor, and therefore too ignorant, to wield the power so rapidly wrested from the class who had so long monopolised it. It is far better to grow out of a creed by the sure and gradual consciousness of the truths of existence, than to dash off a religious garb simply from abhorrence of the shameful practices of its professors, or sudden conviction of the falsity of many of the testimonies in its favor. So it is a more permanent and more complete revolution which is effectuated by educating men to a sense of the majesty and worth of true manhood, than is any mere sudden overturning a rotten or cruel usurpation. Monarchies are most thoroughly and entirely destroyed—not by pulling down the throne, or by decapitating the king, but by educating and building up with a knowledge of political duty, each individual citizen amongst the people.

It is here that heresy has its great advantage. Christianity says: “The powers that be are ordained

of God, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." Heresy challenges the divine right of the governor, and declares that government should be the best contrivance of national wisdom to promote the national weal, to provide against national want, and alleviate national suffering—that government which is only a costly machinery for conserving class privileges, and preventing popular freedom, is a tyrannical usurpation of power, which it is the duty of true men to destroy.

I have briefly and imperfectly alluded to a few of the men who stand out as the sign-posts of heretical progress during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; in some future publication of wider scope fairer tribute may be paid to the memories of some of these mighty warriors in the Freethought army. My object is to show that the civilisation of the masses is in proportion to the spread of heresy amongst them, that its effect is seen in an exhibition of manly dignity and self-reliant effort which is utterly unattainable amongst a superstitious people. Look at the lazzaroni of the Neapolitan States, or the peasant of the Campagna, and you have at once the fearful illustration of demoralisation by faith in the beggar, brigand, and believer.

It is sometimes pretended that such advantages of education and position as the people may boast in England, their civil rights and social advancement,

are owing to their Christianity, but in point of fact the reverse is the case. For centuries Christianity had done little but fetter tightly the masses to Church and Crown, to Priest and Baron; the enfranchisement is comparatively modern. Even in this very day, in the districts where the people are entirely in the hands of the clergy of the Established Church, there they are as a mass the most depraved. Take the agricultural counties and the agricultural laborers: there are no heretical books or papers to be seen in their cottages, no heretical speakers come amongst them to disturb their contentment; the deputy-lieutenant, the squire, and the rector wield supreme authority—the parish church has no rival. But what are the people as a mass? They are not men, they are not women; they lack men's and women's thoughts and aspirations; they are diggers and weeders, hedgers and ditchers, ploughmen and carters; they are taught to be content with the state of life in which it has pleased God to place them.

My plea is, that modern heresy, from Spinoza to Mill, has given brain-strength and dignity to every one it has permeated—that the popular propagandists of this heresy, from Bruno to Carlile, have been the true redeemers and saviors, the true educators of the people. The redemption is yet only at its commencement, the education only lately begun, but the change is traceable already; as witness the power to speak and write, and the ability

to listen and read, which have grown amongst the masses during the last hundred years. And if to-day we write with higher hope, it is because the right to speak and the right to print has been partly freed from the fetters forged through long generations of intellectual prostration, and almost entirely freed from the statutory limitations which, under pretence of checking blasphemy and sedition, have really gagged honest speech against Pope and Emperor, against Church and Throne.

HUMANITY'S GAIN FROM UNBELIEF

As an unbeliever, I ask leave to plead that humanity has been real gainer from scepticism, and that the gradual and growing rejection of Christianity—like the rejection of the faiths which preceded it—has in fact added, and will add, to man's happiness and well being. I maintain that in physics science is the outcome of scepticism, and that general progress is impossible without scepticism on matters of religion. I mean by religion every form of belief which accepts or asserts the supernatural. I write as a Monist, and use the word "nature" as meaning all phenomena, every phenomenon, all that is necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon. Every religion is constantly changing, and at any given time is the measure of the civilisation attained by what Guizot described as the *juste milieu* of those who profess it. Each religion is slowly but certainly modified in its dogma and practice by the gradual development of the peoples amongst whom it is professed. Each discovery destroys in whole or part some theretofore cherished belief. No religion is suddenly rejected by any people; it is rather gradually out-grown. None

see a religion die; dead religions are like dead languages and obsolete customs; the decay is long and—like the glacier march—is only perceptible to the careful watcher by comparisons extending over long periods. A superseded religion may often be traced in the festivals, ceremonies, and dogmas of the religion which has replaced it. Traces of obsolete religions may often be found in popular customs, in old wives' stories, and in children's tales.

It is necessary, in order that my plea should be understood, that I should explain what I mean by Christianity; and in the very attempt at this explanation there will, I think, be found strong illustration of the value of unbelief. Christianity in practice may be gathered from its more ancient forms, represented by the Roman Catholic and the Greek Churches, or from the various churches which have grown up in the last few centuries. Each of these churches calls itself Christian. Some of them deny the right of the others to use the word Christian. Some Christian churches treat, or have treated, other Christian churches as heretics or unbelievers. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants in Great Britain and Ireland have in turn been terribly cruel one to the other; and the ferocious laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, enacted by the English Protestants against English and Irish Papists, are a disgrace to civilisation. These penal laws, enduring longest in

Ireland, still bear fruit in much of the political mischief and agrarian crime of to-day. It is only the tolerant indifference of scepticism that, one after the other, has repealed most of the laws directed by the Established Christian Church against Papists and Dissenters, and also against Jews and heretics. Church of England clergymen have in the past gone to great lengths in denouncing nonconformity; and even in the present day an effective sample of such denunciatory bigotry may be found in a sort of orthodox catechism written by the Rev. F.A. Gace, of Great Barling, Essex, the popularity of which is vouched by the fact that it has gone through ten editions. This catechism for little children teaches that "Dissent is a great sin," and that Dissenters "worship God according to their own evil and corrupt imaginations, and not according to his revealed will, and therefore their worship is idolatrous." Church of England Christians and Dissenting Christians, when fraternising amongst themselves, often publicly draw the line at Unitarians, and positively deny that these have any sort of right to call themselves Christians.

In the first half of the seventeenth century Quakers were flogged and imprisoned in England as blasphemers; and the early Christian settlers in New England, escaping from the persecution of Old World Christians, showed scant mercy to the followers of Fox and Penn. It is customary, in controversy, for

those advocating the claims of Christianity, to include all good done by men in nominally Christian countries as if such good were the result of Christianity, while they contend that the evil which exists prevails in spite of Christianity. I shall try to make out that the ameliorating march of the last few centuries has been initiated by the heretics of each age, though I quite concede that the men and women denounced and persecuted as infidels by the pious of one century, are frequently claimed as saints by the pious of a later generation.

What then is Christianity? As a system or scheme of doctrine, Christianity may, I submit, not unfairly be gathered from the Old and New Testaments. It is true that some Christians to-day desire to escape from submission to portions, at any rate, of the Old Testament; but this very tendency seems to me to be part of the result of the beneficial heresy for which I am pleading. Man's humanity has revolted against Old Testament barbarism; and therefore he has attempted to disassociate the Old Testament from Christianity. Unless Old and New Testaments are accepted as God's revelation to man, Christianity has no higher claim than any other of the world's many religions, if no such claim can be made out for it apart from the Bible. And though it is quite true that some who deem themselves Christians put the Old Testament completely in the background, this is, I allege, because they are out-growing their

Christianity. Without the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, Christianity, as a religion, is naught; but unless the story of Adam's fall is accepted, the redemption from the consequences of that fall cannot be believed. Both in Great Britain and in the United States the Old and New Testaments are forced on the people as part of Christianity; for it is blasphemy at common law to deny the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be of divine authority; and such denial is punishable with fine and imprisonment, or even worse. The rejection of Christianity intended throughout this paper, is therefore the rejection of the Old and New Testaments as being of divine revelation. It is the rejection alike of the authorised teachings of the Church of Rome and of the Church of England, as these may be found in the Bible, the creeds, the encyclicals, the prayer book, the canons and homilies of either or both of these churches. It is the rejection of the Christianity of Luther, of Calvin, and of Wesley.

A ground frequently taken by Christian theologians is that the progress and civilisation of the world are due to Christianity; and the discussion is complicated by the fact that many eminent servants of humanity have been nominal Christians, of one or other of the sects. My allegation will be that the special services rendered to human progress by these exceptional men, have not been in consequence of

their adhesion to Christianity, but in spite of it; and that the specific points of advantage to human kind have been in ratio of their direct opposition to precise Biblical enactments.

A.S. Farrar says[2] that Christianity "asserts authority over religious belief in virtue of being a supernatural communication from God, and claims the right to control human thought in virtue of possessing sacred books, which are at once the record and the instrument of the communication, written by men endowed with supernatural inspiration." Unbelievers refuse to submit to the asserted authority, and deny this claim of control over human thought: they allege that every effort at freethinking must provoke sturdier thought.

Take one clear gain to humanity consequent on unbelief, i.e., in the abolition of slavery in some countries, in the abolition of the slave trade in most civilised countries, and in the tendency to its total abolition. I am unaware of any religion in the world which in the past forbade slavery. The professors of Christianity for ages supported it; the Old Testament repeatedly sanctioned it by special laws; the New Testament has no repealing declaration. Though we are at the close of the nineteenth century of the Christian era, it is only during the past three-quarters of a century that the battle for freedom has been gradually won. It is scarcely a quarter of a century since the famous emancipation amendment was

carried to the United States Constitution. And it is impossible for any well-informed Christian to deny that the abolition movement in North America was most steadily and bitterly opposed by the religious bodies in the various States. Henry Wilson, in his "Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America;" Samuel J. May, in his "Recollections of the Anti-Slavery Conflict;" and J. Greenleaf Whittier, in his poems, alike are witnesses that the Bible and pulpit, the Church and its great influence, were used against abolition and in favor of the slave-owner. I know that Christians in the present day often declare that Christianity had a large share in bringing about the abolition of slavery, and this because men professing Christianity were abolitionists. I plead that these so-called Christian abolitionists were men and women whose humanity, recognising freedom for all, was in this in direct conflict with Christianity. It is not yet fifty years since the European Christian powers jointly agreed to abolish the slave trade. What of the effect of Christianity on these powers in the centuries which had preceded? The heretic Condorcet pleaded powerfully for freedom whilst Christian France was still slave-holding. For many centuries Christian Spain and Christian Portugal held slaves. Porto Rico freedom is not of long date; and Cuban emancipation is even yet newer. It was a Christian King, Charles 5th, and a Christian friar, who founded in Spanish America the slave trade between the Old World and

the New. For some 1800 years, almost, Christians kept slaves, bought slaves, sold slaves, bred slaves, stole slaves. Pious Bristol and godly Liverpool less than 100 years ago openly grew rich on the traffic. During the ninth century Greek Christians sold slaves to the Saracens. In the eleventh century prostitutes were publicly sold as slaves in Rome, and the profit went to the Church.

It is said that William Wilberforce, the abolitionist, was a Christian. But at any rate his Christianity was strongly diluted with unbelief. As an abolitionist he did not believe Leviticus xxv, 44-6; he must have rejected Exodus xxi, 2-6; he could not have accepted the many permissions and injunctions by the Bible deity to his chosen people to capture and hold slaves. In the House of Commons on 18th February, 1796, Wilberforce reminded that Christian assembly that infidel and anarchic France had given liberty to the Africans, whilst Christian and monarchic England was “obstinately continuing a system of cruelty and injustice.”

Wilberforce, whilst advocating the abolition of slavery, found the whole influence of the English Court, and the great weight of the Episcopal Bench, against him. George III, a most Christian king, regarded abolition theories with abhorrence, and the Christian House of Lords was utterly opposed to granting freedom to the slave. When Christian missionaries some sixty-two years ago preached to

Demerara negroes under the rule of Christian England, they were treated by Christian judges, holding commission from Christian England, as criminals for so preaching. A Christian commissioned officer, member of the Established Church of England, signed the auction notices for the sale of slaves as late as the year 1824. In the evidence before a Christian court-martial, a missionary is charged with having tended to make the negroes dissatisfied with their condition as slaves, and with having promoted discontent and dissatisfaction amongst the slaves against their lawful masters. For this the Christian judges sentenced the Demerara abolitionist missionary to be hanged by the neck till he was dead. The judges belonged to the Established Church; the missionary was a Methodist. In this the Church of England Christians in Demerara were no worse than Christians of other sects: their Roman Catholic Christian brethren in St. Domingo fiercely attacked the Jesuits as criminals because they treated negroes as though they were men and women, in encouraging "two slaves to separate their interest and safety from that of the gang," whilst orthodox Christians let them couple promiscuously and breed for the benefit of their owners like any other of their plantation cattle. In 1823 the *Royal Gazette* (Christian) of Demerara said:

"We shall not suffer you to enlighten our slaves, who are by law our property, till you can

demonstrate that when they are made religious and knowing they will continue to be our slaves."

When William Lloyd Garrison, the pure-minded and most earnest abolitionist, delivered his first anti-slavery address in Boston, Massachusetts, the only building he could obtain, in which to speak, was the infidel hall owned by Abner Kneeland, the "infidel" editor of the *Boston Investigator*, who had been sent to gaol for blasphemy. Every Christian sect had in turn refused Mr. Lloyd Garrison the use of the buildings they severally controlled. Lloyd Garrison told me himself how honored deacons of a Christian Church joined in an actual attempt to hang him.

When abolition was advocated in the United States in 1790, the representative from South Carolina was able to plead that the Southern clergy "did not condemn either slavery or the slave trade;" and Mr. Jackson, the representative from Georgia, pleaded that "from Genesis to Revelation" the current was favorable to slavery. Elias Hicks, the brave Abolitionist Quaker, was denounced as an Atheist, and less than twenty years ago a Hicksite Quaker was expelled from one of the Southern American Legislatures, because of the reputed irreligion of these abolitionist "Friends."

When the Fugitive Slave Law was under discussion in North America, large numbers of clergymen of nearly every denomination were found ready to defend this infamous law. Samuel James

May, the famous abolitionist, was driven from the pulpit as irreligious, solely because of his attacks on slaveholding.[3] Northern clergymen tried to induce "silver tongued" Wendell Philips to abandon his advocacy of abolition. Southern pulpits rang with praises for the murderous attack on Charles Sumner. The slayers of Elijah Lovejoy were highly reputed Christian men.

Guizot, notwithstanding that he tries to claim that the Church exerted its influence to restrain slavery, says ("European Civilisation," vol. i, p. 110):

"It has often been repeated that the abolition of slavery among modern people is entirely due to Christians. That, I think, is saying too much. Slavery existed for a long period in the heart of Christian society, without its being particularly astonished or irritated. A multitude of causes, and a great development in other ideas and principles of civilisation, were necessary for the abolition of this iniquity of all iniquities."

And my contention is that this "development in other ideas and principles of civilisation" was long retarded by Governments in which the Christian Church was dominant. The men who advocated liberty were imprisoned, racked, and burned, so long as the Church was strong enough to be merciless.

The Rev. Francis Minton, Rector of Middlewich, in his recent earnest volume on the struggles of labor, admits that "a few centuries ago slavery was

acknowledged throughout Christendom to have the divine sanction.... Neither the exact cause, nor the precise time of the decline of the belief in the righteousness of slavery can be defined. It was doubtless due to a combination of causes, one probably being as indirect as the recognition of the greater economy of free labor. With the decline of the belief the abolition of slavery took place."

The institution of slavery was actually existent in Christian Scotland in the 17th century, where the white coal workers and salt workers of East Lothian were chattels, as were their negro brethren in the Southern States thirty years since; they "went to those who succeeded to the property of the works, and they could be sold, bartered, or pawned."[4] "There is," says J.M. Robertson, "no trace that the Protestant clergy of Scotland ever raised a voice against the slavery which grew up before their eyes. And it was not until 1799, after republican and irreligious France had set the example, that it was legally abolished."

Take further the gain to humanity consequent on the unbelief, or rather disbelief, in witchcraft and wizardry. Apart from the brutality by Christians towards those suspected of witchcraft, the hindrance to scientific initiative or experiment was incalculably great so long as belief in magic obtained. The inventions of the past two centuries, and especially those of the 18th century, might have benefitted

mankind much earlier and much more largely, but for the foolish belief in witchcraft and the shocking ferocity exhibited against those suspected of necromancy. After quoting a large number of cases of trial and punishment for witchcraft from official records in Scotland, J.M. Robertson says: “The people seem to have passed from cruelty to cruelty precisely as they became more and more fanatical, more and more devoted to their Church, till after many generations the slow spread of human science began to counteract the ravages of superstition, the clergy resisting reason and humanity to the last.”

The Rev. Mr. Minton[5] concedes that it is “the advance of knowledge which has rendered the idea of Satanic agency through the medium of witchcraft grotesquely ridiculous.” He admits that “for more than 1500 years the belief in witchcraft was universal in Christendom,” and that “the public mind was saturated with the idea of Satanic agency in the economy of nature.” He adds: “If we ask why the world now rejects what was once so unquestioningly believed, we can only reply that advancing knowledge has gradually undermined the belief.”

In a letter recently sent to the *Pall Mall Gazette* against modern Spiritualism, Professor Huxley declares, “that the older form of the same fundamental delusion—the belief in possession and in witchcraft—gave rise in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries to persecutions by

Christians of innocent men, women, and children, more extensive, more cruel, and more murderous than any to which the Christians of the first three centuries were subjected by the authorities of pagan Rome."

And Professor Huxley adds: "No one deserves much blame for being deceived in these matters. We are all intellectually handicapped in youth by the incessant repetition of the stories about possession and witchcraft in both the Old and the New Testaments. The majority of us are taught nothing which will help us to observe accurately and to interpret observations with due caution."

The English Statute Book under Elizabeth and under James was disfigured by enactments against witchcraft passed under pressure from the Christian churches, which Acts have only been repealed in consequence of the disbelief in the Christian precept, "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The statute 1 James I, c. 12, condemned to death "all persons invoking any evil spirits, or consulting, covenanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding, or rewarding any evil spirit" or generally practising any "infernal arts." This was not repealed until the eighteenth century was far advanced. Edison's phonograph would 280 years ago have insured martyrdom for its inventor; the utilisation of electric force to transmit messages around the world would have been clearly the practice of an infernal art. At least we may plead

that unbelief has healed the bleeding feet of science, and made the road free for her upward march.

Is it not also fair to urge the gain to humanity which has been apparent in the wiser treatment of the insane, consequent on the unbelief in the Christian doctrine that these unfortunates were examples either of demoniacal possession or of special visitation of deity? For centuries under Christianity mental disease was most ignorantly treated. Exorcism, shackles, and the whip were the penalties rather than the curatives for mental maladies. From the heretical departure of Pinel at the close of the last century to the position of Maudsley to-day, every step illustrates the march of unbelief. Take the gain to humanity in the unbelief not yet complete, but now largely preponderant, in the dogma that sickness, pestilence, and famine were manifestations of divine anger, the results of which could neither be avoided nor prevented. The Christian Churches have done little or nothing to dispel this superstition. The official and authorised prayers of the principal denominations, even to-day, reaffirm it. Modern study of the laws of health, experiments in sanitary improvements, more careful applications of medical knowledge, have proved more efficacious in preventing or diminishing plagues and pestilence than have the intervention of the priest or the practice of prayer. Those in England who hold the old faith that prayer will suffice to cure

disease are to-day termed “peculiar people” and are occasionally indicted for manslaughter when their sick children die, because the parents have trusted to God instead of appealing to the resources of science.

It is certainly a clear gain to astronomical science that the Church which tried to compel Galileo to unsay the truth has been overborne by the growing unbelief of the age, even though our little children are yet taught that Joshua made the sun and moon stand still, and that for Hezekiah the sun-dial reversed its record. As Buckle, arguing for the morality of scepticism, says:[6]

“As long as men refer the movements of the comets to the immediate finger of God, and as long as they believe that an eclipse is one of the modes by which the deity expresses his anger, they will never be guilty of the blasphemous presumption of attempting to predict such supernatural appearances. Before they could dare to investigate the causes of these mysterious phenomena, it is necessary that they should believe, or at all events that they should suspect, that the phenomena themselves were capable of being explained by the human mind.”

As in astronomy so in geology, the gain of knowledge to humanity has been almost solely in measure of the rejection of the Christian theory. A century since it was almost universally held that the world was created 6,000 years ago, or at any rate, that by the sin of the first man, Adam, death

commenced about that period. Ethnology and Anthropology have only been possible in so far as, adopting the regretful words of Sir W. Jones, “intelligent and virtuous persons are inclined to doubt the authenticity of the accounts delivered by Moses concerning the primitive world.”

Surely it is clear gain to humanity that unbelief has sprung up against the divine right of kings, that men no longer believe that the monarch is “God’s anointed” or that “the powers that be are ordained of God.” In the struggles for political freedom the weight of the Church was mostly thrown on the side of the tyrant. The homilies of the Church of England declare that “even the wicked rulers have their power and authority from God,” and that “such subjects as are disobedient or rebellious against their princes disobey God and procure their own damnation.” It can scarcely be necessary to argue to the citizens of the United States of America that the origin of their liberties was in the rejection of faith in the divine right of George III.

Will any one, save the most bigoted, contend that it is not certain gain to humanity to spread unbelief in the terrible doctrine that eternal torment is the probable fate of the great majority of the human family? Is it not gain to have diminished the faith that it was the duty of the wretched and the miserable to be content with the lot in life which providence had awarded them?

If it stood alone it would be almost sufficient to plead as justification for heresy the approach towards equality and liberty for the utterance of all opinions achieved because of growing unbelief. At one period in Christendom each Government acted as though only one religious faith could be true, and as though the holding, or at any rate the making known, any other opinion was a criminal act deserving punishment. Under the one word "infidel," even as late as Lord Coke, were classed together all who were not Christians, even though they were Mahommedans, Brahmins, or Jews. All who did not accept the Christian faith were sweepingly denounced as infidels and therefore *hors de la loi*. One hundred and forty-five years since, the Attorney-General, pleading in our highest court, said:[7] "What is the definition of an infidel? Why, one who does not believe in the Christian religion. Then a Jew is an infidel." And English history for several centuries prior to the Commonwealth shows how habitually and most atrociously Christian kings, Christian courts, and Christian churches, persecuted and harassed these infidel Jews. There was a time in England when Jews were such infidels that they were not even allowed to be sworn as witnesses. In 1740 a legacy left for establishing an assembly for the reading of the Jewish scriptures was held to be void[8] because it was "for the propagation of the Jewish law in contradiction to the Christian

religion." It is only in very modern times that municipal rights have been accorded in England to Jews. It is barely thirty years since they have been allowed to sit in Parliament. In 1851, the late Mr. Newdegate in debate[9] objected "that they should have sitting in that House an individual who regarded our Redeemer as an impostor." Lord Chief Justice Raymond has shown[10] how it was that Christian intolerance was gradually broken down. "A Jew may sue at this day, but heretofore he could not; for then they were looked upon as enemies, but now commerce has taught the world more humanity."

Lord Coke treated the infidel as one who in law had no right of any kind, with whom no contract need be kept, to whom no debt was payable. The plea of alien infidel as answer to a claim was actually pleaded in court as late as 1737.[11] In a solemn judgment, Lord Coke says:[12]

"All infidels are in law *perpetui inimici*; for between them, as with the devils whose subjects they be, and the Christian, there is perpetual hostility." Twenty years ago the law of England required the writer of any periodical publication or pamphlet under sixpence in price to give sureties for £800 against the publication of blasphemy. I was the last person prosecuted in 1868 for non-compliance with that law, which was repealed by Mr. Gladstone in 1869. Up till the 23rd December, 1888, an infidel in Scotland was only allowed to enforce any legal claim

in court on condition that, if challenged, he denied his infidelity. If he lied and said he was a Christian, he was accepted, despite his lying. If he told the truth and said he was an unbeliever, then he was practically an outlaw, incompetent to give evidence for himself or for any other. Fortunately all this was changed by the Royal assent to the Oaths Act on 24th December. Has not humanity clearly gained a little in this struggle through unbelief?

For more than a century and a half the Roman Catholic had in practice harsher measure dealt out to him by the English Protestant Christian, than was even during that period the fate of the Jew or the unbeliever. If the Roman Catholic would not take the oath of abnegation, which to a sincere Romanist was impossible, he was in effect an outlaw, and the "jury packing" so much complained of to-day in Ireland is one of the habit survivals of the old bad time when Roman Catholics were thus by law excluded from the jury box.

The Scotsman of January 5th, 1889, notes that in 1860 the Rev. Dr. Robert Lee, of Greyfriars, gave a course of Sunday evening lectures on Biblical Criticism, in which he showed the absurdity and untenableness of regarding every word in the Bible as inspired; and it adds:

"We well remember the awful indignation such opinions inspired, and it is refreshing to contrast them with the calmness with which they are now

received. Not only from the pulpits of the city, but from the press (misnamed religious) were his doctrines denounced. And one eminent U.P. minister went the length of publicly praying for him, and for the students under his care. It speaks volumes for the progress made since then, when we think in all probability Dr. Charteris, Dr. Lee's successor in the chair, differs in his teaching from the Confession of Faith much more widely than Dr. Lee ever did, and yet he is considered supremely orthodox, whereas the stigma of heresy was attached to the other all his life."

And this change and gain to humanity is due to the gradual progress of unbelief, alike inside and outside the Churches. Take from differing Churches two recent illustrations: The late Principal Dr. Lindsay Alexander, a strict Calvinist, in his important work on "Biblical Theology" claims that "all the statements of Scripture are alike to be deferred to as presenting to us the mind of God."

Yet the Rev. Dr. of Divinity also says:

"We find in their writings [i.e., in the writings of the sacred authors] statements which no ingenuity can reconcile with what modern research has shown to be the scientific truth—i.e., we find in them statements which modern science proves to be erroneous."

At the last Southwell Diocesan Church of England Conference at Derby, the Bishop of the

Diocese presiding, the Rev. J.G. Richardson said of the Old Testament that “it was no longer honest or even safe to deny that this noble literature, rich in all the elements of moral or spiritual grandeur, given—so the Church had always taught, and would always teach—under the inspiration of Almighty God, was sometimes mistaken in its science, was sometimes inaccurate in its history, and sometimes only relative and accommodatory in its morality. It assumed theories of the physical world which science had abandoned and could never resume; it contained passages of narrative which devout and temperate men pronounced discredited, both by external and internal evidence; it praised, or justified, or approved, or condoned, or tolerated, conduct which the teaching of Christ and the conscience of the Christian alike condemned.”

Or, as I should urge, the gain to humanity by unbelief is that “the teaching of Christ” has been modified, enlarged, widened, and humanised, and that “the conscience of the Christian” is in quantity and quality made fitter for human progress by the ever increasing additions of knowledge of these later and more heretical days.

SUPERNATURAL AND RATIONAL MORALITY

THE essential of all religion is supernaturalism, and every religious system therefore involves at least dualism; as creator and created, ruler and ruled. This definition would, of course, exclude Pantheism from consideration as a religion. Supernaturalism is for a rationalist a word of self-contradiction. Nature to him means all phenomena, and all that is necessary to the happening of every phenomenon; that is, nature is the equivalent of everything. To the rationalist there can be nothing supernatural. He is a Monist. There is, he affirms, one existence; he knows only its phenomena. These phenomena he distinguishes in thought by their varying characteristics. To the rationalist the word “create” in the sense of absolute origin of substance is a word without meaning. He cannot think totality of existence increased or non-existent. “Substance,” “existence,” “matter,” is to him the totality: known, and, as far as he can yet think, knowable only in its phenomena.

It has been assumed so generally by religious advocates that some theologic dogma is necessary to every system of morality that the assumption needs

direct traverse. It is put to-day by many of those who are attacking secular education for the young that without religious teaching there is no morality possible. This inaccuracy of speech is the result of centuries of supernaturalistic bias. Buckle considers Charron's "Treatise on Wisdom" as the first "attempt made in a modern language to construct a system of morals without the aid of theology." Charron says (Book II, chap. 5, sec. 4) that moral duties "are purely the result of a reasonable and thinking mind."

It will be contended here that every system of "supernatural" morality is necessarily uncertain, arbitrary, and confusing. That moral progress is only made in the ratio in which supernaturalism is diminished.

THE RATIONALIST VIEW

To the rationalist that act is moral which tends to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of the human family with the least injury to any. That is, the test of the morality of any act is its utility. The experience of all ages, collated and classified by the most careful and accurate amongst investigators and profound thinkers, and checked and verified by each day's new discoveries and newer speculations, furnishes each individual with a sufficient but not infallible moral guide. Morality is social; that is, all acts are moral which tend to promote, build up, and ensure the permanent well being of society. Tendencies to moral conduct are transmitted partly

by the training of the young by those already with recognised habit of life, and partly by the influence of heredity. In England Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill have been chiefly identified with the modern affirmation of this utilitarian theory, and R. Hildreth, the translator of Dumont's "Bentham," says: "Whatever may be thought of the principle of utility, when considered as the foundation of morals, no one now-a-days will undertake to deny that it is the only safe rule of legislation." Theologians object to the rationalist presentment of morality: (a) That, according to the rationalist, morality varies, or, (b) that at any rate the conceptions of morality vary. That with different persons, therefore, there may be different views of what is moral, and there being no reliable, unchangeable, and definite standard, the rationalist position is chaotic. (c) The theologian asks, who is to judge on each act, whether or not it is moral? and (d) the theologian alleges that the measure of rational morality is the equivalent of mere individual selfishness, i.e. that the rationalist only seeks his own happiness, that is, only seeks to gratify his own desires.

The rationalist answers (a) that the test of rational morality never varies; that the ability to apply the test does vary with the higher education of the masses. (b) That the standard, though not infallible, is sufficiently reliable for everyday life, and that rationalists seek each day to improve the

efficiency of the standard by enforcing generally more accurate knowledge of life-conditions, thus developing a sound healthy public opinion. (c) Each individual must judge for herself or himself, and therefore should be well taught, or at least should have fair opportunity of being well taught, and should be encouraged to be well taught. It follows from this that morality develops with education. Immorality and ignorance are inseparable. (d) That if it be selfish to desire personal happiness, knowing that to permanently secure such happiness it is necessary to always promote the happiness of the majority, avoiding injury to any, then the rational moralist must be content to be called selfish. He suggests that if there is anything in the objection, it equally, if not with greater force, applies to the Christian supernaturalist who desires to be eternally happy though he knows that "few are chosen," and that "many shall strive to enter in and shall not be able."

THE SUPERNATURAL VIEW

That act is moral which is in obedience to or in accord with the commands of deity. That these commands are known (a) by direct revelation from God; or (b) through the human conscience, which it is alleged is implanted by God in each individual, and which infallibly decides for each person what acts are right and what are wrong.

"For those who believe in the God of Christian

morality," says the Rev. J. Llewellyn Davies, in the preface to his discourses on social questions, "the ultimate sources and rule of morality can be no other than His will;" and Mr. Davies contends that rationalists "can find no scientific basis for duty, no adequate explanation of conscience."

The rationalist objects (a) that the commands of deity must be expressed either (1) to individuals or (2) to the whole race. In the first case the rationalist asks, How is it to be determined when any individual is reliable who professes to be the recipient and interpreter of God's commands? In the second case he asks, Is it conceivable that any such command should have been given to the whole human race without its most complete recognition on the part of the recipients? When an individual claims to be the medium of transmission of divine communication, how is his claim to be tested? How is it clear that the communication was made? that the individual understood it? and that he has correctly interpreted it? If by the quality of the communication he makes, then by what standard is the quality to be judged? The Mahdi claimed to be God-sent; Joseph Smith declared himself charged with a special revelation; so did Mahomet; so did Jesus. How, in either case, is it to be determined whether the prophet is sane and truthful? Is it to be decided by the numbers who accepted or rejected the prophet? and if yes, at what date or within what limits does the numerical

strength become material? There are more Mormons now than there were Christians within a like period. Mahomedanism in some countries would poll an overwhelming majority. Buddhism counts to-day far more heads than can be claimed for Christianity. And what is called Christianity is subdivisible into many sects as hostile to each other, though Christian, as the Christian is to the Mahomedan.

There is most certainly no one revelation to the whole race universally admitted to be the revealed command of God. It is asserted by some that the Bible is such a revelation, but the large majority of the world's inhabitants do not now accept it: the largest proportion of the human family have never accepted it. And even of the minority who nominally accept the Bible as God's revelation, there are many, calling themselves Christians, who declare that the Old Testament is now very imperfect as a moral guide, and that it was only given to the Jews on account of the hardness of their hearts; whilst the Jews on the other hand entirely reject the New Testament. Christians are divided into Roman Catholics and Protestants. The latter say, or at any rate in majority say, that the Bible is an infallible moral guide. Roman Catholics deny that the Bible is a rule of faith except under the interpretation of the Church. Protestants are divided as to the value of various versions and translations, and as to the extent to which the Old Testament is to be regarded

as superseded by the New. Even in the Church of England there is an authorised version and a revised improvement as yet unauthorised.

(b) The rationalist further objects that what is described by the supernaturalist as the human conscience is not a special faculty, unvarying and identical in all, but that it is in each individual a variable result of heredity, organisation, education, and general life-surroundings, enabling judgment by the individual on the consequence of events; that it affords no reliable clue to what is moral, for the general judgments of public conscience as embodied in public opinion, or in statute law, have varied in the same country in different ages to the extent sometimes of absolute and irreconcileable contradiction. That the individual conscience, so-called, varies in the same individual at different periods of his life and under different conditions of health. That at the present moment the judgments of conscience are on most material points in direct conflict in different parts of the world. Two hundred and fifty years ago it was moral in England to believe in witches, and it was a moral act to kill a witch. To-day it is held immoral to believe in witchcraft; to kill a witch would now be at law a criminal act. Witchcraft is so admittedly false that palmistry, conjuring, and fortune-telling are treated as punishable frauds. Yet from the supernatural point of view the reality of witchcraft is unquestionable, and

the praiseworthiness of witchkilling is indisputable (*vide* Exodus xxii, 18; Leviticus xix, 26-31, xx, 27; Deut. xviii, 10, 11; 1 Sam. xxviii). And in some of the districts of England where school boards are yet without influence and where godless education has been prevented, the pious ignorant folk still believe in charms, wise women, and white and black magic.

One hundred years ago it was moral to trade in slaves, to own slaves, and to breed slaves. Even twenty-five years ago it was moral to own and breed slaves in the United States of America. Pious Bristol slave-traders in the 18th century endowed churches from the profits of their commerce. To-day slave-holding is not only punishable by law, but the theory of slavery is indignantly repudiated by all decent English folk. And yet supernaturalism maintained and legalised slavery (Leviticus xxv, 44-46). Wilberforce, the English abolitionist, himself a professing Christian, noting that infidel France had set its negroes free, asked in the House of Commons, on February 11th, 1796: “What would some future historian say in describing two great nations, the one accused of promoting anarchy and confusion and every human misery, yet giving liberty to the African; the other country contending for religion, morality, and justice, yet obstinately continuing a system of cruelty and injustice?” In the American Congress, in 1790, the representative of South Carolina affirmed that the clergy did not condemn

either slavery or the slave-trade, and Mr. Jackson, of Georgia, maintained that religion was not against slavery. On the 4th September, 1835, the Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, reports that at the celebrated pro-slavery meeting held there, “the clergy of all denominations attended in a body, lending their sanction to the proceedings, and adding by their presence to the impressive character of the scene.” The rationalist asks, What was it that the consciences of these Christian men said on the subject of slavery only fifty years ago? Even in Boston, Massachusetts, William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, though an earnest Christian, was shut out of Christian society; and the only building in that city of many churches in which he was at first allowed to publicly plead for the abolition of slavery was a hall owned by Abner Kneeland, an infidel who had been convicted and sent to gaol as a blasphemer. Why for centuries did Christians trade in slaves, if supernatural morality is dependent on the immutable judgments of a God-ordained conscience? Why, if slavery was defensible by supernatural moralists only twenty-five years ago, has it now become utterly indefensible?

In England it is immoral to marry the sister of your deceased wife, and the immorality is so clear and flagrant that any children born of such a marriage are bastardized, and in the event of an intestacy are excluded from sharing the property of

either of the parents. In Canada it is moral to marry your deceased wife's sister, and the children are respected as legitimate. A few years ago a great supernaturalist, a leader in the religious body to which he belonged, an eloquent preacher, an otherwise good man, desired to marry his deceased wife's sister. It being immoral in this country he went abroad to another country where the act was moral, and there he married. The rationalist asks, How is this explicable from the supernatural standpoint?

In any part of Great Britain or Ireland it is immoral to have more than one wife, and the law will punish the parties to the union and put disabilities on the issue. In India, under British law, it is moral to have more than one wife, and the Christian law-courts sitting in London will recognise the children of that union. Christian supernaturalists will admit: That good men like Abraham had more than one wife; that specially-rewarded men like David practised polygamy; but they say that this is an old practice, which, though once good, is no longer to be followed.

In England it is clearly immoral for one man to prepare and use dynamite or other explosives so as to destroy the life and property of Englishmen. But in England it is as clearly moral for men in the Woolwich government laboratory to prepare and use similar explosives to blow to pieces people in Egypt, the Soudan, or elsewhere. The morality is vouched

by the fact that an archbishop issues a special prayer to be offered in all the churches for the success of the expedition carrying the explosives.

Belief is moral from the supernatural standpoint; unbelief immoral and punishable. The rationalist says that the varying beliefs of the world are the natural result of organisation of transmitted traditions and present life-surroundings; that beliefs are not criminal even when they are erroneous, and that wrong beliefs should be met by refutation, not by punishment.

The rationalist affirms that there are only two logical standpoints; one, that of submission of opinion to arbitrary authority. This, in Christianity, is the position of the church of Rome. The other, that of the assertion of the right and duty of private judgment.

The Christian supernaturalist has, in England, considerably modified, in recent times, his action on the immorality of unbelief. In the time of Lord Coke a Turk was an infidel with whom no agreement was binding. From the reign of William III, until late in the reign of George III, Unitarianism was a crime by act of Parliament.

Until late in the reign of George IV Roman Catholicism was a crime punishable by law. Until 1859 a Jew was considered sufficiently wicked to be deprived of many civil rights. Two hundred and thirty years ago Quakers were immoral men, and as

such were publicly whipped.

The supernaturalist recommends right conduct that you may be rewarded when you are dead. The rationalist recommends right conduct because in increasing the present total of human happiness you increase your own happiness now, and render future happiness more easily attainable by others.

These are only a few of many like-charactered illustrations which entitle the rationalist to return on the supernaturalist the weight of the Rev. J. Llewellyn Davies' above-quoted contention.

HAS MAN A SOUL?

THE first step in this inquiry is to define what is meant; by the word “soul,” and the initial difficulty is that it is much easier to agree with theologians upon what is not meant than upon what is meant. Sometimes orthodox talkers seem to confuse “soul” with “life” and “mind,” and they use “soul” or “spirit” as if expressing contrast with “matter.” To at least prevent, as much as possible, misapprehension of our own meaning, we shall try to define each word.

Limiting here the use of the word “life” to the animal kingdom, it is defined to mean the total organic functional activity of each animal. Accepting this definition, “life” will express a variable result not only in each individual, but in the same individual in childhood, prime, or old age. Life is not an entity, it is the state of an organised body in which the organs perform their individual and collective functions. When all the organs do this efficiently, we call this state health; when some of the organs fail, or do too much, we call this disease; when all the organs permanently cease to perform their functions, we call this death. Life, then, is a state of the body; health and disease are phases of

life; death is the termination of life. Life is the word by which we describe the result of a certain collocation; but this does not imply that life can be predicated of any or all the components taken separately. By the life of an animal is meant the existence of that animal; when dead, the animal no longer exists; the substance of what was the animal thenceforth exists in other modes, but the organism has ceased. The life of each animal is as distinct from that of each other animal as is the weight or size of each animal distinct from the weight and size of any other animal; and the life of the animal no more exists after the animal has ceased than does the weight or the size of the animal exist, after its body is destroyed. The word “life” used of an oyster, a lobster, a sheep, a horse, or of a human being, expresses in each case a state distinguishable in significance. Life is the special activity of each organised being; the sum of the phenomena proper to organised bodies. George Henry Lewes says: “Life is the functional activity of an organism in relation to its medium. Every part of a living organism is vital as pertaining to life: but no part has this life when isolated; for life is the synthesis of all the parts.” Theologians sometimes seek to make contrasts between living animals and what they are pleased to term dead matter. Life is not a contrast to non-living substance, but a different condition of it.

By the word “matter,” or “substance,” or

"nature," is intended the sum of all phenomena, actual, past, possible, and of all that is necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon.

The word "force" includes every phase of activity. Force does not express an entity, but is the word by which we account for, or rather the word by the use of which we avoid explaining, the activity of matter, or, as G.H. Lewes would write it, the activity of the felt. He says: "All we know is feeling and changes of feeling. We class the felt apart from the changes, the one as matter, the other as force. The qualities of matter are our feelings; the properties of matter are its qualities, viewed in reference to the effects of one body on another, rather than their effects on us. Both qualities and properties are forces, when considered as affecting changes." By the "mind" of any animal is meant the sum of the remembered perceptions of that animal, and its, his, or her, thinkings on such perceptions. Says Max Müller: "All consciousness begins with sensuous perception, with what we feel, and hear, and see." "Out of this we construct what may be called conceptual knowledge." "Thinking consists simply in addition and subtraction of precepts and concepts."

Those who maintain the doctrine of what is called the immortality of the soul, contend for the existence of a living, thinking spirit, which, they say, is not the body, and which, they urge, will continue when the body has ceased. The burden of proving

this “soul” rests on those who maintain and assert it. It is clear that there is no identity between life and “soul;” life commences, varies, and ceases, in accordance with the growth, decay, and dissolution of the body. The orthodox contention for soul must be that its existence is independent of the body, and this shows that soul is not life. Nor is there any identity between mind and soul. All perception is dependent on the (bodily) perceptive ability and its exercise. All thought has some action of the bodily organism for its immediate antecedent and accompaniment. As the soul is not life, is not mind, and cannot be body, what is it? To call it spirit, and to leave the word spirit undefined is to do nothing. Religionists talk to me of my “soul;” that is, an individual soul continuing to exist, they say, with a continuing consciousness of personal identity after “I” am dead. But if a baby two months old dies, what consciousness of personal identity continues in such a case? Or, if an idiot from birth dies at the age of eighteen: or if a person, sane until twenty, becomes insane, lives insane until forty, and then dies: in either of these two cases what is it that is supposed to be the personal identity which continues after death? And what is meant by my “soul” living after “I” am dead? The word “I” to me represents the bodily organism, its vital and mental activities. To tell me that my body dies and that yet my life continues is a contradiction in terms. To declare that

my life has ended, but that I continue to think is to affirm a like contradiction. Religionists seem to think that they avoid the difficulty, or turn it upon us, by propounding riddles. They analyse the body, and, giving a list of what they call elementary substances, they say: Can oxygen think? can carbon think? can nitrogen think? and when they have triumphantly gone through the list, they add, that as none of these by itself can think, thought is not a result of matter, but is a quality of soul. This reasoning at best only amounts to declaring, "We know what body is, but we know nothing of soul; as we cannot understand how body, which we do know, can think, we therefore declare that it is soul, which we do not know, that does think." There is a still greater fault in this theological reasoning in favor of the soul, for it assumes, contrary to experience, that no quality or result can be found in a given combination which is not also discoverable in each or any of the modes, parts, atoms, or elements combined. Yet this is monstrously absurd. Sugar tastes sweet, but neither carbon, nor oxygen, nor hydrogen, separately tasted, exhibits sweetness; yet sugar is the word by which you describe a certain combination of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen. I contend that the word "soul," in relation to human, vital, and mental phenomena, occupies an analagous position to that which used to be occupied by such words as "demon," "genii," "gnome," "fairy," "gods," in

relation to general physical phenomena.

The ability to think is never found except as an ability of animal organisation, and the ability is always found higher or lower as the organisation is higher or lower: the exercise of this ability varies in childhood, youth, prime, and old age, and is promoted or hindered by climate, food, and mode of life; yet the orthodox maintainers of soul require us to believe that the ability to think might be found without animal organisation, and might, nay will, exist independent of all vital conditions. They contend that what they call the soul will live when the human being has ceased to live; but they do not explain whether it did live before the human being began to live. The orthodox contend that as what they call the elementary substances, taken separately, do not think, therefore man without a soul cannot think, and that as man does think he must have a soul. This argument, if valid at all, goes much too far; a trout thinks, a carp thinks, a rat thinks, a dog thinks, a horse thinks, and, by parity of reasoning, all these animals should have immortal souls.

It is sometimes urged that to deny the immortality of the soul is to reduce man to the level of the beast, but it is forgotten that mankind are not quite on a level. Take the savage, with lower jaw projecting far in advance, and compare him with Dante, Shakspere,

Milton, or Voltaire. Take the Papuan and Plato; the Esquimaux and Confucius; and then ask whether it is possible to contend that all human beings have equal souls?

The orthodox man declares that my soul is spirit, that my body is matter; that my soul has nothing in common with my body; that it exists entirely independently of my body; that my soul lives after my body has ceased to live; that, after my body has decayed, is disintegrated, and become absorbed in and commingled with the elements, my soul still continues uncorrupted and unaffected. But not a shadow of proof or even of reasonable explanation is offered in support of any clause in this declaration. The word "spirit" is left utterly undefined. No sort of explanation is given of the nexus between the two alleged distinct existences, "body" and "soul." Not a trace is suggested of "soul," otherwise than through what are admittedly material conditions.

Those who allege that there is a distinct "soul" which is to live for ever should also explain whether or not this soul has always existed—i.e. whether my soul existed prior to the commencement and clearly traceable growth of my body? And where? And for how long? If it did exist prior to my commencement in the womb, how was it then identifiable as my soul? If prior to my body it was not so identifiable, how will it be identifiable after my body has ceased? If the soul existed prior to my body, had it always

existed? If yes, do you mean that each soul is eternal? That no soul has ever begun to be?

If you argue for the eternity of the soul, you deny God as universal creator; if you contend that soul commenced or was commenced, you should also admit that it may finish or be finished. If the soul existed prior to my body, had it been waiting inactive, but ready to occupy my body? And if yes, when did the occupation commence? And was the soul always existing perfect and unimprovable? If after vitalisation the unborn child dies, what becomes of the soul? and what is it in such a case that evidences that the particular soul had ever existed? If after birth the baby dies before it thinks, though after it has breathed, where in this case is the trace of the soul? If it should be conceded that my soul only began with my body, why is it to be maintained that it will not cease with my body? If, as is pretended, my “soul” is not identifiable with my body, how is it that all intellectual manifestations are affected by my bodily condition, growth, health, decay? If the soul is immortal and immaterial, how is it that temporary pressure on the brain may paralyse and prevent all mental manifestation, and that fracture by a poker or by a bullet may annihilate the possibility of any further mental activity? Henri Taine and Charles Darwin have very carefully noted for us the evidence of gradual growth of sensitive ability and of mind in children. Those who tell us of

soul—which is, they say, not body, nor quality of body, nor result of body, nor influenced by body—should at least explain to us how it is that all manifestations which they say are peculiar to soul keep pace with, and are limited by, the development of body.

What the orthodox claim under the word soul is really the totality of mental ability—founded in perception—and its exercise; dependent, first, on the perceptive ability of the perceiver, and, secondly, on the range of the activity of such ability. Even two individuals of similar perceptive ability may have a varied store of perceptions, and later perceptions in each case, even of identical phenomena, may in consequence have different values. The memory of perception, comparison of and distinguishment between perceptions, thoughts upon and concepts as to perceptions, memory, comparison and distinguishment of all or any of these, the various mental processes included in doubting, believing, reasoning, willing, etc., all these—which I contend are the consequences of vital organisation, commence with it, are strengthened and weakened, and, which I maintain, cease with it—are included by the orthodox under the word “soul.” None of the orthodox, and few of the spiritualists, contend that the “memory” of the rat, the cow, or the horse is to survive the decease of rat, cow, and horse. Scarcely anyone is hardy enough to maintain that the ghost of

the thinking sheep persists with active thought after the slaughterhouse and dinner of roast mutton. Yet if one range of animal mental ability is to be classified as immortal, why not all? Why claim immortality for the "soul" of the idiot, and deny it to the thought, memory, reason, faith, doubt, and will of the retriever? None claim immortality for the brightness of the steel when oxidation has so disfigured the surface that rust has superseded all brilliance; none claim immortality for the sweet odor of the rose when the vegetable mass emits only unpleasant smells and exhibits unsightly rottenness; none claim immortality for the color of the beautiful lily decayed and withered away. Those who claim immortality for what they call the "soul" should first clearly define it, and then at least try to prove that the attributes they claim for soul are not the attributes of what we know as living body.

The word "mind" describes all the possible states of consciousness of each animal; but as after its death there is no longer in that case any continuing animal, so neither is there any possibly continuing mind. But it is only in connexion with the mental and vital processes that there is any shadow of attempt by theologians to in any fashion identify soul, and therefore when life has ceased and consciousness is consequently no longer, there is not even the faintest trace of aught remaining to which the word "soul" can with any reasonableness be

applied from the theological standpoint. Dr. John Drysdale says: “The mind, looked at in its complete state, in its unity, personality, obedience to laws of its own, apparent spontaneity of action and controlling power over the body, and in the total dissimilarity of all its phenomena from all known bodily and material effects, has been almost universally ascribed to the working of an immaterial substance added to organised matter. But such a substance is quite as hypothetical as the potentiality of mind lying in matter, and hence it explains nothing; whereas, if we grant the possibility of consciousness as a concomitant of certain material changes, the peculiarities of mind as an action or function require no further explanation than the conditions of those changes;” and, he adds, “it may be held proved in physiology that for every feeling, every thought, and every volition, a correlative change takes place in the nerve-matter, and, given this special change in every respect identical, a similar state of circumstances will always arise; that this process occupies time, that it requires a due supply of oxygenated blood, that it is interrupted or destroyed by whatever impairs the integrity of the nerve-matter, and, lastly, it is exhausted by its own activity and requires rest.”

“If,” says the same writer, “the mind is merely a function of the material organism, it must necessarily perish with it. If mind and life are a compound of

matter and some diffused ethereal spiritual substance, then at death a personal continuance is equally impossible. If mind is a spirit at all, it must be a definite, indivisible piece of spiritual substance; and if naturally indestructible and immortal as the personal human individual, it must be equally so in all individuals which display mind. Now, it is too late in the day to require a single sentence in proof of the existence of mind in animals; therefore, if the possession of mind naturally involves the immortality of the soul, the latter must be shared equally with the animals who certainly also possess the conscious Ego;" and Dr. J. Drysdale maintains that mind is essentially of the same nature in animals and in man, although of higher and wider scope in the latter, and that in all cases mind is a function of organised matter and necessarily perishes when that organisation ceases.

In all animals the living brain is essential to all phases of thought. The thought-ability of any animal is always in precise proportion to the perfection and activity of the brain. The power of developing thought grows, diminishes, and ceases, the cessation always being complete when the brain ceases to perform its vital functions. If the brain is injured the thought-ability is impaired, the thinking deranged. Yet who to-day would think it wise or necessary, with evidence of aberration of thought resulting from local injury, to treat it as a case of demoniacal

possession?

One other difficulty in the discussion of this question is that new discoveries are not taken into account by our spiritual antagonists in estimating the value of old formulas. Two thousand three hundred years ago demonology had not yet passed into the region of fable. Socrates spoke of the soul as if it had been specially infused into the body by the Gods, and declared "that the soul which resides in thy body can govern it at pleasure;" but such discoveries have since been made in physiology and psychology that were Socrates alive to-day Aristodemus might now well make answers to the old Greek sage which were then impossible. Plato, too, contended for the immortality of the human soul, but under cover of this line of reasoning he also offered proof that the world was an animal and had a like soul. Plato's orthodox admirers today carefully avoid Plato's presentation of the earth as an animal with an immortal soul. David Masson attributes to Auguste Comte the first open and clear adoption of a position on the soul question which rendered evasion difficult. "Previous physiological psychologists, including phrenologists, had generally shrunk from the extreme to which their opponents had said they were committed. They had kept up the time-honored distinction between mind and body; they had used language implying a recognition of some unknown anima, or vital principle, concealed behind the

animal organism; some of them had even been anxious to vindicate their belief in the immateriality or transcendental nature of this principle. But Comte ended all that shilly-shallying. Mind, he said, is the name for the functions of brain and nerve; mind is brain and nerve. This destroyed, that ceases."

In his "Enigmas of Life" William Rathbone Greg concedes that "visible and ascertainable phenomena give no countenance to the theory of a future or spiritual life." He urges that a sense of identity, a conscious continuity of the Ego, is an essential element of the doctrine, and Mr. Greg speaks of this as accounting for "the astonishing doctrine of the resurrection of the body which has so strangely and thoughtlessly found its way into the popular creed. The primitive parents or congealers of that creed—whoever they may have been—innocent of all science, and oddly muddled in their metaphysics, but resolute in their conviction that the same persons who died here should be, in very deed, the same who should rise hereafter—systematised their anticipations into the notion that the grave should give up its actual inmates for their ordained transformation and their allotted fate. The current notion of the approaching end of the world, no doubt helped to blind them to the vulnerability, and indeed the fatal self-contradictions, of the form in which they had embodied their faith. Of course, if they had taken time to think, or if the Fathers of the Church

had been more given to thinking in the rigid meaning of the word, they would have discovered that this special form rendered that faith absurd, indefensible, and virtually impossible. They did not know, or they never considered, that the buried body soon dissolves into its elements, which, in the course of generations and centuries, pass into other combinations, form part of other living creatures, feed and constitute countless organisations one after another; so that when the graves are summoned 'to give up the dead that are in them,' and the sea 'the dead that are in it,' they will be called on to surrender what they no longer possess, and what no supernatural power can give back to them. It never occurred to those creed makers, who thus took upon themselves to carnalise an idea into a fact, that for every atom that once went to make up the body they committed to the earth, there would be scores of claimants before the Great Day of Account; and that even Omnipotence could scarcely be expected to make the same component part be in two or ten places at once. The original human frames, therefore, *could not be had when*, as supposed, they would be wanted." And in his "Creed of Christendom" he writes: "Appearances all testify to the reality and permanence of death; a fearful onus of proof lies upon those who contend that these appearances are deceptive. When we interrogate the vast universe of organisation, we see not simply life and death, but

gradually growing life and gradually approaching death. After death, all that we have ever *known* of man is gone; all we have ever seen of him is dissolved into its component elements; it does not *disappear* so as to leave us at liberty to imagine that it may have gone to exist elsewhere, but is actually used up as materials for other purposes." There is one alleged "indication of immortality" which Mr. Greg twice repeats, and to which we will offer a word of reply. His statement is as follows:

"I refer to that *spontaneous*, irresistible, and, perhaps, nearly universal, feeling we all experience on watching, just after death, the body of someone we have intimately known; the conviction, I mean a sense, a consciousness, an impression *which you have to fight against if you wish to disbelieve or shake it off* that the form lying there is not the Ego you have loved. It does not produce the effect of that person's personality. You miss the Ego though you have the frame. The visible Presence only makes more vivid the sense of actual Absence. Every feature, every substance, every phenomenon is there, and is unchanged. You have seen the eyes as firmly closed, the limbs as motionless, the breath almost as imperceptible, the face as fixed and expressionless before, in sleep or in trance, without the same peculiar sensation. The impression made is indefinable, and is not the result of any conscious process of thought—that that body, quite unchanged

to the eye, is not, and never was your friend—the Ego you were conversant with; and that his or her individuality was not the garment before you *plus* a galvanic current; that, in fact, the Ego you knew once and seek still, *was not that—is not there*. And if not there, it must be *elsewhere or nowhere*, and 'nowhere,' I believe, modern science will not suffer us to predicate of either force or substance that once has been."

Undoubtedly the dead body is not the living human being you loved. It has ceased to live. Every phenomenon is not there unchanged, the whole of the vital phenomena are wanting; there is a complete change so far as organic functional activity is concerned. Even the body itself is not quite unchanged to the eye. There is in most cases, and especially to skilled vision, an easily detectible difference between a living man and a corpse. To say that the Ego is not there, and if not there must be elsewhere, is to use an absurd phrase. Take an ordinary drinking-glass and crush it into powder, or shatter it into fragments, the drinking-glass is not there, nor is it elsewhere; the combination which made up drinking-glass no longer exists. Ego does not denote body only, it denotes living body with personal characteristics. Take a bright steel blade, let the surface be oxidised, and the brightness is no longer there, nor is it elsewhere; it is only that the conditions which were resultant in brightness no

longer exist.

It used to be the fashion to argue at one time as if the majority of, if not the whole of, the human race accepted, without doubt, the dogma of the immortality of the soul; but such a contention is to-day utterly impossible. Strauss, Büchner, Haeckel, Clifford, and a host of others, take ground as representatives of thousands of heterodox Europeans, and even in the pulpit itself orthodoxy is suspect. The Reverend Edward White declares the "natural eternity of souls as a positive dogma to be destitute of all evidence from nature or revelation;" and he refers to "scientific biologists of the first rank, who, after careful study of the phenomena of brain-production and mind-evolution throughout living nature, and of the phenomena of waste and destruction in unfinished organisms, declare it to be the height of absurdity to maintain" this immortality doctrine; and Mr. White reminds us that 480 millions of Buddhists on the continent of Asia all believe in the "extinction of individual being." It is only fair, however, to add here that scholars still dispute as to whether or not "nirvana" should be read as meaning annihilation.

A quotation from Dr. Henry Maudsley may fitly terminate this brief essay: "To those who cannot conceive that any organisation of matter, however complete, should be capable of such exalted functions as those which are called mental, is it

really more conceivable that any organisation of matter can be the mechanical instrument of the complex manifestations of an immaterial mind? It is strangely overlooked by many who write on this matter that the brain is not a dead instrument, but a living organ, with functions of a higher kind than those of any other bodily organ, insomuch as its organic nature and structure far surpass those of any other organs. What, then, are those functions if they are not mental? No one thinks it necessary to assume an immaterial liver behind the hepatic structure, in order to account for its functions. But so far as the nature of nerve and the complex structure of the cerebral convolutions exceed in dignity the hepatic elements and structure, so far must the material functions of the brain exceed those of the liver. Men are not sufficiently careful to ponder the wonderful operations of which matter is capable, or to reflect on the changes effected by it which are continually before their eyes. Are the properties of a chemical compound less mysterious essentially because of the familiarity with which we handle them? Consider the seed dropped into the ground; it swells with germinating energy, bursts its integuments, sends upwards a delicate shoot, which grows into a stem, putting forth in due season its leaves and flowers. And yet all these processes are operations of matter, for it is not thought necessary to assume an immaterial or spiritual plant which effects its

purposes through the agency of the material structure which we observe. Surely there are here exhibited properties of matter wonderful enough to satisfy anyone of the powers that may be inherent in it. Are we, then, to believe that the highest and most complex development of organic structure is not capable of even more wonderful operations? Would you have the human body, which is a microcosm containing all the forms and powers of matter, organised in the most delicate and complex manner, to possess lower powers than those forms of matter exhibit separately in nature? Trace the gradual development of the nervous system through the animal series, from its first germ to its most complex evolution, and let it be declared at what point it suddenly loses all its inherent properties as living structure, and becomes the mere mechanical instrument of a spiritual entity. In what animal, or in what class of animals, does the immaterial principle abruptly intervene, and supersede the agency of matter, becoming the entirely distinct cause of a similar, though more exalted, order of phenomena? The burden of proving that the *deus ex machina* of a spiritual entity intervenes somewhere, and where it intervenes, clearly lies upon those who make the assertion, or who need the hypothesis. They are not justified in arbitrarily fabricating a hypothesis entirely inconsistent with experience of the orderly development of nature, which even postulates a

domain of nature that human senses cannot take any cognisance of, and in then calling upon those who reject their assumption to disprove it."

IS THERE A GOD

THE initial difficulty is in defining the word "God." It is equally impossible to intelligently affirm or deny any proposition unless there is at least an understanding, on the part of the affirmer or denier, of the meaning of every word used in the proposition. To me the word "God" standing alone is a word without meaning. I find the word repeatedly used even by men of education and refinement, and who have won reputation in special directions of research, rather to illustrate their ignorance than to explain their knowledge. Various sects of Theists do affix arbitrary meanings to the word "God," but often these meanings are in their terms selfcontradictory, and usually the definition maintained by one sect of Theists more or less contradicts the definition put forward by some other sect. With the Unitarian Jew, the Trinitarian Christian, the old Polytheistic Greek, the modern Universalist, or the Calvinist, the word "God" will in each case be intended to express a proposition absolutely irreconcilable with those of the other sects. In this brief essay, which can by no means be taken as a complete answer to the question which forms its title, I will for the sake of argument take the explanation of the word "God" as given with

great carefulness by Dr. Robert Flint, Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh, in two works directed by him against Atheism. He defines God ("Antitheistic Theories," p. 1,) as "a supreme, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, righteous and benevolent being who is distinct from and independent of what he has created;" ("Theism," p. 1,) as "a self-existent, eternal being, infinite in power and wisdom, and perfect in holiness and goodness, the maker of heaven and earth;" and (p. 18,) "the creator and preserver of nature, the governor of nations, the heavenly father and judge of man;" (p. 18,) "one infinite personal;" (p. 42,) "the one infinite" being" who "is a person—is a free and loving intelligence;" (p. 59,) "the creator, preserver, and ruler of all finite beings;" (p. 65,) "not only the ultimate cause, but the supreme intelligence;" and (p. 74,) "the supreme moral intelligence is an unchangeable being." That is, in the above statements "God" is defined by Professor Flint to be: *A supreme, self-existent, the one infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, unchangeable, righteous, and benevolent, personal being, creator and preserver of nature, maker of heaven and earth; who is distinct from and independent of what he has created, who is a free, loving, supreme, moral intelligence, the governor of nations, the heavenly father and judge of man.*

The two volumes, published by William Blackwood and Son, from which this definition has

been collected, form the Baird Lectures in favor of Theism for the years 1876 and 1877. Professor Flint has a well-deserved reputation as a clear thinker and writer of excellent ability as a Theistic advocate. I trust, therefore, I am not acting unfairly in criticising his definition. My first objection is, that to me the definition is on the face of it so self-contradictory that a negative answer must be given to the question, Is there such a God? The association of the word "supreme" with the word "infinite" as descriptive of a "personal being" is utterly confusing. "Supreme" can only be used as expressing comparison between the being to whom it is applied, and some other being with whom that "supreme" being is assumed to have possible points of comparison and is then compared. But "the one infinite being" cannot be compared with any other infinite being, for the wording of the definition excludes the possibility of any other infinite being, nor could the infinite being —for the word "one" may be dispensed with, as two infinite beings are unthinkable—be compared with any finite being. "Supreme" is an adjective of relation and is totally inapplicable to "the infinite." It can only be applied to one of two or more finites. "Supreme" with "omnipotent" is pleonastic. If it is said that the word "supreme" is now properly used to distinguish between the Creator and the created, the governor and that which is governed, then it is clear that the word "supreme" would have been an

inapplicable word of description to “the one infinite being” prior to creation, and this would involve the declaration that the exact description of the unchangeable has been properly changed, which is an absurdity. The definition affirms “creation,” that is, affirms “God” existing prior to such creation—i.e., then the sole existence; but the word “supreme” could not then apply. An existence cannot be described as “highest” when there is none other; therefore, none less high. The word “supreme” as a word of description is absolutely contradictory of Monism. Yet Professor Flint himself says (“Anti-Theistic Theories,” p. 132), “that reason, when in quest of an ultimate explanation of things, imperatively demands unity, and that only a Monistic theory of the universe can deserve the name of a philosophy.” Professor Flint has given no explanation of the meaning he attaches to the word “self-existent.” Nor, indeed, has he given any explanation of any of his words of description. By self-existent I mean that to which you cannot conceive antecedent. By “infinite” I mean immeasurable, illimitable, indefinable; i.e., that of which I cannot predicate extension, or limitation of extension. By “eternal” I mean illimitable, indefinable, i.e., that of which I cannot predicate limitation of duration or progression of duration.

“Nature” is with me the same as “universe,” the same as “existence;” i.e., I mean by it: The totality of

all phenomena, and of all that has been, is, or may be necessary for the happening of each and every phenomenon. It is from the very terms of the definition, self-existent, eternal, infinite. I cannot think of nature commencement, discontinuity, or creation. I am unable to think backward to the possibility of existence not having been. I cannot think forward to the possibility of existence ceasing to be. I have no meaning for the word "create" except to denote change of condition. Origin of "universe" is to me absolutely unthinkable. Sir William Hamilton ("Lectures and Discussions," p. 610) affirms: that when aware of a new appearance we are utterly unable to conceive that there has originated any new existence; that we are utterly unable to think that the complement of existence has ever been either increased or diminished; that we can neither conceive nothing becoming something, or something becoming nothing. Professor Flint's definition affirms "God" as existing "distinct from, and independent of, what he has created." But what can such words mean when used of the "infinite?" Does "distinct from" mean separate from? Does the "universe" existing distinct from God mean in addition to? and in other place than? or, have the words no meaning?

Of all words in Professor Flint's definition, which would be appropriate if used of human beings, I mean the same as I should mean if I used the same

words in the highest possible degree of any human being. Here I maintain the position taken by John Stuart Mill in his examination of Sir W. Hamilton (p. 122). Righteousness and benevolence are two of the words of description included in the definition of this creator and governor of nations. But is it righteous and benevolent to create men and govern nations so that the men act criminally and the nations seek to destroy one another in war? Professor Flint does not deny ("Theism," p. 256) "that God could have originated a sinless moral system," and he adds: "I have no doubt that God has actually made many moral beings who are certain never to oppose their own wills to his, or that he might, if he had so pleased, have created only such angels as were sure to keep their first estate." But it is inaccurate to describe a "God" as righteous or benevolent who, having the complete power to originate a sinless moral system, is admitted to have originated a system in which sinfulness and immorality were not only left possible, but have actually, in consequence of God's rule and government, become abundant. It cannot be righteous for the "omnipotent" to be making human beings contrived and designed by his omniscience so as to be fitted for the commission of sin. It cannot be benevolent in "God" to contrive and create a hell in which he is to torment the human beings who have sinned because made by him in sin. "God," if omnipotent and omniscient, could just as

easily, and much more benevolently, have contrived that there should never be any sinners, and, therefore, never any need for hell or torment.

The Rev. R.A. Armstrong, with whom I debated this question, says:—

"'Either,' argues Mr. Bradlaugh, in effect, 'God could make a world without suffering, or he could not. If he could and did not, he is not all-good. If he could not, he is not all-powerful.' The reply is, What do you mean by all-powerful? If you mean having power to reconcile things in themselves contradictory, we do not hold that God is all-powerful. But a humanity, from the first enjoying immunity from suffering, and yet possessed of nobility of character, is a self-contradictory conception."

That is, Mr. Armstrong thinks that a "sinless moral system from the first is a self-contradictory conception."

It is difficult to think a loving governor of nations arranging one set of cannibals to eat, and another set of human beings to be eaten by their fellow-men. It is impossible to think a loving creator and governor contriving a human being to be born into the world the pre-natal victim of transmitted disease. It is repugnant to reason to affirm this "free loving supreme moral intelligence" planning and contriving the enduring through centuries of criminal classes, plague-spots on civilisation.

The word “unchangeable” contradicts the word “creator.” Any theory of creation must imply some period when the being was not yet the creator, that is, when yet the creation was not performed, and the act of creation must in such case, at any rate, involve temporary or permanent change in the mode of existence of the being creating. So, too, the words of description “governor of nations” are irreconcileable with the description “unchangeable,” applied to a being alleged to have existed prior to the creation of the “nations,” and therefore, of course, long before any act of government could be exercised.

To speak of an infinite personal being seems to me pure contradiction of terms. All attempts to think “person” involve thoughts of the limited, finite, conditioned. To describe this infinite personal being as distinct from some thing which is postulated as “what he has created” is only to emphasise the contradiction, rendered perhaps still more marked when the infinite personal being is described as “intelligent.”

The Rev. R.A. Armstrong, in a prefatory note to the report of his debate with myself on the question “Is it reasonable to worship God?” says: “I have ventured upon alleging an intelligent cause of the phenomena of the universe, in spite of the fact that in several of his writings Mr. Bradlaugh has described intelligence as implying limitations. But though intelligence, as known to us in man, is always

hedged within limits, there is no difficulty in conceiving each and every limit as removed. In that case the essential conception of intelligence remains the same precisely, although the change of conditions revolutionises its mode of working." This, it seems to me, is not accurate. The word intelligence can only be accurately used of man, as in each case meaning the totality of mental ability, its activity and result. If you eliminate in each case all possibilities of mental ability there is no "conception of intelligence" left, either essential or otherwise. If you attempt to remove the limits, that is the organisation, the intelligence ceases to be thinkable. It is unjustifiable to talk of "change of conditions" when you remove the word intelligence as a word of application to man or other thinking animal, and seek to apply the word to the unconditional.

As an Atheist I affirm one existence, and deny the possibility of more than one existence; by existence meaning, as I have already stated, "the totality of all phenomena, and of all that has been, is, or may be necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon." This existence I know in its modes, each mode being distinguished in thought by its qualities. By "mode" I mean each cognised condition; that is, each phenomenon or aggregation of phenomena. By "quality" I mean each characteristic by which in the act of thinking I distinguish.

The distinction between the Agnostic and the Atheist is that either the Agnostic postulates an unknowable, or makes a blank avowal of general ignorance. The Atheist does not do either; there is of course to him much that is yet unknown, every effort of inquiry brings some of this within reach of knowing. With "the unknowable" conceded, all scientific teaching would be illusive. Every real scientist teaches without reference to "God" or "the unknowable." If the words come in as part of the yesterday habit still clinging to-day, the scientist conducts his experiments as though the words were not. Every operation of life, of commerce, of war, of statesmanship, is dealt with as though God were nonexistent. The general who asks God to give him victory, and who thanks God for the conquest, would be regarded as a lunatic by his Theistic brethren, if he placed the smallest reliance on God's omnipotence as a factor in winning the fight. Cannon, gunpowder, shot, shell, dynamite, provision, men, horses, means of transport, the value of these all estimated, then the help of "God" is added to what is enough without God to secure the triumph. The surgeon who in performing some delicate operation relied on God instead of his instruments—the physician who counted on the unknowable in his prescription—these would have poor clientele even amongst the orthodox; save the peculiar people the most pious would avoid their surgical or medical aid. The "God"

of the Theist, the “unknowable” of the Agnostic, are equally opposed to the Atheistic affirmation. The Atheist enquires as to the unknown, affirms the true, denies the untrue. The Agnostic knows not of any proposition whether it be true or false.

Pantheists affirm one existence, but Pantheists declare that at any rate some qualities are infinite, e.g. that existence is infinitely intelligent. I, as an Atheist, can only think qualities of phenomena. I know each phenomenon by its qualities. I know no qualities except as the qualities of some phenomenon.

So long as the word “God” is undefined I do not deny “God.” To the question, Is there such a God as defined by Professor Flint, I am compelled to give a negative reply. If the word “God” is intended to affirm Dualism, then as a Monist I negate “God.”

The attempts to prove the existence of God may be divided into three classes:—1. Those which attempt to prove the objective existence of God from the subjective notion of necessary existence in the human mind, or from the assumed objectivity of space and time, interpreted as the attributes of a necessary substance. 2. Those which “essay to prove the existence of a supreme self-existent cause, from the mere fact of the existence of the world by the application of the principle of causality, starting with the postulate of any single existence whatsoever, the world, or anything in the world, and proceeding to

argue backwards or upwards, the existence of one supreme cause is held to be regressive inference from the existence of these effects." But it is enough to answer to these attempts, that if a supreme existence were so demonstrable, that bare entity would not be identifiable with "God." "A demonstration of a primitive source of existence is of no formal theological value. It is an absolute zero."

3. The argument from design, or adaptation, in nature, the fitness of means to an end, implying, it is said, an architect or designer. Or, from the order in the universe, indicating, it is said, an orderer or lawgiver, whose intelligence we thus discern.

But this argument is a failure, because from finite instances differing in character it assumes an infinite cause absolutely the same for all. Divine unity, divine personality, are here utterly unproved. "Why should we rest in our inductive inference of one designer from the alleged phenomena of design, when these are claimed to be so varied and so complex?"

If the inference from design is to avail at all, it must avail to show that all the phenomena leading to misery and mischief, must have been designed and intended by a being finding pleasure in the production and maintenance of this misery and mischief. If the alleged constructor of the universe is supposed to have designed one beneficent result, must he not equally be supposed to have designed all

results? And if the inference of benevolence and goodness be valid for some instances, must not the inference of malevolence and wickedness be equally valid from others? If, too, any inference is to be drawn from the illustration of organs in animals supposed to be specially contrived for certain results, what is the inference to be drawn from the many abortive and incomplete organs, muscles, nerves, etc., now known to be traceable in man and other animals? What inference is to be drawn from each instance of deformity or malformation? But the argument from design, if it proved anything, would at the most only prove an arranger of pre-existing material; it in no sense leads to the conception of an originator of substance.

There is no sort of analogy between a finite artificer arranging a finite mechanism and an alleged divine creator originating all existence. From an alleged product you are only at liberty to infer a producer after having seen a similar product actually produced.

A PLEA FOR ATHEISM

THIS essay is issued in the hope that it may succeed in removing some of the many prejudices prevalent, not only against the actual holders of Atheistic opinions, but also against those wrongfully suspected of Atheism. Men who have been famous for depth of thought, for excellent wit, or great genius, have been recklessly assailed as Atheists by those who lack the high qualifications against which the malice of the calumniators was directed. Thus, not only have Voltaire and Paine been, without ground, accused of Atheism, but Bacon, Locke, and Bishop Berkeley himself, have, amongst others, been denounced by thoughtless or unscrupulous pietists as inclining to Atheism, the ground for the accusation being that they manifested an inclination to push human thought a little in advance of the age in which they lived.

It is too often the fashion with persons of pious reputation to speak in unmeasured language of Atheism as favoring immorality, and of Atheists as men whose conduct is necessarily vicious, and who have adopted Atheistic views as a desperate defiance against a Deity justly offended by the badness of their lives. Such persons urge that amongst the

proximate causes of Atheism are vicious training, immoral and profligate companions, licentious living and the like. Dr. John Pye Smith, in his "Instructions on Christian Theology," goes so far as to declare that "nearly all the Atheists upon record have been men of extremely debauched and vile conduct." Such language from the Christian advocate is not surprising, but there are others who, while professing great desire for the spread of Freethought and having pretensions to rank amongst acute and liberal thinkers, declare Atheism impracticable, and its teachings cold, barren, and negative. Excepting to each of the above allegations, I maintain that thoughtful Atheism affords greater possibility for human happiness than any system yet based on, or possible to be founded on, Theism, and that the lives of true Atheists must be more virtuous—because more human—than those of the believers in Deity, the humanity of the devout believer often finding itself neutralised by a faith with which that humanity is necessarily in constant collision. The devotee piling the faggots at the *auto da fé* of a heretic, and that heretic his son, might notwithstanding be a good father in every other respect (see Deuteronomy xiii, 6-10). Heresy, in the eyes of the believer, is highest criminality, and outweighs all claims of family or affection.

Atheism, properly understood, is no mere disbelief: is in no wise a cold, barren negative; it is,

on the contrary, a hearty, fruitful affirmation of all truth, and involves the positive assertion of action of highest humanity.

Let Atheism be fairly examined, and neither condemned—its defence unheard—on the *ex parte* slanders of some of the professional preachers of fashionable orthodoxy, whose courage is bold enough while the pulpit protects the sermon, but whose valor becomes tempered with discretion when a free platform is afforded and discussion claimed; nor misjudged because it has been the custom to regard Atheism as so unpopular as to render its advocacy impolitic. The best policy against all prejudice is to firmly advocate the truth. The Atheist does not say "There is no God" but he says: "I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word 'God' is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me. If, however, 'God' is defined to mean an existence other than the existence of which I am a mode, then I deny 'God,' and affirm that it is impossible such 'God' can be. That is, I affirm one existence, and deny that there can be more than one." The Pantheist also affirms one existence, and denies that there can be more than one; but the distinction between the Pantheist and the Atheist is,

that the Pantheist affirms infinite attributes for existence, while the Atheist maintains that attributes are the characteristics of mode—i.e., the diversities enabling the conditioning in thought.

When the Theist affirms that his God is an existence other than, and separate from, the so-called material universe, and when he invests this separate, hypothetical existence with the several attributes of personality, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, eternity, infinity, immutability, and perfect goodness, then the Atheist in reply says: "I deny the existence of such a being;" and he is entitled to say this because this Theistic definition is selfcontradictory, as well as contradictory of every-day experience.

If you speak to the Atheist of God as creator, he answers that the conception of creation is impossible. We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished, much less can we conceive an absolute origination of substance. We cannot conceive either, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or on the other, something becoming nothing. The words "creation" and "destruction" have no value except as applied to phenomena. You may destroy a gold coin, but you have only destroyed the condition, you have not affected the substance. "Creation" and "destruction" denote change of phenomena, they do not denote

origin or cessation of substance. The Theist who speaks of God creating the universe, must either suppose that Deity evolved it out of himself, or that he produced it from nothing. But the Theist cannot regard the universe as evolution of Deity, because this would identify Universe and Deity, and be Pantheism rather than Theism. There would be no distinction of substance—no creation. Nor can the Theist regard the universe as created out of nothing, because Deity is, according to him, necessarily eternal and infinite. God's existence being eternal and infinite, precludes the possibility of the conception of vacuum to be filled by the universe if created. No one can even think of any point in extent or duration and say: Here is the point of separation between the creator and the created. It is not possible for the Theist to imagine a beginning to the universe. It is not possible to conceive either an absolute commencement, or an absolute termination of existence; that is, it is impossible to conceive beginning, before which you have a period when the universe has yet to be; or to conceive an end, after which the universe, having been, no longer exists. The Atheist affirms that he cognises to-day effects; that these are, at the same time, causes and effects—causes to the effects they precede, effects to the causes they follow. Cause is simply everything without which the effect would not result, and with which it must result. Cause is the means to an end,

consummating itself in that end. Cause is the word we use to include all that determines change. The Theist who argues for creation must assert a point of time—that is, of duration, when the created did not yet exist. At this point of time either something existed or nothing; but something must have existed, for out of nothing nothing can come. Something must have existed, because the point fixed upon is that of the duration of something. This something must have been either finite or infinite; if finite it could not have been God, and if the something were infinite, then creation was impossible: it is impossible to add to infinite existence.

If you leave the question of creation and deal with the government of the universe, the difficulties of Theism are by no means lessened. The existence of evil is then a terrible stumbling block to the Theist. Pain, misery, crime, poverty, confront the advocate of eternal goodness, and challenge with unanswerable potency his declaration of Deity as all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful. A recent writer in the *Spectator* admits that there is what it regards "as the most painful, as it is often the most incurable, form of Atheism—the Atheism arising from a sort of horror of the idea of an Omnipotent Being permitting such a proportion of misery among the majority of his creatures." Evil is either caused by God, or exists independently; but it cannot be caused by God, as in that case he would not be all-good; nor can it exist

hostilely, as in that case he would not be all-powerful. If all-good he would desire to annihilate evil, and continued evil contradicts either God's desire, or God's ability, to prevent it. Evil must either have had a beginning or it must have been eternal; but, according to the Theist, it cannot be eternal, because God alone is eternal. Nor can it have had a beginning, for if it had it must either have originated in God, or outside God; but, according to the Theist, it cannot have originated in God for he is all-good, and out of all-goodness evil cannot originate; nor can evil have originated outside God, for, according to the Theist, God is infinite, and it is impossible to go outside of or beyond infinity.

To the Atheist this question of evil assumes an entirely different aspect. He declares that each evil is a result, but not a result from God nor Devil. He affirms that conduct founded on knowledge of the laws of existence may ameliorate each present form of evil, and, as our knowledge increases, prevent its future recurrence.

Some declare that the belief in God is necessary as a check to crime. They allege that the Atheist may commit murder, lie, or steal without fear of any consequences. To try the actual value of this argument, it is not unfair to ask: Do Theists ever steal? If yes, then in each such theft the belief in God and his power to punish has been insufficient as a preventive of the crime. Do Theists ever lie or

murder? If yes, the same remark has again force—Theism failing against the lesser as against the greater crime. Those who use such an argument overlook that all men seek happiness, though in very diverse fashions. Ignorant and miseducated men often mistake the true path to happiness, and commit crime in the endeavor to obtain it. Atheists hold that by teaching mankind the real road to human happiness it is possible to keep them from the bye-ways of criminality and error. Atheists would teach men to be moral now, not because God offers as an inducement reward by-and-bye, but because in the virtuous act itself immediate good is insured to the doer and the circle surrounding him. Atheism would preserve man from lying, stealing, murdering, not from fear of an eternal agony after death, but because these crimes make this life itself a course of misery.

While Theism, asserting God as the creator and governor of the universe, hinders and checks man's efforts by declaring God's will to be the sole directing and controlling power, Atheism, by declaring all events to be in accordance with natural laws—that is, happening in certain ascertainable sequences—stimulates man to discover the best conditions of life, and offers him the most powerful inducements to morality. While the Theist provides future happiness for a scoundrel repentant on his death-bed, Atheism affirms present and certain

happiness for the man who does his best to live here so well as to have little cause for repenting hereafter.

Theism declares that God dispenses health and inflicts disease, and sickness and illness are regarded by the Theists as visitations from an angered Deity, to be borne with meekness and content. Atheism declares that physiological knowledge may preserve us from disease by preventing us from infringing the law of health, and that sickness results not as the ordinance of offended Deity, but from ill-ventilated dwellings and workshops, bad and insufficient food, excessive toil, mental suffering, exposure to inclement weather, and the like—all these finding root in poverty, the chief source of crime and disease; that prayers and piety afford no protection against fever, and that if the human being be kept without food he will starve as quickly whether he be Theist or Atheist, theology being no substitute for bread.

It is very important, in order that injustice may not be done to the Theistic argument, that we should have—in lieu of a clear definition, which it seems useless to ask for—the best possible clue to the meaning intended to be conveyed by the word "God." If it were not that the word is an arbitrary term, maintained for the purpose of influencing the ignorant, and the notions suggested by which are vague and entirely contingent upon individual fancies, such a clue could probably be most easily

and satisfactorily obtained by tracing back the word "God," and ascertaining the sense in which it was used by the uneducated worshippers who have gone before us, and collating this with the more modern Theism, qualified as it is by the superior knowledge of to-day. Dupuis says: "Le mot *Dieu* parait destiné à exprimer l'idee de la force universelle et éternellement active qui imprime le mouvement à tout dans la Nature, suivant les lois d'une harmonie constante et admirable, qui se développe dans les diverses formes que prend la matière organisée, qui se mèle à tout, anime tout, et qui semble être une dans ses modifications infiniment variées, et n'appartenir qu'à elle-même." "The word God appears intended to express the universal and eternally active force which endows all nature with motion according to the laws of a constant and admirable harmony; which develops itself in the diverse forms of organised matter, which mingles with all, gives life to all; which seems to be one through all its infinitely varied modifications, and inheres in itself alone."

In the "Bon Sens" of Curé Meslier, it is asked: "Qu'est-ce que Dieu?" and the answer is: "C'est un mot abstrait fait pour désigner la force cachée de la nature; ou c'est un point mathématique qui n'a ni longueur, ni largeur, ni pro-fondeur." "It is an abstract word coined to designate the hidden force of nature; or is it a mathematical point having neither

length, breadth, nor depth."

The orthodox fringe of the Theism of to-day is Hebraistic in its origin—that is, it finds its root in the superstition and ignorance of a petty and barbarous people nearly destitute of literature, poor in language, and almost entirely wanting in high conceptions of humanity. It might, as Judaism is the foundation of Christianity, be fairly expected that the ancient Jewish records would aid us in our search after the meaning to be attached to the word "God." The most prominent words in Hebrew rendered God or Lord in English, *Ieue*, and *Aleim*. The first word Ieue, called by our orthodox Jehovah, is equivalent to "that which exists," and indeed embodies in itself the only possible trinity in unity—i.e., past, present, and future. There is nothing in this Hebrew word to help us to any such definition as is required for the sustenance of modern Theism. The most we can make of it by any stretch of imagination is equivalent to the declaration "I am, I have been, I shall be." The word *Ieue* is hardly ever spoken by the religious Jews, who actually in reading substitute for it, Adonai, an entirely different word. Dr. Wall notices the close resemblance in sound between the word *Iehowa* or *Ieue*, or Jehovah and Jove. In fact Jupiter and Ieue-pater (God the father) present still closer resemblance in sound. Jove is also [--Greek--] whence the word Deus and our Deity. The Greek mythology, far more ancient than that of the

Hebrews, has probably found for Christianity many other and more important features of coincidence than that of a similarly sounding name. The word [--Greek--] traced back, affords us no help beyond that it identifies Deity with the universe. Plato says that the early Greeks thought that the only Gods [--Greek--] were the sun, moon, earth, stars, and heaven. The word Aleim, assists us still less in defining the word God, for Parkhurst translates it as a plural noun signifying "the curser," deriving it from the verb *to curse*. Dr. Colenso has collected for us a store of traditional meanings for the IAO of the Greek, and the *Ieue* of the Hebrew, but though these are interesting to the student of mythology, they give no help to the Theistic demonstrator. Finding that philology aids us but little, we must endeavor to arrive at the meaning of the word "God" by another rule. It is utterly impossible to fix the period of the rise of Theism amongst any particular people; but it is, notwithstanding, comparatively easy, if not to trace out the development of Theistic ideas, at any rate to point to their probable course of growth amongst all peoples.

Keightley, in his "Origin of Mythology," says: "Supposing, for the sake of hypothesis, a race of men in a state of total or partial ignorance of Deity, their belief in many Gods may have thus commenced: They saw around them various changes brought about by human agency, and hence they knew the

power of intelligence to produce effects. When they beheld other and greater effects, they ascribed them to some unseen being, similar but superior to man." They associated particular events with special unknown beings (Gods), to each of whom they ascribed either a peculiarity of power, or a sphere of action not common to other Gods. Thus, one was God of the sea, another God of war, another God of love, another ruled the thunder and lightning; and thus through the various then known elements of the universe, and the passions of humankind.

This mythology became modified with the commencement of human knowledge. The ability to think has proved itself oppugnant to, and destructive of, the reckless desire to worship, characteristic of semi-barbarism. Science has razed altar after altar heretofore erected to the unknown Gods, and has pulled down Deity after Deity from the pedestals on which ignorance and superstition had erected them. The priest, who had formerly spoken as the oracle of God, lost his sway just in proportion as the scientific teacher succeeded in impressing mankind with a knowledge of the facts around them. The ignorant, who had hitherto listened unquestioning during centuries of abject submission to their spiritual preceptors, at last commenced to search and examine for themselves, and were guided by experience rather than by church doctrine. To-day advancing intellect challenges the reserve guard of the old

armies of superstition, and compels a conflict in which humankind must in the end have great gain by the forced enunciation of the truth.

From the word “God” the Theist derives no argument in his favor; it teaches nothing, defines nothing, demonstrates nothing, explains nothing. The Theist answers that this is no sufficient objection; that there are many words which are in common use to which the same objection applies. Even if this were true, it does not answer the Atheist’s objection. Alleging a difficulty on the one side is not a removal of the obstacle already pointed out on the other.

The Theist declares his God to be not only immutable, but also infinitely intelligent, and says: “Matter is either essentially intelligent or essentially non-intelligent; if matter were essentially intelligent, no matter could be without intelligence; but matter cannot be essentially intelligent, because some matter is not intelligent, therefore matter is essentially non-intelligent; but there is intelligence, therefore there must be a cause for the intelligence, independent of matter—this must be an intelligent being—i.e., God.” The Atheist answers: I do not know what is meant, in the mouth of the Theist, by “matter.” “Matter,” “nature,” “substance,” “existence,” are words having the same signification in the Atheist’s vocabulary. Lewes used “matter” as the “symbol of all the known properties, statical and dynamical, passive and active; i.e., subjectively, as

feeling and change of feeling, or objectively, as agent and action;" and Mill defined "nature" as "the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them, including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening." It is not certain that the Theist expresses any very clear idea to himself when he uses the words "matter" and "intelligence;" it is quite certain that he has not yet shown himself capable of communicating this idea, and that any effort he makes is couched in terms which are self-contradictory. Reason and understanding are sometimes treated as separate faculties, yet it is not unfair to presume that the Theist would include them both under the word intelligence. Perception is the foundation of the intellect. The perceptive ability differs in each animal; yet, in speaking of matter, the Theist uses the word "intelligence" as though the same meaning were to be understood in every case. The recollection of the perceptions is the exercise of a different ability from the perceptive ability, and occasionally varies disproportionately; thus, an individual may have great perceptive abilities, and very little memory, or the reverse; yet memory, as well as perception, is included in intelligence. So also the comparing between two or more perceptions; the judging and the reflecting; all these are subject to the same remarks, and all these and other phases of the mind are included in the word intelligence. We answer,

then, that “God” (whatever that word may mean) cannot be intelligent. He can never perceive; the act of perception results in the obtaining a new idea, but if God be omniscient, his ideas have been eternally the same. He has either been always, and always will be, perceiving, or he has never perceived at all. But God cannot have been always perceiving, because, if he had, he would always have been obtaining fresh knowledge, in which case he must at some time have had less knowledge than now: that is, he would have been less perfect: that is, he would not have been God. He can never recollect nor forget; he can never compare, reflect, nor judge. There cannot be perfect intelligence without understanding; but following Coleridge, “understanding is the faculty of judging according to sense.” The faculty of whom? Of some person, judging according to that person’s senses. But has “God” senses? Is there anything beyond “God” for God to sensate? There cannot be perfect intelligence without reason. By reason we mean that phase of the mind which avails itself of past and present experience to predicate more or less accurately of possible experience in the future. To God there can be neither past nor future, therefore to him reason is impossible. There cannot be perfect intelligence without will; but has God will? If God wills, the will of the all-powerful must be irresistible; the will of the infinite must exclude all other wills.

God can never perceive. Perception and

sensation are identical. Every sensation is pleasurable or painful. But God, if immutable, can neither be pleased nor pained. Every fresh sensation involves a change in mental and perhaps in physical condition. God, if immutable, cannot change. Sensation is the source of all ideas, but it is only objects external to the mind which can be sensated. If God be infinite there can be no objects external to him, and therefore sensation must be to him impossible. Yet without perception where is intelligence?

God cannot have memory nor reason—memory is of the past, reason for the future, but to God immutable there can be no past, no future. The words past, present, and future imply change: they assert progression of duration. If God be immutable, to him change is impossible. Can you have intelligence destitute of perception, memory, and reason? God cannot have the faculty of judgment—judgment implies in the act of judging a conjoining or disjoining of two or more thoughts, but this involves change of mental condition. To God the immutable, change is impossible. Can you have intelligence, yet no perception, no memory, no reason, no judgment? God cannot think. The law of the thinkable is, that the thing thought must be separated from the thing which is not thought. To think otherwise would be to think of nothing—to have an impression with no distinguishing mark,

would be to have no impression. Yet this separation implies change, and to God, immutable, change is impossible. In memory, the thing remembered is distinguished from the thing temporarily or permanently forgotten. Can God forget? Can you have intelligence without thought? If the Theist replies to this, that he does not mean by infinite intelligence as an attribute of Deity, an infinity of the intelligence found in a finite degree in humankind, then he is bound to explain, clearly and distinctly, what other "intelligence" he means; and until this be done the foregoing statements require answer.

The Atheist does not regard "substance" as either essentially intelligent or the reverse. Intelligence is the result of certain conditions of existence. Burnished steel is bright—that is, brightness is the characteristic of a certain condition of existence. Alter the condition, and the characteristic of the condition no longer exists. The only essential of substance is existence. Alter the wording of the Theist's objection:—Matter is either essentially bright, or essentially non-bright. If matter were essentially bright, brightness should be the essence of all matter; but matter cannot be essentially bright, because some matter is not bright, therefore matter is essentially non-bright; but there is brightness; therefore there must be a cause for this brightness independent of matter—that is, there must be an essentially bright being—i.e. God.

Another Theistic proposition is thus stated: “Every effect must have a cause; the first cause universal must be eternal: ergo, the first cause universal must be God.” This is equivalent to saying that “God” is “first cause.” But what is to be understood by cause? Defined in the absolute, the word has no real value. “Cause,” therefore, cannot be eternal. What can be understood by “first cause?” To us the two words convey no meaning greater than would be conveyed by the phrase “round triangle.” Cause and effect are correlative terms—each cause is the effect of some precedent; each effect the cause of its consequent. It is impossible to conceive existence terminated by a primal or initial cause. The “beginning,” as it is phrased, of the universe is not thought out by the Theist, but conceded without thought. To adopt the language of Montaigne; “Men make themselves believe that they believe.” The so-called belief in Creation is nothing more than the prostration of the intellect on the threshold of the unknown. We can only cognise the ever-succeeding phenomena of existence as a line in continuous and eternal evolution. This line has to us no beginning; we trace it back into the misty regions of the past but a little way, and however far we may be able to journey there is still the great beyond. Then what is meant by “universal cause?” Spinoza gives the following definition of cause, as used in its absolute signification: “By cause of itself I understand that,

the essence of which involves existence, or that, the nature of which can only be considered as existent." That is, Spinoza treats "cause" absolute and "existence" as two words having the same meaning. If this mode of defining the word be contested, then it has no meaning other than its relative signification of a means to an end. "Every effect must have a cause." Every effect implies the plurality of effects, and necessarily that each effect must be finite; but how is it possible from finite effect to logically deduce a universal—i.e., infinite cause?

There are two modes of argument presented by Theists, and by which, separately or combined, they seek to demonstrate the being of a God. These are familiarly known as the arguments *à priori and à posteriori.*

The *à posteriori* argument has been popularised in England by Paley, who has ably endeavored to hide the weakness of his demonstration under an abundance of irrelevant illustrations. The reasoning of Paley is very deficient in the essential points where it most needed strength. It is utterly impossible to prove by it the eternity or infinity of Deity. As an argument founded on analogy, the design argument, as the best, could only entitle its propounder to infer the existence of a finite cause, or rather of a multitude of finite causes. It ought not to be forgotten that the illustrations of the eye, the watch, and the man, even if admitted as instances of

design, or rather of adaptation, are instances of eyes, watches, and men, designed or adapted out of pre-existing substance, by a being of the same kind of substance, and afford, therefore, no demonstration in favor of a designer alleged to have actually created substance out of nothing, and also alleged to have created a substance entirely different from himself.

The illustrations of alleged adaptation or design in animal life in its embryonic stages are thus dealt with by the late George Henry Lewes: “What rational interpretation can be given to the succession of phases each embryo is forced to pass through? None of these phases have any adaptation to the future state of the animal, but are in positive contradiction to it, or are simply purposeless; many of them have no adaptation, even in its embryonic state. What does the fact imply? There is not a single known organism which is not developed out of simpler forms. Before it can attain the complex structure which distinguishes it, there must be an evolution of forms which distinguish the structures of organisms lower in the series. On the hypothesis of a plan which pre-arranged the organic world, nothing could be more unworthy of a supreme intelligence than this inability to construct an organism at once, without making several tentative efforts, undoing to-day what was so carefully done yesterday, and repeating for centuries the same tentatives and the same corrections in the same succession. Do not let

us blink this consideration. There is a traditional phrase which is in vogue amongst Anthropomorphists—a phrase which has become a sort of argument—the 'Great Architect.' But if we are to admit the human point of view, a glance at the facts of embryology must produce very uncomfortable reflexions. For what shall we say to an architect who was unable—or, being able, was obstinately unwilling—to erect a palace, except by first using his materials in the shape of a hut, then pulling them down and rebuilding them as a cottage, then adding storey to storey, and room to room, not with any reference to the ultimate purposes of a palace, but wholly with reference to the way in which houses were constructed in ancient times? Would there be a chorus of applause from the Institute of Architects, and favorable notices in newspapers of this profound wisdom? Yet this is the sort of succession on which organisms are constructed. The fact has long been familiar; how has it been reconciled with infinite wisdom?"

The *à posteriori* argument can never demonstrate infinity for Deity. Arguing from an effect finite in extent, the most it could afford would be a cause sufficient for that effect, such cause being possibly finite in extent and duration. Professor Flint in his late work in advocacy of Theism concedes that "we cannot deduce the infinite from the finite." And as the argument does not demonstrate God's infinity,

neither can it, for the same reason, make out his omniscience, as it is clearly impossible to logically claim infinite wisdom for a God possibly only finite. God's omnipotence remains unproved for the same reason, and because it is clearly absurd to argue that God exercises power where he may not be. Nor can the *à posteriori* argument show God's absolute freedom, for as it does nothing more than seek to prove a finite God, it is quite consistent with the argument that God's existence is limited and controlled in a thousand ways. Nor does this argument show that God always existed; at the best, the proof is only that some cause, enough for the effect, existed before it, but there is no evidence that this cause differs from any other causes, which are often as transient as the effect itself. And as it does not demonstrate that God has always existed, neither does it demonstrate that he will always exist, or even that he now exists. It is perfectly in accordance with the argument, and with the analogy of cause and effect, that the effect may remain after the cause had ceased to exist. Nor does the argument from design demonstrate one God. It is quite consistent with this argument that a separate cause existed for each effect, or mark of design discovered, or that several causes contributed to some or one of such effects. So that if the argument be true, it might result in a multitude of petty Deities, limited in knowledge, extent, duration, and power; and still worse, each

one of this multitude of Gods may have had a cause which would also be finite in extent and duration, and would require another, and so on, until the design argument loses the reasoner amongst an innumerable crowd of Deities, none of whom can have the attributes claimed for God.

The design argument is defective as an argument from analogy, because it seeks to prove a Creator God who designed, but does not explain whether this God has been eternally designing, which would be absurd; or, if he at some time commenced to design, what then induced him so to commence? It is illogical, for it seeks to prove an immutable Deity, by demonstrating a mutation on the part of Deity.

It is unnecessary to deal specially with each of the many writers who have used from different stand-points the *à posteriori* form of argument in order to prove the existence of Deity. The objections already stated apply to the whole class; and, although probably each illustration used by the Theistic advocate is capable of an elucidation entirely at variance with his argument, the main features of objection are the same. The argument *à posteriori* is a method of proof in which the premises are composed of some position of existing facts, and the conclusion asserts a position antecedent to those facts. The argument is from given effects to their causes. It is one form of this argument which asserts that a man has a moral nature, and from this seeks to

deduce the existence of a moral governor. This form has the disadvantage that its premises are illusory. In alleging a moral nature for man, the Theist overlooks the fact that the moral nature of man differs somewhat in each individual, differs considerably in each nation, and differs entirely in some peoples. It is dependent on organisation and education; these are influenced by climate, food, and mode of life. If the argument from man's nature could demonstrate anything, it would prove a murdering God for the murderer, a lascivious God for the licentious man, a dishonest God for the thief, and so through the various phases of human inclination. The *à priori* arguments are methods of proof in which the matter of the premises exists in the order of conception antecedently to that of the conclusion. The argument is from cause to effect. Amongst the prominent Theistic advocates relying upon the *a priori* argument in England are Dr. Samuel Clarke, the Rev. Moses Lowman, and William Gillespie.

An important contribution to Theistic literature has been the publication of the Baird lectures on Theism. The lectures are by Professor Flint, who asks: "Have we sufficient evidence for thinking that there is a self-existent, eternal being, infinite in power and wisdom, and perfect in holiness and goodness, the Maker of heaven and earth?"

"Theism," he affirms, "is the doctrine that the universe owes its existence, and continuance in

existence, to the reason and will of a self-existent Being, who is infinitely powerful, wise, and good. It is the doctrine that nature has a Creator and Preserver, the nations a Governor, men a heavenly Father and Judge." But he concedes that "Theism is very far from co-extensive with religion. Religion is spread over the whole earth; Theism only over a comparatively small portion of it. There are but three Theistic religions—the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Muhammadan. They are connected historically in the closest manner—the idea of God having been transmitted to the two latter, and not independently originated by them. All other religions are Polytheistic or Pantheistic, or both together. Among those who have been educated in any of these heathen religions, only a few minds of rare penetration and power have been able to rise by their own exertions to a consistent Theistic belief. The God of all those among us who believe in God, even of those who reject Christianity, who reject all revelation, is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. From these ancient Jewish fathers the knowledge of him has historically descended through an unbroken succession of generations to us. We have inherited it from them. If it had not thus come down to us, if we had not been born into a society pervaded by it, there is no reason to suppose that we should have found it out for ourselves, and still less that we should merely have required to open our eyes in

order to see it."

If "Theism is the doctrine that the universe owes its existence to the reason and will of a self-existing being who is infinitely powerful, wise, and good," then it is a doctrine which involves many difficulties and absurdities. It assumes that the universe has not always existed. The new existence added when the universe was originated was either an improvement or a deterioration on what had always existed; or it was in all respects precisely identical with what had therefore always existed. In the first, if the new universe was an improvement, then the previously self-existent being could not have been infinitely good. If the universe was a deterioration, then the creator could have scarcely been all-wise, or he could not have been all-powerful. If the universe was in all respects precisely identical with the self-existent being, then it must have been infinitely powerful, wise and good, and must have been self-existent.

Any of the alternatives is fatal to Theism. Again, if the universe owes its existence to God's reason and will, God must, prior to creation, have thought upon the matter until he ultimately determined to create; but, if the creation were wise and good, it would never have been delayed while the infinitely wise and good reasoned about it, and, if the creation were not wise and good, the infinitely wise and good would never have commenced it. Either God willed without motive, or he was influenced; if he reasoned,

there was—prior to the definite willing—a period of doubt or suspended judgment, all of which is inconsistent with the attributes claimed for deity by Professor Flint. It is hard to understand how whole nations can have been left by their infinitely powerful, wise, and good governor—how many men can have been left by their infinitely powerful, wise, and good father—without any knowledge of himself. Yet this must be so if, as Professor Flint conceives, Theism is only spread over a comparatively small portion of the earth. The moral effect of Christian and Muhammadan Theism on the nations influenced, was well shown in the recent Russo-Turkish War.

Every Theist must admit that if a God exists, he could have so convinced all men of the fact of his existence that doubt, disagreement, or disbelief would be impossible. If he could not do this, he would not be omnipotent, or he would not be omniscient—that is, he would not be God. Every Theist must also agree that if a God exists, he would wish all men to have such a clear consciousness of his existence and attributes, that doubt, disagreement, or disbelief on this subject would be impossible. And this, if for no other reason, because that out of doubts and disagreements on religion have too often resulted centuries of persecution, strife, and misery, which a good God would desire to prevent. If God would not desire this, then he is not all-good, that is, he is not God. But as many men

have doubts, as a large majority of mankind have disagreements, and as some men have disbeliefs as to God's existence and attributes, it must follow that God does not exist, or that he is not all-wise, or that he is not all-powerful, or that he is not all-good.

Many Theists rely on the intuitional argument. It is, perhaps, best to allow the Baird Lecturer to reply to these:—"Man, say some, knows God by immediate intuition, he needs no argument for his existence, because he perceives Him directly—face to face—without any medium. It is easy to assert this but obviously the assertion is the merest dogmatism. Not one man in a thousand who understands what he is affirming will dare to claim to have an immediate vision of God, and nothing can be more likely than that the man who makes such a claim is self-deluded." And Professor Flint urges that: "What seem intuitions are often really inferences, and not unfrequently erroneous inferences; what seem the immediate dictates of pure reason, or the direct and unclouded perceptions of a special spiritual faculty, may be the conceits of fancy, or the products of habits and association, or the reflexions of strong feeling. A man must prove to himself, and he must prove to others, that what he takes to be an intuition, is an intuition. Is that proof in this case likely to be easier or more conclusive than the proof of the Divine existence? The so-called immediate perception of God must be shown to be a perception

and to be immediate; it must be vindicated and verified; and how this is to be done, especially if there be no other reasons for believing in God than itself, it is difficult to conceive. The history of religion, which is what ought to yield the clearest confirmation of the alleged intuition, appears to be from beginning to end a conspicuous contradiction of it. If all men have the spiritual power of directly beholding their Creator—have an immediate vision of God—how happens it that whole nations believe in the most absurd and monstrous Gods? That millions of men are ignorant whether there be one God or thousands?" And still more strongly he adds: "The opinion that man has an intuition or immediate perception of God is untenable; the opinion that he has an immediate feeling of God is absurd."

Every child is born into the world an Atheist, and if he grows into a Theist, his Deity differs with the country in which the believer may happen to be born, or the people amongst whom he may happen to be educated. The belief is the result of education or organisation. This is practically conceded by Professor Flint, where he speaks of the God-idea as transmitted from the Jews, and says: "We have inherited it from them. If it had not come down to us, if we had not been born into a society pervaded by it, there is no reason to suppose that we should have found it out for ourselves." And further, he maintains that a child is born "into blank ignorance,

and, if left entirely to itself, would, probably, never find out as much religious truth as the most ignorant of parents can teach it." Religious belief is powerful in proportion to the want of scientific knowledge on the part of the believer. The more ignorant the more credulous. In the mind of the Theist "God" is equivalent to the sphere of the unknown; by the use of the word he answers, without thought, problems which might otherwise obtain scientific solution. The more ignorant the Theist, the more numerous his Gods. Belief in God is not a faith founded on reason. Theism is worse than illogical; its teachings are not only without utility, but of itself it has nothing to teach. Separated from Christianity with its almost innumerable sects, from Muhammadanism with its numerous divisions, and separated also from every other preached system, Theism is a will-o'-the-wisp, without reality. Apart from orthodoxy, Theism is the veriest dreamform, without substance or coherence.

What does Christian Theism teach? That the first man, made perfect by the all-powerful, all-wise, all-good God, was nevertheless imperfect, and by his imperfection brought misery into the world, where the all-good God must have intended misery should never come; that this God made men to share this misery—men whose fault was their being what he made them; that this God begets a son, who is nevertheless his unbegotten self, and that by belief in the birth of God's eternal son, and in the death of the

undying who died as sacrifice to God's vengeance, men may escape the consequences of the first man's error. Christian Theism declares that belief alone can save man, and yet recognises the fact that man's belief results from teaching, by establishing missionary societies to spread the faith. Christian Theism teaches that God, though no respecter of persons, selected as his favorite one nation in preference to all others; that man can do no good of himself or without God's aid, but yet that each man has a free will; that God is all-powerful, but that few go to heaven, and the majority to hell; that all are to love God, who has predestined from eternity that by far the largest number of human beings are to be burning in hell for ever. Yet the advocates for Theism venture to upbraid those who argue against such a faith.

Either Theism is true or false. If true, discussion must help to spread its influence; if false, the sooner it ceases to influence human conduct the better for human kind. This Plea for Atheism is put forth as a challenge to Theists to do battle for their cause, and in the hope that, the strugglers being sincere, truth may give laurels to the victor and the vanquished: laurels to the victor, in that he has upheld the truth; laurels which should be even more welcome to the vanquished, whose defeat crowns him with a truth he knew not of before.

APPENDIX

A few years ago a Nonconformist minister invited me to debate the question, “Is Atheism the True Doctrine of the Universe?” and the following was in substance my opening statement of the argument, which for some reason, although many letters passed, was never replied to by my reverend opponent.

“By Atheism I mean the affirmation of one existence, of which existence I know only mode; each mode being distinguished in thought by its qualities. This affirmation is a positive, not a negative, affirmation, and is properly describable as Atheism because it does not include in it any possibility of *Theos*. It is, being without God, distinctly an Atheistic affirmation. This Atheism affirms that the Atheist only knows qualities, and only knows these qualities as the characteristics of modes. By ‘existence’ I mean the totality of phenomena and all that has been, is, or may be necessary for the happening of any and every phenomenon. By ‘mode’ I mean each cognised condition (phenomenon or aggregation of phenomena). By ‘quality’ I mean that characteristic, or each of those characteristics, by which in thought I distinguish that which I think. The word ‘universe’ is with me an equivalent for ‘existence.’

“Either Atheism or Theism must be the true doctrine of the Universe. I assume here that no other theory is thinkable. Theism is either Pantheism, Polytheism, or Monotheism. There is, I submit, no

other conceivable category. Pantheism affirms one existence, but declares that some qualities are infinite, e.g. that existence is intelligent. Atheism only affirms qualities for phenomena. We know each phenomenon by its qualities; we know no qualities except as qualities of some phenomenon. By infinite I mean illimitable. Phenomena are, of course, finite. By intelligent I mean able to think. Polytheism affirms several Theistic existences—this affirmation being nearly self-contradictory—and also usually affirms at least one non-theistic existence. Monotheism affirms at least two existences: that is, the Theos and that which the Theos has created and rules. Atheism denies alike the reasonableness of Polytheism, Pantheism, and Monotheism. Any affirmation of more than one existence is on the face of the affirmation an absolute self-contradiction, if infinity be pretended for either of the existences affirmed. The word 'Theos' or 'God' has for me no meaning. I am obliged, therefore, to try to collect its meaning as expressed by Theists, who, however, do not seem to me to be either clear or agreed as to the words by which their Theism may be best expressed. For the purpose of this argument I take Monotheism to be the doctrine 'that the universe owes its existence and continuance in existence to the wisdom and will of a supreme, self-existent, eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient, righteous, and benevolent personal being, who is distinct from and

independent of what he has created.' By wisdom and will I mean that which I should mean using the same words of any animal able to perceive, remember, reflect, judge, and determine, and active in that ability or those abilities. By supreme I mean highest in any relation of comparison. By self-existent I mean that the conception of which, if it be conceivable, does not involve the conception of antecedent or consequent. By eternal and infinite I mean illimitable in duration and extent. By 'omnipotent' I mean supreme in power over everything. By omniscient, knowing everything. By 'righteous and benevolent' I mean that which the best educated opinion would mean when applying those words to human beings. This doctrine of Monotheism appears to me to be flatly contradicted by the phenomena we know. It is inconsistent with that observed uniformity of happening usually described as law of nature. By law of nature I mean observed order of event. The word 'nature' is another equivalent for the word universe or existence. By uniformity of happening I mean that, given certain conditions, certain results always ensue—vary the conditions, the results vary. I do not attack specially either the Polytheistic, Pantheistic, or Monotheistic presentments of Theism. To me any pretence of Theism seems impossible if Monism be conceded, and, therefore, at present, I rest content in affirming one existence. If Monism be true, and Atheism be Monism, then Atheism is necessarily the

true theory of the universe. I submit that 'there cannot be more than one ultimate explanation' of the universe. That any 'tracing back to two or more' existences is illogical, and that as it is only by 'reaching unity' that we can have a reasonable conclusion, it is necessary 'that every form of Dualism should be rejected as a theory of the universe.' If every form of Dualism be rejected, Monism, i.e. Atheism, alone remains, and is therefore the true and only doctrine of the universe."

Speaking of the prevalence of what he describes as "a form of agnosticism," the editor of the *Spectator* writes: "We think we see signs of a disposition to declare that the great problem is insoluble, that whatever rules, be it a mind or only a force, he or it does not intend the truth to be known, if there is a truth, and to go on, both in action and speculation, as if the problem had no existence. That is the condition of mind, we know, of many of the cultivated who are not sceptics, nor doubters, nor inquirers, but who think they are as certain of their point as they are that the circle will not be squared. They are, they think, in presence of a recurring decimal, and they are not going to spend life in the effort to resolve it. If no God exists, they will save their time; and if he does exist, he must have set up the impenetrable wall. A distinct belief of that kind, not a vague, pulpy impression, but a formulated belief, exists, we know, in the most unsuspected

places, its holders not unfrequently professing Christianity, as at all events the best of the illusions; and it has sunk very far down in the ladder of society. We find it catch classes which have suddenly become aware that there is a serious doubt afloat, and have caught something of its extent and force, till they fancy they have in the doubt a revelation as certainly true as they once thought the old certainty." Surely an active, honest Atheism is to be preferred to the state of mind described in the latter part of the passage we have just quoted.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE DEVIL

DEALING with the Devil has been a perilous experiment. In 1790, an unfortunate named André Dubuisson, was confined in the Bastille, charged with raising the Devil. In the reign of Charles I, Thomas Browne, yeoman, was indicted at Middlesex Sessions, for that he did "wickedly, diabolically, and feloniously make an agreement with an evil and impious spirit, that he, the same Thomas Browne, would within ten days after his death, give his soul to the same impious and evil spirit," for the purpose of having a clear income of £2,000 a year. Thomas was found not guilty. In 1682, three persons were hanged at Exeter, and in 1712, five others were hanged at Northampton, for witchcraft and trafficking with the Devil, who has been represented as a black-visaged, sulphurous-constitutioned individual, horned like an old goat, with satyr-like legs, a tail of unpleasant length, and a reckless disposition to buy people presumably his without purchase. I intend to treat the subject entirely from a Biblical point of view; the Christian Devil being a Bible institution. I say the Christian Devil, because other religions also have their Devils, and it is well to

prevent confusion. I frankly admit that none of these religions have a Devil so devilish as that of the Christian.

I am unable to say certainly whether I am writing about a singular Devil or a plurality of Devils. In many texts “Devils” are mentioned (Leviticus xvii, 7; Mark i, 34, &c.) recognising a plurality; in others “the Devil” (Luke iv, 2), as if there was but one. Seven Devils went out of Mary called Magdalene (Luke viii, 2). The Rev. P. Hains, a Wigan church clergyman, tells me that where “Devils” are to be found in the Gospels it is mistranslated and should be “Demons”—these being apparently an inferior sort of Devils. Hershon (Talmudical Commentary on Genesis, p. 299), quotes from Rabbi Yochanan, “There were three hundred different species of male demons in Sichin, but what the female demon is like I know not;” and from Rava, “If anyone wishes to see the demons themselves let him burn and reduce to ashes the offspring of a first-born black cat; let him put a little of it in his eyes and he will see them.” Assuming that either there is one Devil, more than one, or less than one, and having thus cleared away mere numerical difficulties, we will proceed to give the Devil his due. The word Satan occurs 1 Samuel xxix, 4, and is there translated “adversary,” (Cahen) “obstacle,” see also I Kings xi, 14. Satan appears either to have been a child of God or a most intimate acquaintance of the

family, for, on "a day when the children of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also amongst them," (Job I, 6) and no surprise or disapprobation is manifested at his presence. Some trace in this the Persian demonology where the good spirits surround Ormuzd and where Ahriman is the spirit of evil. The conversation in the Book of Job between God and the Devil has a value proportioned to the rarity of the scene and to the high characters of the personages concerned, despite the infidel criticism of Martin Luther, who condemns the Book of Job as "a sheer *argumentum fabula*." A Christian ought to be surprised to find "God omniscient" putting to Satan the query: Whence comest thou? for he cannot suppose God, the all-wise, ignorant upon the subject. Satan's reply: "From going to and fro in the earth, and from going up and down it," increases our surprise and augments our astonishment. The true believer should be astonished to find from his Bible that Satan could have gone to and fro in the earth, and walked up and down it, and yet not have met God, if omnipresent, at least occasionally, during his journeying. It is not easy to conceive omnipresence absent, even temporarily, from every spot where the Devil promenaded. The Lord makes no comment on Satan's reply, but says: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" It seems

extraordinary that God should wish to have the Devil's judgment on the only good man then living: the more extraordinary, as God, the all-wise, knew Satan's opinion without asking it, and God, the immutable, would not be influenced by the expression of the Devil's views. Satan's answer is: "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blest the work of his hand, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." God's reply to this audacious declaration is: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand." And this was Job's reward for being a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil. He was not actually sent to the Devil, but to the Devil was given power over all that he had. Job lost all without repining, sons, daughters, oxen, asses, camels, and sheep, all destroyed, and yet "Job sinned not." Divines urge that this is a beautiful picture of patience and contentment under wrong and misfortune. But it is neither good to submit patiently to wrong, nor to rest contented under misfortune. It is better to resist wrong; wiser to carefully investigate the causes of wrong and misfortune, with a view to their removal. Contentment under wrong is a crime; voluntary submission under oppression is no virtue.

"Again, there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord [as if God's children could ever be absent from him], and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord [again] said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth? a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, ALTHOUGH THOU MOVEDST ME AGAINST HIM TO DESTROY HIM WITHOUT CAUSE." Can God be moved against a man to destroy him without a cause? If so, God is neither immutable nor all-wise. Yet the Bible puts into God's mouth the terrible admission that the Devil had moved God against Job to destroy him without cause. If true, it destroys alike God's goodness and his wisdom.

But Satan answered the Lord and said: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life; put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Does the Lord now drive the Devil from his presence? Is there any expression of wrath or indignation against this tempter? "The Lord said unto Satan: Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life." And Job, being better than everybody else,

finds himself smitten in consequence with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. The ways of the Lord are not as our ways, or this would seem the reverse of an encouragement to virtue.

In the account of the numbering by David, in one place "God," and in another "Satan," occurs (1 Chron. xxi,1; 2 Sam. xxiv, 1), and to each the same act of "moving" or "provoking" David to number his people is attributed. There may be in this more harmony than ordinary men recognise, for one erudite Bible commentator tells us, speaking of the Hebrew word Azazel: "This terrible and venerable name of God, through the pens of Biblical glossers, has been *a devil, a mountain, a wilderness, and a he-goat.*"[13] Well may incomprehensibility be an attribute of deity when, even to holy and reverend fathers, God has been sometimes undistinguishable from a he-goat or a Devil. Moncure D. Conway writes: "There can be little question that the Hebrews, from whom the Calvinist inherited his deity, had no Devil in their mythology, because the jealous and vindictive Jehovah was quite equal to any work of that kind—as the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, bringing plagues upon the land, or deceiving a prophet and then destroying him for his false prophecies."[14]

God is a spirit. Jesus is God. Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the Devil. All these propositions are equally credible.

On the temptation of Jesus by the Devil, the Rev. Dr. Giles writes: “That the Devil should appear personally *to the Son of God is certainly not more wonderful* than that he should, in a more remote age, have appeared *among* the Sons of God, in the presence of God himself, to tempt and torment the righteous Job. But that Satan should carry Jesus, bodily and literally, through the air—first to the top of a high mountain, and then to the topmost pinnacle of the temple—is wholly inadmissible; it is an insult to our understanding.”[15] It is pleasant to find clergymen zealously repudiating their own creeds.

I am not prepared to speak strongly as to the color of the Devil. White men paint him black; black men paint him white. He can scarcely be colorless, as otherwise the Evangelists would have labored under considerable difficulties in witnessing the casting out of the Devil from the man in the synagogue (Luke iv, 35, 36).This Devil is described as an unclean Devil. The Devils were subject to the 70 disciples whom Jesus appointed to preach (Luke x, 17), and they are not unbelievers: one text tells us that they believe and tremble (James ii, 19). It is a fact of some poor Devils that the more they believe the more they tremble. According to another text the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter v, 8), though the Devil’s “doctrines” presumably include vegetarianism (1 Timothy iv, 1, 3). I am not sure what drinks devils incline to,

though it is distinguished from the wine of the communion (1 Corinthians x, 21). Devils should be a sort of eternal salamanders, for there is everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matt. xxv, 41); and there is a lake of brimstone and fire, into which the Devil was cast (Rev. xx, 10). The Devil has, at least upon one occasion, figured as a controversialist. For we learn that he disputed with the arch-angel Michael, contending about the body of Moses (Jude 9); in these degenerate days of personality in debate, it is pleasant to know that the religious champion was very civil towards his Satanic opponent. The Devil was imprisoned for 1,000 years in a bottomless pit (Rev. xx, 2). If a pit had no bottom, it seems but little confinement to shut the top. But, with faith and prayer even a good foundation may be obtained for a bottomless pit. The writer of Revelation, adopting the view of some Hebrew writers, speaks of "the dragon, that old serpent which is the devil and Satan" and following this, it is urged that the Devil was the serpent of Genesis—that is, that it was really Satan who, in this guise, tempted Eve. There is this difficulty in the matter—the Devil is a liar (John viii, 44); but in the interview with Eve the serpent seems to have confined himself to the strict truth (Gen. iii, 4, 5, 22). There is, in fact, no point of resemblance—no horns, no hoof, nothing except a tail.

Kalisch notes that "the Egyptians represented

the eternal spirit Kneph, the author of all good, under the mythic form" of the serpent, but they employed the same symbol "for Typhon, the author of all moral and physical evil, and in the Egyptian symbolical alphabet, the serpent represents subtlety and cunning, lust, and sensual pleasure."

The Old Testament speaks a little of the Devils, sometimes of Satan, but never of "The Devil;" yet Matthew ushers him in, in the temptation scene, without introduction, and as if he were an old acquaintance. I do not remember reading in the Old Testament, anything about the lake of brimstone and fire. Although Malachi iv, 1, speaks of the day "that shall burn as an oven when the wicked shall be burned up." This feature of faith was reserved for the warmth of Christian love to develop from some of the Talmudical writers. The Rev. C. Boutell in his Bible dictionary says, that, "it is at the least unfortunate that the word 'hell' should have been used as if the translation of the Hebrew 'sheol.'" Zechariah, in a vision, saw "Joshua, the High Priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him" (Zach-ariah iii, 1). Why the Devil wanted to resist Joshua is not clear; but, as Joshua's garments were in a very filthy state, it may be that he was preaching to the priest the virtues of cleanliness. Jesus said that one of the twelve disciples was a Devil (John vi, 70). You are told to resist the devil and he will flee from you

(James iv, 7). If this be true, he is a cowardly Devil, and thus does not agree quite with Milton's picture of his grand defiance, almost heroism. But then Milton was a poet, and true religion has but little poetry in it.

Jeroboam, one of the Jewish monarchs, ordained priests for the devils (2 Chron. ix, 15). In the time of Jesus, Satan must, when not in the body of some mad, deaf, dumb, blind, or paralytic person, have been occasionally in heaven; for Jesus, on one occasion, told his disciples that he saw Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven (Luke x, 18). Jesus told Simon Peter that Satan desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat (Luke xxii, 31); perhaps Jesus was chafing his disciple. Paul, the apostle, seems to have looked on the Devil much as some bigots look on the police, for Paul delivered Hymeneus and Alexander unto Satan, that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy i, 20).

Revivalists are much indebted for their evanescent successes to hell and the Devil. Thomas English, a fair specimen of those very noisy and active preachers who do so much in promoting revivals, spoke of "dwelling with devouring fire, bearing everlasting burning, roasting on the Devil's spit, broiling on his gridiron, being pitched about with his fork, drinking the liquid fire, breathing the brimstone fumes, drowning in a red-hot sea, lying on fiery beds."[16] The vulgar tirades of Reginald

Radcliffe, Richard Weaver, and C. H. Spurgeon, will serve to evidence that the above quotation is no exaggeration. In London, before crowded audiences, Mr. Weaver, without originality, and with only the merit of copied coarseness, has called upon the Lord to "shake the ungodly for five minutes over the mouth of hell." Mr. Spurgeon has drawn pictures of hell which, if true and revealed to him by God, would be most disgustingly frightful, and which being but the creation of his own morbid fancies, induce a feeling of contempt as well as disgust for the teacher, who uses such horrible descriptions to affright his weaker hearers.

Calmet says that "By collecting all the passages where Satan (or the Devil) is mentioned, it may be observed, that he fell from Heaven, with all his company; that God cast him down from thence for the punishment of his pride; and by his envy and malice, death, and all other evils came into the world; that by the permission of God he exercises a sort of government in the world over his subordinates, over apostate angels like himself; that God makes use of him to prove good men, and to chastise bad ones; that he is a lying spirit in the mouth of false prophets, seducers, and heretics; that it is he, or some of his, that torment, obsess, or possess men, that inspire them with evil designs, as did *David*, when he suggested to him to number his people, and to *Judas* to betray *Jesus Christ*, and to

Ananias and Sapphira to conceal the price of their field. That he roves about full of rage, like a roaring lion, to tempt, to betray, to destroy, and to involve us in guilt and wickedness.

"That his power and malice are restricted within certain limits, and controlled by the will of God; that he sometimes appears to men to seduce them; that he can transform himself into an angel of light; that he sometimes assumes the form of a spectre, as he appeared to the Egyptians while they were involved in darkness in the days of Moses; that he creates several diseases to men; that he chiefly presides over death, and bears aways the souls of the wicked to hell; that at present he is confined to Hell, as in a prison, but that he will be unbound and set at liberty in the year of *Anti-Christ*; that hell-fire is prepared for him and his; that he is to be judged at the last day. But I cannot perceive very clearly from scripture, that he torments the souls of the wicked in hell, as we generally believe."

In his interesting volume on Elizabethan demonology Mr. Spalding urges that "the empire of the supernatural must obviously be most extended where civilization is the least advanced," and he gives three reasons for the belief in devils—1. "The apparent incapacity of the majority of mankind to accept a purely monotheistic creed." 2. "The division of spirits into hostile camps, good and evil." 3. "The tendency of all theological systems to absorb into

themselves the deities extraneous to themselves, not as gods, but as inferior or even evil spirits."

Even if I were a theist I should refuse to see in God a being omniscient and omnipotent, who puts us into this world without our volition, leaves us to struggle through it unequally pitted against an almost omnipotent and super-subtle Devil; and who, if we fail, finally drops us out of this world into Hell-fire, where a legion of inferior devils finds constant and never-ending employment in inventing fresh tortures for us; our crime being, that we have not succeeded where success was rendered impossible. No high thinkings are developed by the doctrine of Devils and damnation. If a potent faith, it degrades to imbecility alike the teacher and the taught, by its abhorrent mercilessness; and if mere form instead of a faith, then is the Devil doctrine a misleading sham.

WERE ADAM AND EVE OUR FIRST PARENTS?

THIS question, Were Adam and Eve our first parents? is indeed one of vital importance. A negative answer is a denial of the whole Christian scheme. The Christian theory is that Adam, the common father of the whole human race, sinned, and by his sin dragged down all his posterity to a state from which redemption was needed, and that Jesus is, and was, the Redeemer, by whom all mankind are, and were, saved from the consequences of the fall of Adam. If Adam therefore be not the first man, if it is not to Adam the various races of mankind are indebted for their origin, then the whole hypothesis of fall and redemption fails.

It is impossible in the space of this pamphlet to give any statement and analysis of the various hypotheses as to the origin of the human race; that I have done at some length in my volume on “Genesis: its Authorship and Authenticity.” Personally I incline to favor the doctrine of a plurality of sources for the various types of the human race. That wherever the conditions for life have been, there also has been the degree of life resultant on those conditions. My purpose here is not to demonstrate the correctness of

my own thinking, but rather to illustrate the incorrectness of the Genesaical teaching. Were Adam and Eve our first parents? On the one hand, an affirmative answer can be obtained from the Bible, which, though in Genesis v, 2, using Adam as a race-name, specifically asserts (ii, 22) Adam and Eve to be the first man and woman made by God, and in the authorised version fixes the date of their making about 6,000 years, little more or less, from the present time. On the other hand, science emphatically declares man to have existed on the earth for a far more extended period, affirms that as far as we can trace man historically, we find him in isolated groups, diverse in type, till we lose him in the ante-historic period; and with nearly equal distinctness denies that the various existing races find their common parentage in one pair. It is only on the first point that I attack the Bible chronology of man's existence. I am aware that calculations based upon the authorised version of the Old Testament Scriptures are open to objection, and that while from the Hebrew 1,656 years represent the period from Adam to the Deluge generally acknowledged, the Samaritan Pentateuch only yields for the same period 1,307 years, while the Septuagint version furnishes 2,242 years; but a most erudite Egyptologist, states a fatal objection to the Septuagint chronology—i.e., that it makes Methuselah outlive the Flood.[17] The Deluge

occurred, according to the Septuagint, in the year of the world 2,242, and by adding up the generations previous to his (Methuselah's) birth—Adam, 230; Seth, 205; Enos, 190; Cainan, 170; Mahaleel, 165; Jared, 162; Enoch, 165; = 1,287—Methuselah was born in the year of the world 1287. He lived 969 years, and therefore died in 2256. But this is fourteen years after the Deluge.

The Rev. Dr. Lightfoot, who wrote about 1644, fixes the month of creation at September, 5,572 years preceding the date of his book, and says that Adam was expelled from Eden on the day on which he was created.[18] In my volume on Genesis (pp. 29-36) the reader will find the chronology of Genesis carefully examined. For our immediate purpose we will take the ordinary English Bible, which gives the following result: From Adam to Abraham (Genesis v and xi), 2,008; Abraham to Isaac (Genesis xxi, 5), 100; Isaac to Jacob (Genesis xxv, 26), 60; Jacob going into Egypt (Genesis xlvii, 9), 130; Sojourn in Egypt (Exodus xii, 41), 430; Duration of Moses' leadership (Exodus vii, 7; xxxi, 2), 40; thence to David, about 400; from David to Captivity, 14 generations (27), about 22 reigns, 473; Captivity to Jesus, 14 generations, about 5,934 = 234; less disputed 230 years of sojourn in Egypt, 230 = 4,004.

These dates follow the Bible statement, and there is no portion of the orthodox text, except the

period of the Judges, which will admit any considerable extension of the ordinary Oxford chronology.

The Book of Judges is not a book of history. Everything in it is recounted without chronological order. It will suffice to say that the cyphers which we find in the Book of Judges and in the First Book of Samuel yield us, from the death of Joshua to the commencement of the reign of Saul, the sum-total of 500 years, which would make, since the exodus from Egypt, 565 years; whereas the First Book of Kings counts but 480 years, from the going out of Egypt down to the foundation of the temple under Solomon. According to this we must suppose that several of the judges governed simultaneously.(19)

Alfred Maury, in his profound essay on the classification of tongues, traces back some of the ancient Greek mythologies to a Sanscrit source. He has the following remark, worthy of earnest attention: “The God of heaven, or the sky, is called by the Greek *Zeus Pater*; and let us have notice that the pronunciation of Z resembles very much that of D, inasmuch as the word Zeus becomes in the genitive (Dios). The Latins termed the same God, *Dies-piter*, or Jupiter. Now in the Veda, the God of heaven is called Dyashpitai.” What is this but the original of our own Christian God the father, the *Jeue* pater of the Old Testament? The Hebrew Records, whether or not God-inspired, are certainly not the

most antique. Neither is it true that the Hebrew mythology is the most ancient, nor the Hebrew language the most primitive; on the contrary, the mythology is clearly derived, and the language in a secondary or tertiary state.

The word Adam is first written as a proper name in Genesis ii, 19, but the word written Adam is and this is found in Genesis i, 26, and in several other verses. In i, 27, the word is used as if it meant not one man only, but "male and female;" indeed v. 2, says, "male and female created he them and blessed them and called their name Adam." Genesis ii, 18, treats the man as alone, and 19 his name as Adam.

What is the value of this Book of Genesis, the sole authority for the hypothesis that Adam and Eve, about 6,000 years ago, were the sole founders of the peoples now living on the face of the earth? Written we know not by whom, we know not when, and we know not in what language. Eusebius, Chrysostom, and Clemens Alexandrinus alike agree that the name of Moses should not stand at the head of Genesis as the author of the book. Origen did not hesitate to declare the contents of the first and second chapters of Genesis to be purely figurative. Our translation of it has been severely criticised by the learned and pious Bellamy, and by the more learned and less pious Sir William Drummond. It has been amended and revised in our own day. Errors almost innumerable have been pointed out, the correctness

of the Hebrew text itself questioned, and yet this book is claimed as an unerring guide to the students of ethnology. They may do anything, everything, except stray out of the beaten track. We have, on the one hand, an anonymous book, which, for the development of the diversities of the human family, does not even take us back so much as 6,000 years. At least 1,600 years must be deducted for the alleged Noachian deluge, when the world's inhabitants were again reduced to one family, one race, one type. On the other hand, we have now existing Esquimaux men, of the Arctic realm—Chinamen, of the Asiatic realm—Englishmen, of the European realm—Sahara negroes, of the African realm—Fuegians, of the American realm—New Zealanders, of the Polynesian realm—the Malay, representative of the realm which bears his name—the Tasmanian, of the Australian realm—with other families of each realm, too numerous for mention here; dark and fair; black-skinned and 'white-skinned; woolly-haired and straight-haired; low forehead, high forehead; Hottentot limb, Negro limb, Caucasian limb. Do all these different and differing structures and colors trace their origin to one pair? To Adam and Eve, or rather to Noah and his family? Or are they (the various races) indigenous to their native soils, and climates? And are these various types naturally resultant, with all their differences, from the differing conditions for life persistent to and

consistent with them?

The question is really this—Have the different races of man all found their common parent in Noah, about 4,300 years ago? Assuming the unity of the races or species of men now existing, there are but three suppositions on which the diversity now seen can be accounted for:—

"1st. A miracle or direct act of the Almighty, in changing one type into another.

"2nd. The gradual action of physical causes, such as climate, food, mode of life, etc.

"3rd. Congenital or accidental varieties."[20]

We may fairly dismiss entirely the question of miracle. Such a miracle is nowhere recorded in the Bible, and it lies upon anyone hardy enough to assert that the present diversity has a miraculous origin, to show some kind of reasons for his faith, some kind of evidence to warrant our conviction. Until this is done we need not dwell on the first hypothesis.

Of the durability of type under its own life conditions we have overwhelming proof in the statue of an ancient Egyptian scribe, taken from a tomb of the fifth dynasty, 5,000 years old, and precisely corresponding to the Fellah of the present day.[21] The sand had preserved the color of the statuette, which, from its portraitlike beauty, marks a long era of art-progress preceding its production. It antedates the orthodox era of the Flood, carries us back to a time when, if the Bible were true, Adam was yet alive,

and still we find before it kings reigning and ruling in mighty Egypt. Can the reader wonder that these facts are held to impeach the orthodox faith?

On the second point Dr. Nott writes: “It is a commonly received error that the influence of a hot climate is gradually exerted on successive generations, until one species of mankind is completely changed into another This idea is proven to be false.... A sunburnt cheek is never handed down to succeeding generations. The exposed parts of the body are alone tanned by the sun, and the children of the white-skinned Europeans in New Orleans, Mobile, and the West Indies are born as fair as their ancestors, and would remain so if carried back to a colder climate.[22] Pure negroes and negresses, transported from Central Africa to England, and marrying among themselves, would never acquire the characteristics of the Caucasian races; nor would pure Englishmen and Englishwomen, emigrating to Central Africa, and in like manner intermarrying, ever become negroes or negresses. The fact is, that while you don’t bleach the color out of the darkskinned African by placing him in London, you bleach the life out of him; and vice versa with the Englishman.[23] For a long time there has been ascribed to man the faculty of adapting himself to every climate. The following facts will show the ascription a most erroneous one, though human adaptability is very great: “In Egypt the

austral negroes are, and the Caucasian Memlooks were, unable to raise up even a third generation; in Corsica French families vanish beneath Italian summers. Where are the descendants of the Romans, the Vandals, or the Greeks in Africa? In Modern Arabia, after Mahomed Ali had got clear of the Morea War, 18,000 Arnaots (Albanians) were soon reduced to some 400 men. At Gibraltar, in 1817, a negro regiment was almost annihilated by consumption. In 1814, during the three weeks on the Niger, 130 Europeans out of 145 caught African fever, and 40 died; out of 158 negro sailors only eleven were affected, and not one died. In 1809 the British expedition to Welchereen failed in the Netherlands through marsh fever. About the same time, in St. Domingo, about 15,000 French soldiers died from malaria. Of 30,000 Frenchmen, only 8,000 survived exposure to that Antillian island; while the Dominicanised African negro, Toussaint l'Overture, retransported to Europe, was perishing from the chill of his prison in France."

On the third point, again quoting Dr. Nott:—

"The only argument left, then, is that of congenital varieties or peculiarities, which are said to spring up and be transmitted from parent to child, so as to form new races. Let us pause for a moment to illustrate this fanciful idea. The negroes of Africa, for example, are admitted not to be offsets from some other race which have been gradually

blackened and changed in a moral and physical type by the action of climate; but it is asserted that ‘once, in the flight of ages’ some genuine little negro, or rather many such, were born of Caucasian, Mongol, or other light-skinned parents, and then have turned about and changed the type of the inhabitants of a whole continent. So in America, the countless aborigines found on this continent, who we have reason to believe were building mounds before the time of Abraham, are the offspring of a race changed by accidental or congenital varieties. Thus, too, old China, India, Australia, Oceana, etc., all owe their types, physical and mental, to congenital and accidental varieties, and are descended from Adam and Eve! Can human credulity go farther, or human ingenuity invent any argument more absurd?”[24]

But even supposing these objections to the second and third suppositions set aside, there are two other propositions which, if affirmed, as I believe they may be, entirely overthrow the orthodox assertion: “That Adam and Eve, six thousand years ago, were the first pair; and that all diversities now existing must find their common source in Noah—less than four thousand three hundred years from the present time.” These two are as follows:

1. That man may be traced back on the earth long prior to the alleged Adamic era.

2. That there are diversities traceable as existing amongst the human race four thousand five hundred

years ago, as marked as in the present day.

To illustrate the position that man may be traced back to a period long prior to the Adamic era, we refer our readers to the chronology of the late Baron Bunsen, who, while allowing about

22,000 years for man's existence on earth, fixes the following dates after a patient examination of the Nilotic antiquities:

Egyptians under a republican form.....

Ascension of Bytis, the Theban, 1st Priest

Elective Kings in Egypt.....

Hereditary Kings in Upper and Lower Egypt, a double empire form.....

The assertion of such an antiquity for Egypt is no modern hypothesis. Plato puts language into the mouth of an Egyptian, first claiming in that day an antecedent of 10,000 years for painting and sculpture in Egypt. This has long been regarded as fabulous, because it was contrary to the Hebrew chronology.

There are few who now pretend that the whole *creation* (?) took place 6,000 years ago, although, if it be true that God made all in six days, and man on the sixth, then the universe would only be more

ancient than Adam by some five days. To state the age of the earth at 6,000 years is simply preposterous when it is estimated that it would require about 4,000,000 of years for the formation of the fossiliferous rocks alone, and 15,000,000 of years have been stated as a moderate estimate for the antiquity of our globe. The deltas of the great rivers of Hindustan afford corroboration as to man's antiquity. In Egypt the delta of the Nile, formed by immense quantities of sedimentary matter, which in like manner is still carried down and deposited, has not perceptibly increased during the last 3,000 years. "In the days of the earliest Pharaohs, the delta, as it now exists, was covered with ancient cities and filled with a dense population, whose civilisation must have required a period going back far beyond any date that has yet been assigned to the deluge of Noah, or even to the creation of the world."[25]

From borings which have been made at New Orleans to the depth of 600 feet, from excavations for public works, and from examinations in parts of Louisiana, where the range between high and low water is much greater than it is at New Orleans, no less than ten distinct cypress forests, divided from each other by eras of aquatic plants, etc., have been traced, arranged vertically above each other, and from these and other data it is estimated by Dr. Benet Dowler that the age of the delta is at least about 158,000 years, and in the excavations above

referred to, human remains, have been found below the further forest level, making it appear that the human race existed in the delta of the Mississippi more than 57,000 years ago.[26]

It is further urged by the same competent writer that human bones discovered on the coast of Brazil, near Santas, and on the borders of a lake called Lagoa Santa, by Captain Elliott and Dr. Lund, thoroughly incorporated with a very hard breccia, every one in a fossil state, demonstrate that aboriginal man in America antedates the Mississippi alluvia, and that he can even boast a geological antiquity, because numerous species of animals have become extinct since American humanity's first appearance.[27]

With reference to the possibility of tracing back the diversities of the human race to an antediluvian date, it is amply sufficient to point on the one side to the remains of the American Indian disentombed from the Mississippi forests, and on the other to the Egyptian monuments, tombs, pyramids, and stuccoes, revealing to us Caucasian men and Negro men, their diversities as marked as in the present day. Sir William Jones in his day, claimed for Sanscrit literature a vast antiquity, and asserted the existence of the religions of Egypt, Greece, India, and Italy, prior to the Mosaic Era. So far as Egypt is concerned the researches of Lepsius, Bunsen, Champollion, Lenormant, Gliddon, and others have fully verified

the position of the learned president of the Asiatic Society. In "Genesis: its Authorship and Authenticity," pp. 88-21, I have collected other testimony on this point.

We have Egyptian statues of the third dynasty, going back far beyond the 4,300 years which would give the orthodox era of the deluge, and taking us over the 4,500 years fixed by our second proposition. The fourth dynasty is rich in pyramids, tombs, and statues; and according to Lepsius, this dynasty commenced 3,426 B.C., or about 5,287 years from the present date.

Works on the orthodox side constantly assume that the long chronologists must be in error, because their views do not coincide with orthodox teachings. Orthodox authors treat their heterodox brethren as unworthy of credit, because of their heterodoxy. One writer asserts,[28] that the earliest reference to Negro tribes is in the era of the 12th dynasty. Supposing for a moment this to be correct, what even then will be the state of the argument? The 12th dynasty, according to Lepsius ends about 4,000 years ago. The orthodox chronology fixes the deluge about 300 years earlier. Will any sane man argue that there was sufficient lapse of time in three centuries for the development of Caucasian and Negro man from one family?

We trace back the various types of man now known, not to one centre, not to one country, not to

one family, not to one pair, but we trace them to different centres, to distinct countries, to separate families, probably to many pairs. Wherever the conditions for life are found, there are living beings also. The conditions of climate, soil, etc., of Central Africa differ from those of Europe. The indigenous races of Central Africa differ from those of Europe. Geology has helped us very little as to the prehistoric types of man, but its aid has nevertheless been sufficient to far outdate the one man Adam of 6,000 years ago.

I challenge the ordinary orthodox assertion of Adamic unity of origin accompanied as it is by threats of pains and penalties if rejected; I am yet ready to examine it, if it can be presented to me associated with facts, and divested of those future hell-fire torments and present societarian persecutions which now form its chief, if not sole, supports.

The rejection of the Bible account of the peopling of the world involves also the rejection of the entire scheme of Christianity. According to the orthodox rendering of both New and Old Testament teaching, all men are involved in the curse which followed Adam's sin. But if the account of the Fall be mythical, not historical; if Adam and Eve—supposing them to have ever existed—were preceded on the earth by many nations and empires, what becomes of the doctrine that Jesus came to redeem mankind

from a sin committed by one who was not the common father of all humanity?

Reject Adam, and you cannot accept Jesus. Refuse to believe Genesis, and you cannot give credence to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. The Old and New Testaments are so connected together, that to dissolve the union is to destroy the system. The account of the Creation and Fall of Man is the foundation-stone of the Christian Church—if this stone be rotten, the superstructure cannot be stable.

NEW LIFE OF ABRAHAM

MOST undoubtedly father Abraham is a personage whose history should command attention, if only because he figures as the founder of the Jewish race—a race which, having been promised protection and favor by Deity, appear in the large majority of cases to have experienced little else besides the sufferance of misfortune and misery themselves, or its infliction upon others. Men are taught to believe that God, following out a solemn covenant made with Abraham, suspended the course of nature to aggrandise the Jews; that he promised always to bless and favor them if they adhered to his worship and obeyed the priests. The promised blessings were usually: political authority, individual happiness and sexual power, long life, and great wealth; the threatened curses for idolatry or disobedience: disease, loss of property and children, mutilation, death. Amongst the blessings: the right to kill, plunder, and ravish their enemies, with protection, whilst pious, against any subjection to retaliatory measures. And all this because they were Abraham's children!

Abraham is especially an important personage to the orthodox Church-going Christian. Without

Abraham, no Jesus, no Christianity, no Church of England, no bishops, no tithes, no church-rates. But for Abraham, England would have lost all these blessings. Abraham was the great-grandfather of Judah, the head of the tribe to which God's mother's husband, Joseph, belonged.

In gathering materials for a short biographical sketch, we are at once comforted and dismayed by the fact that the only reliable account of Abraham's career is that furnished by the book of Genesis, supplemented by a few brief references in other parts of the Bible, and that, outside "God's perfect and infallible revelation to man," there is no reliable account of Abraham's existence at all. We are comforted by the thought that, despite the new edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," Genesis is unquestioned by the faithful, and is at present protected by Church and State against heretic assaults; but we are dismayed when we think that, if Infidelity, encouraged by Colenso, Kalisch, Professor Robertson Smith, and Professor Wellhausen, upsets Genesis, Abraham will have little historical support. The Talmudical notices of Abraham are too wonderful for irreverent criticism. Some philologists have asserted that Brama and Abraham are alike corruptions of Abba Rama, or Abrama, and that Sarah is identical with Sarasvati. Abram, is a Chaldean compound, meaning father of the elevated, or exalted father. [--Hebrew--] is a compound of

Chaldee and Arabic, signifying father of a multitude. In part v. of his work, Colenso mentions that Adonis was formerly identified with Abram, "high father," Adonis being the personified sun.

Leaving incomprehensible problems in philology for the ordinary authorised version of our Bibles, we find that Abraham was the son of Terah. The Talmud[29] says that Abraham's mother was Amathlai, the daughter of Karnebo (Bava Bathra, fol. 1, col. 1.) The text does not expressly state where Abraham was born, and I cannot therefore describe his birth-place with that accuracy of detail which a true believer might desire, but he "dwelt in old time on the other side of the flood" (Joshua xxiv, 2 and 3). Abraham was born when Terah, his father, was seventy years of age; and, according to Genesis, Terah and his family came forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and went to Haran and dwelt there. We turn to the map to look for Ur of the Chaldees, anxious to discover it as possibly Abraham's place of nativity, but find that the translators of God's inspired word have taken a slight liberty with the text by substituting "Ur of the Chaldees" for "Aur Kasdim," the latter being, in plain English, *the light of the magi, or conjurors, or astrologers* is stated by Kalisch to have been made the basis for many extraordinary legends, as to Abraham's rescue from the flames. In the Talmud P'sachim, fol. 118, col. 1, it is written that "At the time when Nimrod the wicked had cast our Father

Abraham into the fiery furnace, Gabriel stood forth in the presence of the Holy one—blessed be He!—and said, 'Lord of the universe, let me, I pray thee, go down and cool the furnace, and deliver that righteous one from it.'"

Abraham, being born—according to Hebrew chronology, 2,083 years after the creation, and according to the Septuagint 3,549 years after that event—when his father was seventy, grew so slowly that when his father reached the good old age of 205 years, Abraham had only arrived at 75 years, having, apparently, lost no less than 60 years' growth during his father's fife-time. St. Augustine and St. Jerome gave this up as a difficulty inexplicable. Calmet endeavors to explain it, and makes it worse. It is surely impossible Abraham could have lived 135 years, and yet be only 75 years of age?

"The Lord" spoke to Abraham, and promised to make of him a great nation, to bless those who blessed Abraham, and to curse those who cursed him. I do not know precisely which Lord it was that spake unto Abraham, the Hebrew says it was Jeue, or, as our translators call it, Jehovah, but as God said (Exodus vi, 2) that by the name "Jehovah was I not known" to either Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, either the omniscient Deity had forgotten the matter, or a counterfeit Lord had assumed the name. The word Jehovah, which the book of Exodus says Abraham did not know, is nearly always the name by which

Abraham addresses, or speaks of, the Jewish Deity.

Abraham having been promised protection by the God of Truth, initiated his public career with a diplomacy of statement worthy Talleyrand. He represented his wife Sarah as his sister, which, if true, is a sad reproach to the marriage. The Talmud, when Abram came into Egypt, asks: "Where was Sarah? He confined her in a chest, into which he locked her, lest anyone should gaze on her beauty. When he came to the receipt of custom, he was summoned to open the chest, but declined, and offered payment of the duty. The officers said: 'Thou carryest garments;' and he offered duty for garments. 'Nay, it is gold thou carriest;' and he offered the impost laid on gold. Then they said: 'It is costly silks, belike pearls, thou concealest;' and he offered the custom on such articles. At length the Egyptian officers insisted, and he opened the box. And when he did so, all the land of Egypt was illumined by her beauty" (Bereshith Rabba, chap. 40). The ruling Pharaoh, hearing the beauty of Sarah commended, took her into his house, she being at that time a fair Jewish dame, between 60 and 70 years of age, and he entreated Abraham well for her sake, and he had sheep and oxen, asses and servants, and camels. We do not read that Abraham objected in any way to the loss of his wife. The Lord, who is all-just, finding out that Pharaoh had done wrong, not only punished the king, but also punished the king's household, who

could hardly have interfered with his misdoings. Abraham got his wife back, and went away much richer by the transaction. Whether the conduct of father Abraham in pocketing quietly the price of the insult—or honor—offered to his wife, is worthy modern imitation, is a question only within the competence of episcopal authority. After this Abraham was very rich in "silver and gold." So was the Duke of Marlborough after the Duke of York had taken his sister in similar manner into his house. In Gen. xii, 19, there is a curious mistranslation in our version. The text is: "It is for that I had taken her for my wife;" our version has: "I *might have taken* her." The Douay so translates as to take a middle phrase, leaving it doubtful whether or not Pharaoh actually took Sarah as his wife. In any case, the Egyptian king acted far the better of the twain. Abraham plays the part of a timorous, contemptible hypocrite. Strong enough to have fought for his wife, he sold her. Yet Abraham is blessed, and his conduct is our pattern!

Despite his timorousness in the matter of his wife, Abraham was a man of wonderful courage and warlike ability. To rescue his relative, Lot—with whom he could not live on the same land without quarrelling, both being religious—he armed 318 servants, and fought with four powerful kings, defeating them and recovering the spoil. Abraham's victory was so decisive, that the King of Sodom, who fled and fell (xiv, 10) in a previous encounter, now

met Abraham alive (see verse 17), to congratulate him on his victory. Abraham was also offered bread and wine by Melchisedek, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God. Where was Salem? Some identify it with Jerusalem, which it cannot be, as Jebus was not so named until after the time of the Judges (Judges xix, 10). How does this King of this unknown Salem, never heard of before or after, come to be priest of the Most High God? These are queries for divines—orthodox disciples believe without inquiring. Melchisedek was most unique as far as genealogy is concerned. He had no father. He was without mother also; he had no beginning of days or end of life, and must be therefore at the present time an extremely old gentleman, who would be an invaluable acquisition to any antiquarian Bible Evidence Association fortunate enough to cultivate his acquaintance. God having promised. Abraham a numerous family, and the promise not having been in any part fulfilled, the patriarch grew uneasy, and remonstrated with the Lord, who explained the matter thoroughly to Abraham when the latter was in a deep sleep, and a dense darkness prevailed. Religious explanations come with greater force under these or similar conditions. Natural or artificial light and clear-sightedness are always detrimental to spiritual manifestations.

Abraham's wife had a maid named Hagar, and she bore to Abraham a child named Ishmael; at the

time Ishmael was born, Abraham was 86 years of age. Just before Ishmael's birth Hagar was so badly treated that she ran away. As she was only a slave, God persuaded Hagar to return and humble herself to her mistress. Thirteen years afterwards God appeared to Abraham, and instituted the rite of circumcision—which rite had been practised long before by other nations—and again renewed the promise. The rite of circumcision was not only practised by nations long anterior to that of the Jews, but appears in many cases not even to have been pretended as a religious rite (See Kalisch, Genesis, p. 386; Cahen, Genese, p. 43). After God had "left off talking with him, God went up from Abraham." As God is infinite, he did not, of course, go up; but still the Bible says God went up, and it is the duty of the people to believe that he did so, especially as the infinite Deity then and now resides habitually in "heaven" wherever that may be. Again the Lord appeared to Abraham, either as three men or angels or as one of the three, and Abraham, hospitably inclined, invited the three to wash their feet and to rest under the tree, and gave butter and milk and dressed calf, tender and good, to them, and they did eat; and after the enquiry as to where Sarah then was, the promise of a son is repeated. Sarah—then by her own admission an old woman, stricken in years—laughed when she heard this, and the Lord said: "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?" and Sarah denied

it; but the Lord said: “Nay, but thou didst laugh.” The three men then went toward Sodom, and Abraham with them as a guide; and the Lord explained to Abraham that some sad reports had reached him about Sodom and Gomorrah, and that he was then going to find out whether the report was reliable. God is omnipresent, and was always therefore at Sodom and Gomorrah, but had apparently been temporarily absent; he is omniscient, and therefore knew everything which was happening at Sodom and Gomorrah, but he did not know whether or not the people were as wicked they had been represented to him. God, Job tells us, “put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly.” Between the rogues and the fools, therefore, the allwise and all-powerful God seems to be liable to be misled by the reports made to him. Two of the three men or angels went on to Sodom, and left the Lord with Abraham, who began to remonstrate with Deity on the wholesale destruction contemplated, and asked him to spare the city if fifty righteous should be found within it. God said: “If I find fifty righteous within the city, then will I spare the place for their sakes.” God, being all-wise, knew there were not fifty in Sodom, and was deceiving Abraham. By dint of hard bargaining in thorough Hebrew fashion Abraham, whose faith seemed to be tempered by distrust, got the stipulated number reduced to ten, and then “the

Lord went his way."

Jacob Ben Chajim, in his introduction to the Rabbinical Bible (p. 28), tells us that the Hebrew text used to read in verse 22: "And Jehovah still stood before Abraham;" but the scribes altered it, and made Abraham stand before the Lord, thinking the original text offensive to Deity.

Genesis xviii has given plenty of work to the divines. Augustine contended that God can take food, though he does not require it. Justin compared "the eating of God with the devouring power of the fire." Kalisch sorrows over the holy fathers "who have taxed all their ingenuity to make the act of eating compatible with the attributes of Deity."

In the Epistle to the Romans Abraham's faith is greatly praised. We are told (iv, 19 and 20) that: "Being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Yet, so far from Abraham giving God glory, Genesis xvii, 17, says that: "Abraham fell upon his face and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" The Rev. Mr. Boutell says that "the declaration which caused Sarah to 'laugh' shows the wonderful familiarity which was then permitted to Abraham in his

communications with God."

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham journeyed south and sojourned in Gerar, and, either untaught or too well taught by his previous experience, again represented his wife as his sister, and Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah. As before, we find neither remonstrance nor resistance recorded on the part of Abraham. This time God punished the women in Abimelech's house for an offence they did not commit, and Sarah was again restored to her husband, with sheep, oxen, men-servants, women-servants, and money. Infidels object that the Bible says Sarah "was old and well stricken in age;" that "it had ceased to be with her after the manner of women;" that she was more than 90 years of age; and that it is not likely King Abimelech would fall in love with an ugly old woman; but if Genesis be true, it is clear that Sarah had not ceased to be attractive, as God resorted to especial means to protect her from Abimelech. At length Isaac was born, and his mother Sarah urged Abraham to expel Hagar and her son, "and the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son;" the mother being only a bondwoman does not seem to have troubled him. God, however, approving Sarah's notion, Hagar was expelled, "and she departed and wandered in the wilderness, and the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs." She had apparently carried

the child, who—being at least more than 14, and according to some calculations as much as 17 years of age—must have been a heavy child to carry in a warm climate.

The Talmud says: “On the day when Isaac was weaned Abraham made a great feast, to which he invited all the people of the land. Not all of those who came to enjoy the feast believed in the alleged occasion of its celebration, for some said contemptuously, ‘This old couple have adopted a foundling, and provided a feast to persuade us to believe that the child is their own offspring.’ What did Abraham do? He invited all the great men of the day, and Sarah invited their wives, who brought their infants, but not their nurses, along with them. On this occasion Sarah’s breasts became like two fountains, for she supplied, of her own body, nourishment to all the children. Still some were unconvinced, and said, ‘Shall a child be born to one that is a hundred years old, and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear?’ (Gen. xvii, 17). Whereupon, to silence this objection, Isaac’s face was changed, so that it became the very picture of Abraham’s; then one and all exclaimed, ‘Abraham begat Isaac’” (Bara Metzia, fol. 87, col. 1).

God never did tempt any man at any time, but he “did tempt Abraham” to kill Isaac by offering him as a burnt offering. The doctrine of human sacrifice is one of the holy mysteries of Christianity, as taught

in the Old and New Testament. Of course, judged from a religious or Biblical stand-point, it cannot be wrong, as, if it were, God would not have permitted Jephtha to sacrifice his daughter by offering her as a burnt offering, nor have tempted Abraham to sacrifice his son, nor have said in Leviticus, “None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death” (xxvii, 29), nor have in the New Testament worked out the monstrous sacrifice of his only son Jesus, at the same time son and begetting father.

Abraham did not seem to be entirely satisfied with his own conduct when about to kill Isaac, for he not only concealed from his servants his intent, but positively stated that which was not true, saying, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” If he meant that he and Isaac would come again to them, then he knew that the sacrifice would not take place. Nay, Abraham even deceived his own son, who asked him where was the lamb for the burnt offering? But we learn from the New Testament that Abraham acted in this and other matters “by faith,” so his falsehoods and evasions, being results and aids of faith, must be dealt with in an entirely different manner from transactions of every day life. Just as Abraham stretched forth his hand to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and prevented the murder, saying, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast

not withheld thy son." This conveys the impression that up to that moment the angel of the Lord was not quite certain upon the subject.

In Genesis xiii God says to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee." Yet, as is admitted by the Rev. Charles Boutell, in his "Bible Dictionary," "The only portion of territory in that land of promise, of which Abraham became possessed," was a graveyard, which he had bought and paid for. Although Abraham was too old to have children before the birth of Isaac, he had many children after Isaac [was] born. He lived to "a good old age" and died "full of years," but was yet younger than any of those who preceded him, and whose ages are given in the Bible history, except Nahor.

According to the Talmud, as Abraham was very pious so were his very camels, for they would not enter into a place where there were idols (Avoth d' Rabbi Nathan, chap. 8).

Abraham gave "all that he had to Isaac," but appears to have distributed the rest of the property amongst his other children, who were sent to enjoy it somewhere down East.

According to the New Testament, Abraham is now in Paradise, but Abraham in heaven is scarcely an improvement upon Abraham on earth. When he was entreated by an unfortunate in hell for a drop of water to cool his tongue, father Abraham replied: "Son, remember that in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things, and now thou art tormented," as if the reminiscence of past good would alleviate present and future continuity of evil.

Rabbi Levi says that Abraham sits at the gate of hell and does not permit any circumcised Israelite to enter (Yalkut Shimoni, fol. 33, col. 2, sec. 18).

The Talmud declares that "Abraham was a giant of giants; his height was as that of *seventy-four* men put together. His food, his drink, and his strength were in the proportion of seventy-four men's to one man's. He built an iron city for the abode of his seventeen children by Keturah, the walls of which were so lofty that the sun never penetrated them; he gave them a bowl full of precious stones, the brilliancy of which supplied them with light in the absence of the sun." (Sophrim, chap. 21).

NEW LIFE OF JACOB

IT ought to be pleasant work to present sketches of God's chosen people. More especially should it be an agreeable task to recapitulate the interesting events occurring during the life of a man whom God has loved. Jacob was the son of Isaac; the grandson of Abraham. These three men were so free from fault, their lives so unobjectionable, that the God of the Bible delighted to be called the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." It is true that Abraham owned slaves, was not always exact to the truth, and, on one occasion, turned his wife and child out to the mercies of a sandy desert; that Isaac in some sort followed his father's example and disingenuous practices; and that Jacob was without manly feeling, a sordid, selfish, unfraternal cozener, a cowardly trickster, a cunning knave; but they must nevertheless have been good men, for God was "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The name Jacob is not inappropriate. Kalisch says—"This appellation, if taken in its obvious etymological meaning, implies a deep ignominy: for the root from which it is derived signifies *to deceive, to defraud*, and in such a despicable meaning the same form of the word is indeed used elsewhere"

(Jeremiah ix, 3.). Jacob would, therefore, be nothing else but the crafty *impostor*; in this sense Esau, in the heat of his animosity, in fact clearly explains the word, "justly is his name called Jacob (cheat) because he has cheated me twice." (Genesis xxvii, 36.) Pious Jews in the formula for blessing the new moon are taught in the Kabbalah "to meditate on the initials of the four divine epithets which form Jacob." According to the ordinary orthodox Bible chronology, Jacob was born about 1836 or 1837 B.C., that is, about 2168 years from "in the beginning," his father Isaac being then sixty years of age. There is a difficulty connected with Holy Scripture chronology which would be insuperable were it not that we have the advantage of spiritual aids in elucidation of the text. This difficulty arises from the fact that the chronology of the Bible, in this respect, like the major portion of Bible history, is utterly unreliable. But we do not look to the Old or New Testament for mere common-place, every-day facts—if we do, severe will be the disappointment of the truth-seeker—we look there for mysteries, miracles, paradoxes, and perplexities, and have no difficulty in [finding] the objects of our search. Jacob was born, together with his twin brother, Esau, in consequence of special entreaty addressed by Isaac to the Lord on behalf of Re-bekah, to whom he had been married about nineteen years, and who was yet childless. Infidel physiologists (and it is a not

unaccountable fact, that all who are physiologists are also in so far infidel) assert that prayer would do little to repair the consequence of such disease, or such abnormal organic structure, as had compelled sterility. But our able clergy are agreed that the Bible was not intended to teach us science; or, at any rate, we have learned that its attempts in that direction are most miserable failures. Its mission is to teach the unteachable: to enable us to comprehend the incomprehensible. Before Jacob was born God decreed that he and his descendants should obtain the mastery over Esau and his descendants: “the elder shall serve the younger.” (Gen. xxv, 23) The God of the Bible is a just God, but it is hard for weak flesh to discover the justice of this proemial decree, which so sentenced to servitude the children of Esau before their father’s birth. Jacob came into the world holding by his brother’s heel, like some cowardly knave in the battle of life, who, not daring to break a gap in the hedge of conventional prejudice, which bars his path, is yet ready enough to follow some bolder warrior, and to gather the fruits of his courage. “And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field: and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.” One day, Esau returned from his hunting, faint and wearied to the very point of death. He was hungry, and came to Jacob, his twin and only brother, saying, “Feed me, I pray thee” (Ibid., xxv, 30) “for I am exceedingly

faint." (Douay Version) In a like case would not any man so entreated immediately offer to the other the best at his command, the more especially when that other is his only brother, born at the same time, from the same womb, suckled at the same breast, fed under the same roof? But Jacob was not merely a man and a brother, he was one of God's chosen people, and one who had been honored by God's prenatal selection. "If a man come unto me and hate not his brother, he cannot be my disciple." So taught Jesus the Jew, in after time, and in this earlier age Jacob the Jew, in practice, anticipated the later doctrine. It is one of the misfortunes of theology, if not its crime, that profession of love to God is often accompanied with bitter and active hate of man. Jacob was one of the founders of the Jewish race, and even in this their prehistoric age, the instinct for driving a hard bargain seems strongly developed. "Jacob said" to Esau, "Sell me this day thy birthright." The famished man vainly expostulated, and the birthright was sold for a mess of pottage. If to-day one man should so meanly and cruelly take advantage of his brother's necessities to rob him of his birthright, all good and honest men would shun him as an un-brotherly scoundrel, and most contemptible knave; yet, less than

4,000 years ago, a very different standard of morality must have prevailed. Indeed, if God is unchangeable, divine notions of honor and honesty

must to-day be widely different from those of our highest men. God approved and endorsed Jacob's conduct. His approval is shown by his love, afterwards expressed for Jacob; his endorsement by his subsequent attention to Jacob's welfare. We may learn from this tale, so pregnant with instruction, that any deed which to the worldly and sensible man appears like knavery while understood literally becomes to the devout and prayerful man an act of piety when understood spiritually. Pious preachers and clever commentators declare that Esau despised his birthright. I do not deny that they might back their declaration by scripture quotations, but I do deny that the narrative ought to convey any such impression. Esau's words were, "Behold I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright be to me?"

Bereshith Rabba, cap. 95, says that "wherever Jacob resided, he studied the law as his fathers did," and it adds, "How is this, seeing that the law had not yet been given?" There is no record that Esau also studied the law, and there is no mention of any legal proceedings to set aside this very questionable birthright transfer.

Isaac growing old, and fearing from his physical infirmities the near approach of death, was anxious to bless Esau before he died, and directed him to take quiver and bow and go out in the field to hunt some venison for a savory meat, such as old Isaac

loved. Esau departed, but when he had left his father's presence in order to fulfil his request, Jacob appeared on the scene. Instigated by his mother, he, by an abject stratagem, passed himself off as Esau. With a savory meat prepared by Rebekah, he came into his father's presence, and Isaac said, "Who art thou, my son?" Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord. The Lord loved Jacob, yet Jacob lied to his old blind father, saying, "I am Esau thy firstborn." Isaac had some doubts: these are manifested by his inquiring how it was that the game was killed so quickly. Jacob, whom God loved, in a spirit of shameless blasphemy replied, "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." Isaac still hesitated, fancying that he recognised the voice to be the voice of Jacob, and again questioned him, saying, "Art thou my very son Esau?" God is the God of truth and loved Jacob, yet Jacob said, "I am." Then Isaac blessed Jacob, believing that he was blessing Esau and God permitted the fraud to be successful, and himself also blessed Jacob. In that extraordinary composition known as the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told that by faith Isaac blessed Jacob. But what faith had Isaac? Faith that Jacob was Esau? His belief was produced by deceptive appearances. His faith resulted from false representations. And there are very many men in the world who have no better foundation for their religious faith than had Isaac when he blessed Jacob, believing him to be Esau. In

the Douay Bible I find the following note on this remarkable narrative: “St. Augustine (*L. contra mendacium*, c. 10), treating at large upon this place, excuseth Jacob from a lie, because this whole passage was mysterious, as relating to the preference which was afterwards to be given to the Gentiles before the carnal Jews, which Jacob, by prophetic light, might understand. So far it is certain that the first birthright, both by divine election and by Esau’s free cession, belonged to Jacob; so that if there were any lie in the case, it would be no more than an officious and venial one.” How glorious to be a patriarch, and to have a real saint laboring years after your death to twist your lies into truth by aid of prophetic light! Lying is at all times most disreputable, but at the deathbed the crime is rendered more heinous. The death hour would have awed many men into speaking the truth, but it had little effect on Jacob. Although Isaac was about to die, this greedy knave cared not, so that he got from the dying man the sought-for prize. God is said to love righteousness and hate iniquity, yet he loved the iniquitous Jacob, and hated the honest Esau. All knaves are tinged more or less with cowardice. Jacob was no exception to the rule. His brother, enraged at the deception practised upon Isaac, threatened to kill Jacob. Jacob was warned by his mother and fled. Induced by Rebekah, Isaac charged Jacob to marry one of Laban’s daughters. On the way to Haran,

where Laban dwelt, Jacob rested and slept. While sleeping he dreamed; ordinarily, dreams have little significance, but in the Bible they are more important. Some of the most weighty and vital facts of the Bible are communicated in dreams; and rightly so; if the men had been wideawake they would have probably rejected the revelation as absurd. So much does that prince of darkness, the devil, influence mankind against the Bible in the day time, that it is when all is dark, and our eyes are closed, and the senses dormant, that God's mysteries are most clearly seen and understood. Jacob "saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven; the angels also, of God ascending and descending by it, and the Lord leaning upon the ladder (Gen. xxviii, 12 and 13, Douay Version). In the ancient temples of India, and in the mysteries of Mithra, the seven-stepped ladder by which the spirits ascended to heaven is a prominent feature, and one of probably far higher antiquity than the age of Jacob. Did paganism furnish the groundwork for the patriarch's dream? "No man hath seen God at anytime." God is "invisible." Yet Jacob saw the invisible God, whom no man hath seen or can see, either standing above a ladder or leaning upon it. True, it was all a dream. Yet God spoke to Jacob, but perhaps that was a delusion too. We find by scripture that God threatens to send to some "strong delusions that they might believe a lie and be damned." Poor

Jacob was much frightened; as any one might be, to dream of God leaning on so long a ladder. What if it had broken, and the dreamer underneath it? Jacob's fears were not so powerful but that his shrewdness and avarice had full scope in a sort of half-vow, halfcontract, made in the morning. Jacob said, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I shall come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God." The inference deducible from this conditional statement is, that if God failed to complete the items enumerated by Jacob, then the latter would have nothing to do with him. Jacob was a shrewd Jew, who would have laughed to scorn the preaching "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

After this contract Jacob went on his journey, and reached the house of his mother's brother, Laban, into whose service he entered. "Diamond cut diamond" would be an appropriate heading to the tale which gives the transactions between Jacob the Jew and Laban the son of Nahor. Laban had two daughters. Rachel, the youngest, was "beautiful and well-favored;" Leah, the elder, was "blear-eyed." Jacob served for the pretty one; but on the wedding day Laban made a feast, and when evening came gave Jacob the ugly Leah instead of the pretty

Rachel. Jacob being (according to Josephus) both in drink and in the dark, it was morning ere he discovered his error. After this Jacob served for Rachel also, and then the remainder of the chapter of Jacob's servitude to Laban is but the recital of a series of frauds and trickeries. Jacob embezzled Laban's property, and Laban misappropriated and changed Jacob's wages. In fact, if Jacob had not possessed the advantage of divine aid, he would probably have failed in the endeavor to cheat his master, but God, who says "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor anything that is thy neighbor's," encouraged Jacob in his career of covetous criminalty. At last Jacob, having amassed a large quantity of property, determined to abscond from his employment, and taking advantage of his uncle's absence at sheepshearing "he stole away unawares," taking with him his wives, his children, flocks, herds, and goods. To crown the whole, Rachel, worthy wife of a husband so fraudulent, stole her father's gods.

But in those days God's ways were not as our ways. God came to Laban in a dream and compounded the felony, saying, "Take heed thou speak not anything harshly against Jacob."[30] This would probably prevent Laban giving evidence in a police court against Jacob, and thus save him from transportation or penal servitude. After a reconciliation and treaty had been effected between

Jacob and Laban, the former went on his way “and the angels of God met him.” Balaam’s ass, at a later period, shared the good fortune which was the lot of Jacob, for that animal also had a meeting with an angel. Jacob was the grandson of the faithful Abraham to whom angels also appeared. It is somewhat extraordinary that Jacob should have manifested no surprise at meeting a host of angels. Still more worthy of note is it that our good translators elevate the same words into “angels” in verse 1, which they degrade into “messengers” in verse 3. John Bellamy, in his translation, says the “angels” were not immortal angels, and it is very probable John Bellamy was right. Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau, and heard that the latter was coming to meet him followed by 400 men. Jacob, a timorous knave at best, became terribly afraid. He, doubtless, remembered the wrongs inflicted upon Esau, the cruel extortion of the birthright, and the fraudulent obtainment of the dying Isaac’s blessing. He, therefore, sent forward to his brother Esau a large present as a peace offering. He also divided the remainder of his flocks, herds, and goods, into two divisions, that if one were smitten, the other might escape; sending these on, he was left alone. While alone he wrestled with either a man, or an angel, or God. The text says “a man,” the heading to the chapter says “an angel” and Jacob himself says that he has “seen God face to face.”

Whether God, angel, or man, it was not a fair wrestle, and were the present editor of Bell's Life referee, he would, unquestionably, declare it to be most unfair to touch "the hollow of Jacob's thigh" so as to put it "out of joint," and consequently, award the result of the match to Jacob. Jacob, notwithstanding the injury, still kept his grip, and the apocryphal wrestler, finding himself no match at fair struggling, and that foul play was unavailing, now tried entreaty, and said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Spirits never appear in the day time, when if they did appear, they could be seen and examined; they are often more visible in the twilight, in the darkness, and in dreams. Jacob would not let go: his life's instinct for bargaining prevailed, and probably, because he could get nothing else, he insisted on his opponent's blessing, before he let him go. In the Roman Catholic version of the Bible there is the following note:—"Chap. xxxii, v. 24. *A man, etc*.This was an angel in human shape, as we learn from *Osee* (c. xii, v. 4). He is called God (xv, 28 and 30), because he represented the son of God. This wrestling, in which Jacob, assisted by God, was a match for an angel, was so ordered (v. 28) that he might learn by this experiment of the divine assistance, that neither Esau, nor any other man, should have power to hurt him." How elevating it must be to the true believer to conceive God helping Jacob to wrestle with his own representative. On the

morrow Jacob met Esau.

"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed[31] him; and they wept."

"And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord." "And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself."

"The last portion of the history of Jacob and Esau", writes G. J. Holyoake, "is very instructive. The coward fear of Jacob to meet his brother is well delineated. He is subdued by a sense of his treacherous guilt. The noble forgiveness of Esau invests his memory with more respect than all the wealth Jacob won, and all the blessings of the Lord he received. Could I change my name from Jacob to Esau, I would do it in honor of him. The whole incident has a dramatic interest. There is nothing in the Old or New Testament equal to it. The simple magnanimity of Esau is scarcely surpassed by anything in Plutarch. In the conduct of Esau, we see the triumph of time, of filial affection, and generosity over a deep sense of execrable treachery, unprovoked and irrevocable injury." Was not Esau a merciful, noble, generous man? Yet God hated him, and shut him out of all share in the promised land. Was not Jacob a mean, prevaricating knave: a crafty, abject cheat? Yet God loved and rewarded him. How great

are the mysteries in this Bible representation of an all-good and all-loving God, thus hating good, and loving evil! At the time of the wrestling a promise was made, which is afterwards repeated by God to Jacob, that the latter should not be any more called Jacob, but Israel. This promise was not strictly kept; the name "Jacob" being used repeatedly, mingled with that of Israel in the after part of Jacob's history. Jacob had a large family; his sons are reputedly the heads of the twelve Jewish tribes. Joseph, who was much loved by his father, was sold by his brethren into slavery. This transaction does not seem to have called for any special reproval from God. Joseph, who from early life was skilled in dreams, succeeded by interpreting the visions of Pharaoh in obtaining a sort of premiership in Egypt; while filling which office he, like more modern Prime Ministers, "placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land." Joseph not only gave his own family the best place in the land, but he also, by a trick of statecraft, obtained the land for the king, made slaves of the people, and made it a law over the land of Egypt that the king should be entitled to one-fifth of the produce, always, of course, excepting and saving the rights of the priest. Judah, another brother, sought to have burned a woman by whom he had a child. A third, named Reuben, was guilty of the grossest vice, equalled only by that of Absalom the son of David; of

Simeon and Levi, two more of Jacob's sons, it is said that "instruments of cruelty were in their habitations;" their conduct, as detailed in the 34th chapter of Genesis, alike shocks by its treachery and its mercilessness. After Jacob had heard that his son Joseph was governor in Egypt, but before he had journeyed farther than Beersheba, God spake unto him in the visions of the night, and probably forgetting that he had given him a new name, or being more accustomed to the old one, said, "Jacob, Jacob," and then told him to go down into Egypt; where Jacob died after a residence of about seventeen years, when 147 years of age.[32] Before Jacob died he blessed first the sons of Joseph, and then his own children, and at the termination of his blessing to Ephraim and Manasseh, we find the following speech addressed to Joseph, "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." This speech implies warlike pursuits on the part of Jacob, of which the Bible gives no record, and which seem incompatible with his recorded life. The sword of craft and the bow of cunning are the only weapons in the use of which he was skilled. When his sons murdered and robbed the Hivites, fear seems to have been Jacob's most prominent characteristic.

The Talmud says: "The sons of Esau, of Ishmael, and of Keturah, went on purpose to dispute the

burial (of Jacob); but when they saw that Joseph had placed his crown upon the coffin, they did the same with theirs." There were *thirty-six* crowns in all, tradition says. "And they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation." Even the very horses and asses joined in it, we are told. On arriving at the cave of Machpelah, Esau once more protested, and said, "Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, are all buried here. Jacob disposed of his share when he buried Leah in it, and the remaining one belongs to me." "But thou didst sell thy share with thy birthright," remonstrated the sons of Jacob. "Nay," rejoined Esau, "that did not include my share in the burial place." "Indeed it did," they argued, "for our father, just before he died, said (Gen. i, 5), 'In my grave which I have bought for myself.'" "Where are the title-deeds?" demanded Esau. "In Egypt," was the answer. And immediately the swiftfooted Naphthali started for the records ("So light of foot was he," says the Book of Jasher, "that he could go upon the ears of corn without crushing them"). Hushim, the son of Dan, being deaf, asked what was the cause of the commotion. On being told what it was, he snatched up a club and smote Esau so hard that his eyes dropped out and fell upon the feet of Jacob, at which Jacob opened his eyes and grimly smiled (Soteh, fol. 13, col. 1).

NEW LIFE OF MOSES

THE “Life of Abraham” was presented to our readers, because, as the nominal founder of the Jewish race, his position entitled him to that honour. The “Life of David,” because, as one of the worst men and worst kings ever known, his history might afford matter for reflection to admirers of monarchical institutions and matter for comment to the advocates of a republican form of government. The “Life of Jacob” served to show how basely mean and contemptibly deceitful a man might become, and yet enjoy God’s love. Having given thus a brief outline of the career of the patriarch, the king, and the knave, the life of a priest naturally presents itself as the most fitting to complement the present quadrifid series.

Moses, the great grandson of Levi, was born in Egypt, not far distant from the banks of the Nile, a river world-famous for its inundations, made familiar to ordinary readers by the travellers who have journeyed to discover its source, and held in bad repute by strangers, especially on account of the carnivorous Saurians who infest its waters. The mother and father of our hero were both of the tribe of Levi, and were named Jochebed and Amram. The

infant Moses was, at the age of three months, placed in an ark of bulrushes by the river's brink. This was done in order to avoid the decree of extermination propounded by the reigning Pharaoh against the male Jewish children. The daughter of Pharaoh, coming down to the river to bathe, found the child and took compassion upon him, adopting him as her son. Of the early life of Moses we have but scanty record. We are told in the New Testament that he was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts vii, 21), and that "when he was come to years he refused" by faith (Hebrews, xi, 24) "to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Perhaps the record from which the New Testament writers quoted has been lost; it is certain that the present version of the Old Testament does not contain those statements. The record which is lost may have been God's original revelation to man, and of which our Bible may be an incomplete version. I am little grieved by the supposition that a revelation may have been lost, being, for my own part, more inclined to think that no revelation has ever been made. Josephus says that, when quite a baby, Moses trod contemptuously on the crown of Egypt. The Egyptian monuments and Exodus are both silent on this point. Josephus also tells us that Moses led the Egyptians in war against the Ethiopians, and married Tharbis, the daughter of the Ethiopian monarch. This also is omitted both in Egyptian history and in the sacred record. When

Moses was grown, according to the Old Testament, or when he was 40 years of age according to the New, “it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel,” “And he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew;” “And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.” The New Testament says that he did it, “for he supposed that his brethren would understand how that God, by his hand, would deliver them.” (Acts vii, 25) But this is open to the following objections:—The Old Testament says nothing of the kind;—there was no man to see the homicide, and as Moses hid the body, it is hard to conceive how he could expect the Israelites to understand a matter of which they not only had no knowledge whatever, but which he himself did not think was known to them;—if there were really no man present, the story of the after accusation against Moses needs explanation;—it might be further objected that it does not appear that Moses at that time did even himself conceive that he had any mission from God to deliver his people. Moses fled from the wrath of Pharaoh, and dwelt in Midian, where he married the daughter of one Reuel or Raguel, or Jethro. This name is not of much importance, but it is strange that if Moses wrote the books of the Pentateuch he was not more exact in designating so near a relation. While acting as shepherd to his father-in-law, “he led the flock to the

back side of the desert," and "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire:" that is, the angel was either a flame, or was the object which was burning, for this angel appeared in the midst of a bush which burned with fire, but was not consumed. This flame appears to have been a luminous one, for it was a "great sight," and attracted Moses, who turned aside to see it. But the luminosity would depend on substance ignited and rendered incandescent. Is the angel of the Lord a substance susceptible of ignition and incandesence? Who knoweth? If so, will the fallen angels ignite and burn in hell? God called unto Moses out of the midst of the bush. It is hard to conceive an infinite God in the middle of a bush, yet as the law of England says that we must not "deny the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority," in order not to break the law, I advise all to believe that, in addition to being in the middle of a bush, the infinite and all-powerful God also sat on the top of a box, dwelt sometimes in a tent, afterwards in a temple; although invisible, appeared occasionally; and, being a spirit without body or parts, was hypostatically incarnate as a man. Moses, when spoken to by God, "hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God." If Moses had known that God was *invisible,* he would have escaped this fear. God told Moses that the cry of the children of Israel had reached him, and that he had *come down* to deliver

them, and that Moses was to lead them out of Egypt. Moses does not seem to have placed entire confidence in the phlegomic divine communication, and asked, when the Jews should question him on the name of the Deity, what answer should he make? It does not appear from this that the Jews, if they had so completely forgotten God's name, had much preserved the recollection of the promise comparatively so recently made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. The answer given according to our version is, "I am that I am;" according to the Douay, "I am who am." God, in addition, told Moses that the Jews should spoil the Egyptians of their wealth; but even this promise of plunder, so congenial to the nature of a bill-discounting Jew of the Bible type, did not avail to overcome the scruples of Moses. God therefore taught him to throw his rod on the ground, and thus transform it into a serpent, from which pseudo-serpent Moses at first fled in fear, but on his taking it by the tail it resumed its original shape. Moses, with even other wonders at command, still hesitated; he had an impediment in his speech. God cured this by the appointment of Aaron, who was eloquent, to aid his brother. God directed Moses to return to Egypt, but his parting words must somewhat have damped the future legislator's hope of any speedy or successful ending to his mission. God said, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall not let the people go." On the journey back to Egypt

God met Moses “by the way in the inn, and sought to kill him.” I am ignorant as to the causes which prevented the omnipotent Deity from carrying out his intention; the text does not explain the matter, and I am not a bishop or a D.D., and I do not therefore feel justified in putting my assumptions in place of God’s revelation. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, and asked that the Jews might be permitted to go three days’ journey in the wilderness; but the King of Egypt not only refused their request, but gave them additional tasks, and in consequence Moses and Aaron went again to the Lord, who told them, “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them.” Whether God had forgotten that the name Jehovah was known to Abraham, or whether he was here deceiving Moses and Aaron, are points the solution of which I leave to the faithful referring them to the fact that Abraham called a place (Genesis xxii, 14) Jehovah-Jireh. After this Moses and Aaron again went to Pharaoh and worked wonderfully in his presence. Thaumaturgy is coming into fashion again, but the exploits of Moses far exceeded any of those performed by Mr. Home or the Davenport Brothers. Aaron flung down his rod, and it became a serpent; the Egyptian magicians flung down their rods, which became serpents also; but the rod of Aaron, as though it had been a Jew money-lender or a tithe

collecting parson, swallowed up these miraculous competitors, and the Jewish leaders could afford to laugh at their defeated rival conjurors. Moses and Aaron carried on the miracle-working for some time. All the water of the land of Egypt was turned by them into blood, but the magicians did so with their enchantments, and it had no effect on Pharaoh. Then showers of frogs, at the instance of Aaron, covered the land of Egypt; but the Egyptians did so with their enchantments, and frogs abounded still more plentifully. The Jews next tried their hands at the production of lice, and here—to the glory of God be it said—the infidel Egyptians failed to imitate them. It is written that "cleanliness is next to godliness," but we cannot help thinking that godliness must have been far from cleanliness when the former so soon resulted in lice. The magicians were now entirely discomfited. The preceding wonders seem to have affected all the land of Egypt; but in the next miracle the swarms of flies sent were confined to Egyptians only, and were not extended to Goshen, in which the Israelites dwelt.

The next plague in connection with the ministration of Moses and Aaron was that "all the cattle of Egypt died." After "all the cattle" were dead, a boil was sent, breaking forth with blains upon man and beast. This failing in effect, Moses afterwards stretched forth his hand and smote "both man and beast" with hail, then covered the land with locusts,

and followed this with a thick darkness throughout the land—a darkness which *might* have been felt. Whether it was felt is a matter on which I am unable to pass an opinion. After this, the Egyptians being terrified by the destruction of their first-born children, the Jews, at the instance of Moses, borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment; and they spoiled the Egyptians. The fact is, that the Egyptians were in the same position as the payers of church rates, tithes, vicars' rates, and Easter dues: they lent to the Lord's people, who are good borrowers, but slow when repayment is required. They prefer promising you a crown of glory to paying you at once five shillings in silver. Moses led the Jews through the Red Sea, which proved a ready means of escape, as may be easily read in Exodus, which says that the Lord "made the sea dry land" for the Israelites, and afterwards not only overwhelmed in it the Egyptians who sought to follow them, but, as Josephus tells us, the current of the sea actually carried to the camp of the Hebrews the arms of the Egyptians, so that the wandering Jews might not be destitute of weapons. After this the Israelites were led by Moses into Shur, where they were without water for three days, and the water they afterwards found was too bitter to drink until a tree had been cast into the well. The Israelites were then fed with manna, which, when gathered on Friday, kept for the Sabbath, but rotted if kept from

one week day to another. The people grew tired of eating manna, and complained, and God sent fire amongst them and burned them up in the uttermost parts of the camp; and after this the people wept and said, “Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic; but now there is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes.” This angered the Lord, and he gave them a feast of quails, and while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the anger of the Lord was kindled, and he smote the Jewish people with a very great plague (Numbers, ix). The people again in Rephidim were without water, and Moses therefore smote the Rock of Horeb with his rod, and water came out of the rock. At Rephidim the Amalekites and the Jews fought together, and while they fought Moses, like a prudent general, went to the top of a hill, accompanied by Aaron and Hur, and it came to pass that when Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hands Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands were heavy, and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun, and Joshua discomfited Amalek, and his people with the edge of the sword. How the true believer ought to rejoice

that the stone was so convenient, as otherwise the Jews might have been slaughtered, and there might have been no royal line of David, no Jesus, no Christianity. That stone should be more valued than the precious black stone of the Moslem; it is the corner-stone of the system, the stone which supported the Mosaic rule. God is everywhere, but Moses went up unto him, and the Lord called to him out of a mountain and came to him in a thick cloud, and descended on Mount Sinai in a fire, in consequence of which the mountain smoked, and the Lord came down upon the top of the mountain and called Moses up to him; and then the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and also those precepts which follow, in which Jews are permitted to buy their fellow-countrymen for six years, and in which it is provided that, if the slave-master shall give his six-year slave a wife, and she bear him sons or daughters, that the wife and the children shall be the property of her master. In these precepts it is also permitted that a man may sell his own daughter for the most base purposes. Also that a master may beat his slave, so that if he do not die until a few days after the ill-treatment, the master shall escape justice because the slave is his money. Also that Jews may buy strangers and keep them as slaves for ever. While Moses was up in the mount the people clamoured for Aaron to make them gods. Moses had stopped away so long that the people gave him up

for lost. Aaron, whose duty it was to have pacified and restrained them, and to have kept them in the right faith, did nothing of the kind. He induced them to bring all their gold, and then made it into a calf, before which he built an altar, and then proclaimed a feast. Manners and customs change. In those days the Jews did see the God that Aaron took their gold for, but now the priests take the people's gold, and the poor contributors do not even see a calf for their pains, unless indeed they are near a mirror at the time when they are making their voluntary contributions. And the Lord told Moses what happened, and said, "I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people. Now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Moses would not comply with God's request, but remonstrated, and expostulated, and begged him not to afford the Egyptians an opportunity of speaking against him. Moses succeeded in changing the unchangeable, and the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

Although Moses would not let God's "wrath wax hot" his own "anger waxed hot," and he broke, in his rage, the two tables of stone which God had given him, and on which the Lord had graven and written with his own finger. We have now no means of knowing in what language God wrote, or whether Moses afterwards took any pains to rivet together the

broken pieces. It is almost to be wondered at that the Christian Evidence Societies have not sent missionaries to search for these pieces of the tables, which may even yet remain beneath the mount. Moses took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon water and made the children of Israel drink of it. After this Moses armed the priests and killed 3,000 Jews, “and the Lord plagued the people because they had made the calf which Aaron had made.” (Exodus xxxii, 35) Moses afterwards pitched the tabernacle without the camp; and the cloudy pillar in which the Lord went, descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle; and the Lord talked to Moses “face to face, as a man would to his friend.” (Exodus xxxiii, 11) And the Lord then told Moses, “Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live.” (Exodus xxxiii, 20) Before this Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, “saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of sapphire stone,.. and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” (Exodus xxix, 9)

Aaron, the brother of Moses, died under very strange circumstances. The Lord said unto Moses, “Strip Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar, his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there.” And Moses did as the

Lord commanded, and Aaron died there on the top of the mount, where Moses had taken him. There does not appear to have been any coroner's inquest in the time of Aaron, and the suspicious circumstances of the death of the brother of Moses have been passed over by the faithful.

When Moses was leading the Israelites near Moab, Balak the King of the Moabites sent to Balaam in order to get Balaam to curse the Jews. When Balak's messengers were with Balaam, God came to Balaam also, and asked what men they were. Of course God knew, but he inquired for his own wise purposes, and Balaam told him truthfully. God ordered Balaam not to curse the Jews, and therefore the latter refused, and sent the Moabitish messengers away. Then Balak sent again high and mighty princes under whose influence Balaam went mounted on an ass, and God's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he sent an angel to stop him by the way; but the angel did not understand his business well, and the ass first ran into a field, and then close against the wall, and it was not until the angel removed to a narrower place that he succeeded in stopping the donkey; and when the ass saw the angel she fell down. Balaam did not see the angel at first; and, indeed, we may take it as a fact of history that asses have always been the most ready to perceive angels.

Moses may have been a great author, but we have little means of ascertaining what he wrote in

the present day. Divines talk of Genesis to Deuteronomy as the five books of Moses, but Eusebius, in the fourth century, attributed them to Ezra, and Saint Chrysostom says that the name of Moses has been affixed to the books without authority, by persons living long after him. It is quite certain that if Moses lived 3,300 years ago, he did not write in square letter Hebrew, and this because the character has not existed so long. It is indeed doubtful if it can be carried back 2,000 years. The ancient Hebrew character, though probably older than this, yet is comparatively modern amongst the ancient languages of the earth.

It is urged by orthodox chronologists that Moses was born about 1450 B.C., and that the Exodus took place about 1491 B.C. Unfortunately "there are no recorded dates in the Jewish Scriptures that are trustworthy." Moses, or the Hebrews, not being mentioned upon Egyptian monuments from the twelfth to the seventeenth century B.C. inclusive, and never being alluded to by any extant writer who lived prior to the Septuagint translation at Alexandria (commencing in the third century B.C.), there are no extraneous aids, from sources alien to the Jewish Books, through which any information, worthy of historical acceptance, can be gathered elsewhere about him or them.[33]

Moses died in the land of Moab when he was 120 years of age. The Lord buried Moses in a valley

of Moab, over against Bethpeor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. Josephus says that "a cloud came over him on the sudden and he disappeared in a certain valley." The devil disputed about the body of Moses, contending with the Archangel Michael (Jude, 9); but whether the devil or the angel had the best of the discussion, the Bible does not tell us.

De Beauvoir Priaulx,[34] looking at Moses as a counsellor, leader, and legislator, says:—"Invested with this high authority, he announced to the Jews their future religion, and announced it to them as a state religion, and as framed for a particular state, and that state only. He gave this religion, moreover, a creed so narrow and negative—he limited it to objects so purely temporal, he crowded it with observances so entirely ceremonial or national—that we find it difficult to determine whether Moses merely established this religion in order that by a community of worship he might induce in the tribe-divided Israelites that community of sentiment which would constitute them a nation; or, whether he only roused them to a sense of their national dignity, in the hope that they might then more faithfully perform the duties of priests and servants of Jehovah. In other words, we hesitate to decide whether in the mind of Moses the state was subservient to the purposes of religion, or religion to the purposes of state."

The same writer observes[35] that, according to the Jewish writings, Moses "is the friend and favourite of the Deity. He is one whose prayers and wishes, the Deity hastens to fulfil, one to whom the Deity makes known his designs. The relations between God and the prophet are most intimate. God does not disdain to answer the questions of Moses, to remove his doubts, and even occasionally to receive his suggestions, and to act upon them even in opposition to his own pre-determined decrees."

NEW LIFE OF DAVID

IN compiling a biographical account of any ancient personage, impediments often arise from the uncertainty, party bias, and prejudiced coloring of the various traditions out of which, the biography is collected. Here no such obstacle is met with, no such bias can be imagined, for, in giving the life of David, we extract it from an all-wise God's perfect and infallible revelation to man, and thus are enabled to present it to our readers free from any doubt, uncertainty, or difficulty. There is perhaps the fear that the manner of this brief sketch may be adjudged to be within the operation of such common law as wisely protects the career of the saints from mere sinful common-sense criticism; but as the matter is derived from the authorised version for which England is indebted to James, of royal and pious memory, this new life of David may be safely left to the impartial judgment of Mr. Justice North, aided by the charitable and pious counsel of Sir Hardinge Giffard. The latter, who has had more than one criminal client for whom he has most ably pleaded, might be relied on to make out a strong, if not a good, case for punishing any one who is unfair to the man after God's own heart. Mr. Justice Stephen has

furnished me with some slight guide in his notice of Voltaire's play called "David:"—

"It constitutes, perhaps, the bitterest attack on David's character ever devised by the wit of man, but the effect is produced almost exclusively by the juxtaposition, with hardly any alteration, of a number of texts from different parts of David's history. It would be a practical impossibility to charge a jury in such a case, so as to embody Lord Coleridge's view of the law. The judge would have to say: 'It is lawful to say that David was a murderer, an adulterer, a treacherous tyrant who passed his last moments in giving directions for assassinations; but you must observe the decencies of controversy. You must not arrange your facts in such a way as to mix ridicule with indignation, or to convey too striking a contrast between the solemn character of the documents from which the extracts are made, and the nature of the extracts themselves, and of the facts to which they relate.'"

It is in the spirit of this paragraph that I have penned the present life.

The father of David was Jesse, an Ephrathite of Bethlehem Judah, who had either eight sons, (1 Samuel xvi, 10-11, and xvii, 12), or only seven (1 Chronicles, ii, 13-15), and David was either the eighth son or the seventh. Some may think this a difficulty, but such persons will only be those who rely on their own intellectual faculties, or who have

been misled by arithmetic. If you are in any doubt, consult some qualified divine, and he will explain to you that there is really no difference between eight and seven when rightly understood with prayer and faith, by the help of the spirit. Arithmetic is an utterly infidel acquirement, and one which all true believers should eschew. The proposition that three times one are one is a fundamental article of the Christian faith. When young, David tended his father's sheep, and apparently while so doing he gained a character for being cunning in playing a mighty valiant man, a man of war and prudent in matters. He obtained his reputation as a soldier early and wonderfully, for he was "but a youth;" and God's most holy word asserts that when going to fight with Goliath, he tried to walk in armor and could not, because he was not accustomed to it (1 Samuel xvii, 39 *c.f.* Douay version). Samuel shortly prior to this anointed David, who, while yet a lad, had been selected by the Lord to be King of the Jews in place and stead of Saul, who had wickedly disobeyed the commands of the Lord, who in his infinite love and mercy had said (1 Sam. xv, 3): "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." Saul, however, behaved unrighteously, for he "spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that

was good, and would not utterly destroy them." This not unnaturally irritated and annoyed the Lord. "Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be King: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments," and the Lord bid Samuel fill a "horn with oil," and sent Samuel, who anointed David the son of Jesse in the midst of his brethren, and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. If a man takes to spirits his life will probably be one of vice, misery, and misfortune; and if spirits take to him, the result in the end is nearly the same. Every evil deed which the Bible records as having been done by David was after the spirit of the Lord had so come upon him. Saul being King of Israel, an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. The devil has, it is said, no love for music, and Saul was recommended to have David to play on a harp, in order that harmony might drive this evil spirit back to the Lord who sent it. The Jew's harp was played successfully, and Saul was often relieved from the evil spirit by David's ministrations. There is nothing miraculous in this; at the People's Concerts many a working man has been relieved from the "blue devils" by a stirring chorus, a merry song, or patriotic anthem; and on the contrary many evil spirits have been aroused by the most unmusical performances of the followers of General Booth. David was appointed armor-bearer to the

King; but curiously enough, this office does not appear to have interfered with his duties as a shepherd; indeed, the care of his father's sheep took precedence over the care of the king's armor, and in the time of war he "went and returned to feed his father's sheep." Perhaps his "prudence in matters" induced him thus to take care of himself.

A Philistine, one Goliath of Gath (whose height was six cubits and a span, or about nine feet six inches, at a low computation) had defied the armies of Israel. This Goliath was (to use the vocabulary of a reverend sporting correspondent to a certain religious newspaper) a veritable champion of the heavy weights. He carried in all about two cwt. of offensive and defensive armor upon his person, and his challenge had great weight. None dared accept it amongst the soldiers of Saul until the arrival of David, who brought some food for his brethren. David volunteered to fight the giant, but Elias, David's brother, having mocked the presumption of the offer, and Saul objecting that the venturesome lad was not competent to take part in a conflict so dangerous, David related how he pursued a lion and a bear, how he caught him by his beard and slew him. Which animal it was that David thus bearded the text does not say. The Douay says it was "a lion or a bear." To those who have chased the king of the forests or studied the habits of bears, the whole story looks, on an attentive reading, "very like a whale."

David was permitted to fight the giant; his equipment was simple, a sling and stones, and with these, from a distance, he slew the giant. Some suggest that the weapon Goliath fell under was the long bow. This suggestion is rendered probable by the book itself. One verse says that David slew the Philistine with a stone, another verse says that he slew him with the giant's own sword, while in 2 Samuel xxi, 19, we are told that Goliath the Gittite was slain by Elhanan. Our translators, who have great regard for our faith and more for their pulpits, have kindly inserted the words "the brother of" before Goliath. This emendation saves the true believer from the difficulty of understanding how Goliath of Gath could have been killed by different men at different times. David was previously well known to Saul, and was much loved and favored by that monarch. He was also seen by the king before he went forth to do battle with the gigantic Philistine. Yet (as if to verify the proverb that kings have short memories for their friends) Saul had forgotten his own armor-bearer and muchloved harpist, and was obliged to ask Abner who David was. Abner, captain of the king's host, familiar with the person of the armor-bearer to the king, of course knew David well; he therefore answered: "As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell." David, having made known his parentage, was appointed to high command by Saul; but the Jewish women over-praised David, and thus

displeased the king. One day the evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul and he prophesied. Men often talk great nonsense under the influence of spirits, which they sometimes regret when sober. It is, however, an interesting fact in ancient spiritualism to know that Saul prophesied with a devil in him. Under the joint influence of the devil and prophecy, Saul tried to kill David with a javelin, and this was repeated, even after David had married the king's daughter (whose wedding he had secured by the slaughter of two hundred men). Saul then asked his son and servants to kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, loved David, "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain." It is interesting as showing the utility of oaths that after having thus sworn Saul was more determined than ever to kill David. To save his own life David fled to Naioth, and Saul sent there messengers to arrest David; but three sets of the king's messengers having in turn all become prophets, Saul went himself, and the spirit of the Lord came upon him also, and he stripped off his clothes and prophesied as hard as the rest, "laying down naked all that day and all that night."

David lived in exile for some time in godly company, having collected round him every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented. Saul made several fruitless attempts to effect his capture, with no better

result than that he twice placed himself in the power of David, who twice showed the mercy to a cruel king which he never conceded to an unoffending people. David having obtruded himself upon Achish, King of Gath, doubtful of his safety, feigned madness to cover his retreat. He then lived a precarious life, sometimes levying a species of black mail upon defenceless farmers. Having applied to one farmer to make him some compensation for permitting the farm to go unrobbed, and his demand not having been complied with, David, who is a man after the heart of God of mercy, immediately determined to murder the farmer and all his household for their wicked reluctance in submitting to his extortions. The wife of farmer Nabal compromised the matter. David "*accepted her person*" and ten days after Nabal was found dead in his bed. David afterwards went with 600 men and lived under the protection of Achish, King of Gath, and while thus residing (being the anointed one of God who says, "Thou shalt not steal") he robbed the inhabitants of the surrounding places. Being also obedient to the statute, "Thou shalt do no murder," he slaughtered, and left neither man nor woman alive to report his robberies to King Achish; and as he "always walked in the ways" of a God to whom "lying lips are an abomination," he made false reports to Achish in relation to his actions. Of course this was all for the glory of God, whose ways are not as our ways. Soon the Philistines

were engaged in another of the constantly recurring conflicts with the Israelites. Who offered them the help of himself and hand? Who offered to make war on his own countrymen? David, the man after God's own heart, who obeyed God's statutes and who walked in his ways, to do only that which was right in the sight of God. The Philistines rejected the traitor's aid, and prevented the consummation of this baseness. While David was making this unpatriotic proffer of his services to the Philistines, his own city of Ziglag was captured by the Amalekites, who were doubtless endeavoring to avenge some of the most unjustifiable robberies and murders perpetrated by David and his followers in their country. David's own friends evidently thought that this misfortune was a retribution for David's crimes, for they spoke of stoning him. The Amalekites had captured and carried off everything, but they do not seem to have maltreated or killed any of their enemies. David was less merciful. He pursued them, recaptured the spoil, and spared not a man of them, save 400 who escaped on camels. In consequence of the death of Saul, David was elevated to the throne of Judah, while Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, was made king of Israel. But Ishbosheth having been assassinated, David slew the assassins, when they, hoping for reward, brought him the news, and he reigned ultimately over Israel also.

As religious readers are doubtless aware, the

Lord God of Israel, after the time of Moses, usually dwelt on the top of an ark or box, between two figures of gold; and on one occasion David made a journey with his followers to Baal, to bring thence the ark of God. They placed it on a new cart drawn by oxen. On the journey the oxen stumbled, and consequently shook the cart. One of the drivers, whose name was Uzzah, possibly fearing that God might be tumbled to the ground, took hold of the ark, apparently in order to steady it, and prevent it from overturning. God, who is a God of love, was much displeased that any one should presume to do any such act of kindness, and killed Uzzah on the spot as a punishment for his sin. This shows that if a man sees the Church of God tumbling down, he should never try to prop it up; if it be not strong enough to save itself, the sooner it falls the better for humankind—that is, if they keep away from it while it is falling. David was much displeased that the Lord had killed Uzzah; in fact, David seems to have wished for a monopoly of slaughter, and always manifested displeasure when any killing was done unauthorised by himself. Being displeased, David would not take the ark to Jerusalem, but left it in the house of Obed Edom; then, as the Lord proved more kind to Obed Edom than he had done to Uzzah, David determined to bring the ark away, and did so, dancing before the ark in a state of semi-nudity, for which he was reproached by Michal. Lord Campbell's

Act is intended to hinder the publication of indecencies, but the pages of the Book which the law affirms to be God's most holy word do not come within the scope of the Act, and lovers of obscene language may therefore have legal gratification so long as the Bible shall exist. The God of Israel, who had been leading a wandering life for many years, and who had "walked in a tent and in a tabernacle," and "from tent to tent," and "from one tabernacle to another," and "who had not dwelt in any house" since the time that he brought the Israelites out of Egypt, was offered "an house for him to dwell in," but he declined to accept it during the lifetime of David, although he promised to permit the son of David to erect him such an abode. David being now a powerful monarch, and having many wives and concubines, saw one day the beautiful wife of one of his soldiers. To see with this licentious monarch was to crave for the gratification of his lust. The husband Uriah was fighting for the king, yet David was base enough to steal his wife's virtue during Uriah's absence in the field of battle. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" was one of the commandments, yet we are told by God of this David, that he was one "who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart to do only that which was right in mine eyes" (1 Kings, xiv, 8). David having seduced the wife, sent for her husband, wishing to make him condone his wife's dishonor. In modern England

under a Stuart or a Brunswick, Uriah might have become a Marquis or a Baron. Some hold that virtue in rags is less worth than vice when coro-neted. Uriah would not be thus tricked, and David, the pious David, coolly planned, and without mercy caused to be executed, the treacherous murder of Uriah. God is all-just; and David having committed adultery and murder, God punished and killed an innocent child, which had no part or share in David's crime, and never chose that it should be born from the womb of Bathsheba. After this king David was even more cruel and merciless than before. Previously he had systematically slaughtered the inhabitants of Moab, now he sawed people with saws, cut them with harrows and axes, and made them pass through brick-kilns. Yet of this man, God said he "did that which was right in mine eyes." So bad a king, so treacherous a man, a lover so inconstant, a husband so adulterous, was of course a bad father, having bad children. We are little surprised, therefore, to read that his son Amnon robbed of her virtue his own sister, David's daughter Tamar, and that Am-non was afterwards slain by his own brother, David's son Absalom, and we are scarcely astonished that Absalom himself, on the house-top, in the sight of all Israel, should complete his father's shame by an act worthy a child of God's select people. Yet these are God's chosen race, and this is the family of the man "who walked in God's

ways all the days of his life."

God, who is all-wise and all-just, and who is not a man that he should repent, repented that he had made Saul king because Saul spared one man. In the reign of David the same good God sent a famine for three years on the descendants of Abraham, and upon being asked his reason for thus starving his chosen ones, the reply of the Deity was that he sent the famine on the subjects of David because Saul slew the Gibeonites. Satisfactory reason!—because Oliver Cromwell slew the Royalists, God will punish the subjects of Charles the Second. One reason is, to profane eyes, equivalent to the other, but a bishop or even a rural dean would soon show how remarkably God's justice was manifested. David was not behindhand in justice. He had sworn to Saul that he would not cut off his seed—i.e., that he would not destroy Saul's family. He therefore took two of Saul's sons, and five of Saul's grandsons, and gave them up to the Gibeonites, who hung them. Strangely wonderful are the ways of the Lord! Saul slew the Gibeonites, therefore years afterwards God starves Judah. The Gibeonites hang men who have nothing to do with the crime of Saul, except that they are his descendants, and then we are told "the Lord was intreated for the land." The anger of the Lord being kindled against Israel, he, wanting some excuse for punishing the descendants of Jacob, moved David to number his people. The Chronicles say that the

tempter was Satan, and pious people may thus learn what there is of distinction between God and Devil. Philosophers would urge that both personifications are founded in the ignorance of the masses, and the continuance of the myth will cease with the credulousness of the people. David caused a census to be taken of the tribes of Israel and Judah. There is a trival disagreement of about 270,000 soldiers between Samuel and Chronicles, but readers must not allow so slight an inaccuracy as this to stand between them and heaven. What are 270,000 men when looked at prayerfully? That any doubt should arise is to a devout mind at the same time profane and preposterous. Statisticians suggest that 1,570,000 soldiers form a larger army than the Jews are likely to have possessed; but if God is omnipotent, there is no reason to limit his power of miraculously increasing or decreasing the armament of the Jewish nation. David, it seems, did wrong in numbering his people, but we are never told that he did wrong in robbing or murdering their neighbors, or in pillaging peaceful agriculturists. David said: “I have sinned,” and for this an all-merciful God brought a pestilence on the people, and murdered 70,000 Israelites, for an offence which their ruler had committed. The angel who was engaged in this terrible slaughter stood somewhere between heaven and earth, and stretched forth his hand with a drawn sword to destroy Jerusalem itself; but even the

bloodthirsty Deity of the Bible "repented him of the evil," and said to the angel: "It is enough." Many volumes might be written to answer the enquiries—where did the angel stand, and on what? Of what metal was the sword, and where was it made? As it was a drawn one, where was the scabbard? and did the angel wear a sword-belt? Examined in a pious frame of mind, much holy instruction may be derived from the attempt to solve these solemn problems.

David now grows old and weak, and at last his death-hour comes. Oh! for the dying words of the Psalmist! What pious instruction shall we derive from the death-bed scene of the man after God's own heart! Listen to the last words of Judah's expiring monarch. You who have been content with the pious frauds and forgeries perpetrated with reference to the death-beds and dying words of the great, the generous, the witty Voltaire; the manly, the self-denying, the incorruptible Thomas Paine; the humane, simple, child-like man, yet mighty poet, Shelley—you who have turned away from these with unwarranted horror—come with me to the death-couch of the special favorite of God. Bathsheba's child stands by his side. Does any thought of the murdered Uriah rack old David's brain, or has a tardy repentance effaced the bloody stain from the pages of his memory? What does the dying David say? Does he talk of cherubs, angels and heavenly

choirs? Nay, none of these things passes his lips. Does he make a confession of his crime-stained life, and beg his son to be a better king, a truer man, a more honest citizen, a wiser father? Nay, not so—no word of sorrow, no sign of regret, no expression of remorse or repentance escapes his lips. What does the dying David say? This foul monster whom God has made king; this redhanded robber, whose life has been guarded by "our Father which art in Heaven;" this perjured king, whose lying lips have found favor in the sight of God, and who, when he dies, is safe for Heaven. It is written: "There shall be more joy in heaven before God over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine righteous men." Does David repent? Nay, like the ravenous wolf, which, tasting blood, is made more eager for the prey, he too yearns for blood; and with his dying breath begs his son to bring the grey hairs of two old men down to the grave with blood. And this is God's anointed king, the chief one of God's chosen people.

The learned and pious Puffendorf explains that David having only sworn not himself to kill Shimei (1 Kings, ii, 8) there was no perjury on the part of David in persuading Solomon to contrive the killing from which David had sworn to personally abstain.

David is alleged to have written several Psalms, but of this there is little evidence beyond pious assertion. In one of these the psalmist addresses God in pugilistic phraseology, praising Deity that he had

smitten all his enemies on the cheek-bone, and broken the teeth of the ungodly. In these days when "muscular Christianity" is not without advocates, the metaphor which presents God as a sort of magnificent Benicia Boy may find many admirers. In the eighteenth Psalm, David describes God as with "smoke coming out of his nostrils and fire out of his mouth," by which "coals were kindled." He represents God as coming down from heaven, and says: "he rode upon a cherub." The learned Parkhurst gives a likeness of a one-legged, four-winged, four-faced animal, part lion, part bull, part eagle, part man, and if a cloven foot be any criterion, part devil also. This description, if correct, will give some idea to the faithful of the wonderful character of the equestrian feats of Deity. In addition to a cherub, God has other means of conveyance at his disposal, if David be not in error when he says that the chariots of the Lord are 20,000.

In Psalm xxvi the writer adds hypocrisy in addition to his other vices. He has the impudence to tell God that he has been a man of integrity and truth, and that he has avoided evil-doers, although, if we are to believe Psalm xxxviii, the hypocrite must have already been subject to a loathsome disease—a penalty consequent on his licentiousness and criminality. In another Psalm, David the liar tells God that "he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." To understand David's pious nature we must

study his prayer to God against an enemy (Psalm cix, 6-14): “Set thou a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few: and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.”

A full consideration of the life of David must give great help to the orthodox in promoting and sustaining faith. While spoken of by Deity as obeying all the statutes and keeping all the commandments, we are astonished to find that murder, theft, lying, adultery, licentiousness, and treachery are amongst the crimes which may be laid to his charge. David was a liar, God is a God of truth; David was merciless, God is merciful, and of long suffering; David was a thief, God says: “Thou shalt not steal;” David was a murderer, God says: “Thou shalt do no murder; “David took the wife of Uriah, and “accepted” the wife of Nabal, God says: “Thou shalt

not covet thy neighbor's wife." Yet, notwithstanding all these things, David was the man after God's own heart!

Had this Jewish monarch any redeeming traits in his character? Was he a good citizen? If so, the Bible has carefully concealed every action which would entitle him to such an appellation. Was he a kind and constant husband? To whom? To which of his many wives and mistresses? Was he grateful to those who aided him in his hour of need? Rather, like the serpent which, half-frozen by the wayside, is warmed into new life in the traveller's breast, and then treacherously stings his succorer with his poisoned fangs, so David robbed and murdered the friends and allies of the King of Gath, who afforded him protection against the pursuit of Saul. Does his patriotism outshine his many vices? Does his love of country efface his many misdoings? Not even this. David was a heartless traitor who volunteered to serve against his own countrymen, and would have done so had not the Philistines rejected his treacherous help. Was he a good king? So say the priesthood now; but where is the evidence of his virtue? His crimes brought plague and pestilence on his subjects, and his reign is a continued succession of wars, revolts, and assassinations, plottings and counterplots.

The life of David is a dark blot on the page of human history, fit in companionship for the

biographies of Constantine the Great and Henry VIII; but it is through David that the genealogies of Jesus are traced, and without David there would be no Christian faith.

A NEW LIFE OF JONAH

JONAH was the son of Amittai of Gath-hepher, which place divines identify with Gittah-hepher of the Children of Zebulun. Dr. Inman says that Gath-hepher means “the village of the Cow’s tail,” but he also says it means “the Heifer’s trough.” Gesenius translates it “the wine-press of the well.” Bible Dictionaries say that Gath-hepher is the same as el-Meshhad, and affirm that the tomb of Jonah was “long shown on a rocky hill near the town.” The blood of Saint Januarius is shown in Naples to this day. Nothing is known of the sex or life of Amittai, except that Jonah was his or her son, and that Gath-hepher was her or his place of residence; but to a true believer these two facts, even though standing utterly alone, will be pregnant with instruction. To the sceptic and railer, Amittai is as an unknown quantity in an algebraic problem. Jonah was not a very common proper name, [--Hebrew--] means a dove, and some derive it from the Arabic root—to be weak, gentle:—so that one meaning of Jonah, according to Gesenius, would be feeble, gentle bird. The Prophet Jonah was by no means a feeble, gentle bird; he was rather a bird of pray. Certainly it was his intention to become a bird of passage. The date

of the birth of Jonah is not given; the margin of my Bible dates the book of Jonah B.C. cir. 862, and my Bible Dictionary fixes the date of the matter to which the book relates at “about B.C. 830.” If from any reason either of these dates should be disagreeable to the reader, he can choose any other date without fear of anachronism. Jonah was a prophet; so is Dr. Cumming, so is Brigham Young; there is no evidence that Jonah followed any other profession. Jonah’s profit probably hardly equalled that realised by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but he had money enough to pay his fare “from the presence of the Lord” to Tarshish. The exact distance of this voyage may be easily calculated by remembering that the Lord is omnipresent, and then measuring from his boundary to Tarshish. The fare may be worked out by the differential calculus after evening prayer.

The word of the Lord came to Jonah; when or how the word came the text does not record, and to any devout mind it is enough to know that it came. The first time in the world’s history that the word of the Lord ever came to anybody, may be taken to be when Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord” “walking in the Garden” of Eden “in the cool of the day.” Between the time of Adam and Jonah a long period had elapsed; but human nature, having had many prophets, was very wicked. The Lord wanted Jonah to go with a message to Nineveh. Nineveh was apparently a city of three days’ journey in size.

Allowing twenty miles for each day, this would make the city about 60 miles across, or about 180 miles in circumference. Some faint idea may be formed of this vast city, by adding together London, Paris, and New York, and then throwing in Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Marseilles, Naples, and Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Jonah knowing that the Lord did not always carry out his threats or perform his promises, did not wish to go to Nineveh, and "rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." The Tarshish for which Jonah intended his flight was either in Spain or India or elsewhere. I am inclined, after deep reflection and examination of the best authorities, to give the preference to the third-named locality. When Cain went "out of the presence of the Lord," he went into the Land of Nod, but whether Tarshish is in that or some other country there is no evidence to determine. To get to Tarshish, Jonah—instead of going to the port of Tyre, which was the nearest to his reputed dwelling, and by far the most commodious—went to the more distant and less convenient port of Joppa, where he found a ship going to Tarshish; "so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them into Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord." Jonah was, however, very shortsighted. Just as in the old Greek mythology, winds and waves are made warriors for the gods, so the God of the Hebrews "sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in

the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." Luckily she was not an old leaky vessel, overladen and heavily insured; one which the sanctimonious owners desired to see at the bottom, and which the captain did not care to save. Christianity and civilisation were yet to bring forth that glorious resultant, a pious English shipowner, with a newly-painted, but, under the paint, a worn and rusty iron vessel, long abandoned as unfit, but now fresh-named, and so insured that Davy Jones's locker becomes the most welcome haven of refuge. "The mariners were afraid... and cast forth the wares" into the sea to lighten the ship. But where was Jonah during this noise? Men trampling on deck, hoarse and harsh words of command, and the fury of the storm troubled not our prophet. Sea-sickness, which spares not the most pious, had no effect upon him. "Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay and was fast asleep." The battering of the waves against the sides disturbed not his devout slumbers; the creaking of the vessel's timbers spoiled not his repose. Despite the pitching and rolling of the vessel Jonah "was fast asleep." Had he been in the comfortable berth of a Cunarder, it would not have been easy to sleep through such a storm. Had he been in the hold of a smaller vessel on the Bay of Biscay, finding himself now with his head lower than his heels, and now with his body playing hide and seek amongst loose articles of cargo, it would have

required great absence of mind to prevent waking. Had he only been on an Irish steamer carrying cattle on deck, between Bristol and Cork, with a portion of the bulwarks washed away, and a squad of recruits "who cried every man to his God," he would have found the calmness of undisturbed slumber difficult. But Jonah was on board the Joppa and Tarshish boat, and he "was fast asleep." As the crew understood the theory of storms, they of course knew that when there is a tempest at sea it is sent by God, because he is offended by some one on board the vessel. Modern scientists scout this notion, and pretend to track storm waves across the world, and to affix storm signals in order to warn mariners. They actually profess to predict atmospheric changes, and to explain how such changes take place. Church clergymen know how futile science is, and how potent prayers are, for vessels at sea. The men on the Joppa vessel said, "every one to his fellow, Come, and lets us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah." It is always a grave question in sacred metaphysics as to whether God directed Jonah's lot, and, if yes, whether the casting of lots is analogous to playing with loaded dice. The Bishop of Lincoln, who understands how far cremation may render resurrection awkward, is the only divine capable of thoroughly resolving this problem. For ordinary Christians it is enough to know that the lot

fell upon Jonah.

Before the crew commenced casting lots to find out Jonah, they had cast lots of their wares overboard, so that when the lot fell on Jonah it was much lighter than it would have been had the lot fallen upon him during his sleep. Still, if not stunned by the lot which fell upon him, he stood convicted as the cause of the tempest:—and the crew "Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not; for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord,

hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging." No pen can improve this story; it is so simple, so natural, so child-like. Every one has heard of casting oil on troubled waters. It stands to reason that a fat prophet would produce the same effect. What a striking illustration of the power of faith it will be when bishops leave their own sees in order to be in readiness to calm an ocean storm. Or if not a bishop, at least a curate; and even a lean curate; for with sea air, a ravenous appetite, and a White Star Line cabin bill of fare of breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, and supper, fatness would soon be arrived at. In the interests of science I should like to see an episcopal prophet occasionally thrown overboard during a storm. The experiment must in any case be advantageous to humanity; should the tempest be stilled, then the ocean would be indeed the broad way, not leading to destruction; should the storm not be conquered, there would even then be promotion in the Church, and happiness to many at the mere cost of one bishop. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." Jesus says the fish was a whale. A whale would have needed preparation, and the statement has an air of vraisemblance. The fish did swallow Jonah. "Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Poor Jonah! and poor fish! Poor Jonah, for it can scarcely be pleasant, even if you escape

suffocation, to be in a fish's belly with too much to drink, and no room to swallow, and your solids either raw or too much done. Poor fish! for even after preparation it must be disagreeable to have one's poor stomach turned into a sort of prayer meeting. Jonah was taken in; but the fish found that taking in a parson was a feat neither easy nor healthy. After Jonah had uttered guttural sounds from inside the fish's belly for three days and three nights, the Lord spake unto the fish, and the fish was sick of Jonah, "and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." Some sceptics urged that a whale could not have swallowed Jonah; but once, at Tod-morden, a Church of England clergyman, who had been curate to the Reverend Charles Kingsley, got rid of this as an objection by assuring us that he should have equally believed the story had it stated that Jonah had swallowed the whale. And then the word of the Lord came to Jonah once more, and this time Jonah obeyed. He was to take God's message to the citizens of Nineveh. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Should Jonah come to London in the present day with a similar message, he would meet scant courtesy from our clergy. A foreigner, and using a strange tongue, he would probably find himself in Colney Hatch or Hanwell. To come to England in the name of Mahomet or Buddha, or Osiris or Jupiter,

would have little effect. But the Ninevites do not seem even to have raised the question that the God of the Hebrews was not their God. They listened to Jonah, and "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands." The consumption of sackcloth for covering every man and beast must have been rather large, and the Nineveh sackcloth manufacturers must have had enormous stocks on hand to supply the sudden demand. The city article of the *Nineveh Times*, if such a paper existed, would probably have described "sackcloth firm, with a tendency to rise." Man and beast, all dressed in or covered with sackcloth! It would be sometimes difficult to distinguish a Ninevite man from a Ninevite beast, the dress being similar for all. This is a difficulty, however, other nations have shared with the Ninevites. Men and women may sometimes be seen

in London dressed in broadcloth and satins, and, though their clothing is distinguishable enough, their conduct is sometimes so beastly that the naked beasts are the more respectable.

Nineveh was frightened, and Nineveh moaned, and Nineveh determined to do wrong no more. “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” God, the unchangeable, changed his purpose, and spared the city, which in his infinite wisdom he had doomed. “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.” It was enough to [vex] a saint to be sent to prophesy the destruction of the city in six weeks, and then nothing at all to happen. “And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish.” Jonah did not like to be a discredited prophet, and cried, “Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?” Jonah, knowing the Lord, was still curious and uncertain as well as angry. He was a prophet and a sceptic. “So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a boot[h], and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over

Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" The Lord seems to have overlooked that Jonah had more pity on himself than the gourd, whose only value to him was as a shade from the sun. Jonah, too, might have reminded the Lord that there were more than 120,000 persons similarly situated at the deluge and at the slaughter of the Midianites, and that the "much cattle" had never theretofore been reckoned in the divine decrees of mercy.

Here ends the new life of Jonah. Of the prophet's childhood we know nothing; of his middle age no more than we have here related; of his old

age and death we have nothing to say. It is enough for good Christians to know that “Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” According to Jesus the story of Jonah is as true as Gospel.

WHO WAS JESUS CHRIST?

MANY persons will consider the question one to which the Gospels give a sufficient answer, and that no further inquiry is necessary. But while the general Christian body affirm that Jesus was God incarnate on earth, the Unitarian Christians, less in numerical strength, but numbering a large proportion of the more intelligent and humane, absolutely deny his divinity; the Jews, of whom he is alleged to have been one, do not believe in him at all; and the enormous majority of the inhabitants of the earth have never accepted the Gospels. Even in the earliest ages of the Christian Church heretics were found, amongst Christians themselves, who denied that Jesus had ever existed in the flesh. Under these circumstances the most pious should concede that it is well to prosecute the inquiry to the uttermost, that their faith may rest on sure foundations. The history of Jesus Christ is contained in four books or gospels; outside these it cannot be pretended that there is any reliable narrative of his life. We know not with any certainty, and have now no means of knowing, when, where, or by whom these gospels were written. The name at the head of each gospel affords no clue to the real writer. Before A.D. 160, no author

mentions any Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and there is no sufficient evidence to identify the Gospels we have with even the writings to which Irenæus refers towards the close of the second century. The Church has provided us with an author for each Gospel, and some early Fathers have argued that there ought to be four Gospels, because there are four seasons, four principal points to the compass, and four corners to the earth. Bolder speculators affirm twelve apostles because there are twelve signs of the Zodiac. With regard to the Gospel first in order, divines disagree as to the language in which it was written. Some allege that the original was in Hebrew, others deny that our Greek version has any of the characters of a translation.

We neither know the hour, nor day, nor month, nor year, of Jesus's birth; divines generally agree that he was not born on Christmas Day, and yet on that day the anniversary of his birth is observed. The Oxford Chronology places the matter in no clearer light, and more than thirty learned authorities give a period of over seven years' difference in their reckoning. The place of his birth is also uncertain. The Jews, in the presence of Jesus, reproached him that he ought to have been born at Bethlehem, and he never replied, "I was born there." (John vii, 41, 42, 52.)

Jesus was the son of David, the son of Abraham (Matthew i), from whom his descent is traced

through Isaac—born of Sarai (whom the writer of the epistle to Galatians [iv, 24], says was a covenant and not a woman)—and ultimately through Joseph, who was not only not his father, but is not shown to have had any kind of relationship to him, and through whom therefore the genealogy should not be traced. There are two genealogies in the Gospels which contradict each other, and these in part may be collated with the Old Testament genealogy, which differs from both. The genealogy of Matthew is self-contradictory, counts thirteen names as fourteen, and omits the names of three kings. Matthew says Abiud was the son of Zorobabel (i, 13). Luke says Zorobabel's son Was Rhesa (iii, 27). The Old Testament contradicts both, and gives Meshullam and Hananiah and Shelomith, their sister (1 Chron. iii, 19), as the names of Zorobabel's children. The reputed father of Jesus, Joseph, had two fathers, one named Jacob, the other Heli. The divines suggest that Heli was the father of Mary, by reading the word "Mary" in Luke iii, 23, in lieu of "Joseph," and the word "daughter" in lieu of "son," thus correcting the evident blunder made by inspiration. The birth of Jesus was miraculously announced to Mary and to Joseph by visits of an angel, but they so little regarded the miraculous annunciation that they marvelled soon after at much less wonderful things spoken by Simeon. Jesus was the son of God, or God manifest in the flesh, and his birth was first

discovered by some wise men or astrologers, a class described in the Bible as an abomination in God's sight. These men saw his star in the East, but it did not tell them much, for they were apparently obliged to ask information from Herod the King. Herod in turn inquired of the chief priests and scribes; and it is evident Jeremiah was right if he said, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means," for these chief priests either misread the prophets, or misquoted the scripture which is claimed to be a revelation from God, and invented a false prophecy (Matthew ii, 5, 6, c.f. (Micah v, 2), by omitting a few words from, and adding a few words to, a text until it suited their purpose. The star—after the wise men knew where to go, and no longer required its aid—led and went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. This story will be better understood if the reader will walk out some clear night, notice a star, and then try to fix the one house it will be exactly over. The writer of the Third Gospel, silent on the star story, speaks of an angel who tells some shepherds of the miraculous; but this does not appear to have happened in the reign of Herod. After the wise men had left Jesus, an angel warned Joseph to flee with Jesus and Mary into Egypt; and Joseph did fly, and remained there with the young child and his mother until the death of Herod; and this it is alleged was done to fulfil a prophecy. The words (Hosea xi, 1)

are not prophetic and have no reference whatever to Jesus. The Jesus of the Third Gospel never went into Egypt at all in his childhood. When Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, he was baptised by John in the River Jordan. John, who knew him, according to the First Gospel, forbade him directly he saw him; but, according to the Fourth Gospel, he knew him not, and had, therefore, no occasion to forbid him. God is an "invisible spirit," whom no man hath seen (John i, 18), or can see (Exodus xxxiii, 20); but the man John saw the spirit of God descending like a dove. God is everywhere, but at that time was in heaven, from whence he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Although John heard this from God's own mouth, he did not always act as if he believed it, but some time after sent two of his disciples to Jesus to inquire if he were really the Christ (Matthew xi, 2, 3). Immediately after the baptism, Jesus was led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights, and in those days he did eat nothing. Moses twice fasted that period. Such fasts are nearly miraculous. The modern fasting men, and the Hindoo fasters, only show that under very abnormal conditions, long abstinence from food is possible. Absolutely miraculous events are events which never happened in the past, do not take place in the present, and never will occur in the future. Jesus, it is said, was God, and by his power as God

fasted. On the hypothesis of his divinity, it is difficult to understand how he became hungry. When hungry the Devil tempted Jesus by offering him stones, and asking him to make them bread. Stones offered to a hungry man for bread-making hardly afford a probable temptation. Which temptation came next is a matter of doubt. Matthew and Luke relate the story in different order. According to one, the Devil next taketh Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and tempts him to throw himself to the bottom, by quoting Scripture that angels should bear him in their arms. Jesus either disbelieved this Scripture, or remembered that the Devil, like other pillars of the Church, grossly misquoted to suit his purpose, and the temptation failed. The Devil then took Jesus to an exceeding high mountain, from whence he showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, in a moment of time. It is urged that this did not include a view of the antipodes, but only referred to the kingdoms then known; even then it must have been a long look from Judea to China. The mountain must have been very high—much higher than the diameter of the earth. Origen, a learned and pious holy father, suggests that no man in his senses will believe this to have really happened. If Origen had to defend his language before a modern judge of the type of Mr. Justice North, the Christian father would have sore risk of Holloway Gaol. The Devil offered Jesus—who it is

declared was one with God, and therefore omnipotent—all the kingdoms of the world, if he, Jesus the omnipotent God, would fall down and worship his own creature the Devil. Some object that if God is the creator and omnipotent ruler of the world, then the Devil would have no control over the kingdoms of the world, and that the offer could be no temptation, as it was made to Jesus, who was God omnipotent and all-wise. Such objectors rely on natural reason.

After the temptation Jesus worked many miracles, casting out devils and otherwise doing marvels amongst the inhabitants of Judea, who seem as a body to have been very unbelieving. If a second Jesus of Nazareth were in this heretical age to boast that he possessed the power of casting out devils, he would stand a fair chance of expiating his offence by a three months' imprisonment with hard labor. It is true that the 72nd Canon of the Church of England recognises that ministers can cast out devils, but forbids them to do this unless licensed by the Bishop "under pain of the imputation of imposture or cozenage." Now, if sick men have a little wisdom, the physician is resorted to that he may cure the disease. If men have much wisdom, they study physiology while they have health, in order to prevent sickness. In the time of the early Christians prayer and faith (James v, 14, 15) occupied the position since usurped by medicine and experience.

Men who had lost their senses in the time of Christ were regarded as attacked not by disease but by the Devil. In the days of Jesus one spirit would make a man blind, or deaf, or dumb: occasionally a number of devils would get into a man and drive him mad. On one occasion Jesus met either one man (Mark v, 2) or two men (Matt. viii, 28), possessed with devils. The devils knew Jesus, and addressed him by name. Jesus, not so familiar with the imp or imps, inquired the name of the particular devil he was addressing. The answer, given in Latin, would induce a belief, possibly corroborated by the writings of the monks, that devils communicated in that tongue. Jesus wanted to cast out the devils from the man; this they did not contest, but they expressed a decided objection to being cast out of the country. A compromise was agreed to, and at their own request the devils were transferred to a herd of swine. The swine ran into the sea and were drowned. There is no record of any compensation to the owner.

Jesus fed large multitudes of people under circumstances of a most ultra-thaumaturgic character. To the first book of Euclid is prefixed an axiom “that the whole is greater than its part.” John Wesley was wise if it be true that he eschewed mathematics lest it should lead him to infidelity. If any man be irreligious enough to accept Euclid’s axiom, he will be compelled to reject the miraculous feeding of 5,000 people with five loaves and two

small fishes. The original difficulty of the miracle, though not increased, is made hard to the common mind by the assertion that after the multitude had been fed, twelve basketsfull of fragments remained.

Jesus is related to have walked on the sea when it was very stormy, and when “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.” Walking on the water is a great feat even if the sea be calm, but when the waves run high it is still more wonderful.

The miracle of turning water into wine at Cana, in Galilee, is worthy attention, when considering the question, Who was Jesus Christ? Jesus and his disciples had been called to a marriage feast, and when there the company fell short of wine. The mother of Jesus, to whom the Catholics offer worship, and to whom they pay great adoration, informed Jesus of the deficiency, and was answered, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” His mother seemed to have expected a miracle, yet in the Fourth Gospel the Cana wonder was the beginning of miracle working by Jesus; the apocryphal gospels assert that Jesus practised miracle working as a child. Jesus having obtained six waterpots full of water, turned them into wine. Teetotallers who cannot believe God would specially provide means of drunkenness, urge that this wine was not of intoxicating quality, though there is nothing in the text to justify their hypothesis. The curious connexion between the phrase “well drunk,”

and the time at which the miracle was performed, would rather warrant the supposition that the guests were already in such a state as to render it difficult for them to critically appreciate the new vintage. The moral effects of this miracle are not easily appreciable.

Shortly after this Jesus went to the temple with a scourge of small cords, and drove thereout the cattle dealers and money changers who had assembled there in the ordinary course of their business. The writer of the Fourth Gospel places this event very early in the public life of Jesus. The writer of the Third Gospel fixes the occurrence much later.

Jesus being hungry went to a fig-tree, to gather figs, though the season of figs was not yet come. Of course there were no figs upon the tree, and Jesus then caused the tree to wither away. This is specially interesting as a problem for a true orthodox trinitarian who will believe—first, that Jesus was God, who made the tree, and prevented it from bearing figs; second, that God the all-wise, who is not subject to human passions, being hungry, went to the fig-tree, on which he knew there could be no figs, expecting to find some there; third, that God the all-just then punished the tree, because it did not bear figs in opposition to God's eternal ordination.

Jesus had a disciple named Peter, who, having much Christian faith, was a great coward and denied

his leader in his hour of need. Jesus though previously aware that Peter would be a traitor, yet gave him the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and told him that whatsoever he bound on earth should be bound in Heaven. Peter was to have denied Jests three times before the cock should crow (Matt. xxvi, 34). The cock crowed before Peter's second denial (Mark xiv, 68). Commentators urge that the words used do not refer to the crowing of any particular cock, but to a special hour of the morning called "cock-crow." But if the Gospel be true, the explanation is false. Peter's denial becomes the more extraordinary when we remember that he had seen Moses, Jesus, and Elias talking together, and had heard a voice from a cloud say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." As Peter could thus deny Jesus after having heard God vouch his divinity, and Peter not only escapes punishment, but gets the office of gatekeeper to Heaven, how much more should those escape punishment and obtain reward, who only deny because they cannot help it, and who have been left without any corroborative evidence of sight or hearing?

The Jesus of the First Gospel promised that, as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so he (Jesus) would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Yet he was buried on Friday evening, and was out of the grave before Saturday night was over. Some say that the Jews

reckoned part of a day as a whole one.

The translators have made Jesus perform a curious equestrian feat on his entry into Jerusalem. The text (Matt. xxi, 7) says they "brought the ass and the colt and put on them their clothes and set him thereon." This does not mean that he rode on both at one time; it only says so. On the cross the Jesus of the Four Gospels, who was God, cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God cannot forsake himself. Jesus was God himself. Yet God forsook Jesus, and the latter cried out to know why he was forsaken. Any able divine will explain that of course he knew, and that he was not forsaken. The explanation renders it difficult to believe the dying cry, and the passage becomes one of the mysteries of the holy Christian religion, which, unless a man rightly believe, "without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." At the crucifixion of Jesus wonderful miracles took place "The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the grave after his resurrection and appeared unto many." Which saints were these? They "appeared unto many," but there is not the slightest evidence outside the Bible that anyone ever saw them. Their "bodies" came out of the graves. Do not the bodies of the saints decompose like those of ordinary human beings?

Jesus must have much changed in the grave, for his disciples did not know him when he stood on the

shore (John xxi, 4), and Mary, most attached to him, knew him not, but supposed that he was the gardener. According to the First Gospel, Jesus appeared to two women after his resurrection, and afterwards met eleven of his disciples by appointment on a mountain in Galilee. When was this appointment made? The text on which divines rely is Matt. xxvi, 32; this makes no such appointment. According to the Second Gospel, he appeared first to one woman, and when she told the disciples they did not believe it. Yet, on pain of indictment now and damnation hereafter, we are bound to unhesitatingly accept that which the disciples of Jesus rejected. By the Second Gospel we learn that instead of the eleven going to Galilee after Jesus, he came to them as they sat at meat. In the Third Gospel he first appeared to two of his disciples at Emmaus, and they did not know him until they had been a long time in his company—it was evening before they recognised him. Unfortunately, directly they knew him they did not see him, for as soon as they knew him he vanished out of their sight. He immediately afterwards appeared to the eleven at Jerusalem, and not at Galilee, as stated in the First Gospel. Jesus asked for some meat, and the disciples gave him a portion of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and he did eat. Jesus was afterwards taken up into Heaven, a cloud received him, and he was missed. God is everywhere, and Heaven no more

above than below, but it is necessary we should believe that Jesus has ascended into Heaven to sit on the right hand of God, who is infinite and has no right hand. Was Jesus Christ a man? If limited for our answer to the mere Gospel Jesus—surely not. His whole career is, on any literal reading, simply a series of improbabilities or contradictions. Who was Christ? born of a virgin, and of divine parentage? So too were many of the mythic Sungods and so was Krishna, whose story, similar in many respects with that of Jesus, was current long prior to the Christian era.

Was Jesus Christ man or myth? His story being fable, is the hero a reality? That a man named Jesus really lived and performed some special actions attracting popular attention, and thus became the centre for a hundred myths may well be true, but beyond this what is there of solid fact?

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH?

THE language in which Jesus taught, has not been preserved to us. Who recorded his actual words, or if any real record ever existed, is all matter of guess. Who translated the words of Jesus into the Greek no one knows. In the compass of four pamphlets, attributed to four persons, of whose connexion with the Gospels, as we have them, little or nothing whatever can be ascertained, we have what are, by the orthodox, supposed to be the words in which Jesus actually taught. What did he teach? Manly, self-reliant resistance of wrong, and practice of right? No; the key-stone of his whole teaching may be found in the text: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew v, 3) Is poverty of spirit the chief amongst virtues, that Jesus gives it prime place in his teachings? Is it even a virtue at all? Surely not. Manliness of spirit, honesty of spirit, fulness of rightful purpose, these are virtues; poverty of spirit is a crime. When men are poor in spirit, then the proud and haughty in spirit oppress them. When men are true in spirit and determined (as true men should be) to resist, and as far as possible, prevent wrong, then is there greater opportunity for present happiness, and, as even

Christians ought to admit, no lesser fitness for the enjoyment of further happiness, in some may-be heaven. Are you poor in spirit, and are you smitten; in such case what did Jesus teach?—"Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other." (Luke, vi, 29) Surely better to teach that "he who courts oppression shares the crime;" and, if smitten once to take careful measure to prevent a future smiting. Jesus teaches actual invitation of injury. Shelley breathed higher humanity:

> "Stand ye calm and resolute,
> Like a forest close and mute,
> With folded arms and looks, which are
> Weapons of an unvanquished war."

There is a wide distinction between passive resistance to wrong, and courting further injury at the hands of the wrongdoer.

In the teaching of Jesus, poverty of spirit is enforced to the fullest conceivable extent: "Him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again." (Luke vi, 29, 30) Poverty of person, is the only possible sequence to this extraordinary manifestation of poverty of spirit. Poverty of person is attended with many unpleasantnesses; and Jesus, who knew that poverty would result from his

teaching, says, as if he wished to keep the poor content through their lives with poverty, “Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke vi, 20) “But woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation.” (Luke vi, 24) He pictures one in hell, whose only related vice is that in life he was rich; and another in heaven, whose only related virtue is that in life he was poor (Luke xvi, 19-31). He affirms it is more difficult for a rich man to get into heaven, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Luke xvii, 25). The only intent of such teaching could be to induce the poor to remain content in this life, with the want and misery of their wretched state in the hope of higher recompense in some future life. Is it good to be content with poverty? Is it not far better to investigate the causes of poverty, with a view to its cure and prevention? The doctrine is most horrid which declares that the poor shall not cease from the face of the earth. Poor in spirit and poor in pocket, with no courage to work for food, or money to purchase it, we might well expect to find the man with empty stomach also who held these doctrines; and what does Jesus teach? “Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled.” (Luke vi, 21) He does not say when the filling shall take place. The date is evidently postponed until men will have no stomachs to replenish? It is not in this life that the hunger is to be sated. “Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger.” (Luke vi,

25) It would but little advantage the hungry man to bless him by filling him, if a curse awaited the completion of his repast. Craven in spirit, with an empty purse and hungry mouth—what next? The man who has not manliness enough to prevent wrong, will probably bemoan his hard fate, and cry bitterly that sore are the misfortunes he endures. And what does Jesus teach? “Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.” (Luke vi, 21) Is this true, and, if true, when shall the laughter come? “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew v, 4) Aye, but when? Not while they mourn and weep. Weeping for the past is vain: a deluge of tears will not wash away its history. Weeping for the present is worse than vain—it obstructs your sight. In each minute of your life the aforetime future is present born, and you need dry and keen eyes to give it and yourself a safe and happy deliverance. When shall they that mourn be comforted? Are slaves that weep salt tear-drops on their chains comforted in their weeping. Each pearly overflowing as it falls rusts mind, as well as fetter. Ye who are slaves and weep, will never be comforted until you dry your eyes, and nerve your arms, and, in the plenitude of manliness:

> “Shake your chains to earth like dew,
> Which in sleep hath fallen on you.”

Jesus teaches that the poor, the hungry, and the wretched shall be blessed? But blessing only comes when they cease to be poor, hungry, and wretched. Contentment under poverty, hunger, and misery is high treason, not to yourself alone, but to your fellows. Slavery spreads quickly wherever humanity is stagnant and content with wrong.

What did Jesus teach? “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” (Matthew xix, 19) But how if thy neighbor will not hear thy doctrine when thou preachest the “glad tidings of great joy” to him? Then forgetting all your love, and with the bitter hatred that a theological disputant alone can manifest, you “shall shake off the dust from your feet,” and by so doing make it more tolerable in the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah, than for your unfortunate neighbor who has ventured to reject your teaching (Matthew x, 14, 15). It is mockery to speak as if love could really result from the dehumanising and isolating faith required from the disciple of Jesus. Ignatius Loyola in this, at least, was more consistent than his Protestant brethren. “If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke xiv, 26) “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I come to set a man at variance against his father, and the

daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes they shall be of his own household." (Matthew x, 34-36) "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew xix, 29) The teaching of Jesus is, in fact, save yourself by yourself. The teaching of humanity should be, to save yourself save your fellow. The human family is a vast chain, each man and woman a link. There is no snapping off one link and preserving for it, isolated from the rest, an entirety of happiness; our joy depends on our brother's also. Jesus teaches that "many are called, but few are chosen;" that the majority will inherit an eternity of misery, while but the minority obtain eternal happiness. And on what is the eternity of bliss to depend? On a truthful course of life? Not so. Jesus puts Father Abraham in Heaven, whose reputation for faith outstrips his character for veracity. The passport through Heaven's portals is faith. "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned." (Mark xvi, 16) Are you married? You love your wife? Both die. You from first to last had said, "I believe," much as a well-trained parrot might say it. You had never examined your reasons for your faith; as a true believer should, you distrusted the efficacy of your carnal reason. You said, "I believe in God and Jesus

Christ," because you had been taught to say it, and you would have as glibly said, "I believe in Allah, and in Mahomet his prophet," had your birth-place been a few degrees eastward, and your parents and instructors Turks. You believed in this life, and after death awake in Heaven. Your much-loved wife did not think as you did—she could not. Her organisation, education, and temperament were all different from your own. She disbelieved because she could not believe. She was a good wife, but she disbelieved. A good and affectionate mother, but she disbelieved. A virtuous and kindly woman, but she disbelieved. And you are to be happy for an eternity in Heaven, with the knowledge that she is writhing in agony in Hell. If this be true, Shelley was right in declaring that your Christianity:

> "Peoples earth with demons, hell with men,
> And heaven with slaves."

It is urged that Jesus is the savior of the world, who brought redemption without let or stint to the whole human race. But what did Jesus teach? "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritan enter ye not," (Matthew x, 6) were his injunctions to those whom he first sent out to preach. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," is his hard answer to the poor Syrophenician woman who entreated succor for her child.

Christianity, as first taught by Jesus, was for the Jews alone, it was only when rejected by them, that the world at large had the opportunity of salvation afforded it. “He came unto his own and his own received him not.” (John i, 11) Why should the Jews be more God’s own than the Gentiles? Is God the creator of all? did he create the descendant of Abraham with greater right and privilege than all other men? Then, indeed, is grievous injustice. You had no choice whether to be born Jew or Gentile; yet to the accident of such a birth is attached the first offer of a salvation which, if accepted, shuts out all beside.

The Kingdom of Heaven is a prominent feature in the teachings of Jesus. Examine the picture drawn by God incarnate of his own special domain. ’Tis likened to a wedding feast, (Matthew xxii, 2) to which the invited guests coming not, servants were sent out into the highways to gather all they can find —both good and bad. The King, examining his motley array of guests, and finding one without a wedding garment inquired why he came in to the feast without one. The man, whose attendance had been compulsorily enforced, was speechless. And who can wonder? he was a guest from necessity, not choice, he neither chose the fashion of his coming, or that of his attiring. Then comes the King’s decree, the command of the all-merciful and loving King of Heaven. “Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into

outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Commentators urge that it was the custom to provide wedding garments for all guests, and that this man was punished for his non-acceptance of the customary and ready robe. The text does not warrant this explanation, but gives as moral of the parable, that an invitation to the heavenly feast will not ensure partakal of it, for that "many are called, but few are chosen." What more of the Kingdom of Heaven? "Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance." (Luke xv, 7) The greater sinner one has been, the better saint he makes, and the more he has sinned, so much the more he loves God. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke vii, 47) Thus asserting that a life of vice, with its stains washed away by a death-bed repentance, is better than a life of consistent and virtuous conduct? Why should the fatted calf be killed for the prodigal son? (Luke xv, 27) Why should men be taught to make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness? (Luke xvi, 9) These ambiguities, these assertions of punishment and forgiveness of crime, instead of directions for its prevention and cure, are serious blots on a system alleged to have been inculcated by one for whom his followers claim divinity.

Will you urge the love of Jesus as the redeeming feature of the teaching? Then read the story of the

fig tree (Matthew xxi, 18-22; Mark xi, 12-24) withered by the hungry Jesus. The fig tree was, if he were all-powerful God, made by him; he limited its growth and regulated its development; he prevented it from bearing figs, expected fruit where he had rendered fruit impossible, and in his *infinite love* was angry that the tree had not upon it that it could not have. What love is expressed in that remarkable speech which follows one of his parables:—"For, I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him. *But those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me*." (Luke xix, 26, 27) What love is expressed by that Jesus who, if he were God, represents himself as saying to the majority of his unfortunate creatures (for it is the few that are chosen):—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew xxv, 41) There is no love in this horrid doctrine of eternal torment. And yet the popular preachers of to-day talk first of the love of God and then of:

"Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisons and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves,
Whose life has been a penance for its crii

In the sayings attributed to Jesus there is the passage which influenced so extraordinarily the famous Origen (Matthew xix, 12). If he understood it aright, its teachings are most terrible. If he understood it wrongly, what of the wisdom of teaching which expresses itself so vaguely? The general intent of Christ's teaching seems to be an inculcation of neglect of this life, in the search for another. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." (John vi, 27) "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on... take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?.... But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew vi, 25-33) These texts, if fully observed, would be most disastrous; they would stay all scientific discoveries, prevent all development of man's energies. In the struggle for existence, men are compelled to become acquainted with the conditions which compel happiness or misery. It is only in the practical application of that knowledge, that the wants of society are ascertained, and disease, poverty, hunger, and wretchedness prevented, or at any rate lessened. Jesus substitutes "I believe," for "I think," and puts "watch and pray" instead of "think, then act." Belief is the prominent doctrine which pervades, and governs all

Christianity. It is represented that, at the judgment, the world will be reproved “Of sin, because they believe not.” This teaching is most disastrous; man should be incited to active thought: Christian belief would bind him to the teachings of a stagnant past. Fit companion to blind belief is slave-like prayer. Men pray as though God needed most abject entreaty ere he would grant justice. What does Jesus teach on prayer? “After this manner pray ye—Our Father, which art in heaven.” Do you think that God is the Father of all, when you pray that he will enable you to defeat some others of his children, with whom your nation is at war? And why “which art in Heaven?” Where is your Heaven? You look upward, and if you were at the Antipodes, would look upward still. But that upward would be downward to us. Do you localize Heaven? Why say “which art in Heaven?” Is God infinite, then he is also in earth. “Hallowed be thy name.” “What is God’s name? if you know it not how can you hallow it? how can God’s name be hallowed even if you know it?” “Thy kingdom come.” What is God’s kingdom, and will your praying bring it quicker? Is it the Judgment day, and do you who say “Love one another,” pray for the more speedy arrival of that day, on which God may say to your fellow “depart ye cursed into everlasting fire?” “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” How is God’s will done in heaven? If the Devil be a fallen angel, there must have been

rebellion even there. “Give us this day our daily bread.” Will the prayer get it without work? No. Will work get it without prayer? Yes. Why pray, then, for bread to God, who says, “Blessed be ye that hunger... woe unto you that are full?” “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matthew vi, 12) What debts have you to God? Sins? Coleridge writes, “A sin is an evil which has its ground or origin in the agent, and not in the compulsion of circumstances. Circumstances are compulsory, from the absence of a power to resist or control them: and if the absence likewise be the effect of circumstances... the evil derives from the circumstances... and such evil is not sin.”[36] Do you say that you are independent of all circumstances, that you can control them, that you have a free will? Buckle replies that the assertion of a free will “involves two assumptions, of which the first, though possibly true, has never been proved, and the second is unquestionably false. These assumptions are that there is an independent faculty, called consciousness, and that the dictates of that faculty are infallible.”[37] “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew vi, 13) Do you think God may lead you into temptation? if so, you cannot think him all good; if not all-good he is not God. If God, the prayer is blasphemy.

Jesus, according to the general declaration of Christian divines, came to die, and what does he teach by his death? The Rev. F.D. Maurice well said,

"That he who kills for a faith must be weak, that he who dies for a faith must be strong." How did Jesus die? Giordano Bruno and Julius Cæsar Vanini were burned, charged with heresy. They died calm, heroic, defiant of wrong. Jesus, who could not die courted death, that he, as God, might accept his own atonement, and might pardon man for a sin which the pardoned man had not committed, and in which he had no share. The death Jesus courted came, and when it came he could not face it, but prayed to himself that he might not die. And at last, when on the cross, if two gospels do him no injustice his last words were a bitter cry of deep despair. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Rev. Enoch Mellor writing on the Atonement, says, "I seek not to fathom the profound mystery of these words. To understand their full import would require one to experience the agony of desertion they express." Do the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" express an "agony" caused by a consciousness of "desertion?" if this be not the meaning conveyed by the despairing death-cry then there is in it no meaning whatever. And if those words do express a "bitter agony of desertion" then they emphatically contradict the teachings of Jesus. "Before Abraham was, I am." "I and my father are one." "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." These were the words of Jesus—words conveying an impression that divinity was claimed by the one who

uttered them. If Jesus had indeed been God, the words “My God, my God,” would have been a mockery most extreme. God could not have deemed himself forsaken by himself. The dying Jesus, in that despair, confessed himself either the dupe of some other teaching, a self-deluded enthusiast, or an arch-impostor, who in that bitter cry, with the wide-opening of the flood-gates through which life’s stream ran out, confessed aloud that he, at least, was no deity, and deemed himself a God-forsaken man. The garden scene of agony is fitting prelude to this most terrible act. Jesus, who is God, prays to himself: in “agony he prayed most earnestly” (Luke xxii, 44) He refuses to hear his own prayers, and he, the omnipotent, is forearmed against his coming trial by an angel from heaven, who “strengthened” the great Creator. Was Jesus the Son of God? Praying, he said “Father the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” (John xvii, 2) And was he glorified? His death and resurrection most strongly disbelieved in the very city where they are alleged to have happened. His doctrines rejected by the only people to whom he preached them. His miracles denied by the only nation amongst whom they are alleged to have been performed; and he himself thus on the cross crying out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Nor is it true that the teachings of Jesus are generally received. Jesus taught: “And these signs

shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark xvi, 17, 18) How many of those who profess to believe in Jesus would be content to be tested by these signs? Any person claiming that each sign was to be found manifested in her or his case would be regarded as mad. Illustrations of faith-healing occasionally arise, but are not always reliable, nor are such cures limited to those who profess faith in Jesus. The gift of speaking with new tongues has been the claim of a very small sect. Serpent charming is more practised amongst Hindus than amongst Christians.

Peace and love are alleged to be the special characteristics of Christianity. Yet the whole history of Christian nations has been blurred by war and hate. Now and for the past thirty years the most civilized amongst Christian nations have been devoting enormous sums and huge masses of men to the preparation for war. Torpedoes and explosive shells, one hundred ton guns and mele-nite, are by Christian rulers accounted better aids than faith in Jesus.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

ALL good Christians, indeed all Christians—for are there any who are not models of goodness?—will desire that their fellow-creatures who are unbelievers should have the fullest possible information, biographical or otherwise, as as to the twelve persons specially chosen by Jesus to be his immediate followers. The believer, of course, would be equally content with his faith in the absence of all historic vouchers. Indeed a pious worshipper would cling to his creed not only without testimony in its favor, but despite direct testimony against it. It is to those not within the pale of the church that I shall seek to demonstrate the credibility of the history of the twelve apostles. The short biographical sketch here presented is extracted from the first five books of the New Testament, two of which at least are attributed to two of the twelve. It is objected, by heretical men who go as far in their criticisms on the Gospels as Colenso does with the Pentateuch, that not one of the gospels is original or written by any of the apostles; that, on the contrary, they were preceded by numerous writings, since lost or rejected, these in their turn having for their basis the oral tradition which preceded them. It is alleged that

the four gospels are utterly anonymous, and that the fourth gospel is subject to strong suspicions of spuriousness. To use on this part of the words of the author of "Supernatural Religion," applied by him to the Acts of the Apostles: "As a general rule, any documents so full of miraculous episodes and supernatural occurrences would, without hesitation, be characterized as fabulous and incredible, and would not, by any sober-minded reader, be for a moment accepted as historical. There is no other testimony." It would be useless to combat, and I therefore boldly ignore these attacks on the authenticity of the text, and proceed with my history. The names of the twelve are as follows—Simon, surnamed Peter; Andrew, his brother; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Andrew, Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; James, the son of Alphteus; Simon, the Canaanite; Judas Iscariot; and a twelfth, as to whose name there is some uncertainty; it was either Lebbæus, Thaddæus, or Judas. It is in Matthew alone (x, 3) that the name of Lebbæus is mentioned thus—"Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus." We are told, on this point, by able Biblicists, that the early MSS have not the words "whose surname was Thaddæus," and that these words have probably been inserted to reconcile the gospel according to Matthew with that attributed to Mark. How good must have been the old fathers who sought to improve upon the Holy Ghost by making clear that

which inspiration had left doubtful! In the English version of the Rheims Testament used in this country by our Roman Catholic brethren, the reconciliation between Matthew and Mark is completed by omitting the words "Lebbæus whose surname was," leaving only the name "Thad-dæus" in Matthew's text. This omission must be correct, being by the authority of an infallible church, and Dr. Newman shows us that when the church pronounces all doubt is damnable. If Matthew x, 3, and Mark iii, 18, be passed as reconciled, although the first calls the twelfth disciple Lebbæus, and the second gives him the name Thaddæus, there is yet the difficulty that in Luke vi, 16, corroborated by John xiv, 22, there is a disciple spoken of as "Judas, not Iscariot." "Judas, *the brother* of James." Commentators have endeavored to clear away this last difficulty by declaring that Thaddæus is a Syriac word, having much the same meaning as Judas. This has been answered by the objection that if Matthew's Gospel uses Thaddæus in lieu of Judas, then he ought to speak of Thaddæus Iscariot, which he does not; and it is further objected also that while there are some grounds for suggesting a Hebrew original for the gospel attributed to Matthew, there is not the slightest pretence for alleging that Matthew wrote in Syriac. It is to be hoped that the unbelieving reader will not stumble on the threshold of his study because of a little uncertainty as to a name. What is

in a name? The Jewish name which we read as Jesus is really Joshua, but the name to which we are most accustomed seems the one we should adhere to.

Simon Peter being the first named amongst the disciples of Jesus, deserves the first place in this notice. The word “Simon” may be rendered, if taken as a Greek name, *flat-nose* or *ugly*. Some of the ancient Greek and Hebrew names are characteristic of peculiarities in the individual, but no one now knows whether Peter’s nose had anything to do with his name. Simon is rather a Hebrew name, but Peter is Greek, signifying a rock or stone. Peter is supposed to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and his second name may express his stony insensibility to all appeals by infidels for admittance to the celestial regions. Lord Byron’s “Vision of Judgment” is the highest known authority as to Saint Peter’s celestial duties, but this nobleman’s poems are only fit for very pious readers. Peter, ere he became a parson, was by trade a fisher, and when Jesus first saw Peter, the latter was in a vessel fishing with his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea of Galilee. The calling of Peter and Andrew to the apostleship was sudden, and apparently unexpected. Jesus walking by the sea said to them—“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew iv, 18-22) The two brothers did so, and they became Christ’s disciples. The successors of Peter have since reversed the apostle’s early practice: instead of now casting

their nets into the sea, the modern representatives of the disciples of Jesus draw the sees into their nets, and, it is believed, find the result much more profitable. When Jesus called Peter no one was with him but his brother Andrew; a little further on the two sons of Zebedee were in a ship with their father mending nets. This is the account of Peter's call given in the gospel according to Matthew, and as according to the Church Matthew was inspired by the Holy Ghost, who is identical with God the Father, who is one with God the Son, who is Jesus, the account must be free from error. In the Gospel according to John, which is likewise inspired in the same manner, from the same source, and with similar infallibility, we learn that Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist, and that when Andrew first saw Jesus Peter was not present, but Andrew went and found Peter who, if fishing, must have been angling on land, telling him "we have found the Messiah," and that Andrew then brought Peter to Jesus, who said: "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas." There is no mention in this gospel narrative of the sons of Zebedee being a little further on, or of any fishing in the sea of Galilee. This call is clearly on land, whether or not near the sea of Galilee does not appear. In the Gospel according to Luke, which is as much inspired as either of the two before-mentioned gospels, and, therefore, equally authentic with each

of them, we are told (Luke v, 1-11) that when the call took place Jesus and Peter were both at sea. Jesus had been preaching to the people, who, pressing upon him, he got into Simon's ship, from which he preached. After this he directed Simon to put out into the deep and let down the nets. Simon answered: "Master, we have toiled all night, and taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." No sooner was this done than the net was filled to breaking, and Simon's partners, the two sons of Zebedee, came to help, when, at the call of Jesus, they brought their ships to land, and followed him. From these accounts the unbeliever may learn that when Jesus called Peter either both Jesus and Peter were on the land, or one was on land and the other on the sea, or both of them were at sea. He may also learn that the sons of Zebedee were present at the time, having come to help to get in the great catch, and were called with Peter; or that they were further on, sitting mending nets with their father, and were called afterwards; or that they were neither present nor near at hand. He may also be assured that Simon was in his ship when Jesus came to call him, and that Jesus was on land when Andrew, Simon's brother, found Simon and brought him to Jesus to be called. The unbeliever must not hesitate because of any apparent incoherence or contradiction in the narrative. The greater the difficulty in believing, the more deserved the reward

which only comes to belief. With faith it is easy to harmonise the three narratives above quoted, especially when you know that Jesus had visited Simon's house before the call of Simon, (Luke iv, 38) but did not go to Simon's house until after Simon had been called (Matthew viii, 14). Jesus went to Simon's house and cured his wife's mother of a fever. Robert Taylor,[38] commenting on the fever-curing miracle, says—"St. Luke tells us that this fever had taken the woman, not that the woman had taken the fever, and not that the fever was a very bad fever, or a yellow fever, or a scarlet fever, but that it was a great fever—that is, I suppose, a fever six feet high at least; a personal fever, a rational and intelligent fever, that would yield to the power of Jesus's argument, but would never have given way to James's powder. So we are expressly told that Jesus rebuked the fever—that is, he gave it a good scolding; asked it, I dare say, how it could be so unreasonable as to plague the poor old woman so cruelly, and whether it wasn't ashamed of itself; and said, perhaps, *Get out, you naughty wicked fever, you*; and such like objurgatory language, which the fever, not being used to be rebuked in such a manner, and being a very sensible sort of fever, would not stand, but immediately left the old woman in high dudgeon." This Robert Taylor, although a clergyman of the Church of England, has been convicted of blasphemy and imprisoned for writing in such

wicked language about the Bible. Simon Peter, as a disciple, performed many miracles, some when in company with Jesus, and more when separately by himself. These miracles, though themselves unvouched by any reliable testimony, and disbelieved by the people amongst whom they were worked, are strong evidence in favor of the apostolic character claimed for Peter.

On one occasion the whole of the disciples were sent away by Jesus in a ship, the Savior remaining behind to pray. About the fourth watch of the night, when the ship was in the midst of the sea, Jesus went unto his disciples, walking on the sea. Though Jesus went unto his disciples, and, as an expeditious way, I suppose, of arriving with them, he would have passed by them, but they saw him, and supposing him to be a spirit, cried out. Jesus bid them be of good cheer, to which Peter answered, (Matthew xiv, 23) “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee.” Jesus said, “Come,” and Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. But the sea being wet and the wind boisterous, Peter became afraid, and instead of walking on the water began to sink into it, and cried out “Lord save me,” and immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught Peter.

Some object that the two gospels according to John and Mark, which both record the feat of water-walking by Jesus, omit all mention of Peter’s attempt. Probably the Holy Ghost had good reasons

for omitting it. A profane mind might make a jest of an Apostle “half seas over,” and ridicule an apostolic gatekeeper who could not keep his head above water.

Peter’s partial failure in this instance should drive away all unbelief, as the text will show that it was only for lack of faith that

Peter lost his buoyancy. Simon is called Bar-Jonah, that is, son of Jonah, but I am not aware that he is any relation to the Jonah who lived under water in the belly of a fish three days and three nights.

It was Simon Peter who, having told Jesus he was the Son of God, was answered “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” (Matthew xvi, 17) We find a number of disciples shortly before this, and in Peter’s presence, telling Jesus that he was the Son of God, (Matthew xiv, 33) but there is, of course, no real contradiction between the two texts. It was on this occasion that Jesus said to Simon, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” Under these extraordinary declarations from the mouth of God the Son, the Bishops of Rome have claimed, as successors of Peter, the same

privileges, and their pretensions have been acceded to by some of the most powerful monarchs of Europe.

Under this claim the Bishops, or Popes of Rome, have at various times issued Papal Bulls, by which they have sought to bind the entire world. Many of these have been very successful; but in 1302, Philip the Fair, of France, publicly burned the Pope Boniface's Bull after an address in which the States-General had denounced, in words more expressive than polite, the right of the Popes of Rome to Saint Peter's keys on earth. Some deny that the occupiers of the episcopal seat in the seven-hilled city are really of the Church of Christ, and they point to the bloody quarrels which have raged between men, contending for the Papal dignity. They declare that those Vicars of Christ have more than once resorted to fraud, treachery, and murder, to secure the Papal dignity. They point to Stephen VII, the son of an unmarried priest, who cut off the head of his predecessor's corpse; to Sergius III, convicted of assassination; to John X, who was strangled in the bed of his paramor Theodora; to John XI, son of Pope Sergius III, famous only for his drunken debauchery; to John XII, found assassinated in the apartments of his mistress; to Benedict IX, who both purchased and sold the Pontificate; to Gregory VII, the pseudo lover of the Countess Matilda, and the author of centuries of war carried on by his successors. And if these

suffice not, they point to Alexander Borgia, whose name is but the echo of crime, and whose infamy will be as lasting as history. It is answered: “By the fruit ye shall judge of the tree.” It is useless to deny the vine’s existence because the grapes are sour. Peter, the favored disciple, it is declared was a rascal, and why not his successors? They have only to repent, and there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that re-penteth than over ninety and nine righteous men. Such language is very terrible, and arises from allowing the carnal reason too much freedom.

All true believers will be familiar with the story of Peter’s sudden readiness to deny his Lord and teacher in the hour of danger, and will easily draw the right moral from the mysterious lesson here taught; but unbelievers may be a little inclined to agree with the common infidel objections on this point. These objections, therefore, shall be first stated, and then refuted in the most orthodox fashion. It is objected that all the denials were to take place before the cock should crow, (Matthew xxvi, 34; Luke xxii, 34; John xiii, 38) but that only one denial actually took place before the cock crew (Mark xiv, 68). That the first denial by Peter that he knew Jesus, or was one of his disciples, was at the door to the damsel, (John xviii, 17) but was inside while sitting by the fire, (Luke xxii, 57) that the second denial was to a man, and apparently still

sitting by the fire (Luke xvii, 58), but was to a maid when he was gone out into the porch. That these denials, or at any rate, the last denial, were all in the presence of Jesus (Luke xvii, 61), who turned and looked at Peter, but that the first denial was at the door, Jesus being inside the palace, the second denial out in the porch, Jesus being still inside (Mark xiv, 69), and the third denial also outside. The refutation of these paltry objections is so simple, that any little child could give it, and none but an infidel would need to hear it, we therefore refrain from penning it. None but a disciple of Paine, or follower of Voltaire, would permit himself to be drawn to the risk of damnation on the mere question as to when some cock happened to crow, or as to the particular spot on which a recreant apostle denied his master. It is the merest justice to Peter to add that his disloyalty to Jesus was shared by his co-apostles. When Jesus was arrested “all the disciples forsook him and fled” (Matthew xxvi, 56). The true believer may sometimes be puzzled that Peter should so deny Jesus after he, Peter, had seen (Matthew xvii, 3-5) Moses and Elias, who had been dead many centuries, talking with Jesus, and had heard “a voice out of the cloud which said, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” The unbeliever must not allow himself to be puzzled by this. Two of the twelve apostles, whose names are not given, saw Jesus after he was dead, on the road to Emmaus, but they did

not know him; towards evening they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight. In broad daylight they did not know him, at evening time they knew him. While they did not know him they could see him, when they did know him they could not see him. Well may true believers declare that the ways of the Lord are wonderful. One of the apostles, Thomas, called Didymus, set the world an example of unbelief. He disbelieved the other disciples when they said to him, “we have seen the Lord,” and required to see Jesus, though dead, alive in the flesh, and touch the body of his crucified master. Thomas the apostle had his requirements complied with —he saw, he touched, and he believed. The great merit is to believe without any evidence—“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.” How it was that Thomas the apostle did not know Jesus when he saw him shortly after near the sea of Tiberias, is another of the mysteries of the Holy Christian religion. The acts of the apostles after the death of Jesus deserve treatment in a separate paper; the present essay is issued to aid the members of the Church Congress in their endeavors to stem the rising tide of infidelity.

THE ATONEMENT

"*Quel est donc ce Dieu qui fait mourir Dieu pour apaiser Dieu?*"

THE chief feature of the Christian religion is that Jesus, the Son of God, "very God of very God," sacrificed himself, or was sacrificed by God the Father, to atone for Adam's transgression, some 4,000 years before, against a divine command. It is declared in the New Testament, in clear and emphatic language, that in consequence of the one man Adam's sin, death entered into the world, and judgment and condemnation came upon all men. It is also declared that "Christ died for the ungodly;" "that he died for our sins," and "was delivered for our offences." On the one hand it is urged that Adam, the sole source of the human family, offended deity, and that the consequence of this offence was the condemnation to death, after a life of sorrow, of the entire race. On the other side of the picture is portrayed the love of God, who sent his only beloved son to die—and by his death procuring for all eternal life—to save the remnant of humanity from the further vengeance of their all-merciful heavenly father. The religion of Christ finds its source in the forbidden fruit of the yet undiscovered Garden of

Eden.

Adam's sin is the corner-stone of Christianity, the keystone of the arch. Without the fall there is no redeemer, for there is no fallen one to be redeemed. It is, then, to the history of Adam that the critical examinant of the Atonement theory should first direct his attention. But to try the doctrine of the Atonement by the aid of science would be fatal to religion. As for the one man Adam,

6,000 years ago the first of the human race, his existence is not only unvouched for by science, but is actually questioned by the timid, and repudiated by the bolder, exponents of modern ethnology. The human race is traced back far beyond the period fixed for Adam's sin. Egypt and India speak for humanity busy with wars, rival dynasties, and religions, long prior to the date given for the garden scene in Eden.

The fall of Adam could not have brought sin upon mankind, and death by sin, if hosts of men and women so lived and died ages before the words "thou shalt surely die" were spoken by God to man.

Nor could all men inherit Adam's misfortune if it be true that it is not to one but to many centres of origin that we ought to trace back the various races of mankind.

The theologian who finds no evidence of death prior to the offence shared by Adam and Eve is laughed to scorn by the geologist, who points to the

innumerable petrifactions in the earth's strata, which with a million tongues declare, more potently than loudest speech, that myriads of myriads of living things ceased their life-struggle incalculable ages before man's era on our world.

Science has so little to offer in support of any religious doctrine, and so much to advance against all purely theologic tenets, that we turn to a point giving the Christian greater vantage ground, and accepting for the moment his scriptures as our guide, we deny that he can maintain the possibility of Adam's sin, and yet consistently affirm the existence of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good God. Did Adam sin? We take the Christian's Bible in our hands to answer the question, first defining the word sin. What is sin? Samuel Taylor Coleridge says: "A sin is an evil which has its ground or origin in the agent, and not in the compulsion of circumstances. Circumstances are compulsory from the absence of a power to resist or control them, and if this absence be likewise the effect of circumstances (that is, if it have been neither directly nor indirectly caused by the agent himself) the evil derived from the circumstance, and therefore such evil is not sin, and the person who suffers it, or is the compelled actor or instrument of its infliction on others, may feel regret, but not remorse. Let us generalise the word circumstance so as to understand by it all and everything not connected with the will.... Even

though it were the warm blood circulating in the chambers of the heart or man's most inmost sensations, we regard them as circumstantial, extrinsic, or from without.... An act to be sin must be original, and a state or act that has not its origin in the will may be calamity, deformity, or disease, but sin it cannot be. It is not enough that the act appears so voluntary, or that it has the most hateful passions or debasing appetite for its proximate cause and accompaniment. All these may be found in a madhouse, where neither law nor humanity permit us to condemn the actor of sin. The reason of law declared the maniac not a free agent, and the verdict followed of course, *not guilty*." Did Adam sin?

The Bible story is that a Deity created one man and one woman; that he placed them in a garden wherein he had also placed a tree, which was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. That although he had expressly given the fruit of every tree bearing seed for food, he, nevertheless, commanded them not to eat of the fruit of this specially attractive tree under penalty of death. Supposing Adam to have at once disobeyed this injunction, would it have been sin? The fact that God had made the tree good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, should have surely been sufficient justification. The God-created inducement to partake of its fruit was strong and ever operative. The

inhibition lost its value as against the enticement. If the All-wise had intended the tree to be avoided, would he have made its allurements so overpowering to the senses? But the case does not rest here. In addition to all the attractions of the tree, and as though there were not enough, there is a subtle serpent gifted with suasive speech, who, either wiser or more truthful than the All-perfect Deity, says that although God has threatened immediate death as the consequence of disobedience to his command, yet they "shall not die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The tempter is stronger than the tempted, the witchery of the serpent is too great for the spell-bound woman, the decoy tree is too potent in its temptations; overpersuaded herself by the honey-tongued voice of the seducer, she plucks the fruit and gives to her husband also. And for this giving way to a God-designed temptation their offspring are to suffer God's eternal, unforgiving wrath! The yet unborn children are to be the victims of God's vengeance on their parents' weakness—though he had made them weak; had created the tempter sufficiently strong to practise upon this weakness; and had arranged the causes, predisposing man and woman to commit the offence—if indeed it be an offence to pluck the fruit of a tree which gives knowledge to the eater. It is for this fall that Jesus is to atone. He is sacrificed to

redeem the world's inhabitants from the penalties for a weakness (for sin it was not) they had no share in. It was not sin; for the man was influenced by circumstances prearranged by Deity, and which man was powerless to resist or control. But if the man was so influenced by such circumstances, it was God who influenced the man—the God who punished the human race for an action to the commission of which he impelled their progenitor.

Adam did not sin. He ate of the fruit of a tree which God had made good to be eaten. He was induced to this through the indirect persuasion of a serpent God had made for the very purpose of persuading him. But even if Adam did sin, and even if he and Eve, his wife, were the first parents of the whole human family, what have we to do with their sin? We, unborn when the act was committed, and without choice as to coming into this world amongst the myriad worlds which roll in the vast expanse of solar and astral systems. Why should Jesus atone for Adam's sin? Adam suffered for his own offence; he, according to the curse, was to eat in sorrow of the fruit of the earth all his life as punishment for his offence. Atonement, after punishment, is surely a superfluity. Or was the atonement only for those who needed no atonement, having no part in the offence? Did the sacrifice of Jesus serve as atonement for the whole world, and, if yes, for all sin, or for Adam's sin only? If the atonement is for the whole world, does it

extend to unbelievers as well as to believers in the efficacy? if it only includes believers, then what has become of those generations who, according to the Bible, for 4,000 years succeeded each other in the world without faith in Christ because without knowledge of his mission? Should not Jesus have come 4,000 years earlier, or, at least, should he not have come when the Ark grounded on Ararat served as monument of God's merciless vengeance, which had made the whole earth like to a battle field, whereon the omnipotent had crushed the feeble, and had marked his prowess by the innumerable myriads of decaying dead? If it be declared that though the atonement by Jesus only applies to believers in his mission so far as regards human beings born since his coming, yet that it is wider in its retrospective redeeming effect; then the answer is that it is unfair to those born after Jesus to make faith the condition precedent to the saving efficacy of atonement, especially if belief be required from all mankind posterior to the Christian era, whether they have heard of Jesus or not. Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Kaffirs, and others have surely a right to complain of this atonement scheme, which ensures them eternal damnation by making it requisite to believe in a Gospel of which they have no knowledge. If it be contended that belief will only be required from those to whom the Gospel of Jesus has been preached, and who have had afforded to them the

opportunity of its acceptance, then how great a cause of complaint against Christian Missionaries have those peoples who, without such missions, might have escaped damnation for unbelief. The gates of hell are opened to them by the earnest propagandist, who professes to show the road to heaven.

But does this atonement serve only to redeem the human family from the curse inflicted by Deity in Eden's garden for Adam's sin, or does it operate as satisfaction for all sin? If the salvation is from the punishment for Adam's sin alone, and if belief and baptism are, as Jesus himself affirms, to be the conditions precedent to any saving efficacy in the much-lauded atonement by the son of God, then what becomes of a child that only lives a few hours, is never baptised, and never having any mind, consequently never has any belief? Or what becomes of one idiot-born who, throughout his dreary life, never has mental capacity for the acceptance or examination of, or credence in any religious dogmas whatever? Is the idiot saved who cannot believe? Is the infant saved who cannot believe? I, with some mental faculties tolerably developed, cannot believe. Must I be damned? If so, fortunate short-lived babe! lucky idiot! That the atonement should not be effective until the person to be saved has been baptised, that the sprinkling of a few drops of water should quench the flames of hell, is a remarkable feature in the Christian's creed:

"One can't but think it somewhat droll,
Pump-water thus should cleanse a soul."

How many fierce quarrels have raged on the formula of baptism amongst those loving brothers in Christ who believe he died for them! How strange an idea that, though God has been crucified to redeem mankind, it yet needs the font of water to wash away the lingering stain of Adam's crime.

One minister of the Church of England, occupying the presidential chair of a well-known training college for Church clergymen in the North of England, seriously declared, in the presence of a large auditory and of several church dignitaries, that the sin of Adam was so potent in its effect, that if a man *had never been born, he would yet have been damned for sin*. That is, he declared that man existed before birth, and that he committed sin before he was born; and if never born, would notwithstanding deserve to suffer eternal torment for that sin.

It is almost impossible to discuss seriously a doctrine so monstrously absurd, and yet it is not one whit more ridiculous than the ordinary orthodox and terrible doctrine, that God the undying, in his infinite love, killed himself under the form of his son to appease the cruel vengeance of God, the just and merciful, who, without this, would have been ever vengeful, unjust, and merciless.

The atonement theory, as presented to us by the Bible, is in effect as follows:—God created man surrounded by such conditions as the divine mind chose, in the selection of which man had no voice, and the effects of which on man were all foreknown and predestined by Deity. The result was man's fall on the very first temptation, so frail the nature with which he was endowed, or so powerful the temptation to which he was subjected. For this fall not only did the all-merciful punish Adam, but also his posterity; and this punishing went on for many centuries, until God, the immutable, changed his purpose of continual condemnation of men for sins they had no share in, and was wearied with his long series of unjust judgments on those whom he created in order that he might judge them. That, then, God sent his son, who was himself and was also his own father, and who was immortal, to die upon the cross, and, by this sacrifice, to atone for the sin which God himself had caused Adam to commit, and thus to appease the merciless vengeance of the All-merciful, which would otherwise have been continued against men yet unborn for an offence they could not have been concerned in or accessory to. Whether those who had died before Christ's coming are redeemed, the Bible does not clearly tell us. Those born after are redeemed only on condition of their faith in the efficacy of the sacrifice offered, and in the truth of the history of Jesus's life. The doctrine of salvation

by sacrifice of human life is the doctrine of a barbarous and superstitious age: the outgrowth of a brutal and depraved era. The God who accepts the bloody offering of an innocent victim in lieu of punishing the guilty culprit shows no mercy in sparing the offender: he has already satiated his lust for vengeance on the first object presented to him.

Sacrifice is an early, prominent, and with slight exception an abiding feature in the Hebrew record—sacrifice of life finds appreciative acceptance from the Jewish Deity. Cain's offering of fruits is ineffective, but Abel's altar, bearing the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof, finds respect in the sight of the Lord. While the face of the earth was disfigured by the rotting dead after God in his infinite mercy had deluged the world, then it was that the ascending smoke from Noah's burnt sacrifice of bird and beast produced pleasure in heaven, and God himself smelled a sweet savor from the roasted meats. To preach atonement for the past by sacrifice is worse than folly—it is crime. The past can never be recalled, and the only reference to it should be that, by marking its events, we may avoid its evil deeds and improve upon its good ones. The Levitical doctrine of the atonement, with its sin laden scapegoat sent into the wilderness to the evil demon Azazel, though placed in the Pentateuch, is of much later date, being one of the myths acquired by the Jews during their captivity. The general notion of

atonement by sacrifice is that of an averting of the just judgment by an offering which may induce the judge, who in this case is also the executioner, to delay or remit the punishment he has awarded. In the gospel atonement story the weird folly of the scapegoat mystery and the barbarous waste of doves, pigeons, rams, and bulls as burnt offerings are all outdone. We have in lieu of these the history of the Man-God subject to human passions and infirmities, who comes to die, and who prays to his heavenly father—that is, to himself—that he will spare him the bitter cup of death; who is betrayed, having himself, ere he laid the foundations of the world, predestined Judas to betray him; and who dies, being God immortal, crying with his almost dying breath —"My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

WHEN WERE OUR GOSPELS WRITTEN?

AN ANSWER TO THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

PREFATORY NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

SINCE this pamphlet was originally penned in 1867, the author of "Supernatural Religion" has in his three volumes placed a very storehouse of information within the easy reach of every student, and many of Dr. Tischendorf's reckless statements have been effectively dealt with in that masterly work. In the present brief pamphlet there is only the very merest index to matters which in "Supernatural Religion" are exhaustively treated. Part II of "The Freethinkers' Text-Book," by Mrs Besant, has travelled over the same ground with much care, and has given exact reference to authorities on each point.

THE Religious Tract Society, some time since, issued, prefaced with their high commendation, a translation of a pamphlet by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf, entitled "When were our Gospels Written?" In the introductory preface we are not unfairly told that "on the credibility of the four Gospels the whole of Christianity rests, as a building on its foundations." It is proposed in this brief essay

to deal with the character of Dr. Tischendorf's advocacy, then to examine the genuineness of the four Gospels, as affirmed by the Religious Tract Society's pamphlet, and at the same time to ascertain, so far as is possible in the space, how far the Gospel narrative is credible.

The Religious Tract Society state that Dr. Teschendorf's *brochure* is a repetition of "arguments for the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels," which the erudite Doctor had previously published for the learned classes, "with explanations" now given in addition, to render the arguments "intelligible" to meaner capacities; and as the "Infidel" and "Deist" are especially referred to as likely to be overthrown by this pamphlet, we may presume that the society considers that in the 119 pages—which the translated essay occupies—they have presented the best paper that can be issued on their behalf for popular reading on this question. The praise accorded by the society, and sundry laudations appropriated with much modesty in his own preface by Dr. Constantine Tischendorf to himself, compel one at the outset to regard the Christian manifesto as a most formidable production. The Society's translator impressively tells us that the pamphlet has been three times printed in Germany and twice in France; that it has been issued in Dutch and Russian, and is done into Italian by an Archbishop with the actual approbation of the Pope.

The author's preface adds an account of his great journeyings and heavy travelling expenses incurred out of an original capital of a "few unpaid bills," ending in the discovery of a basketful of old parchments destined for the flames by the Christian monks in charge, but which from the hands of Dr. Tischendorf are used by the Religious Tract Society to neutralise all doubts, and to "blow to pieces" the Rationalistic criticism of Germany and the coarser Infidelity of England. Doubtless Dr. Tischendorf and the Society consider it some evidence in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels that the learned Doctor was enabled to spend 5,000 dollars out of less than nothing, and that the Pope regards his pamphlet with favor, or they would not trouble to print such statements. We frankly accord them the full advantage of any argument which may fairly be based on such facts. An autograph letter of endorsement by the Pope is certainly a matter which a Protestant Tract Society—who regard "the scarlet whore at Babylon" with horror—may well be proud of.

Dr. Tischendorf states that he has since 1839 devoted himself to the textual study of the New Testament, and it ought to be interesting to the orthodox to know that, as a result of twenty-seven years' labor, he now declares that "it has been placed beyond doubt that the original text... had in many places undergone such serious modifications of

meaning as to leave us in painful uncertainty as to what the apostles had actually written," and that "the right course to take" "is to set aside the received text altogether and to construct a fresh text."

This is pleasant news for the true believer, promulgated by authority of the managers of the great Christian depôt in Paternoster Row, from whence many scores of thousands of copies of this incorrect received text have nevertheless been issued without comment to the public, even since the society have published in English Dr. Tischendorf s declaration of its unreliable character.

With the modesty and honorable reticence peculiar to great men, Dr. Tischendorf records his successes in reading hitherto unreadable parchments, and we learn that he has received approval from "several learned bodies, and even from crowned heads," for his wonderful performances. As a consistent Christian, who knows that the "powers that be are ordained of God," our "critic without rival," for so he prints himself, regards the praise of crowned heads as higher in degree than that of learned bodies.

The Doctor discovered in 1844 the MS on which he now relies to confute audacious Infidelity, in the Convent of St. Catherine at Sinai; he brought away a portion, and handed that portion, on his return, to the Saxon Government—they paying all expenses. The Doctor, however, did not then divulge where he

had found the MS. It was for the advantage of humankind that the place should be known at once, for, at least, two reasons. First, because by aid of the remainder of this MS—"the most precious Bible treasure in existence"—the faulty text of the New Testament was to be reconstructed; and the sooner the work was done the better for believers in Christianity. And, secondly, the whole story of the discovery might then have been more easily confirmed in every particular.

For fifteen years, at least, Dr. Tischendorf hid from the world the precise locality in which his treasure had been discovered. Nay, he was even fearful when he knew that other Christians were trying to find the true text, and he experienced "peculiar satisfaction" when he ascertained that his silence had misled some pious searchers after reliable copies of God's message to all humankind; although all this time he was well aware that our received copies of God's revelation had undergone "serious modifications" since the message had been delivered from the Holy Ghost by means of the Evangelists.

In 1853, "nine years after the original discovery," Dr. Tisch-endorf again visited the Sinai convent, but although he had "enjoined on the monks to take religious care" of the remains of which they, on the former occasion, would not yield up possession, he, on this second occasion, and apparently after careful search, discovered "eleven

short lines," which convinced him that the greater part of the MS had been destroyed. He still, however, kept the place secret, although he had no longer any known reason for so doing; and, having obtained an advance of funds from the Russian Government, he, in 1859, tried a third time for his "pearl of St. Catherine," which, in 1853, he felt convinced had been destroyed, and as to which he had nevertheless, in the meantime, been troubled by fears that the good cause might be aided by some other than Dr. Tischendorf discovering and publishing the "priceless treasure," which, according to his previous statements, he must have felt convinced did not longer exist. On this third journey the Doctor discovered "the very fragments which, fifteen years before, he had taken out of the basket," "and also other parts of the Old Testament, the New Testament complete, and, in addition, Barnabas and part of Hermas."

With wonderful preciseness, and with great audacity, Dr. Tischendorf *refers* the transcription of the discovered Bible to the first half of the fourth century. Have Dr. Tischendorf's patrons here ever read of MSS discovered in the same Convent of St. Catherine, at Sinai, of which an account was published by Dr. Constantine Simonides, and concerning which the *Westminster Review* said, "We share the suspicions, to use the gentlest word which occurs to us, entertained, we believe, by all

competent critics and antiquarians."

In 1863 Dr. Tischendorf published, at the cost of the Russian Emperor, a splendid but very costly edition of his Sinaitic MS in columns, with a Latin introduction. The book is an expensive one, and copies of it are not very plentiful in England. Perhaps the Religious Tract Society have not contributed to its circulation so liberally as did the pious Emperor of all the Russias. Surely a text on which our own is to be re-constructed ought to be in the hands at least of every English clergyman and Young Men's Christian Association.

"Christianity," writes Dr. Tischendorf, "does not, strictly speaking, rest on the moral teaching of Jesus;" "it rests on his person only." "If we are in error in believing in the person of Christ as taught in the Gospels, then the Church herself is in error, and must be given up as a deception." "All the world knows that our Gospels are nothing else than biographies of Christ." "We have no other source of information with respect to the life of Jesus."

So that, according to the Religious Tract Society and its advocate, if the credibility of the Gospel biography be successfully impugned, then the foundations of Christianity are destroyed. It becomes, therefore, of the highest importance to show that the biography of Jesus, as given in the four Gospels, is absolutely incredible and self-contradictory.

It is alleged in the Society's preface that all the

objections of infidelity have been hitherto unavailing. This is, however, not true. It is rather the fact that the advocates of Christianity when defeated on one point have shuffled to another, either quietly passing the topic without further debate, or loudly declaring that the point abandoned was really so utterly unimportant that it was extremely foolish in the assailant to regard it as worthy attack, and that, in any case, all the arguments had been repeatedly refuted by previous writers.

To the following objections to the Gospel narrative the writer refuses to accept as answer, that they have been previously discussed and disposed of.

The Gospels which are yet mentioned by the names popularly associated with each do not tell us the hour, or the day, or the month, or—save Luke—the year, in which Jesus was born. The only point on which the critical divines, who have preceded Dr. Tischendorf, generally agree is, that Jesus was not born on Christmas day. The Oxford Chronology, collated with a full score of recognised authorities, gives us a period of more than seven years within which to place the date. So confused is the story as to the time of the birth, that while Matthew would make Jesus born in the lifetime of Herod, Luke would fix the period of Jesus's birth as after Herod's death.

Christmas itself is a day surrounded with curious ceremonies of pagan origin, and in no way serving to

fix the 25th December as the natal day. Yet the exact period at which Almighty God, as a baby boy, entered the world to redeem long-suffering humanity from the consequences of Adam's ancient sin, should be of some importance.

Nor is there any great certainty as to the place of birth of Christ. The Jews, apparently in the very presence of Jesus, reproached him that he ought to have been born at Bethlehem. Nathaniel regarded him as of Nazareth. Jesus never appears to have said to either, "I was born at Bethlehem." In Matthew ii, 6, we find a quotation from the prophet: "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least amongst the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people-Israel." Matthew lays the scene of the birth in Bethlehem, and Luke adopts the same place, especially bringing the child to Bethlehem for that purpose, and Matthew tells us it is done to fulfil a prophecy. Micah v, 2, the only place in which similar words occur, is not a prophecy referring to Jesus at all. The words are: "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." This is not quoted correctly in Matthew, and can hardly be said by any straining of language to apply to Jesus. The credibility of a story on which Christianity rests is bolstered up by

prophecy in default of contemporary corroboration. The difficulties are not lessened in tracing the parentage. In Matthew i,

17, it is stated that "the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations." Why has Matthew made such a mistake in his computation of the genealogies—in the last division we have only thirteen names instead of fourteen, even including the name of Jesus? Is this one of the cases of "painful uncertainty" which has induced the Religious Tract Society and Dr. Tischendorf to wish to set aside the *textus receptus* altogether?

From David to Zorobabel there are in the Old Testament twenty generations; in Matthew, seventeen generations; and in Luke, twenty-three generations. In Matthew from David to Christ there are twenty-eight generations, and in Luke from David to Christ forty-three generations. Yet, according to the Religious Tract Society, it is on the credibility of these genealogies as part of the Gospel history that the foundation of Christianity rests. The genealogy in the first Gospel arriving at David traces to Jesus through Solomon; the third Gospel from David traces through Nathan. In Matthew the names from David are Solomon, Roboam, Abia, Asa, Josaphat, Joram, Ozias; and in the Old Testament we

trace the same names from David to Ahaziah, whom I presume to be the same as Ozias. But in 2nd Chronicles xxii, 11, we find one Joash, who is not mentioned in Matthew at all. If the genealogy in Matthew is correct, why is the name not mentioned? Amaziah is mentioned in chap. xxiv, v. 27, and in chap. xxvi, v. 1, Uzziah, neither of whom [is] mentioned in Matthew, where Ozias is named as begetting Jotham, when in fact three generations of men have come in between. In Matthew and Luke, Zorobabel is represented as the son of Salathiel, while in 1 Chronicles iii, 17-19, Zerubbabel is stated to be the son of Pedaiah, the brother of Salathiel. Matthew says Abiud was the son of Zorobabel (chap. i, v. 13). Luke iii, 27, says Zorobabel's son was Rhesa. The Old Testament contradicts both, and gives Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith, their sister (1 Chronicles iii, 19), as the names of Zorobabel's children. Is this another piece of evidence in favor of Dr. Tischendorfs admirable doctrine, that it is necessary to reconstruct the text?

In the genealogies of Matthew and Luke there are only three names agreeing after that of David, viz., Salathiel, Zorobabel, and Joseph—all the rest are utterly different. The attempts at explanation which have been hitherto offered, in order to reconcile these genealogies, are scarcely creditable to the intellects of the Christian apologists. They allege that "Joseph, who by nature was the son of Jacob, in

the account of the law was the son of Heli. For Heli and Jacob were brothers by the same mother, and Heli, who was the elder, dying without issue, Jacob, as the law directed, married his widow; in consequence of such marriage, his son Joseph was reputed in the law the son of Heli." This is pure invention to get over a difficulty—an invention not making the matter one whit more clear. For if you suppose that these two persons were brothers, then unless you invent a death of the mother's last husband and the widow's remarriage Jacob and Heli would be the sons of the same father, and the list of the ancestors should be identical in each genealogy. But to get over the difficulty the pious do this. They say, although brothers, they were only half-brothers; although sons of the same mother, they were not sons of the same father, but had different fathers. If so, how is it that Salathiel and Zorobabel occur as father and son in both genealogies? Another fashion of accounting for the contradiction is to give one as the genealogy of Joseph and the other as the genealogy of Mary. "Which?" "Luke," it is said. Why Luke? what are Luke's words? Luke speaks of Jesus being, "as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli." When Luke says Joseph, the son of Heli, [does] he mean Mary, the daughter of Heli? Does the Gospel say one thing and mean another? because if that argument is worth anything, then in every case where a man has a theory which disagrees

with the text, he may say the text means something else. If this argument be permitted we must abandon in Scriptural criticism the meaning which we should ordinarily intend to convey by any given word. If you believe Luke meant daughter, why does the same word mean son in every other case all through the remainder of the genealogy? And if the genealogy of Matthew be that of Joseph, and the genealogy of Luke be that of Mary, they ought not to have any point of agreement at all until brought to David. They, nevertheless, do agree and contradict each other in several places, destroying the probability of their being intended as distinct genealogies. There is some evidence that Luke does not give the genealogy of Mary in the Gospel itself. We are told that Joseph went to Bethlehem to be numbered because he was of the house of David: if it had been Mary it would have surely said so. As according to the Christian theory, Joseph was not the father of Jesus, it is not unfair to ask how it can be credible that Jesus's genealogy could be traced to David in any fashion through Joseph?

So far from Mary being clearly of the tribe of Judah (to which the genealogy relates) her cousinship to Elizabeth would make her rather appear to belong to the tribe of Levi.

To discuss the credibility of the miraculous conception and birth would be to insult the human understanding. The mythologies of Greece, Italy, and

India, give many precedents of sons of Gods miraculously born. Italy, Greece, and India, must, however, yield the palm to Judea. The incarnate Chrishna must give way to the incarnate Christ. A miraculous birth would be scouted today as monstrous; antedate it 2,000 years and we worship it as miracle.

Matt. i, 22, 23, says: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” This is supposed to be a quotation from Isaiah vii, 14-16: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.”

But in this, as indeed in most other cases of inaccurate quotation, the very words are omitted which would show its utter inapplicability to Jesus. Even in those which are given, the agreement is not complete. Jesus was not called Emmanuel. And even if his mother Mary were a virgin, this does not help the identity, as the word OLME in Isaiah, rendered “virgin” in our version, does not convey the notion of

virginity, for which the proper word is BeThULE; OLME is used of a youthful spouse recently married. The allusion to the land being forsaken of both her kings, omitted in Matthew, shows how little the passage is prophetic of Jesus.

The story of the annunciation made to Joseph in one Gospel, to Mary in the other, is hardly credible on any explanation. If you assume the annunciations as made by a God of all-wise purpose, the purpose should, at least, have been to prevent doubt of Mary's chastity; but the annunciation is made to Joseph only after Mary is suspected by Joseph. Two annunciations are made, one of them in a dream to Joseph, when he is suspicious as to the state of his betrothed wife; the other made by the angel Gabriel (whoever that angel may be) to Mary herself, who apparently conceals the fact, and is content to be married, although with child not by her intended husband. The statement—that Mary being found with child by the Holy Ghost, her husband, not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily—is quite incredible. If Joseph found her with child *by the Holy Ghost*, how could he even think of making a public example of her shame when there was nothing of which she could be ashamed—nothing, if he believed in the Holy Ghost, of which he need have been ashamed himself, nothing which need have induced him to wish to put her away privily. It is clear—according to Matthew—

that Mary was found with child, and that the Holy Ghost parentage was not even imagined by Joseph until after he had dreamed about the matter.

Although the birth of Jesus was specially announced by an angel, and although Mary sang a joyful song consequent on the annunciation, corroborated by her cousin's greeting, yet when Simeon speaks of the child, in terms less extraordinary, Joseph and Mary are surprised at it and do not understand it. Why were they surprised? Is it credible that so little regard was paid to the miraculous annunciation? Or is this another case of the "painful uncertainty" alluded to by Dr. Teschendorf?

Again, when Joseph and Mary found the child Jesus in the temple, and he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" they do not know what he means, so that either what the angel had said had been of little effect, or the annunciations did not occur at all. Can any reliance be placed on a narrative so contradictory? An angel was specially sent to acquaint a mother that her son about to be born is the Son of God, and yet that mother is astonished when her son says, "Wist ye not I must be about my father's business?"

The birth of Jesus was, according to Matthew, made publicly known by means of certain wise men. These men saw his star in the East, but it did not tell them much, for they were obliged to come and ask

information from Herod the King. Is astrology credible? Herod inquired of the chief priests and scribes; and it is evident Jeremiah was right, if he said, “The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means,” for these chief priests misquoted to suit their purposes, and invented a false prophecy by omitting a few words from, and adding a few words to, a text until it suited their purpose. The star, after they knew where to go, and no longer required its aid, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. The credibility of this will be better understood if the reader notice some star, and then see how many houses it will be over. Luke does not seem to have been aware of the star story, and he relates about an angel who tells some shepherds the good tidings, but this last-named adventure does not appear to have happened in the reign of Herod at all. Is it credible that Jesus was born twice? After the wise men had left Jesus, an angel warned Joseph to flee with him and Mary into Egypt, and Joseph did fly, and remained there with the young child and his mother until the death of Herod; and this, it is alleged, was done to fulfil a prophecy. On referring to Hosea xi, 1,

we find the words have no reference whatever to Jesus, and that, therefore, either the tale of the flight is invented as a fulfilment of the prophecy, or the prophecy manufactured to support the tale of the flight. The Jesus of Luke never went into Egypt at all

in his childhood. Directly after the birth of the child his parents instead of flying away because of persecution into Egypt, went peacefully up to Jerusalem to fulfil all things according to the law, returned thence to Nazareth, and apparently dwelt there, going up to Jerusalem every year until Jesus was twelve years of age.

In Matthew ii, 15, we are told that Jesus remained in Egypt, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.” In Hosea ii, 1, we read, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” In no other prophet is there any similar text. This not only is not a prophecy of Jesus, but is, on the contrary, a reference to the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. Is the prophecy manufactured to give an air of credibility to the Gospel history, or how will the Religious Tract Society explain it? The Gospel writings betray either a want of good faith, or great incapacity on the part of their authors in the mode adopted of distorting quotations from the Old Testament?

When Jesus began to be about thirty years of age he was baptised by John in the river Jordan. John, who, according to Matthew, knew him, forbade him directly he saw him; but, according to the writer of the fourth Gospel, he knew him not, and had, therefore, no occasion to forbid him. God is an “invisible” “spirit,” whom no man hath seen

(John i, 18), or can see (Exodus xxxiii, 20); but the man John saw the spirit of God descending like a dove. God is everywhere, but at that time was in heaven, from whence he said, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” Although John heard this from God’s own mouth, he some time after sent two of his disciples to Jesus to inquire if he were really the Christ (Matthew xi, 2, 3). Yet it is upon the credibility of this story, says Dr. Teschendorf, that Christianity rests like a building on its foundations.

It is utterly impossible John could have known and not have known Jesus at the same time. And if, as the New Testament states, God is infinite and invisible, it is incredible that as Jesus stood in the river to be baptised, the Holy Ghost was seen as it descended on his head as a dove, and that God from heaven said, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.” Was the indivisible and invisible spirit of God separated in three distinct and two separately visible persons? How do the Religious Tract Society reconcile this with the Athanasian Creed?

The baptism narrative is rendered doubtful by the language used as to John, who baptised Jesus. It is said, “This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Isaiah xl, 1-5, is, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her

warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." These verses have not the most remote relation to John? And this manufacture of prophecies for the purpose of bolstering up a tale, serves to prove that the writer of the Gospel tries by these to impart an air of credibility to an otherwise incredible story.

Immediately after the baptism, Jesus is led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. There he fasts forty days and forty nights.

John says, in chapter i, 35, "Again, the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." Then, at the 43rd verse, he says, "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, follow me." And in chapter ii, 1, he says, "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called and his disciples unto the marriage." According to Matthew, there can be no doubt that

immediately after the baptism Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. And we are to believe that Jesus was tempted of the Devil and fasting in the wilderness, and at the same time feasting at a marriage in Cana of Galilee? Is it possible to believe that Jesus actually did fast forty days and forty nights? If Jesus did not fast in his capacity as man, in what capacity did he fast? And if Jesus fasted, being God, the fast would be a mockery; and the account that he became a hungered must be wrong. It is barely possible that in some very abnormal condition or cataleptic state, or state of trance, a man might exist, with very slight nourishment or without food, but that a man could walk about, speak, and act, and, doing this, live forty days and nights without food is simply an impossibility.

Is the story that the Devil tempted Jesus credible? If Jesus be God, can the Devil tempt God? A clergyman of the Church of England writing on this says: “That the Devil should appear personally to the Son of God is certainly not more wonderful than that he should, in a more remote age, have appeared among the sons of God, in the presence of God himself, to torment the righteous Job. But that Satan should carry Jesus bodily and literally through the air, first to the top of a high mountain, and then to the topmost pinnacle of the temple, is wholly inadmissable, it is an insult to our understanding,

and an affront to our great creator and redeemer." Supposing, despite the monstrosity of such a supposition, an actual Devil—and this involves the dilemma that the Devil must either be God-created, or God's co-eternal rival; the first supposition being inconsistent with God's goodness, and the second being inconsistent with his power; but supposing such a Devil, is it credible that the Devil should tempt the Almighty maker of the universe with "all these will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me?"

In the very names of the twelve Apostles there is an uncertainty as to one, whose name was either Lebbæus, Thaddæus, or Judas. It is in Matthew x, 3, alone that the name of Lebbæus is mentioned, thus —"Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus." We are told, on this point, by certain Biblicists, that some early MSS have not the words "whose surname was Thaddæus," and that these words have probably been inserted to reconcile the Gospel according to Matthew with that attributed to Mark. In the English version of the Rheims Testament used in this country by our Roman Catholic brethren, the reconciliation between Matthew and Mark is completed by omitting the words "Lebbæus whose surname was," leaving only the name "Thaddæus" in Matthew's text. The revised version of the New Testament now agrees with the Rheims version, and the omission will probably meet with the entire concurrence of Dr.

Tischendorf and the Religious Tract Society, now they boast autograph letters of approval from the infallible head of the Catholic Church. If Matthew x, 3, and Mark iii,

18, be passed as reconciled, although the first calls the twelfth disciple Lebbæus, and the second gives him the name Thaddæus; there is yet the difficulty that in Luke vi, 16, corroborated by John xiv, 22, there is a disciple spoken of as "Judas, not Iscariot," "Judas, the brother of James." Commentators have endeavored to clear away this last difficulty by declaring that Thaddæus is a Syriac word, having much the same meaning as Judas. This has been answered by the objection that if Matthew's Gospel uses Thad-dæus in lieu of Judas, then he ought to speak of Thaddæus Iscariot, which he does not; and it is further objected also that while there are some grounds for suggesting a Hebrew original for the Gospel attributed to Matthew, there is not the slightest pretence for alleging that Matthew wrote in Syriac. The Gospels also leave us in some doubt as to whether Matthew is Levi, or whether Matthew and Levi are two different persons.

The account of the calling of Peter is replete with contradictions. According to Matthew, when Jesus first saw Peter, the latter was in a vessel fishing with his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea of Galilee. Jesus walking by the sea said to them—

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of

men." The two brothers did so, and they became Christ's disciples. When Jesus called Peter no one was with him but his brother Andrew. A little further on, the two sons of Zebedee were in a ship with their father mending nets, and these latter were separately called. From John, we learn that Andrew was originally a disciple of John the Baptist, and that when Andrew first saw Jesus, Peter was not present, but Andrew went and found Peter who, if fishing, must have been angling on land, telling him "we have found the Messiah," and that Andrew then brought Peter to Jesus, who said, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called Cephas." There is no mention in John of the sons of Zebedee being a little further on, or of any fishing in the sea of Galilee. This call is clearly on land. Luke's Gospel states that when the call took place, Jesus and Peter were both at sea. Jesus had been preaching to the people, who pressing upon him, he got into Simon's ship, from which he preached. After this he directed Simon to put out into the deep and let down the nets. Simon answered, "Master, we have toiled all night and taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." No sooner was this done, than the net was filled to breaking, and Simon's partners, the two sons of Zebedee, came to help, when at the call of Jesus, they brought their ships to land, and followed him.

Is it credible that there were three several calls,

or that the Gospels being inspired, you could have three contradictory versions of the same event? Has the story been here "painfully modified," or how do Dr. Tischendorf and the Religious Tract Society clear up the matter? Is it credible that, as stated in Luke, Jesus had visited Simon's house, and cured Simon's wife's mother, before the call of Simon, but did not go to Simon's house for that purpose, until after the call of Simon, as related in Matthew? It is useless to reply that the date of Jesus's visit is utterly unimportant, when we are told that it is upon the credibility of the complete narrative that Christianity must rest. Each stone is important to the building, and it is not competent for the Christian advocate to regard as useless any word which the Holy Ghost has considered important enough to reveal.

Are the miracle stories credible? Every ancient nation has had its miracle workers, but modern science has relegated all miracle history to realms of fable, myth, illusion, delusion, or fraud. Can Christian miracles be made, the exceptions? Is it likely that the nations amongst whom the dead were restored to life would have persistently ignored the author of such miracles? Were the miracles purposeless, or if intended to convince the Jews, was God unable to render his intentions effective? That five thousand persons should be fed with five loaves and two fishes, and that an apparent excess should remain beyond the original stock, is difficult to

believe; but that shortly after this—Jesus having to again perform a similar miracle for four thousand persons—his own disciples should ignore his recent feat, and wonder from whence the food was to be derived, is certainly startlingly incredible. If this exhibition of incredulity were pardonable on the part of the twelve apostles, living witnesses of greater wonders, how much more pardonable the unbelief of the sceptic of to-day, which the Religious Tract Society seek to overcome by a faint echo of asserted events all contrary to probability, and with nineteen centuries intervening.

The casting out the devils presents phænomena requiring considerable credulity, especially the story of the devils and the swine. To-day insanity is never referable to demoniacal possession, but eighteen hundred years ago the subject of lunacy had not been so patiently investigated as it has been since. That one man could now be tenanted by several devils is a proposition for which the maintainer would in the present generation incur almost universal contempt; yet the repudiation of its present possibility can hardly be consistent with implicit credence in its ancient history. That the devils and God should hold converse together, although not without parallel in the book of Job, is inconsistent with the theory of an infinitely good Deity; that the devils should address Jesus as son of the most high God, and beg to be allowed to enter a herd of swine, is at least ludicrous;

yet all this helps to make up the narrative on which Dr. Tischendorf relies. That Jesus being God should pray to his Father that “the cup might pass from” him is so incredible that even the faithful ask us to regard it as mystery. That an angel from heaven could strengthen Jesus, the almighty God, is equally mysterious. That where Jesus had so prominently preached to thousands, the priests should need any one like Judas to betray the founder of Christianity with a kiss, is absurd; his escapade in flogging the dealers, his wonderful cures, and his raising Lazarus and Jairus’s daughter should have secured him, if not the nation’s love, faith, and admiration, at least a national reputation and notoriety. It is not credible if Judas betrayed Jesus by a kiss that the latter should have been arrested upon his own statement that he was Jesus. That Peter should have had so little faith as to deny his divine leader three times in a few hours is only reconcilable with the notion that he had remained unconvinced by his personal intercourse with the incarnate Deity. The mere blunders in the story of the denial sink into insignificance in face of this major difficulty. Whether the cock did or did not crow before the third denial, whether Peter was or was not in the same apartment with Jesus at the time of the last denial, are comparatively trifling questions, and the contradictions on which they are based may be the consequence of the errors which Dr. Tischendorf says

have crept into the sacred writings.

Jesus said, “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Jesus was crucified on Friday, was buried on Friday evening, and yet the first who went to the grave on the night of Saturday as it began to dawn towards Sunday, found the body of Jesus already gone. Did Jesus mean he should be three days and three nights in the grave? Is there any proof that his body remained in the grave for three hours? Who went first to the grave? was it Mary Magdalene alone, as in John, or two Marys as in Matthew, or the two Marys and Salome as in Mark, or the two Marys, Joanna, and several unnamed women as in Luke? To whom did did Jesus first appear? Was it, as in Mark, to Mary Magdalene, or to two disciples going to Emmaus, as in Luke, or to the two Marys near the sepulchre, as in Matthew? Is the eating boiled fish and honeycomb by a dead God credible? Did Jesus ascend to heaven the very day of his resurrection, or did an interval of nearly six weeks intervene?

Is this history credible, contained as it is in four contradictory biographies, outside which biographies we have, as Dr. Tisch-endorf admits, “no other source of information with respect to the life of Jesus?” This history of an earth-born Deity, descended through a crime-tainted ancestry, and whose genealogical tree is traced through one who

was not his father; this history of an infinite God nursed as a baby, growing through childhood to manhood like any frail specimen of humanity; this history, garnished with bedevilled men, enchanted fig tree, myriads of ghosts, and scores of miracles, and by such garnishment made more akin to an oriental romance than to a sober history; this picture of the infinite invisible spirit incarnate visible as man; immutability subject to human passions and infirmities; the creator come to die, yet wishing to escape the death which shall bring peace to his God-tormented creatures; God praying to himself and rejecting his own prayer; God betrayed by a divinely-appointed traitor; God the immortal dying, and in the agony of the death-throes—stronger than the strong man's will—crying with almost the last effort of his dying breath, that he being God, is God forsaken!

If all this be credible, what story is there any man need hesitate to believe?

Dr. Tischendorf asks how it has been possible to impugn the credibility of the four Gospels, and replies that this has been done by denying that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear. In the preceding pages it has been shown that the credibility of the Gospel narrative is impugned because it is uncorroborated by contemporary history, because it is self-contradictory, and because many of its incidents are *prima facie* most

improbable, and some of them utterly impossible. Even English Infidels are quite prepared to admit that the four Gospels may be quite anonymous; and yet, that their anonymous character need be of no weight as an argument against their truth. All that is urged on this head is that the advocates of the Gospel history have sought to endorse and give value to the otherwise unreliable narratives by a pretence that some of the Evangelists, at least, were eyewitnesses of the events they refer to. Dr. Teschendorf says: “The credibility of a writer clearly depends on the interval of time which lies between him and the events which he describes. The farther the narrator is removed from the facts which he lays before us the more his claims to credibility are reduced in value.” Presuming truthfulness in intention for any writer, and his ability to comprehend the facts he is narrating, and his freedom from a prejudice which may distort the picture he intends to paint correctly with his pen: we might admit the correctness of the passage we have quoted; but can these always be presumed in the case of the authors of the Gospels? On the contrary, a presumption in an exactly opposite direction may be fairly raised from the fact that immediately after the Apostolic age the Christian world was flooded with forged testimonies in favor of the biography of Jesus, or in favor of his disciples.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* observes: “To

say nothing of such acknowledged forgeries as the Apostolic constitutions and liturgies, and the several spurious Gospels, the question of the genuineness of the alleged remains of the Apostolic fathers, though often overlooked, is very material. Any genuine remains of the 'Apostle' Barnabas, of Hermas, the contemporary (Romans xvi, 14), and Clement, the highly commended and gifted fellow laborer of St. Paul (Phil, iv, 3), could scarcely be regarded as less sacred than those of Mark and Luke, of whom personally we know less. It is purely a question of criticism. At the present day, the critics best competent to determine it, have agreed in opinion, that the extant writings ascribed to Barnabas and Hermas are wholly spurious—the frauds of a later age. How much suspicion attaches to the 1st Epistle of Clement (for the fragment of the second is also generally rejected) is manifest from the fact, that in modern times it has never been allowed the place expressly assigned to it among the canonical books prefixed to the celebrated Alexandrian MS, in which the only known copy of it is included. It must not be forgotten that Ignatius expressly lays claim to inspiration, that Irenæus quotes Hermas as Scripture, and Origen speaks of him as inspired, while Polycarp, in modestly disclaiming to be put on a level with the Apostles, clearly implies there would have been no essential distinction in the way of his being ranked in the same order. But the question is,

how are these pretensions substantiated?" So far the *Edinburgh Review*, certainly not an Infidel publication.

Eusebius, in his "Ecclesiastical History," admits the existence of many spurious gospels and epistles, and some writings put forward by him as genuine, such as the correspondence between Jesus and Agbaras, have since been rejected as fictitious. It is not an unfair presumption from this that many of the most early Christians considered the then existing testimonies insufficient to prove the history of Jesus, and good reason is certainly afforded for carefully examining the whole of the evidences they have bequeathed us.

On p. 48, Dr. Tischendorf quotes Irenæus, whose writings belong to the extreme end of the second century, as though that Bishop must be taken as vouching the four Gospels as we now have them. Yet, if the testimony of Irenæus be reliable ("Against Heresies," Book III, cap. i.) the Gospel attributed to Matthew was believed to have been composed in Hebrew, and Irenæus says that as the Jews desired a Messiah of the royal line of David, Matthew having the same desire to a yet greater degree, strove to give them full satisfaction. This may account for some of the genealogical curiosities to which we have drawn attention, but hardly renders Matthew's Gospel more reliable; and how can the suggestion that Matthew wrote in Hebrew prove that Matthew penned the

first Gospel, which has only existed in Greek? Irenæus, too, flatly contradicts the Gospels by declaring that the ministry of Jesus extended over ten years and that Jesus lived to be fifty years of age ("Against Heresies," Book II, cap. 22).

If the statement of Irenæus ("Against Heresies," Book III, cap. xi) that the fourth Gospel was written to refute the errors of Cerinthus and Nicolaus, have any value, then the actual date of issue of the fourth Gospel will be considerably after the others. Dr. Tischendorf's statement that Polycarp has borne testimony to the Gospel of John is not even supported by the quotation on which he relies. All that is said in the passage quoted (Eusebius, "Ecc. Hist," Book V, cap. 20) is that Irenæus when he was a child heard Polycarp repeat from memory the discourses of John and others concerning Jesus. If the Gospels had existed in the time of Polycarp it would have been at least as easy to have read them from the MS as to repeat them from memory. Dr. Tischendorf might also have added that the letter to Florinus, whence he takes the passage on which he relies, exists only in the writings of Eusebius, to whom we are indebted for many pieces of Christian evidence since abandoned as forgeries. Dr. Tischendorf says: "Any testimony of Polycarp in favor of the Gospel refers us back to the Evangelist himself, for Polycarp, in speaking to Irenæus of this Gospel as the work of his master, St. John, must have

learned from the lips of the apostle himself, whether he was its author or not." Now, what evidence is there that Polycarp ever said a single word as to the authorship of the fourth Gospel, or of any Gospel, or that he even said that John had penned a single word? In the Epistle to the Philippians (the only writing attributed to Polycarp for which any genuine character is even pretended), the Gospel of John is never mentioned, nor is there even a single passage in the Epistle which can be identified with any passage in the Gospel of John.

Surely Dr. Tischendorf forgot, in the eager desire to make his witnesses bear good testimony, that the highest duty of an advocate is to make the truth clear, not to put forward a pleasantly colored falsehood to deceive the ignorant. It is not even true that Irenæus ever pretends that Polycarp in any way vouched our fourth Gospel as having been written by John, and yet Dr. Tischendorf had the cool audacity to say "there is nothing more damaging to the doubters of the authenticity of St. John's Gospel than this testimony of St. Polycarp." Do the Religious Tract Society regard English Infidels as so utterly ignorant that they thus intentionally seek to suggest a falsehood, or are the Council of the Religious Tract Society themselves unable to test the accuracy of the statements put forward on their behalf by the able decipherer of illegible parchments? It is too much to suspect the renowned Dr. Constantine Tischendorf of

ignorance, yet even the coarse English sceptic regrets that the only other alternative will be to denounce him as a theological charlatan.

Dr. Mosheim, writing on behalf of Christianity, says that the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians is by some treated as genuine and by others as spurious, and that it is no easy matter to decide. Many critics, of no mean order, class it amongst the apostolic Christian forgeries, but whether the Epistle be genuine or spurious, it contains no quotation from, it makes no reference to, the Gospel of John.

To what is said of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, it is enough to note that all these are after A.D. 150. Irenæus may be put 177 to 200, Tertullian about 193, and Clement of Alexandria as commencing the third century.

One of Dr. Tischendorf s most audacious flourishes is that (p. 49) with reference to the Canon of Muratori, which we are told “enumerates the books of the New Testament which, from the first, were considered canonical and sacred,” and which “was written a little after the age of Pius I, about A.D. 170.”

First the anonymous fragment contains books which were never accepted as canonical; next, it is quite impossible to say when or by whom it was written or what was its original language. Mura-tori, who discovered the fragment in 1740, conjectured that it was written about the end of the second or

beginning of the third century, but it is noteworthy that neither Eusebius nor any other of the ecclesiastical advocates of the third, fourth, or fifth centuries, ever refers to it. It may be the compilation of any monk at any date prior to 1740, and is utterly valueless as evidence.

Dr. Tischendorfs style is well exemplified by the positive manner in which he fixes the date A.D. 139 to the first apology of Justin, although a critic so "learned" as the unrivalled Dr. Tischendorf could not fail to be aware that more than one writer has supported the view that the date of the first apology was not earlier than A.D. 145, and others have contended for A.D. 150. The Benedictine editors of Justin's works support the latter date. Dr. Kenn argues for A.D. 155-160. On page 63, the Religious Tract Society's champion appeals to the testimony of Justin Martyr, but in order not to shock the devout while convincing the profane, he omits to mention that more than half the writings once attributed to Justin Martyr are now abandoned, as either of doubtful character or actual forgeries, and that Justin's value as a witness is considerably weakened by the fact that he quotes the acts of Pilate and the Sybilline Oracles as though they were reliable evidence, when in fact they are both admitted specimens of "a Christian forgery." But what does Justin testify as to the Gospels? Does he say that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were their writers?

On the contrary, not only do the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John never occur as Evangelists in the writings of Justin, but he actually mentions facts and sayings as to Jesus, which are not found in either of the four Gospels. The very words rendered Gospels only occur where they are strongly suspected to be interpolated, Justin usually speaking of some writings which he calls “memorials” or “memoirs of the Apostles.”

Dr. Tischendorf urges that in the writings of Justin the Gospels are placed side by side with the prophets, and that “this undoubtedly places the Gospels in the list of canonical books.” If this means that there is any statement in Justin capable of being so construed, then Dr. Tischendorf was untruthful. Justin does quote specifically the Sybilline oracles, but never Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. He quotes statements as to Jesus, which may be found in the apocryphal Gospels, and which are not found in ours, so that if the evidence of Justin Martyr be taken, it certainly does not tend to prove, even in the smallest degree, that four Gospels were specially regarded with reverence in his day. The Rev. W. Sanday thinks that Justin did not assign an exclusive authority to our Gospels, and that he made use also of other documents no longer extant (“Gospels in 2nd Century,” p. 117).

On p. 94 it is stated that “as early as the time of Justin the expression ‘the Evangel’ was applied to the

four Gospels." This statement by Dr. Tischendorf and its publication by the Religious Tract Society call for the strongest condemnation. Nowhere in the writings of Justin are the words "the Evangel" applied to the four Gospels.

Lardner only professes to discover two instances in which the word anglicised by Tischendorf as "Evangel," occurs; [--Greek--] and [--Greek--] the second being expressly pointed out by Schleiermacher as an interpolation, and as an instance in which a marginal note has been incorporated with the text; nor would one occurrence of such a word prove that any book or books were so known by Justin, as the word is merely a compound of good and [--Greek--] message; nor is there the slightest foundation for the statement that in the time of Justin the word Evangel was ever applied to designate the four Gospels now attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Dr. Tischendorf (p. 46) admits that the "faith of the Church... would be seriously compromised" if we do not find references to the Gospels in writings between A.D. 100 and A.D. 150; and—while he does not directly assert—he insinuates that in such writings the Gospels were "treated with the greatest respect," or "even already treated as canonical and sacred writings;" and he distinctly affirms that the Gospels "did see the light" during the "Apostolic age," "and before the middle of the second" century

"our Gospels were held in the highest respect by the Church," although for the affirmation, he neither has nor advances the shadow of evidence.

The phrases, "Apostolic age" and "Apostolic fathers" denote the first century of the Christian era, and those fathers who are supposed to have flourished during that period, and who are supposed to have seen or heard, or had the opportunity of seeing or hearing, either Jesus or some one or more of the twelve Apostles. Barnabas, Clement, Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp, are those whose names figure most familiarly in Christian evidences as Apostolic fathers. But the evidence from these Apostolic fathers is of a most unreliable character. Mosheim ("Ecclesiastical History," cent. 1, cap. 2, sec. 3, 17) says that "the Apostolic history is loaded with doubts, fables, and difficulties," and that not long after Christ's ascension several histories were current of his life and doctrines, full of "pious frauds and fabulous wonders." Amongst these were "The Acts of Paul," "The Revelation of Peter," "The Gospel of Peter," "The Gospel of Andrew," "The Gospel of John," "The Gospel of James," "The Gospel of the Egyptians," etc. The attempts often made to prove from the writings of Barnabas, Ignatius, etc., the prior existence of the four Gospels, though specifically unnamed, by similarity of phraseology in quotations, is a failure, even admitting for the moment the genuineness of the Apostolic Scriptures,

if the proof is intended to carry the matter higher than that such and such statements were current in some form or other, at the date the fathers wrote. As good an argument might be made that some of the Gospel passages were adopted from the fathers. The fathers occasionally quote, as from the mouth of Jesus, words which are not found in any of our four Gospels, and make reference to events not included in the Gospel narratives, clearly evidencing that even if the four documents ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were in existence, they were not the only sources of information from which some of the Apostolic fathers derived their knowledge of Christianity, and evidencing also that the four Gospels had attained no such specific superiority as to entitle them to special mention by name.

Of the epistle attributed to Barnabas, which is supposed by its supporters to have been written in the latter part of the first century, which, Paley says, is probably genuine, which is classed by Eusebius as spurious ("Ecclesiastical History," book iii, cap. 25), and which Dr. Donaldson does not hesitate for one moment in refusing to ascribe to Barnabas the Apostle ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, p. 100), it is only necessary to say that so far from speaking of the Gospels with the greatest respect, it does not mention by name any one of the four Gospels. There are some passages in Barnabas which are nearly identical in phraseology with some Gospel passages, and which it

has been argued are quotations from one or other of the four Gospels, but which may equally be quotations from other Gospels, or from writings not in the character of Gospels. There are also passages which are nearly identical with several of the New Testament epistles, but even the great framer of Christian evidences, Lardner, declares his conviction that none of these last-mentioned passages are quotations, or even allusions, to the Pauline or other epistolary writings. Barnabas makes many quotations which clearly demonstrate that the four Gospels, if then in existence and if he had access to them, could not have been his only source of information as to the teachings of Jesus (e.g, cap. 7). “The Lord enjoined that whosoever did not keep the fast should be put to death.” “He required the goats to be of goodly aspect and similar, that when they see him coming they may be amazed by the likeness to the goat.” Says he, “those who wish to behold me and lay hold of my kingdom, must through tribulation and suffering obtain me” (cap. 12). And the Lord saith, “When a tree shall be bent down and again rise, and when blood shall flow out of the wound.” Will the Religious Tract Society point out from which of the Gospels these are quoted?

Barnabas (cap. 10) says that Moses forbade the Jews to eat weasel flesh, “because that animal conceives with the mouth,” and forbad them to eat the hyena because that animal annually changes its

sex. This father seems to have made a sort of *mélange* of some of the Pentateuchal ordinances. He says (cap. 8) that the Heifer (mentioned in Numbers) was a type of Jesus, that the *three* (?) young men appointed to sprinkle, denote Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that *wool was put upon a stick* because the kingdom of Jesus was founded upon the cross, and (cap. 9) that the 318 men *circumcised* by Abraham stood for Jesus crucified. Barnabas also declared that the world was to come to an end in 6,000 years ("Freethinker's Text-Book," part ii, p. 268). In the Sinaitic Bible, the Epistle of St. Barnabas has now, happily for misguided Christians, been discovered in the original Greek. To quote the inimitable style of Dr. Tischendorf, "while so much has been lost in the course of centuries by the tooth of time and the carelessness of ignorant monks, an invisible eye had watched over this treasure, and when it was on the point of perishing in the fire, the Lord had decreed its deliverance;" "while critics have generally been divided between assigning it to the first or second decade of the second century, the Sinaitic Bible, which has for the first time cleared up this question, has led us to throw its composition as far back as the last decade of the first century." A fine specimen of Christian evidence writing, cool assertion without a particle of proof and without the slightest reason given. How does the Siniatic MS, even if it be genuine, clear up the question of the date of St.

Barnabas's Epistle? Dr. Tischendorf does not condescend to tell us what has led the Christian advocate to throw back the date of its composition? We are left entirely in the dark: in fact, what Dr. Tischendorf calls a "throw back," is if you look at Lardner just the reverse. What does the epistle of Barnabas prove, even if it be genuine? Barnabas quotes, by name, Moses and Daniel, but never Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Barnabas specifically refers to Deuteronomy and the prophets, but never to either of the four Gospels.

There is an epistle attributed to Clement of Rome, which has been preserved in a single MS only where it is coupled with another epistle rejected as spurious. Dr. Donaldson ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, p. 3) declares that who the Clement was to whom these writings are ascribed cannot with absolute certainty be determined. Both epistles stand on equal authority; one is rejected by Christians, the other is received. In this epistle while there is a distinct reference to an Epistle by Paul to the Corinthians, there is no mention by name of the four Gospels, nor do any of the words attributed by Clement to Jesus agree for any complete quotation with anyone of the Gospels as we have them. The Rev. W. Sanday is frank enough to concede "that Clement is not quoting directly from our Gospels."

Is it probable that Clement would have mentioned a writing by Paul, and yet have entirely

ignored the four Gospels, if he had known that they had then existed? And could they have easily existed in the Christian world in his day without his knowledge? If anyone takes cap. xxv of this epistle and sees the phoenix given as a historic fact, and as evidence for the reality of the resurrection, he will be better able to appreciate the value of this so-called epistle of Clement.

The letters of Ignatius referred to by Dr. Tischendorf are regarded by Mosheim as laboring under many difficulties, and embarrassed with much obscurity. Even Lardner, doing his best for such evidences, says, that if we find matters in the Epistles inconsistent with the notion that Ignatius was the writer, it is better to regard such passages as interpolations, than to reject the Epistles entirely, especially in the "scarcity" of such testimonies.

There are fifteen epistles of which eight are undisputedly forgeries. Of the remaining seven there are two versions, a long and a short version, one of which must be corrupt, both of which may be. These seven epistles, however, are in no case to be accepted with certainty as those of Ignatius. Dr. Cureton contends that only three still shorter epistles are genuine ("Ante-Nicene Fathers," vol. i, pp. 137 to 143). The Rev. W. Sanday treats the three short ones as probably genuine, waiving the question as to the others ("Gospels in Second Century," p. 77, and see preface to sixth edition "Supernatural Religion").

Ignatius, however, even if he be the writer of the epistles attributed to him, never mentions either of the four Gospels. In the nineteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, there is a statement made as to the birth and death of Jesus, not to be found in either Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.

If the testimony of the Ignatian Epistles is reliable, then it vouches that in that early age there were actually Christians who denied the death of Jesus. A statement as to Mary in cap. nineteen of the Epistle to the Ephesians is not to be found in any portion of the Gospels. In his Epistle to the Trallians, Ignatius, attacking those who denied the real existence of Jesus, would have surely been glad to quote the evidence of eye witnesses like Matthew and John, if such evidence had existed in his day. In cap. eight of the Epistles to the Philadelphians, Ignatius says, “I have heard of some who say: Unless I find it in the archives I will not believe the Gospel. And when I said it is written, they answered that remains to be proved.” This is the most distinct reference to any Christian writings, and how little does this support Dr. Tischendorf’s position. From which of our four Gospels could Ignatius have taken the words, “I am not an incorporeal demon,” which he puts into the mouth of Jesus in cap. iii, the epistle to the Smyrnæans? Dr. Tischendorf does admit that the evidence of the Ignatian Epistles is not of decisive value; might he not go farther and say, that

as proof of the four Gospels it is of no value at all?

On page 70, Dr. Tischendorf quotes Hippolytus without any qualification. Surely the English Religious Tract Society might have remembered that Dodwell says, that the name of Hippolytus had been so abused by impostors, that it was not easy to distinguish any of his writings. That Mill declares that, with one exception, the pieces extant under his name are all spurious. That, except fragments in the writings of opponents, the works of Hip-polytus are entirely lost. Yet the Religious Tract Society permit testimony so tainted to be put forward under their authority, to prove the truth of Christian history. The very work which Dr. Tischendorf pretends to quote is not even mentioned by Eusebius, in the list he gives of the writings of Hippolytus.

On page 94, Dr. Tischendorf states that Basilides, before A.D. 138, and Valentinus, about A.D. 140, make use of three out of four Gospels, the first using John and Luke, the second, Matthew, Luke, and John. What words of either Basilides or Valentinus exist anywhere to justify this reckless assertion? Was Dr. Tisch-endorf again presuming on the utter ignorance of those who are likely to read his pamphlet? The Religious Tract Society are responsible for Dr. Tischendorf s allegations, which it is impossible to support with evidence.

The issue raised is not whether the followers of Basilides or the followers of Valentinus may have

used these gospels, but whether there is a particle of evidence to justify Dr. Tischendorf s declaration, that Basilides and Valentinus themselves used the above-named gospels. That the four Gospels were well known during the second half of the first century is what Dr. Tischendorf undertook to prove, and statements attributed to Basilides and Valentinus, but which ought to be attributed to their followers, will go but little way as such proof (see “Supernatural Religion,” vol. ii, pp. 41 to 63).

It is pleasant to find a grain of wheat in the bushel of Tischendorf chaff. On page 98, and following pages, the erudite author applies himself to get rid of the testimony of Papias, which was falsified and put forward by Paley as of great importance. Paley says the authority of Papias is complete; Tischendorf declares that Papias is in error. Paley says Papias was a hearer of John, Tischendorf says he was not. We leave the champions of the two great Christian evidence-mongers to settle the matter as best they can. If, however, we are to accept Dr. Tischendorfs declaration that the testimony of Papias is worthless, we get rid of the chief link between Justin Martyr and the apostolic age. It pleases Dr. Tischendorf to damage Papias, because that father is silent as to the gospel of John; but the Religious Tract Society must not forget that in thus clearing away the second-hand evidence of Papias, they have cut away their only

pretence for saying that any of the Gospels are mentioned by name within 150 years of the date claimed for the birth of Jesus. In referring to the lost work of Theophilus of Antioch, which Dr. Tischendorf tells us was a kind of harmony of the Gospels, in which the four narratives are moulded and fused into one, the learned Doctor forgets to tell us that Jerome, whom he quotes as giving some account of

Theophilus, actually doubted whether the so-called commentary was really from the pen of that writer. Lardner says: “Whether those commentaries which St. Jerome quotes were really composed by Theophilus may be doubted, since they were unknown to Eusebius, and were observed by Jerome to differ in style and expression from his other works. However, if they were not his, they were the work of some anonymous ancient.” But if they were the work of an anonymous ancient after Eusebius, what becomes of Dr. Tischendorf s “as early as A.D. 170?”

Eusebius, who refers to Theophilus, and who speaks of his using the Apocalypse, would have certainly gladly quoted the Bishop of Antioch’s “Commentary on the Four Gospels,” if it had existed in his day. Nor is it true that the references we have in Jerome to the work attributed to Theophilus, justify the description given by Dr. Tischendorf, or even the phrase of Jerome, “*qui quatuor*

Evangelistarum in unum opus dicta compingens." Theophilus seems, so far as it is possible to judge, to have occupied himself not with a connected history of Jesus, or a continuous discourse as to his doctrines, but rather with mystical and allegorical elucidations of occasional passages, which ended, like many pious commentaries on the Old or New Testament, in leaving the point dealt with a little less clear with the Theophillian commentary than without it. Dr. Tischendorf says that Theo-doret and Eusebius speak of Tatian in the same way—that is, as though he had, like his Syrian contemporary, composed a harmony of the four Gospels. This is also inaccurate. Eusebius talks of Tatianus "having found a certain body and collection of Gospels, I know not how," which collection Eusebius does not appear even to have ever seen; and so far from the phrase in Theodoret justifying Dr. Tischendorfs explanation, it would appear from Theodoret that Tatian's Diatessaron was, in fact, a sort of spurious gospel, "The Gospel of the Four" differing materially from our four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Neither Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, or Jerome, who refer to other works of Tatian, make any mention of this. Dr. Tischendorf might have added that Diapente, or "the Gospel of the Five," has also been a title applied to this work of Tatian.

In the third chapter of his essay, Dr. Tischendorf refers to apocryphal writings "which bear on their

front the names of Apostles" "used by obscure writers to palm off" their forgeries. Dr. Tischendorf says that these spurious books were composed "partly to embellish" scripture narratives, and "partly to support false doctrine;" and he states that in early times, the Church was not so well able to distinguish true gospels from false ones, and that consequently some of the apocryphal writings "were given a place they did not deserve." This statement of the inability of the Church to judge correctly, tells as much against the whole, as against any one or more of the early Christian writings, and as it may be as fatal to the now received gospels as to those now rejected, it deserves the most careful consideration. According to Dr. Tischendorf, Justin Martyr falls into the category of those of the Church who were "not so critical in distinguishing the true from the false;" for Justin, says Tischendorf, treats the Gospel of St. James and the Acts of Pilate, each as a fit source whence to derive materials for the life of Jesus, and therefore must have regarded the Gospel of St. James and the Acts of Pilate, as genuine and authentic writings; while Dr. Tischendorf, wiser, and a greater critic than Justin, condemns the Gospel of St. James as spurious, and calls the Acts of Pilate "a pious fraud;" but if Dr. Tischendorf be correct in his statement that "Justin made use of this Gospel" and quotes the "Acts of Pontius Pilate," then, according to his own words, Justin did not know how to distinguish the

true from the false, and the whole force of his evidence previously used by Dr. Tischendorf in aid of the four Gospels would have been seriously diminished, even if it had been true, which it is not, that Justin Martyr had borne any testimony on the subject.

Such, then, are the weapons, say the Religious Tract Society, by their champion, "which we employ against unbelieving criticism." And what are these weapons? We have shown in the preceding pages, the *suppressio veri* and the *suggestio falsi* are amongst the weapons used. The Religious Tract Society directors are parties to fabrication of evidence, and they permit a learned charlatan to forward the cause of Christ with craft and chicane. But even this is not enough; they need, according to their pamphlet, "a new weapon;" they want "to find out the very words the Apostles used." True believers have been in a state of delusion; they were credulous enough to fancy that the authorised version of the Scriptures tolerably faithfully represented God's revelation to humankind. But no, says Dr. Tischendorf, it has been so seriously modified in the copying and re-copying that it ought to be set aside altogether, and a fresh text constructed. Glorious news this for the Bible Society. Listen to it, Exeter Hall! Glad tidings to be issued by the Paternoster Row saints! After spending hundreds of thousands of pounds in giving away Bibles to soldiers, in placing them in hotels and

lodging-houses, and shipping them off to negroes and savages, it appears that the wrong text has been sent through the world, the true version being all the time in a waste-paper heap at Mount Sinai, watched over by an "invisible eye." But, adds Dr. Tischendorf, "if you ask me whether any popular version contains the original text, my answer is Yes and No. I say Yes as far as concerns your soul's salvation." If these are enough for the soul's salvation, why try to improve the matter? If we really need the "full and clear light" of the Sinaitic Bible to show us "what is the Word written by God," then most certainly our present Bible is not believed by the Religious Tract Society to be the Word written by God. The Christian advocates are in this dilemma: either the received text is insufficient, or the proposed improvement is unnecessary. Dr. Tischendorf says that "The Gospels, like the only begotten of the Father, will endure as long as human nature itself," yet he says "there is a great diversity among the texts," and that the Gospel in use amongst the Ebionites and that used amongst the Nazarenes have been "disfigured here and there with certain arbitrary changes." He admits, moreover, that "in early times, when the Church was not so critical in distinguishing the true from the false," spurious Gospels obtained a credit which they did not deserve. And while arguing for the enduring character of the Gospel, he requests you to set aside the received text altogether, and to try to construct a

new revelation by the aid of Dr. Tischendorf s patent Sinaitic invention.

We congratulate the Religious Tract Society upon their manifesto, and on the victory it secures them over German Rationalism and English Infidelity. The Society's translator, in his introductory remarks, declares that “circumstantial evidence when complete, and when every link in the chain has been thoroughly tested, is as strong as direct testimony;” and, adds the Society’s penman, “This is the kind of evidence which Dr. Tischendorf brings for the genuineness of our Gospels.” It would be difficult to imagine a more inaccurate description of Dr. Tischendorf s work. Do we find the circumstantial evidence carefully tested in the Doctor’s boasting and curious narrative of his journeys commenced on a pecuniary deficiency and culminating in much cash? Do we find it in Dr. Tischendorf s concealment for fifteen years of the place, watched over by an invisible eye, in which was hidden the greatest biblical treasure in the world? Is the circumstantial evidence shown in the sneers at Renan? or is each link in the chain tested by the strange jumbling together of names and conjectures in the first chapter? What tests are used in the cases of Valentinus and Basilides in the second chapter? How is the circumstantial testimony aided by the references in the third chapter to the Apocryphal Gospels? Is there a pretence even of critical testing in

the chapter devoted to the apostolic fathers? All that Dr. Tisch-endorf has done is in effect to declare that our authorised version of the New Testament is so unreliable, that it ought to be got rid of altogether, and a new text constructed. And this declaration is circulated by the Religious Tract Society, which sends the sixpenny edition of the Gospel with one hand, and in the other the shilling Tischendorf pamphlet, declaring that many passages of the Religious Tract Society's New Testament have undergone such serious modifications of meaning as to leave us in painful uncertainty as to what was originally written.

The very latest contribution from orthodox sources to the study of the Gospels, as contained in the authorised version, is to be found in the very candid preface to the recently-issued revised version of the New Testament, where the ordinary Bible receives a condemnation of the most sweeping description. Here, on the high authority of the revisers, we are told that, with regard to the Greek text, the translators of the authorised version had for their guides “manuscripts of late date, few in number and used with little critical skill.” The revisers add what Freethinkers have long maintained, and have been denounced from pulpits for maintaining, viz., “that the commonly received text needed thorough revision,” and, what is even more important, they candidly avow that “it is but recently that materials

have been acquired for executing such a work with even approximate completeness." So that not only "God's Word" has admittedly for generations not been "God's Word" at all, but even now, and with materials not formerly known, it has only been revised with "approximate completeness," whatever those two words may mean. If they have any significance at all, they must convey the belief of the new and at present final revisers of the Gospel, that, even after all their toil, they are not quite sure that god's revelation is quite exactly rendered into English. So far as the ordinary authorised version of the New Testament goes—and it is this, the law-recognised version which is still used in administering oaths—we are told that the old translators "used considerable freedom," and "studiously adopted a variety of expressions which would now be deemed hardly consistent with the requirements of faithful translation." This is a pleasant euphemism, but a real and direct charge of dishonest translation by the authorised translators. The new revisers add, with sadness, that "it cannot be doubted that they (the translators of the authorised version) carried this liberty too far, and that the studied avoidance of uniformity in the rendering of the same words, even when occurring in the same context, is one of the blemishes of their work." These blemishes the new revisers think were increased by the fact that the translation of the

authorised version of the New Testament was assigned to two separate companies, who never sat together, which "was beyond doubt the cause of many inconsistencies," and, although there was a final supervision, the new revisers add, most mournfully: "When it is remembered that the supervision was completed in nine months, we may wonder that the incongruities which remain are not more numerous."

Nor are the revisers by any means free from doubt and misgiving on their own work. They had the "laborious task" of "deciding between the rival claims of various readings which might properly affect the translation," and, as they tell us, "Textual criticism, as applied to the Greek New Testament, forms a special study of much intricacy and difficulty, and even now leaves room for considerable variety of opinion among competent critics." Next they say: "the frequent inconsistencies in the authorised version have caused us much embarrassment," and that there are "numerous passages in the authorised version in which... the studied variety adopted by the Translators of 1611 has produced a degree of inconsistency that cannot be reconciled with the principle of faithfulness." So little are the new revisers always certain as to what god means that they provide "alternative readings in difficult or debateable passages," and say "the notes of this last group are numerous and largely in excess

of those which were admitted by our predecessors." And with reference to the pronouns and other words in italics we are told that "some of these cases... are of singular intricacy, and make it impossible to maintain rigid uniformity." The new revisers conclude by declaring that "through our manifold experience of its abounding difficulties we have felt more and more as we went onward that such a work can never be accomplished by organised efforts of scholarship and criticism unless assisted by divine help." Apparently the new revisers are conscious that they did not receive this divine help in their attempt at revision, for they go on: "We know full well that defects must have their place in a work so long and so arduous as this which has now come to an end. Blemishes and imperfections there are in the noble translation which we have been called upon to revise; blemishes and imperfections will assuredly be found in our own revision... we cannot forget how often we have failed in expressing some finer shade of meaning which we recognised in the original, how often idiom has stood in the way of a perfect rendering, and how often the attempt to preserve a familiar form of words, or even a familiar cadence, has only added another perplexity to those which have already beset us."

MR. GLADSTONE IN REPLY TO COLONEL INGERSOLL ON CHRISTIANITY

IN the early days of the *National Reformer* there was some reason to believe that, despite his enormous work and his utterly differing views, Mr. Gladstone was not unfrequently a reader of some of the papers appearing in its columns. Later there was on one occasion a very remarkable piece of evidence that, whilst considering as "questionable" the literature issued from the publishing office of the late Mr. Austin Holyoake, the veteran statesman did not pass it without notice. I do not know if Mr. Gladstone has, during the last dozen years or so, had time or inclination for similar acquaintance with the utterances of advanced Freethought in this country—though his critique on a recent novel gives affirmative probability—but it is clear that he watches heretical utterances across the Atlantic; for in the *North American Review* for May, Mr. Gladstone —intervening in a correspondence going on between the Rev. Dr. Field and Colonel R.G. Ingersoll—takes up his pen against the eloquent American. I have hesitated very much as to publicly noticing the North

American Review article, for my personal reverence for Mr. Gladstone is very great. I know how very far from one another we are on questions of religion, and believing that the religious side or bent of Mr. Gladstone's mind is stronger than any other feeling influencing him, I can conceive that I may offend much in any criticism, however respectfully worded. Yet I am sure that Mr. Gladstone's high position entitles all he says to most attentive audience, and my duty to those in the Freethought ranks who trust me compels me that I should tender some words of comment. I venture to hope that the view of duty Mr Gladstone has felt incumbent on him may prevail on my side to prevent any appearance of impertinent interference.

It is not proposed to deal here with the points in controversy between Dr. Field and Colonel Ingersoll, or with the ease as between Mr. Gladstone and the Colonel. All that will be ventured on is a brief comment, from my own standpoint, on some of the positions adopted by Mr. Gladstone, writing as a Christian believer.

Early in the article, stating his own position, Mr. Gladstone says: "Belief in divine guidance is not of necessity belief that such guidance can never be frustrated by the laxity, the infirmity, the perversity of man alike in the domain of action and the domain of thought." The whole effect of this sentence is governed by the meaning attached by the writer to

the words “divine guidance.” If the meaning intended to be conveyed by the word “divine” includes the assumption of omnipotent omniscience for the person or influence described as divine, and if “guidance” means the intentional direction of the human by the divine to a given end, then it is not easy to understand how this can be intelligently believed, and yet that the same believer shall at the same time believe that laxity or infirmity on the part of the individual guided may “frustrate” the guidance, that is, may counteract it, nullify it, or overcome it. That mental infirmity in the individual may be irremediable by Deity is a proposition which challenges the assumed omniscient omnipotence. That fallible human perversity may be more powerful than omnipotent intent is a contradiction in terms. If the affirmer of divine influence regarded the “divine” person as creator, and the individuals guided as created results, then the infirmity, i.e., insufficient capacity of the created, must have been intentional on the part of an omniscient, and the “guidance” would be illusory, in that the “divine” must, even prior to creation, have planned and predesigned the frustration of his own guiding effort by means of this infirmity. Perversity on the part of the created individual, whether originated purposely by the creator or developed in spite of the omnipotent guider, such perversity, sufficient in activity to frustrate the active intent of omnipotence,

involves wholesale contradiction on the part of, or utter confusion in the mind of, the believer. According to Mr. Gladstone, the "divine" may guide the individual to think x, intending the individual to think x, but knowing that the individual cannot (from infirmity) think x, or will not (from perversity) think x, and therefore the divine purpose is frustrated: the "divine," i.e., the omnipotent being, is not only unable or unwilling to cure the infirmity, or to overcome the perversity, but is actually the cause of the fatal infirmity or perversity. That Mr. Gladstone honestly believes this is manifest, but I venture to deny that such honest belief can be accepted as the equivalent for accurate thought. It may be the equivalent for a state of mind, which, existing amongst millions of human beings in diverse races, is yet consistent with the wide prevalence of ir-reconcileable faiths, and with faiths irreconcileable with fact. Alike in thought and action, Mr. Gladstone believes the divine guidance may be frustrated by human perversity, and thus possibly explains to himself why it is that the Christian Governments of Europe have, in this close of the nineteenth century, literally millions of men constantly ready for the work of killing those who belong to the common family of "Our Father which art in heaven."

Taking up the words of the questioning challenge by Colonel Ingersoll to Dr. Field "What think you of Jephthah?" Mr. Gladstone writes: "I am

aware of no reason why any believer in Christianity should not be free to canvass, regret, or condemn the act of Jephthah. So far as the narration which details it is concerned, there is not a word of sanction given to it more than to the falsehood of Abraham in Egypt, or of Jacob and Rebecca in the matter of the hunting (Gen. xx, 1-8, and Gen. xxiii [this is a misprint for xxvii]); or to the dissembling of St. Peter in the case of the Judaising converts (Gal. ii, 11); I am aware of no color of approval given to it elsewhere. But possibly the author of the reply may have thought that he found such an approval in the famous eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the apostle, handling his subject with a discernment and care very different to those of the reply, writes thus (Heb. xi, 32): 'And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah: of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.' Jephthah, then, is distinctly held up to us by a canonical writer as an object of praise. But of praise on what account? Why should the reply assume that it is on account of the sacrifice of his child?"

I submit that to condemn the voluntary human sacrifice by Jephthah to Jehovah, it is necessary to condemn the Bible presentment. A believer in Christianity who condemned the act of Jephthah would in this necessarily condemn also the devotion to the Lord of a human being and the carrying out

the vow by actual human sacrifice. But Leviticus xxvii, 28 and 29, authorises such a vow, and enacts the result in precise language. Kalisch, writing on this ("Leviticus," Part I, p. 385), says: "The fact stands indisputable that human sacrifices offered to Jehovah were possible among the Hebrews long after the time of Moses, without meeting check or censure from the teachers or leaders of the nation."

Mr. Gladstone correctly enough maintains that the Bible gives no more sanction to the conduct of Jephthah "than to the falsehood of Abraham in Egypt." I quite admit that this is accurately stated, but God frequently described himself as the "God of Abraham;" Abraham is pictured as being in heaven; special promises were made to Abraham; and if these were not as sanctioning his conduct, they nevertheless were marks of approbation without blame of that conduct. In ordinary cases where reward is given it is not unnaturally associated with the narrated conduct of the person rewarded. Abraham and Jephthah stand on much the same footing on the question of readiness to offer human sacrifice, except that in Jephthah's case the initiative is with him. In the case of Abraham, the initiative is from the Lord.

Mr. Gladstone, again, accurately says that there is no more sanction given to the act of Jephthah than is given to the trick and deliberate falsehood by which Jacob cheated blind Isaac out of the blessing

intended for Esau. That is so; but, according to the Genesis narrative, God practically endorsed the fraud when he not only declared himself the God of Jacob, but by his prophet declared that he loved Jacob and hated Esau (Romans ix, 13). When the cheater is loved and the cheated hated, it is scarcely straining the text to associate sanction of the act with the love expressed for the the conduct of the person rewarded.

The narration as to Jephthah is of a distinct bargain between Jephthah and the Lord, and a bargain made under spiritual influence, or, to use Mr. Gladstone's words, under divine guidance. The text is explicit (Judges xi, 29, 30, 31):

"Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the chil-dren of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

After this vow the Lord does deliver the children of Ammon into Jephthah's hands, and Jephthah—who says: "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back"—in return keeps his part of

the agreement, “and did with her according to his vow.” And yet Mr. Gladstone writes that there is no reason so far as he is aware, to prevent a Christian from condemning this act of Jephthah. No reason, except that the condemnation must include the condemning of the practice of such vows generally, though specially enacted (Leviticus xxvii, 28, 29):

“Notwithstanding no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed but shall surely be put to death”—

and must also involve the express condemnation of the particular bargain assented to and completed alike by Jephthah and by “the Lord.”

With the challenge as to Jephthah, Col. Ingersoll asked Dr. Field “What of Abraham?” and this, too, is taken up by Mr. Gladstone who says of Abraham: “He is not commended because, being a father, he made all the preparations antecedent to plunging the knife into his son. He is commended (as I read the text) because, having received a glorious promise, a promise that his wife should be the mother of nations, and that kings should be born of her (Genesis xvii, 6), and that by his seed the blessings of redemption should be conveyed to man, and the fulfilment of the promise being dependent solely

upon the life of Isaac, he was nevertheless willing that the chain of these promises should be broken by the extinction of that life, because his faith assured him that the Almighty would find the way to give effect to his own designs" (Heb. xi, 16-19). But the text is surely clear on this. Abraham is praised because he offered up Isaac, that is, that he was ready and willing to offer a human sacrifice to "the Lord" similar to that which was actually offered by Jephthah. Jephthah's sacrifice was voluntary; Abraham's uncompleted sacrifice was undertaken in obedience to the pressure of temptation by God.

Mr. Gladstone observes that "the facts... are grave and startling," and he might well write thus if he had before him any record of the case of a man tried in the United States for the murder of his son. The man imagined and believed, as Abraham is stated to have imagined and believed, that he heard God command him to kill his son as a sacrifice; the man obeyed what he believed to be the divine command. While Abraham only "took the knife to slay his son," the American actually killed his child. On the trial the jury found that the man was insane; that the imagined divine command was delusion; that what the man claimed to be an act of faith in God was an act of human insanity. Mr. Gladstone says that Abraham's faith "may have been qualified by a reserve of hope that God would interpose before the final act," that is, that the interposition would

come before he, like Jephthah, actually killed his child as a human sacrifice to the Deity who tempted him. The Bible text gives no support to Mr. Gladstone's qualifying theory. Genesis xxii, 1, 2, says:

"God did tempt Abraham.... And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Without hesitation, Abraham, according to the narrative, takes his son to the place, binds him to the wood, and deliberately prepares to carry out the sacrifice. Abraham either deceives the men (verse 5) and misleads his son (verses 7 and 8), or Abraham did not believe in the consummation of the sacrifice, and in the latter case the faith for which he is praised would be no more than hypocritic pretence. Nay, the text expressly represents God as affirming that Abraham was ready to carry out the sacrifice of his son (verse 16):

"By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son."

If Abraham only offered to kill his son as a sacrifice with the mental qualification that the offer would not be accepted, and that the sacrifice would not be exacted, then the Lord must have been misled into the swearing recited in the text.

Evidently Mr. Gladstone, himself a humane man

and loving father, is not quite at ease in dealing with this part of Abraham's history. He says (1) "that the narrative does not supply us with a complete statement of particulars;" (2) that "the command was addressed to Abraham under conditions essentially different from those which now determine for us the limits of moral obligations;" (3) "that the estimate of human life at the time was different;" (4)

that "the position of the father in the family was different: its members were regarded as in some sense his property." I rejoin (1) that to read into the text vital words of explanation which are not specifically expressed in the "divine revelation"—and to so read because without these words the text is incredible—is perilously near downright infidelity. And that, given the incompleteness of Genesis, the added explanation must vary with the intellect, training, and temper of the expositor, e.g. Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Spurgeon, or the man who killed his child in America, would fill up each imagined hiatus in very diverse fashions. (2) Mr. Gladstone's argument can only be maintainable on the assumption that the limits of moral obligation were in the time of Abraham differently determined—for or by, "the Lord"—from such limits today, that is, that the "divine guide" is not immutable. (3) That to render this argument permissible on the part of a believer in Christianity it must be assumed that "the Lord" then estimated the value of human life

differently from the manner in which he now would estimate it, because—unless "the Lord" was simply deceiving Abraham in the original direction and the subsequent swearing—"the Lord" concurred in and approved the proposed sacrifice by Abraham; as he also afterwards concurred in and approved the actual sacrifice by Jephthah. (4) [nvolves the assumption that the morality of family relation is now admittedly higher under modern civilisation than when specially regulated by "divine guidance."

3 "Capital and Wages," p. 19.

4 "Perversion of Scotland," p. 197.

Mr. Gladstone grants that "there is every reason to suppose that around Abraham in 'the land Moriah,' the practice of human sacrifice as an act of religion was in full vigor," and he does not fall into the error of ordinary Biblical apologists in pretending that the practice of human sacrifice was confined to "false "religions.

Mr. Gladstone fairly states that the command received by Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a human sacrifice was not only "obviously inconsistent with the promises which had preceded," but "was also inconsistent with the morality acknowledged in later times." I submit that this statement is really a condemnation by Mr. Gladstone of the divine command, in that it is a declaration that such a command would—in times later than Abraham, in fact, in our own times—be an immoral command.

Here there ought not to be any question raised of changed conditions, for the command is from "the Lord," that is, from the assumed immutable, omniscient Omnipotent. Mr. Gladstone, it is true, contends that "though the law of moral action is the same everywhere and always, it is variously applicable to the human being, as we know from experience; and its first form is that of simple obedience to a superior whom there is every ground to trust." As in the article Mr. Gladstone has given no definition of what he means by morality, I have no right to go beyond his statement. Following Bentham and Mill, I should personally maintain the utilitarian definition of morality, i.e., "that that action is moral which is for the greatest good of the greatest number with the least injury to any." But this would not in any fashion fit in with Mr. Gladstone's contention, which in the case of a Russian, would make the act moral which is of simple obedience to the Czar, even though that act happened to be the knouting of a delicate woman; or in the case of a Roman Catholic would declare the act to be moral which was performed in simple obedience to the Pope, even though it were the applying the fire to the faggots piled round Giordano Bruno; or in the case of an English sailor would make the act moral done in obedience to the commander of his ship, even though it should be the placing a destructive torpedo in contact with a crowded vessel of an enemy; or in

the case of an Irish constable, though the act should be the shooting, on the command of his superior, from the window of a Mitchelstown barrack, even though the result was the murder of an unoffending old man.

A FEW WORDS ON THE CHRISTIANS' CREED

TO THE REV. J.G. PACKER, A.M, INCUMBERER OF ST. PETER'S, HACKNEY ROAD

SIR,—Had the misfortunes which I owe to your officious interference been less than they are, and personal feeling left any place in my mind for deliberation or for inquiry in selecting a proper person to whom to dedicate these few remarks, I should have found myself directed, by many considerations, to the person of the Incumberer of St. Peter's, Hackney Road. A life spent in division from part of your flock, and in crushing those whom you could not answer, may well entitle you to the respect of all true bigots. Hoping that you will be honoured as you deserve,

I am, Reverend Sir,

Yours truly,

C. BRADLAUGH

THE Creed of the Christian is what I proceed to consider, and I shall take for consideration the one which we have given us in the Communion Service of the Church of England. It begins thus: "I believe in

one God, the Father, Almighty." Here is a declaration of belief in the unity of God. How far this declaration is carried out in the latter parts of the creed, is a matter for further investigation; but we will now take the next sentence: "Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." Here, in the two sentences, we have the declaration of belief in a power that has created the universe. Now, the very term "belief" implies that the thing is not known; for when we have attained knowledge, we are beyond mere belief. As the believers are in doubt about the existence of a creator, I will endeavor to investigate the probability of there being such an existence. If you put any inquiries to a Christian as to the creation, he will tell you that God made matter out of nothing. If you ask him who or what God is, he will tell you that God is quite incomprehensible. Failing to get any other information on this point, you ask him, but how could something be produced from nothing? to which, if he is a pious man, he will reply, that, too, is incomprehensible; and also add, that it is one of those mysteries of religion that we must not attempt to reason upon. Having satisfied ourselves that the Christian can give us no information, beyond that which is contained in a book which he calls a revelation from God, we look to this book to ascertain, if we can, something further relating to this incomprehensibility. We, however, now find ourselves in a worse position than

we were before, for we are told in one text that God is all-powerful; in another text (Judges i, 19) we are told that he is not. In one text we are told that God is unchangeable; and in another we are told that God grieves and repeats (Gen. vi, 6). In another that he gets in a passion, and marches through the land in indignation, and thrashes the heathen in his anger (Habakkuk iii, 12). I might fill a volume with these beautiful specimens of the character of the God of the Christian. However, as the Bible quite supports God's character for incomprehensibility, I think we need not doubt that thus far the Christian is right. But, as this is not the sort of evidence that a reasonable man will be satisfied with, and as the burden of proof lies upon the man who declares or makes the assertion, I think all must come to the conclusion that the assertion, not being supported by evidence, must, as a matter of necessity, fall to the ground.

The next passage runs thus: "And in our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God: begotten of his Father before all the worlds." Here is the declaration of a belief (which, however little it will bear examination, we will take for the present) in a being whom we should take from the word Son to be a personage inferior to God the Father, especially as in John (xiv, 28), Jesus is represented saying "the Father is greater than I;" but such is not the case, for the next words, "God of God, Light of Light, Very

God of Very God," show that the Christian makes Jesus not only to be equal, but to be superior to God the Father, for he tells us that Jesus is God of Gods, and very God of very God. Now if God the Father is incomprehensible, I can assure you that the God and very God of God the Father appears to me to be doubly so. The belief then proceeds, "begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." This is a most important declaration, for it clearly proves that the Christian believes in a material and substantial God, or rather material and substantial Gods, for he tells us that God the Father and God the Son are both of the same substance. This belief in a material deity upsets the prior declaration of the creation or production of matter from nothing, for if the Gods or God of the Christians are or is eternal, and as they, or he, are or is clearly material, so matter must be eternal, and could never have been created. The belief next proceeds, "Who for us men and for our salvation came own from heaven." This coming down and ascending up to heaven clearly proves that the Christian considers that the earth is a kind of flat surface with heaven above, and that God lives up in heaven, and that he sometimes has come down to see us and gone up again after the visit. But we are told that he came for our salvation. Now to be a salvation there must be a fall. Of course there must, cries the exulting Christian; look to Genesis and see the

account of the fall of Adam. We do look to Genesis, and we find that somebody called Yeue Alehim (whom our translators make Lord God, but for what reason I am at a loss), has placed Adam and Eve in a garden with a command not to eat certain fruit, and that this Lord God, to make his command stronger, backs it with a lie, for he tells Adam and Eve that in the day that they eat of it they shall surely die, which the sequel proves not to be true, as they did not die, but one of them lived 930 years after he had broken the command. While Adam and Eve are in this garden a cunning serpent, whom the Lord God also has made, tempts Eve, and they eat of the fruit of the tree, and their eyes are opened, and they gain a knowledge of good and evil. Now the Lord God seems to be very much like the bigoted parsons of the present day, for when he finds out what Adam and Eve have done he gets in a passion and swears at them, and curses Adam and his wife and the serpent; and not satisfied with this, he curses the land too, just as if the land had had some share in the crime.

This is a summary of the account of the Fall contained in the Bible. Because Adam and Eve had been guilty of the horrible crime of eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is they learnt to think and reason for themselves, God Almighty found it necessary to damn them; and depend upon it, reader, whoever you may be, that when you are guilty of the crime of thinking,

speaking, and acting for yourself in religious matters, God's vicegerents on earth, the black-coated, white-neckerchiefed, strait-haired, pious psalm-singing gentry, will do their best to crush you and damn you by every means in their power. They will calumniate you as they have done Thomas Paine and the rest of those brave men who have been courageous enough to strive for civil and religious liberty.

But I fear I am guilty of digression, and therefore I will take you back to the account of the Fall. Adam having been cursed, our pastors pretend that it was necessary that there should be a redemption—for they have such a good opinion of their God, that although they tell us that without God's help we could not live and move, they think God would damn the whole earth because one man [ate] an apple which, according to their own account, he could not have done if God had not permitted him; therefore, to use the words of Richard Carlile, they give us the horrible picture of “a merciful God sacrificing a good and pure God to appease the vengeance of a jealous and revengeful God.”

I will now leave this to the consideration of the reader, and take the next passage, which runs thus: “And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.” I can scarcely imagine that any of the Christians ever give this belief a thought, as, parrot-like, they repeat it after their leader in the pulpit, for if they did think they must

be aware that they are uttering the most ridiculous and absurd statements respecting their deity. The doctrine of the incarnation, however, is common to the Hindoos; and as their religion is much older than Christianity, I suppose they will admit that the Hindoos did not derive their doctrine from the Christian, and also that it seems extremely probable that the Christians derived their doctrine of the incarnation from the Hindoos. This would go very far towards identifying Christianity with Paganism; and therefore the devout Christian will shudder at the thought, and again tell you that is a mystery that must not be inquired into. But the absurdities contained in the idea of an omnipotent and infinite God becoming a weak and finite man, must, I think, be apparent to all.

The creed then reads: “And was crucified, also, for us, under Pontius Pilate. He suffered, and was buried.” The idea of a Very God of Very God *suffering* and being buried! “And the third day he rose again according to the scriptures.” Now, unless there were other scriptures besides those which we possess, Jesus did not rise according to the scriptures; for the scriptures say, that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. But Jesus was not three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, for he was crucified in the course of Friday, and was out of the

grave before dawn on Sunday—being only one clear day and two nights. So much for being according to the scriptures.

It then proceeds: “And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father.” We have been told that there is only one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and I think that this fully proves the truth of the observation, for one moment we are told of an infinite God, and the next of two infinite Gods, sitting beside each other in a finite place called heaven. But this is not the whole of the absurdity; for the idea of ascension into heaven proves what I have before noticed with regard to the absurd ideas of heaven and earth contained in this creed.

The creed proceeds: “And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: whose kingdom shall have no end.” This involves the belief of the existence in a future state, and, as it is impossible to prove a negative to the question, I shall put the following interrogatories for the believer’s consideration. In what state do you expect man to exist with a knowledge of his identity after death? He cannot exist in a material state, for the matter of which he was composed has been dispersed, and now forms other bodies, and thus the organisation is totally destroyed. You cannot tell me that the atoms of which that man was composed will reunite, because that would presuppose the existence of a

power possessing the capability of the creation of matter in the same state with the same knowledge of personal identity; besides which, the matter of which Alexander the Great was composed may now be in your body, and thus either you or poor Alexander would have to go on short commons at the day of judgment. And with regard to anything that may be said as to our existence in an immaterial state, I only ask the believer to produce some proof of it, for as yet we have no proof, and therefore have nothing to answer.

The creed proceeds: “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life: who proceedeth from the Father and Son.” On this declaration I have not much to say, except to point out the absurdity of it; for a dissertation on the term Holy Ghost would be too long for my pages. If God the Father and God the Son are living beings, then God the Holy Ghost is not the Lord and Giver of Life; for he proceeds from them, and they were before him. But if God the Holy Ghost is the Lord and Giver of Life, then, till he came into existence, God Almighty and his Son must have been without life. More than this, Jesus is said to be the son of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost; now, if the Holy Ghost proceeds from Jesus first, it seems rather strange that Jesus should have proceeded from the Holy Ghost afterwards. The “Ecce Homo” suggests that the *aggelos*, or messenger who represented the Holy Ghost, might have been a *young*

man.

But to return to our subject. It then proceeds: "Who, with the Father and the Son together, is worshipped and glorified: who spake by the prophets." Now it happens that there are a number of Lords who spake by the prophets—such as *Yeue or Yehovah, Alehim, El Sheddi*, and others—but not one Holy Ghost: so that the Bible gives the lie to the belief, unless the Holy Ghost was the lying spirit in the case of Ahab, and I am afraid that that would not tell much to the credit of the Holy (or unholy) Ghost.

"And I believe in one catholic and apostolic church." Setting aside the word apostolic, this is the only good part in the belief; for depend upon it readers, that till there is an universality of mind and action throughout the world in one direction, we never shall have true happiness. Therefore I praise the belief in a catholic or universal church or community; but the objectionable word apostolic pulls me down from the Utopia to which I had begun to soar, for that word spoils all. With the word apostle are strangely mingled together some ideas of Peter, the Pope, the Inquisition, thumbscrews, racks, stakes, and other adjuncts to an apostolic church.

"I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." Only think, readers, the church set at loggerheads, and nearly £100,000 spent on the last nine words. A bishop, with all the courage imaginable, speaking what the *Times* tells him may

cost him his mitre, and then excommunicating the whole who disagree with him, the *Times* of course included, on account of these words! I think after this we had better read the passage again. What is baptism? Answer: Saying long prayers over a baby in long clothes, till you wake it, and then sprinkling water on it till you make it cry! What is remission of sins? Answer: Don't know. Now I believe the grand question in dispute is whether the grace comes before the baptism or at it, or after it, or whether it comes at all; and to settle this question they have employed themselves in worrying one another with threats, protests, and prohibitions, to the benefit of the lawyers and us poor inquirers. I say our benefit, too, for we are told that when rogues fall out honest men get their own. What absurdity is contained in the idea that the baptising of a child with water saved it from being damned for sins that it never committed! or, how still more absurd is the idea that the child would be damned if it were not baptised at all; yet this doctrine is taught and inculcated by the Creed of the Church of England. The creed proceeds: “I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.” Together with this resurrection are associated the ideas that we shall be brought before the bar of God and give an account of our deeds, and that the bad shall be sent to hell and the good to heaven. Now we are told that hell is a lake of brimstone and fire; if that is the case, I deny that

there can be eternal punishment, for science proves that there is not enough brimstone in any finite space to burn one man for ever, let alone several millions: and with regard to heaven, if I am to go there I hope it will not be near the planet Uranus, for I should feel too cold; or near the sun, for then I should feel too hot, and should not be very happy. However, take it at the worst, we freethinkers should be better off than the believer, for bad as the believer makes his God, he surely could never be unjust enough to send me to hell for speaking what I believed to be the truth.

Taking the Creed as a whole, it is one of the most ridiculous declarations of faith imaginable, for the believer declares a belief in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And how are these pictured in Scripture? "The Father is somewhere in heaven, the Son sits at his right hand, and the Holy Ghost flies about in a bodily shape like a dove." What a curious picture to present to any reasonable man—a Father begets a Son from nothing, and a dove proceeds from the two of them. I shall say no more on this disgusting part of Christianity—disgusting because so many believe all that is told them by a man who possesses the same powers of comprehension as themselves, and who has a position to maintain in the world—I mean the priest. My blood runs cold to think of the mischief that has been done by those men called priests; they are the bane of society, for they rule the mass of

society *vi et armis* and they rule it wrongfully; they do not give it a chance of obtaining a mouthful of intellectual food without steeping it in the poison of their superstitious dogmas, and till we take the antidote of free discussion we shall never be free. But alas for reform! there are strong bulwarks of faith and prejudice to be attacked and pulled down before that antidote can fully counteract the debasing effects of superstition on the mind and action of man.

However, Christian, before concluding, I will give you a summary of your most absurd Creed. You believe in God the Father who is eternal, and in God the Son who is eternal too. You believe that the Holy Ghost is the father of Jesus, and that Jesus is the son of God the Father. You believe that the Holy Ghost is a *material spirit*, and that he has made himself manifest in two forms, namely, a dove or pigeon, and a cloven tongue of fire (the latter would be no bad emblem, were he the identical lying spirit). You believe that a finite woman, who was a virgin, gave birth to an infinite God, and yet that that God was a man. You believe that Jesus went down into hell and stopped on his visit three days; but, Christian, if it were true, do you think that the devil would have been unwise enough to let his bitterest enemy out after he had got him so nicely in his power? You believe that the Holy Ghost spoke by the prophets. To do that he must have had foreknowledge, and we

must have been predestined to do certain acts; and yet you believe that we are free, and shall be punished or rewarded according to our actions and faith. You believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost, are three separate persons, and yet that they are one.

You who are Papists believe that there are three Gods in one and one in three, and that yours is the true Church, and that the Pope is the head of the church, and the representative of God on earth. You who are Churchmen hold the same trinity, but make Victoria, by the grace of God, queen defender of the faith, nominal Pope of your church, and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York the actual popes. You who are Wesleyan elect John Wesley to the papal dignity, and so on with the rest.

I hope that all who profess the creed will look around and see the present theological panic. The Wesleyans are divided by the "Fly Sheets" into two parties, and are attacking one another most vigorously. The Church of England is divided by Goreham, and the bishops are excommunicating one another. And lastly, the Pope is at a discount in the very seat of his empire, and Free-thought is slowly but steadily increasing.

To those readers who approve of this, I beg leave to ask their assistance in the work of progress by their acting as well as talking among their fellow-men. To those who disapprove, I say, "Answer it."

FOOTNOTES

[1] The oath taken by the Knights of the Order of Malta is to kill, or make the Mahometans prisoners, for the glory of God.

[2] Farrar's "Critical History of Freethought".

[3] "Capital and Wages," p. 19.

[4] "Perversion of Scotland," p. 197.

[5] "Capital and Wages," pp. 15, 16.

[6] "History of Civilisation," vol. i, p. 345.

[7] Omychund v. Barker, 1 Atkyns 29.

[8] D'Costa v. D'Pays, Amb. 228.

[9] 3 Hansard cxvi, 381.

[10] Lord Raymond's reports 282, Wells v. Williams.

[11] Ramkissenseat v Barker, 1 Atkyns 51.

[12] Coke's reports, Calvin's case.

[13] G.R. Gliddon's extract from Land's "Sacra Scritura," chap, iii, sec. 1. "Demonology and Devil-lore," vol. i, p. 11.

[14] "Christian Records," by the Rev. Dr. Giles, p. 144.

[15] "Pilgrim's Progress from Methodism to Christianity."

[16] Sharpe's "History of Egypt," p. 196.

[17] "Harmony of the Four Evangelists, and Harmony of the Old Testament."

[18] Munks' "Palestine," p.231

[20] "Types of Mankind," Dr. Nott, p. 57.

[21] M. Pulzsky on Iconography—"Indigenous Races," p. 111.

[22] "Types of Mankind," p. 58.

[23] “Indigenous Races of the Earth,” p. 458. The alleged discovery of whiteskinned negroes in Western Africa does not affect this question; it is not only to the color of the skin but also to the general negro characteristics that the above remarks apply.

[24] Nott and Gliddon, “Indigenous Races,” p. 587.

[25] Gliddon’s “Types of Mankind,” p. 335.

[26] “Types,” p. 336 to 369.

[27] “Types,” pages 350 and 357.

[28] “Archaia,” p. 406.

[29] The quotations are taken from Hershon’s Talmudical Miscellany.

[30] Genesis, xxxi, v. 24, Douay version.

[31] The Talmud says: “Read not ‘and he kissed him,’ but read ‘and he bit him’” (Pirke d’Rab Eliezer, chap. 36); and Rabbi Yanai says: “Esau did not come to kiss him, but to bite him; only the neck of Jacob our father became as hard as marble, and this blunted the teeth of the wicked one. And what is taught by the expression ‘And they wept?’ ‘The one wept for his neck, and the other for his teeth” (“Midrash Rabbah,” c. 68). Aben Ezra says that this exposition is only fit for children.

[32] Bava Bathra, fol. 17, col. 1, says: “Over six the angel of death had no dominion and these were: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam,” and it also says that these and Benjamin, the son of Jacob, “are seven who are not consumed by the worm in the grave.”

[33] G.R. Gliddon’s Types of Mankind: Mankind’s Chronology, p 711

[34] Questiones Mosaicæ, p. 438.

[35] p. 418.

[36] “Aids to Reflection,” 1843, p. 200.

[37] “History of Civilisation,” Vol. I, p. 14.

[38] “Devil’s Pulpit,” vol. i, p. 148.

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