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THE
RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

THE
RELIGION OF THE FUTURE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY THE REV.

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P R E F A C E.

It is easier to call a man names than to examine his arguments. The consequence is, that those who disapprove of a book generally content themselves with abusing its author. I shall not, of course, waste either the reader's time or my own by attempting to ward off the personalities of criticism. But there is one objection which I must remove at the outset, for it concerns my subject and not myself. It will be urged by many who do not entirely disagree with me, that these Essays are purely negative—that I have nothing to offer in the place of that which I am seeking to destroy.

Now if this were true, it would not necessarily follow that the Essays were unworthy of consideration. Doing negative work is not the same

as doing nothing. If a man were being crushed to death in the embraces of an octopus and you cut the beast away, you would hardly expect him to find fault with you because your action was purely negative—because you had not introduced him on the spot to a more agreeable companion. When a man's life has been saved by the removal of a tumour, he does not generally complain that the operation was purely negative—that he has lost a tumour without having received anything in its place. And it is equally absurd in the intellectual sphere to grumble at the negative because it is not positive. Buckle says most truly of Descartes: "He deserves the gratitude of posterity not so much on account of what he built up as on account of what he pulled down. He was great as a creator, but he was greater far as a destroyer. We justly admire the men who have discovered new truths, but we should reserve the full measure of our admiration for those who have liberated mankind from old errors. There is no higher achievement than to attack inveterate prejudices, to remove the pressure of tradition, to take away obstacles which

make progress impossible." Negation is, at all events, as important as affirmation. Falsehood must be rejected before truth can be received. So that it is quite possible for a book to be purely negative and at the same time pre-eminently useful.

But it is not true that the Essays are purely negative. Though I have said that religions are passing away, I have also said that Religion is to come. Though I have attacked the Christianity of Christendom, I have defended the Christianity of Christ. Though I have condemned priestcraft, I have extolled righteousness. Though I have shown that all the Churches must perish unless radically changed, I have been the first to point out that in my own Church, at any rate, the necessary process of transformation has actually even now begun. And throughout the whole of my negative criticism I have been aiming at a positive result. The Church is often attacked by atheists, by those who are opposed to all religion, by men who think but meanly of the teaching of Christ. Much of what they said was true—more's the pity of it—and I have been obliged to say it

once again. But my motive and my object are different. I have found fault with the Church, not because I am an atheist, but because I believe in God ; not because I think so little of the teaching of Christ, but because I think so much ; not because I am opposed to Religion, but because I consider it the profoundest of human needs. Everything I have denounced is not only hateful in itself, but retards the coming of the Kingdom of God—that “ new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Some of these Essays, or parts of them, have already appeared in the pages of the ‘Fortnightly’ and other Reviews, but the editors have kindly given me permission to reprint them.

A. W. M.

ST ERMIN'S MANSIONS, S.W.

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I.

The Religion of the Future.

“ Welche Religion ich bekenne ?
Keine von allen die Du mir nennst.
Und warum keine ? Aus Religion.”

—SCHILLER.

ONE morning, when a boy, I was walking on the Tors at Ilfracombe, and I overtook an old gentleman, who entered into conversation with me. We strolled on in company and spent the day together. I discovered that he was the Rev. Mr Dobney of Maidstone, a Dissenting minister of some note, whom I had often heard condemned for his heretical views on future punishment. We talked of many things and persons — among others, of Charles Kingsley. Mr Dobney spoke very enthusiastically about

the illustrious Vicar of Eversley. But I listened somewhat coldly. I had been brought up in the Evangelical school; I had myself, as I thought, been "converted"; I had "believed in Jesus" and felt sure of heaven; I thanked God that I was not as other men nor even as this Canon. Mr Dobney's enthusiasm therefore seemed to me misplaced. I said, "Yes, I suppose Kingsley was a good man, but he had no religion." To which my companion replied, "What *is* religion?" I was taken aback and did not answer. We neither of us gave our definitions; but had we done so, mine would have been that religion consisted in saving the soul; his that it was devotion to goodness. He and I between us practically summed up the views of the whole human race.

Religion is probably derived etymologically, as Cicero originally maintained, from *relegere*, to care for, attend to, regard.¹ But be that as it may, the term is invariably used to express the supreme and most important object of human attention.

¹ *Relegere* is the opposite of *negligere*, formerly written *negligere*, to neglect.

With the vast majority of mankind, whom I had the dishonour that morning to represent, the supreme object of attention is salvation from suffering. This conception of religion can be traced back to the primitive savage. The strongest instincts in his rude nature were desire for pleasure and dread of pain. He found the one very difficult to acquire, and the other still more difficult to avoid. Things were always going wrong with him. He fell sick, he was unsuccessful in the chase, he was wounded by a poisoned arrow, his property was destroyed by fire. He was thwarted and worried in a thousand different ways. It seemed as if he were the sport of some malignant spirit. He knew what malignancy meant, for he had often felt it. He knew, or thought he knew, what a spirit meant, for that other self of his, which lived in dreams, was apparently independent of the body. Might not his disasters be due to the action of a disembodied or unembodied spirit, who for some reason or other took pleasure in annoying him? This suspicion was confirmed by the more startling phenomena of nature, such

as thunder and lightning, deluge and drought, earthquakes and eclipses; and at last he became convinced that he had to contend with a whole host of spiteful spirits, who were bent on nothing short of his destruction. Then a happy thought occurred to him. Possibly his ghostly enemies were, like himself, susceptible to bribes. If so, presents of barley or wine might induce them to leave him alone. Possibly to them, as to himself, the sight of blood was grateful; such an offering might prevail upon them actually to befriend him. Some of his fellow-savages undertook to investigate these matters. They became priests and theologians, studied the idiosyncrasies of the various deities, and explained minutely what men must do to be saved. Saved, that is to say, from pain. It was the only salvation they wanted, the only salvation of which they could conceive. At first they troubled themselves solely about the present life. By-and-by sacrifices came to be offered with a view to divine favours after death. But, whether the offerings had reference to this world or that which is to come, they were always made in

the way of bargain. For a certain amount of pleasure men bartered a certain amount of pain. From the beginning to the end of the transaction there was no question of morality. Neither priest nor layman inquired into the character of the gods. The devotees never asked if the sacrifices were legitimate. It was sufficient to believe that they would pay. A man's religion was but one of many "irons in the fire," which differed from the others only in being somewhat more expensive. For his own salvation he would offer up anything and everything that god or devil might demand. He did not shrink even from human sacrifice. If necessary, he could bring himself, like Jephthah, to present his only child "a burnt-offering to the Lord." But whatever the nature of the gift, it had one invariable meaning. In all ages and countries men have sacrificed to the gods for gain.

In most ages and countries, however, there have arisen prophets—and my companion on the Tors was one of their disciples—prophets like Isaiah, Confucius, Zoroaster, Gautama, Christ, Mohammed, who opposed the popular religion,

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protested against the teaching of the priests, maintained the worthlessness of ceremonialism, and declared that personal conduct should be the supreme object of human attention. These reformers were at first thought mad, then they were said to be blasphemers, by-and-by they obtained a few followers, and finally the names of some of them became associated with new religions, of which they are therefore said to have been the Founders. In many cases, however, this term is a misnomer. The religions now called after them are not theirs, while the Religion which they sought to establish can scarcely be said to have been founded at all. For soon after the reformer had passed away, the priests again reasserted themselves, the old routine of formalism was revived, the so-called new religion became a curious medley of inconsistencies, and the Master's teaching was completely neutralised by the incorporation of doctrines and practices which he himself had condemned.

The teaching of the prophets has always been fundamentally the same. We find Isaiah, for

instance, speaking as follows: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with. . . . Cease to do evil; learn to do well. Seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow."¹—Zoroaster denounced the magic and spells of the Dævas, and preached the doctrine that the one thing needful was to do right. "The good and the base," he said, "rule over you. Between these two ye must make your choice. Be good then, and not base. All good thoughts, words and works lead to Paradise. All evil thoughts, words and works to hell."—Confucius was so anxious to fix men's attention on their present duty, that he would enter into no metaphysical speculations regarding the problem of immortality. When questioned about it he replied, "I do not as yet know what life is; how can

¹ Cf. 1 Samuel xv. 22; Psalm li. 16, 17; Jeremiah vii. 22, 23; Amos v. 21, 22; Micah vi. 7.

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I understand death?" The whole duty of man, he said, might be summed up in the word Reciprocity; we must refrain from injuring others, as we would that they should refrain from injuring us.—Gautama taught that every man has to work out his salvation for himself without the mediation of a priest. On one occasion when he met a sacrificial procession, he explained to his followers that it was idle to shed the blood of bulls and goats, that all they needed was a change of heart. So too he insisted on the uselessness of fasts and penances and other forms of ritual. "Neither going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dirt, nor a rough garment, nor reading the Vedas, will cleanse a man. . . . Anger, drunkenness, envy, disparaging others, these constitute uncleanness, and not the eating of flesh." He summed up his teaching in the celebrated verse:—

"To cease from sin,
To get virtue,
To cleanse the heart,
This is the religion of the Buddhas.

And in the farewell address which he delivered to his disciples he called his religion by the name of Purity. "Learn," he exhorted them, "and spread abroad the law thought out and revealed by me, that this Purity of mine may last long and be perpetuated for the good and happiness of multitudes."—To the same effect spoke Christ. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father. . . . Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, who make clean the outside of the cup and the platter but within are full of extortion and excess, who devour widows' houses and for a pretence make long prayers. Ye shall receive the greater damnation."—Mohammed, again, taught the self-same doctrine of justification by works. "It is not the flesh and blood ye sacrifice, it is your piety, which is acceptable to God. . . . Woe to them that make a show of piety and refuse to help the needy. . . . It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer towards the east or towards the west; but righteousness is of those

who perform the covenants which they have covenanted.”

Such was the uniform teaching of the prophets. And if they could come back to-day, they would be as much opposed to the religions which now bear their names as they were to the old superstitions which they are supposed, but erroneously supposed, to have destroyed. Look at Buddhism, for example. There has been, I admit, in what is called Southern Buddhism but little departure outwardly from the original teaching of the master. But though the letter remains, the spirit is for the most part gone. Mr Perrin says:¹—

“The monks of Siam do not as a rule endeavour to make their sermons interesting. They are satisfied to intone a number of verses in the dead language Pāli, and to add an almost incomprehensible commentary in Siamese. Nor do their hearers care. Crouching on the ground in a reverential posture, they make merit by appearing to listen, and they do not believe that that merit would be one whit greater if they understood the language of the preacher.”

And in the Northern Buddhism of Thibet we find

¹ ‘Religion of Philosophy,’ p. 439.

a system which is, even outwardly, the very antithesis of Gautama's. There are tonsured priests, abbots, bishops, cardinals, popes, rosaries, images, holy water, vestments, processions, feasts, confessional, purgatory, the worship of saints and angels and the double Virgin, mysterious rites in which the laity are spectators only, even sacraments in which a portion of the Deity is occasionally swallowed by the celebrant.¹ As for modern Mohammedanism—

“A volume might be written on its corruption. The present professors of Islam have dimmed the glory of their master. . . . Practice has given way to the mockery of profession ; ceremonialism has taken the place of work. Earnestness is absent, enthusiasm has died out. The notion has fixed itself in the minds of the generality of Moslems that the right of private judgment ceased with the early legists ; so they adopt unconditionally the interpretations of men who lived in the eighth century, and who could therefore have had no conception of the necessities of the nineteenth. Mohammedans in the present day are governed in their lives and conduct less by the precepts of Mohammed than by the theories of the commentators— theories which are often utterly at variance with the Prophet's spirit. In practice, the Koran is set aside

¹ Rhys Davids' 'Hibbert Lecture,' p. 193.

in favour of the glosses and traditions of the schoolmen of Islam.”¹

But the most remarkable instance of corruption is that which has occurred in the case of Christianity. Christ and “Christianity” are wide as the poles asunder. It is only by an elaborate process of critical investigation—a process as yet by no means completed—that we can discover for certain what Jesus really taught. The New Testament, more often than not perhaps, misrepresents Him. Even the first three gospels, as we have them, are quite untrustworthy. Nor do the MSS. help us much; for sometimes they support what we feel sure He did not say, and fail to support what we feel sure He did say. There is but little authority for the story of His conversation with the woman taken in adultery, and yet we know instinctively that it is true. There is strong authority for the cursing of the barren fig-tree, yet we know instinctively that it is false.² Further, it is now established, beyond the pos-

¹ ‘Life and Teachings of Mohammed,’ by Syed Ameer Ali, pp. 262, 281-288.

² It is idle to say that Christ intended to teach a moral lesson. “The time of figs was not yet.” The tree was cursed

sibility of reasonable dispute, that the Gospel miracles—except possibly those of healing—were altogether imaginary. Every great religious teacher has been accredited by his admiring disciples with a supernatural birth and resurrection, and with unlimited control over the phenomena of nature. This was not the result of dishonesty. It was the inevitable consequence of the psychological law, that miracles are seen by those who expect to see them. Once more, when we come to the Gospel of St John we find a good deal of Alexandrine philosophy, of which there is no reason to suppose that Christ would have approved, which is at all events thoroughly alien to His own conception of His mission as explained by the synoptic evangelists. Indeed, the writer's point of view in the fourth gospel is quite different from that of the other three. This divergence, however, does not increase our difficulties, as might have been at first expected. On the contrary, it gives additional

for being barren, when by the laws of creation it could not be anything else. We know nothing about Christ at all, if we do not know that He was incapable of such silly, sorry petulance.

weight and significance to the statements in which the writers agree. And we find that the Jesus of St John, no less than the Jesus of St Matthew, invariably insisted on the paramount importance of conduct. Christ's description of the last judgment (Matt. xxv.) is as follows: "The King shall say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me. The King shall say unto them on the left hand, Depart, ye cursed. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me." And in His farewell address (John xiii.-xvi.) Christ three times laid down the new commandment as a

complete summary of His teaching: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. . . . This is my commandment, That ye love one another. . . . These things I command you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

That such was actually the fundamental doctrine of Christ is confirmed by the 'Didache.' This little treatise on the teaching of the twelve apostles could not have been composed much later than the end of the first century. Clement of Alexandria, one of the early Fathers, quotes from it and calls it "Scripture." Not being included in the sacred canon, however, it was lost sight of for many centuries. But in 1873 it was rediscovered by Bryennios, Metropolitan of Nicomedia, who found a MS. copy of it in a library at Constantinople. And in the 'Didache,' as clearly as in the gospels, we find the doctrine that conduct should be the supreme object of human attention. "The two ways"—the way of life and the way of death—are distinguished by the actions, not by the

creeds, of those who follow them. Canon Spence has naïvely said, without seeing the meaning of his admission: "Some notable omissions characterise the 'Teaching.' There is no clear-cut statement as to Christ's relationship to the Father. Nothing is said respecting the Atonement or the work of the precious blood. The Holy Spirit, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, is only mentioned twice. His work and office are left unnoticed." Well, the gospels are characterised by precisely the same kind of "notable omission." We may be sure, therefore, that in the original teaching of Jesus neither dogma nor "the precious blood" found place; but that, in common with the rest of the Prophets, he insisted upon right conduct as man's all-comprehensive duty.

What is now called Christianity has for its foundation pre-Christian paganism, and for its superstructure post-Christian metaphysics. The latter is for the most part unintelligible; but it would be harmless enough, if we were not expected to say that we "believed" it. Jesus invented no formulæ, He made no definitions.

Yet for centuries His nominal disciples fought like tigers over the question whether Christ's substance—whatever that might be—were *ὁμοούσιος* or *ὁμοιούσιος*, *i.e.*, the same as the substance of the Father or only similar. Christendom was literally rent asunder by what is called the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed, by the question whether the Holy Ghost proceeds—whatever that may mean—from the Father and the Son or from the Father alone. And now we are taught that “whosoever will be saved must hold the Catholic Faith, must thus think of the Trinity.” That is bad enough; but the revival of the pagan doctrine of sacrifice is worse. And we find it taught most explicitly in all the Churches of Western Christendom. Our own Articles say “that Christ died to reconcile the Father”; and in our Communion Service He is declared to have “made satisfaction for the sins of the world.” Luther put it thus: “God's anger against the sinner was so fierce, that it could only be appeased by the blood of His Son.” The Westminster Confession speaks of Christ's death as a “bargain.” The Council

of Trent maintained that "Christ appeased the wrath of God." In the Romish Mass and the High Church Eucharist the priest is supposed to offer anew upon his altar the Saviour's body and blood. And to this appalling theory is sometimes added the doctrine of predestination, according to which the sacrificial blood of Christ can only effect the ransom of a part of mankind, the Deity having determined that the rest shall, in spite of that sacrifice, be damned. "God delivers from damnation," says our Article, "those whom He hath chosen." The others were created on purpose to agonise eternally for what their Maker calls His glory! In its simple form of propitiation by blood, the orthodox Atonement is as vile as anything to be found in heathendom. But the addition to it of the doctrine of predestination makes it infinitely viler still. The two together constitute the most savage superstition which has ever existed in the world. The god of orthodoxy is the very wickedest being which it is possible for the human mind to conceive. But his devotees ask no questions about his character.

They do not inquire into the legality of his "salvation." If they did they would soon discover that to be saved in such a way was equivalent to being morally lost. Morality however does not enter into their calculations. It is enough for them to believe that they are in danger, and that here is a way of escape.¹

The religions of the world then ultimately

¹ I know it is sometimes said that the sacrifice of Christ was necessary to satisfy the divine justice. But the god of orthodoxy has no justice to satisfy. To threaten eternal punishment for a temporal offence, to retaliate upon myriads of innocent men and woman for the disobedience of a single pair, to accept one person's suffering as a set-off against another person's sin—all this is injustice of the foulest dye. I know it is sometimes said that the Deity makes men good by imputing to them the righteousness of Christ. But to say this is to talk the most egregious nonsense. Imputed righteousness is as much a contradiction in terms as imputed health. I know that the orthodox Atonement is but little preached nowadays, and even less believed. But I am not here concerned with the opinions of the Rev. Mr A. nor even with those of the Right Rev. Dr B. ; I am dealing only with the doctrines of the Church as they have been authoritatively expounded in Articles and Creeds.

resolve themselves into two kinds. The priests as a rule, and the great majority of mankind, have embraced the one; the prophets and a very small minority the other. The one is interested, the other disinterested. The one consists in devotion to pleasure, the other in devotion to character. The one is the art of getting good things, the other the art of becoming good. The one has an ideal of advantage, the other an ideal of righteousness. The one ignores morality or relegates it to a secondary place, the other makes morality supreme. The one is the religion of savages and of a low stage of evolution; we may therefore call it the religion of the past. The other is the religion of the noblest of our race, it belongs to the highest stage of evolution, and we may therefore call it the religion of the future.

It is frequently said that religion is dying out. But we should be more correct in saying that it is yet to come. In the good sense of the word, religion has but rarely existed in the past. That can only flourish when religion, in the bad sense, decays. And religion, in the bad sense, is decaying fast.

“ Humana ante oculos fœde cum vita jaceret
In terris oppressa gravi sub religione
Quæ caput a cæli regionibus ostendebat
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,
Primum Graius homo mortalis tollere contra
Est oculos ausus primusque obsistere contra,
Quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
Murmure compressit cælum, sed eo magis acrem
Inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arta
Naturæ primus portarum claustra cupiret.
Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
Processit longe flammantia mœnia mundi
Atque omne immensum peregravit mente animoque,
Unde refert nobis victor quid possit oriri
Quid nequeat, finita potestas denique cuique
Quanam sit ratione atque alte terminus hærens.
Quare religio pedibus subjecta vicissim
Opteritur, nos exæquat victoria cælo.”

Lucretius was somewhat too sanguine. The work was but begun by the “man of Greece.” To-day however there are vast multitudes who have mastered the lesson which he taught. And some of us have not only learnt to disbelieve in the existence of the old gods; we are beginning to feel that, even if they did exist, we should not worship them—we should treat them with execration and contempt. The number of human beings is continually on the increase who sympathise with

the words of John Stuart Mill, "If God can send me to hell for not saying wrong is right, to hell I will go." The number of human beings is continually on the increase who have dared to say to the god of orthodoxy what Prometheus of old said to Jove:—

“Why art thou made a god of, thou poor type
Of anger and revenge and cunning force?
True power was never born of brutish strength.
There is a higher purity than thou,
And higher purity is greater strength.
Thy nature is thy doom, at which thy heart
Trembles behind the thick wall of thy might.
He who hurled down the monstrous Titan brood
Is weaker than a simple human thought:
Let man but will, and thou art god no more.”

In a word, the undying Religion of the future is taking the place of the religions of the past, which are already almost dead.

Will the religion of the future involve a Deity? The gods are going: will God remain? Of the four greatest Reformers — Confucius, Gautama,

Christ, Mohammed — only two were Theists. And it is sometimes said that an atheistic religion is “nothing but morality.” Well, if this were true, morality without a God would be better than a god without morality. But it is a mistake to say that a religion of conduct is only morality. It is a mistake to restrict the term religion to an explicit recognition of God. It is a mistake to talk of religion and morality as if they could exist altogether apart. There is no such thing as mere morality. In the good sense of the word, there is no such thing as mere religion. There is in morality¹ *at least an implicit* recognition of God. Right conduct is all He can require of us, all that we can do for Him. And therefore one man who thinks he disbelieves in God may please Him as well, or even better, than another who thinks he believes in Him.

“Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase !)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,

¹ I need hardly say I use the word morality in no narrow, “nonconformist” sense.

And saw within the moonlight in his room,
 Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
 An angel writing in a book of gold.
 Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
 And to the presence in the room he said,
 'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
 And with a look made of all sweet accord,
 Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
 'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
 Replied the angel. Abou spake more low,
 But cheerly still, and said, 'I pray thee then,
 Write me as one that loves his fellow-men.'
 The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
 He came again with a great wakening light,
 And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
 And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

Morality is the beginning of true religion; it is religion not yet come to full consciousness of itself. The man who has done the will of God is not to be called irreligious, merely because he has made a mistake in metaphysics.

But Atheism *is* a mistake in metaphysics none the less. There are three arguments for the existence of God which together amount almost to demonstration.

1. *The uniformity of nature.* That is the first step in the proof. But, by an extraordinary aberration of the logical faculties, the Posi-

tivists have used it as an anti-theistic argument. "Our power of foreseeing and controlling phenomena," said Comte, "destroys the belief that they are governed by changeable wills." Quite so. But such a belief could not be entertained by any philosophical Theist. A really irregular phenomenon would be a manifestation of sheer diabolism.¹ Though the regularity of nature is not enough by itself to prove the existence of God, the irregularity of nature would be amply sufficient to disprove it. Theism—belief in a Being deservedly called God—could not be established until after the uniformity of nature had been discovered. We must cease to believe in many changeable wills, before we can begin to believe in One that is unchangeable. We must cease to believe in a finite God, outside of nature, who capriciously interferes with her phenomena, before we can begin to believe in an infinite God, immanent in nature, of whose mind and will all natural phenomena are the various but never-varying expressions.

2. *The rationality of nature.* "Science," says

¹ Fiske's 'Idea of God,' chap. vii.

Lange, "starts from the principle of the intelligibility of nature." And to say that she is intelligible is to say that she is dominated and suffused by thought. "Science," says Bacon, "is the interpretation of nature." To interpret is to explain, and nothing can be explained that is not in itself rational. Reason can only grasp what is reasonable. You cannot explain the conduct of a fool. You cannot interpret the actions of a lunatic. They are contradictory, meaningless, unintelligible. Similarly if nature were an irrational system, there would be no possibility of knowledge. The interpretation of nature consists in making our own the thoughts which nature implies. Scientific hypothesis consists in guessing at these thoughts; scientific verification in proving that we have guessed aright. "O God," said Kepler, when he discovered the laws of planetary motion, "I think again Thy thoughts after Thee." There could be no course of nature, no laws of sequence, no possibility of scientific prediction, in a senseless play of atoms. But as it is, we know exactly how the forces of nature act, and how they will

continue to act. We can express their mode of working in the most precise mathematical formulæ. Every fresh discovery in science reveals anew the order, the law, the system, in a word the reason, which underlies material phenomena. And reason is the outcome of mind.¹

3. *The progressiveness of nature.* The last, the most comprehensive, the most certain, word of science is evolution. And it is the most hopeful word I know. For when we contemplate the suffering and disaster around us, we are sometimes tempted to think that the great Contriver is either indifferent to human welfare or incapable of securing it. But evolution, which is only another name for continuous improvement, inspires us with confidence. It suggests indeed that the Creator is not omnipotent, in the vulgar sense of being able to do impossibilities; but it also suggests that the difficulties

¹ This argument may be carried further. Kant and Hegel have shown that the whole of our conscious experience implies the existence of a Mind other than, but similar to, our own. I have given a simple exposition of this doctrine—at least as simple as it can be made—in my ‘Belief in God,’ pp. 73-79.

of creation are being surely, though slowly, overcome.¹

In a word then, the uniformity, the rationality, the progressiveness of nature, seem to afford overwhelming evidence of the fact that her phenomena are controlled by a Being of transcendent wisdom and benevolence—that is to say, by God. And if this be so, the religion of the future will be explicitly theistic.

Will the religion of the future involve immortality? I think so. There is absolutely no evidence against the theory. It is said, I know, that we cannot imagine how there can be consciousness after the dissolution of the body. But if this argument could disprove the future life, it would also disprove the present; for we cannot imagine how there can be con-

¹ That there *were* difficulties in the Creator's path is an idea which, though not generally acceptable, has been entertained by many thinkers of many schools, notably by Plato, Leibnitz, Mill, and Martineau. On this subject see the chapters on the necessity for pain in my 'Inspiration,' pp. 141-161.

consciousness *before* the dissolution of the body. "The passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. Granting that a definite thought and a definite molecular action occur in the brain simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one phenomenon to the other. Were our minds and senses so expanded, strengthened and illuminated as to enable us to see and feel the very molecules of the brain, were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electric discharges, if such there be, and were we intimately acquainted with the corresponding states of thought and feeling, we should still be as far as ever from the solution of the problem — How are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness?"¹ Since then we do not know *how* brain and sentience are connected, we certainly cannot know that they are *necessarily* connected. "It is not even probable,"

¹ Tyndall's 'Fragments of Science,' vol. ii. p. 87.

says Butler, "that the mind has any kind of relation to the body which it might not have to any other foreign matter formed into instruments of perception." Consciousness not having been explained in the present, cannot possibly have been explained away from the future.

And while there is no evidence against the theory of immortality, there is a great deal of evidence in favour of it.

(a) It is a hypothesis which is in harmony with experience. Immortality would be but another exemplification of that order and progress which we find everywhere throughout nature. "The advance through inorganic, vegetative, animated and self-conscious existence, and again from the lowest savage to the loftiest philosopher, is all in the direction of a more complete and definite personality. The severance of the ego from the non-ego is the supreme result of all the machinery of the physical life. To suppose that there is a height in the range of being whereto having attained, this slowly evolved personality vanishes like a volcanic

island and subsides into the ocean of impersonal being, is to suppose that the whole scheme of things is self-stultifying, a great much ado about nothing, the building of a tower which should reach unto heaven, but which, like a child's house of cards, as soon as it is finished will be again swept flat."¹ We know of nothing to warrant the supposition that the end of all things is to be fiasco and collapse.

(b) It is a hypothesis which explains experience. We find within ourselves a thirst for happiness, and yet we are never happy. We find within ourselves a yearning for perfection, and yet we are miserably imperfect. We find within ourselves a sentiment of justice, and yet this sentiment is being for ever violated by the fortunes and misfortunes of our neighbours. Immortality, and immortality alone, can reconcile these strange contradictions.

(c) It is the only hypothesis which affords a logical basis for religion. I know that he who truly loves goodness loves it for its own sake, that he neither seeks nor needs reward. But

¹ Cf. Fiske's 'Destiny of Man.'

if goodness be doomed to annihilation, it loses all its charm, and devotion to it becomes unreasonable—an amiable but quixotic weakness. It seems to me that the last word on this subject was said ages ago by the author of Ecclesiastes.¹ He did not believe in immortality, and therefore he was a pessimist and a sensualist. By all the laws of logic the three things are inextricably bound together.² If there be no future life, then everything is in the last resort vanity. And if everything be vanity, there is but one pursuit that will bear serious investigation, and that is the pursuit of pleasure. We have been dragged out of nothingness, and made to endure the heartache and the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to, only to be hurled back

¹ See my 'Agnosticism,' part ii.

² Hartmann, I know, in his 'Religion der Zukunft,' maintains that pessimism, so far from being antagonistic to religion, is its indispensable presupposition ("die unerlässliche Voraussetzung aller Religiosität"); and he declares that the pessimistic religion of the future will offer to the believer the satisfaction of feeling himself eternally one with his God. It reads like a grim joke. Satisfaction! When the only achievement of the Unconscious is to have produced the worst of all possible worlds!

into nothingness at the last. We may have struggled bravely to live a useful, heroic life, to help on the progress of the world, but the object for which we have worked we shall never see. Long ere that we shall have been "cast as rubbish to the void." And those for whom we laboured were not worth the effort. They too are ephemeral and contemptible. They too will shortly be flung into the same bottomless abyss. In such a universe the man who tries to act morally is a fool. The wise man would adopt as his maxim the words of a modern Koheleth: "Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face, some tone on the hills or sea is choicer than the rest, some mood or passion of intellectual excitement is irresistibly attractive for us—and for that moment only. A counted number of pulses is given us of a variegated life. We are all condemned to die. We have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Our one chance is in getting into this interval as many pulsations as possible." Pleasure is always pleasurable more or less. But the struggle for perfec-

tion is painful and, in this life at any rate, unsuccessful. To sacrifice pleasure for character—apart from immortality—would be to give up the certain for the uncertain, the real for the chimerical, the possible for the impossible. The art of life is to be in harmony with one's environment. But if there be no future, the universe is immoral to the core, and therefore devotion to goodness is the crowning folly of the race.¹

So the religion of the future, if it is to be a rational religion, must involve the idea of immortality.

Will the religion of the future be called Christianity? No, if by Christianity be meant the Christianity of Christendom. That I have already shown. Yes, if by Christianity be meant the Christianity of Christ. In support of this assertion I cannot, I think, do better than recall to the reader's mind the opinions of one or two

¹ See my 'Origin of Evil,' pp. 74-77.

of the most eminent thinkers of our time. Matthew Arnold said :—

“As the course of the world is for ever establishing the pre-eminence of righteousness, so too the course of the world is for ever establishing what righteousness really is—that is to say, true Christianity.”

John Stuart Mill said :—

“Whatever else may be taken from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all his predecessors than all his followers. . . . Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in selecting this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life.”

Carlyle said :—

“Cheerfully recognising, gratefully appropriating, whatever Voltaire has proved, or any other man has proved or shall prove, the Christian religion, once here, cannot again pass away. Were the memory of this faith never so obscured, as indeed in every age the coarse passions and perceptions of the world do all but obliterate it in the hearts of most, yet in every pure soul, in every poet and wise man, it finds a new missionary, a new martyr, till the great volume of

universal history is finally closed and man's destinies are fulfilled on this earth."

Finally, Renan said:—

"Par une destinée exceptionnelle, le christianisme pur se présente encore, au bout de dix-huit siècles, avec le caractère d'une religion universelle et éternelle. . . . La religion de Jésus est à quelques égards la religion définitive. Après lui il n'y a plus qu'à développer et à féconder. 'Christianisme' est devenu presque synonyme de 'religion.' Tout ce qu'on fera en dehors de cette grande et bonne tradition chrétienne sera stérile. Quels que puissent être les transformations du dogme, Jésus restera en religion le créateur du sentiment pur. Quels que puissent être les phénomènes de l'avenir, Jésus ne sera pas surpassé. Tous les siècles proclameront qu'entre les fils des hommes il n'en est pas né de plus grand que Jésus."

And in thus associating the name of the Nazarene with the religion of the future, we do not ignore, much less condemn, the religious reformers who preceded or followed Him. We only mean that their work is comprehended and completed in His. He was greater than some of the prophets by reason of His theism; greater than any—Gautama alone excepted—in the charm of His personality; greater than all on account of His

plan of salvation,—the attainment of righteousness through love.¹ He was the creator *par excellence* of the religion that will never die. Alas! He has lain buried for centuries in the tomb of theology. But His resurrection is at hand. The stone is being rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, and some of us have already caught a glimpse of His immortal glory.

And what of the Church?² Well, she will live if she becomes in reality what now she is but nominally—the Church of Christ. Otherwise she is most assuredly doomed. At present she represents the religions of the past—religions which Christ and all the prophets condemned, religions which are gradually dying out with the gradual development of the race. The barbaric theory of sacrifice continues to disgrace her formularies. And, apart from this, she is essentially

¹ This I have explained in my 'Inspiration,' pp. 38-63.

² I use this term as a convenient abbreviation for the various Churches and sects of Christendom.

anti-Christian in the importance which she attaches to "belief." The fact is, "the world" has become more Christian than the Church. The most highly educated people have discarded the fundamental doctrines of orthodoxy. Even the average man is beginning to look upon those doctrines with suspicion and contempt. They are opposed to the best instincts of the race—instincts which are becoming every day more authoritative. It is certain therefore that if the Church is not reformed she will be destroyed. And by reform I do not mean any patching up of the Articles, any tinkering of the Creeds; it must be a thorough, radical, absolute reform. The Church must get rid altogether of what she now regards as fundamental. She must begin again from the beginning. She must take a fresh start from Christ. The last two thousand years of ecclesiastical nightmare must be as though they had never been. She must be born again. And before the new-born Church there would lie a glorious mission. Priests, I admit, would no longer be required to regenerate infants by baptism or to offer up sacrifices on

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the altar. But true worship would begin—the worship of a Deity who is all and only good; while in every worshipper would be kindled an enthusiasm for righteousness, a passionate resolve to “work together with God” for the elevation and amelioration of the race.

It may seem futile to hope for such a change as this. But the reformation would not after all be so difficult: for the Church is still called by the name of Christ; His words are still read in her services; she still professes to regard His authority as supreme. She has but to practise this article of her creed, and the reformation is accomplished. To go back to the simple Christianity of Christ would be to get rid at once of all her corruption. And I have shown¹ that my own section of the Church is specially fitted to be the pioneer in such an undertaking. She is in reality much “broader,” much more Christian than she knows. The Church of England as by law established teaches, it is true, the pagan and patristic perversions of the religion of Jesus. But on the other hand the Church

¹ Essay VII.

of England as by law established cannot force one of these perversions upon the acceptance of any of her members. Unconsciously, almost we may say by accident, the Church of England has drifted on to the true foundation. If she recognises the fact in time her salvation is secured.

It is we clergy who are the great obstacle. Many of the best men in the world, no doubt, have been by profession "priests"—*in* the Church yet not *of* it. From Zoroaster to Stanley there have been some who united in themselves the priestly and the prophetic office. They were ordained by men to perform a certain ritual, but they were also ordained by God to disseminate new ideas. Priests though they were, they did not hesitate to attack the abuses of the priesthood. The verses with which this essay concludes were actually written by a bishop. There are again many clergymen—I have letters from them continually—who are eager for reform, but who refrain from speaking out for fear of losing their livings, or because they think that nobody would listen to them. And there are also, I am well aware, many simple-minded

parish priests, unable to see, much less to expose, the falsity of the orthodox doctrines, who nevertheless live and die in the service of their parishioners with as much devotion and self-sacrifice, as if they had never heard that "the wrath of the Deity had been appeased by blood" and that "men are to be justified by faith without works." All these will be ready enough to discard the Christianity of Christendom, as soon as they can be made to see that it brings discredit on the Master whom they love. But the great majority of the clergy are so saturated with the spirit of Ecclesiasticism, so wedded to the religion of the past, that their conversion seems almost hopeless. The moral sense of the average priest has been perverted. It is actually laid down in our Articles that "before justification"—*i.e.*, for those who have not accepted the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement—"good works have the nature of sin." And even after "justification," good works continue to be regarded as of less importance than orthodoxy. The "Fathers" are held up as saints, specially qualified, by reason of their holiness, to explain

the nature of the Godhead; and yet it is well known—it is related in every ecclesiastical history—that they were the greatest liars, the most deliberate forgers, the world has seen. The “Councils” are said to have been under the guidance and control of the Holy Ghost; and yet it is well known—it is related in every ecclesiastical history—that the majority of their members were as self-opinionated, as quarrelsome, as contemptible a set of men as ever sat in conclave. “It would seem,” said Gregory of Nazianzen, “as though a herald had convoked to the assembly all the gluttons, villains, liars and false-swearers of the Empire.” In reading the works of the theologians, we get the impression that they look upon morality with comparative contempt. One, for instance, is so interested in the dogma of “inspiration” that he does not hesitate to accept the story of the Gadarene swine, utterly regardless of the fact that, if it were true, it would reflect lasting discredit on the character of Jesus. Another,¹ after representing

¹ See a sermon on “The Faith and the Bible” by the Master of the Temple.

the Scriptures as a direct revelation from the Deity, says: "It is ludicrous to be disturbed by the scientific inaccuracies of Genesis; when the heart turns to God there will be an end of such silly trifling!" Silly trifling, indeed! Why, the question involved is nothing less than the veracity of God.

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

The Church will never be reformed until her clergy have learnt the lesson—which many an 'infidel' could teach—that righteousness is man's first and only duty.

"The parish priest
Of austerity
Climbed up in a high church steeple,
To be nearer God,
So that he might hand
His word down to the people.

"And in sermon script
He daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven;
And he dropped it down
On the people's heads
Two times one day in seven.

“In his age God said,
‘Come down and die ;’
And he cried out from the steeple,
‘Where art Thou, Lord ?’
And the Lord replied,
‘Down here among my people.’”

II.

*The Decadence of the English
Church.*

THERE is much in my Church which I admire and love. Its music, its architecture, many of its prayers, a few of its hymns, a little of its teaching, much of its practice, some of its associations, connected as they have been with the great joys and sorrows of life, the unselfish devotion of a large number of its clergy,—these things are of inestimable value. But I am convinced that the good is being neutralised by the evil, and that there is a danger of both speedily perishing in one common catastrophe. The Church is in imminent peril — all the more imminent because it is seldom recognised or suspected. In one of his humorous poems, Oliver

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Wendell Holmes speaks of an old couple who had been accustomed for many years to drive about in a "one-horse shay." This carriage was constructed originally on an ingenious principle, so that every part should be just as strong as every other part. It was a sort of infallible chaise; there was not a weak point about it; it never seemed any the worse for wear; it looked as if it would last for ever. But on one occasion, as it was being driven along in the usual fashion, it suddenly collapsed—into dust. I am afraid that may be an emblem of what is in store for the Church of England. To superficial observers she appears prosperous and flourishing; but nevertheless the end may be near. And the end *is* near, unless the clergy can be awakened to a sense of the danger before it is too late.

Institutions, like organisms, must—if they would survive—adapt themselves to their environment. Want of adaptation is death. Human society is constantly changing, in its modes of thought, in its experiences, in its needs. And, unless the Church changes correspondingly, she will be destroyed—destroyed by the very society

which she claims to mould. But the clergy, with few exceptions, persistently refuse to recognise this necessity for adaptation. The modern priest, as a rule, expects as much credulity on the part of his devotees as did the old medicine-men and rain-makers. He talks about miracles—Gadarene pigs and what not—as he might have done at a time when natural law had never been heard of; when every one believed, not in the uniformity, but in the irregularity of nature. He talks about inspiration and revelation as if he did not know that much of the teaching of the Bible had been equalled, and even surpassed, in other sacred literatures, and that some of the sayings of Christ Himself—including even the golden rule—had been anticipated by “pagans” hundreds of years before the Christian era. The dogmas of orthodoxy were formulated in the third or fourth century, and yet he goes on repeating these antiquated shibboleths as if he were not aware that since the days of St Augustine men’s views of the universe, and therefore of the God of the universe, had been revolutionised. Change and progress are hateful to

the clerical mind. Instead of aiding development, the clergy have eternally hampered and opposed it. Instead of leading the race, it has been their mournful prerogative to lag behind. The majority of them are now centuries in the rear. And the consequence is that men are beginning to ask themselves if they might not dispense with the "benefit of clergy," if they would not be better off without a Church than with it?

The influence of the priesthood is everywhere on the wane. Fashion no doubt continues to lend it a certain precarious support.

"At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world your friend."

But going to church is no longer absolutely indispensable. The friendship of the world may be obtained without it. Even the "smart" people are becoming lax in their religious observances. I remember a few years ago it was proposed in Convocation to pass a resolution condemning "the desecration of the Sabbath," which was then becoming so common in society. But the Bishop

of London, with touching frankness, said that they might as well save themselves the trouble, as nobody would pay any attention to the resolution if they did pass it. And over the cultured portion of the community the influence of the Church is already almost *nil*. How many clever persons do you know who are in the habit of looking to their clergymen for *instruction*? Even the scholarly clergy—those who are thoroughly acquainted with Hebrew and with the Fathers—even they, with few exceptions, are quite out of touch with modern thought. And every year their ranks are recruited from a lower intellectual class. So that the small amount of influence which the clergy still retain is continually becoming smaller.

For the last thirty or forty years the intellectual attainments of candidates for orders have been steadily on the decline. The Church is ceasing to attract young men of conspicuous ability. At the English universities in the olden times the best men usually went into orders; but what was formerly the rule is now the exception. This is a fact which it is idle

to attempt to dispute. Every student at Oxford and Cambridge is acquainted with it. It can be proved to demonstration by comparing the ordination lists of to-day with those of half a century ago. It has been acknowledged and deplored by the Bishops themselves. In 1861, Dr Temple, then head-master of Rugby, wrote a remarkable letter to Dr Tait, who was at that time Bishop of London. This letter was called forth by the fact that Dr Temple, in common with other contributors to the 'Essays and Reviews,' had been severely censured by the Bishops in Convocation. "Many years ago," he said, "your lordship urged us from the university pulpit to undertake the critical study of the Bible. You said it was a dangerous study, but indispensable. You described its difficulties, and those who listened to you must have felt a confidence that, if they took your advice, you at any rate would never join in treating them unjustly if their study had brought with it the difficulties you described. To tell a man to study, and yet bid him under heavy penalties come to the same conclusions as those

who have not studied, is to mock him. If the conclusions are prescribed the study is precluded. Freedom plainly implies the widest possible toleration. I admit that toleration must have limits, or the Church would fall to pieces. But the student has a right to claim, first, that those limits should be known beforehand and contained in formularies within his own reach, not locked up in the breasts of certain of his brethren; secondly, that his having transgressed them should be decided after fair, open trial by men practised in such decisions. Instead of that what do we see? A set of men publish a book containing the results of their study and thought, which—rightly or wrongly—they believe to be within the limits traced out by the formularies. Suddenly, without any warning that they are on their trial, without any opportunity given for explanation or defence, assuredly without any proof that they have really transgressed the limits prescribed, the whole Bench of Bishops join in inflicting a severe censure and in insinuating that they are dishonest men. How on earth is any study to be pursued under such

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treatment as this? *You complain that young men of ability will not take orders. How can you expect it when this is what befalls any one who does not think as you do?*"

The fact that the ablest men have ceased to go into orders received a curious kind of indirect confirmation in a speech made by Mr Gladstone at the jubilee of Trinity College, Glenalmond, in October 1891. "The charge that the clergy are falling behind in the intellectual race," he said, "I believe to be a most inaccurate, most untrue, and most unjust aspersion. You may judge of the character of a body in part by the names of those who die in its ranks. I will name five men who have died in the ranks of the British clergy within the last two years. One of these was Bishop Lightfoot, and one Dr Liddon; one was Dean Church; one was Archbishop Magee; and the fifth, a much younger man, whose fame was almost entirely confined to the University of Oxford, Mr Aubrey Moore. Now I say that body is an illustrious body from whose ranks, within less than two years, five such men can be numbered as having ceased

to be." True. But to know whether that body is or is not degenerating, we must inquire by whom the dead are to be succeeded. The fact that the English army was once led by a Marlborough and a Wellington would not ensure for it victory to-day. And since young men of ability are no longer taking orders, it follows that eventually there will be no worthy successors of the eminent clergymen who have gone.

All the while laymen are being *better* educated ; they are reading more widely and thinking more deeply. They are going up-hill as fast as the clergy are going down. The intellectual advances of the laity render the clergy less and less capable of understanding them. So that the want of adaptation between Society and the Church is ever on the increase. And want of adaptation is death. There is no possibility of evading this law. Ridicule will not alter it ; it is not to be laughed out of existence. Reasoning will not change it ; it is not to be argued away. For a while, no doubt, it may be ignored ; it may be seemingly disobeyed with impunity ; but the effects of the disobedience are only accumulating

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for a more terrible catastrophe in the end. Unless the Church of England undergoes a radical change, she will practically cease to exist. She will appeal exclusively to the intellectual dregs of the community, and could only therefore in bitterest irony be called a National Church.

III.

Ecclesiasticism.

ECCLESIASTICISM came into existence when men first began to think. It will pass out of existence when they have thought a little more.

The rise of the priesthood must have been somewhat on this wise. With the primitive savage, as with ourselves, things were often, almost always, going wrong. Every now and then a thunderstorm burst upon him with its noise and horror, and the flash of the lightning burnt up his little hut or struck a comrade dead. Occasionally he may have seen the earth grow fluid like the sea, and engulf some of his neighbours in its waves. Not unfrequently his crude experiments in agriculture would be spoilt by

flood or drought, by mildew or blight. Sometimes he would be unsuccessful with his fishing or hunting; sometimes he would be wounded in battle: all else might change and vanish, but calamity would be sure to return. The only certainty in his life was trouble. Now trouble set him thinking—philosophising. Philosophy, said Aristotle, begins in wonder; and the first thing men wondered at was grief. The primitive savage did not think, if he could help it. When he was comfortable, he asked no questions. As long as he could eat his fill and bask placidly in the sun, he took life as it came, thoughtlessly and without reflection. But when he had nothing to eat, when the sun refused to shine, when times were bad with him, he was driven into asking, Why? He tried to find the cause, that he might if possible remove the effect. So he set out upon the philosophical inquiry, What is the cause of calamity? His solution of the problem was curious, and yet not unnatural. There was one form of calamity which he himself was in the habit of producing. He was fond of inflicting physical pain. He always

made a point of relieving his feelings in this way when he happened to be in a rage. And when other people were angry, they too, if they could, always avenged themselves in the same fashion. All men, he found, were prompted by anger to the infliction of pain. Now out of these data he constructed what seemed an argument, but what was in fact a fallacy. We know that an "A" proposition cannot be converted simply; it must be converted *per accidens*—that is to say, its conversion will yield only a particular and not a universal conclusion. *E.g.*, from the proposition, "All paupers are miserable beings," we cannot infer that all miserable beings are paupers. But the primitive savage did not know anything about conversion *per accidens*. He argued thus: Since all rage manifests itself in calamity, therefore all calamity is a manifestation of rage. And so when any trouble came upon him which he could not trace to a brother man, he pronounced a verdict of guilty against some person or persons unknown—bad-tempered, vindictive persons like himself. *These persons were the first gods.* The next question he asked

himself was this: Could anything be done to make the gods amiable? Might they not, at any rate, be persuaded to leave him alone? And here again he argued from his experience, such as it was. His own anger had often been appeased by gifts; why not theirs? In all probability, he thought to himself, they would be susceptible to bribes, for he had never known any one who was not. Presents would most likely render the gods innocuous, perhaps even beneficent. In other words, he conceived the idea of sacrifice. The difficulty was to discover what sacrifices would be acceptable. In this dilemma arose the priests—the gentlemen who undertook, for a consideration, to square the gods. If you are in difficulties, there will always be people ready *for payment* to help you out of them. Generally they will make matters worse; but that is no concern of theirs. They will have received their fee, and there for them the business ends. Some of the primitive clergy may have been themselves sincere believers: but many of them probably were not; they merely traded on the faith of their lay brethren. Honest or dis-

honest, however, they boldly declared that they knew exactly how matters might be satisfactorily arranged. And all the prescribed sacrifices were cheerfully offered up by the laity—so great was their dread of pain, so keen was their desire for pleasure.

Now it will be observed that the primitive priest did not concern himself—did not even profess to concern himself—about morality. He was a minister, not of virtue, but of policy ; he spoke, not of goodness, but of good things ; he taught people to become, not better, but more prosperous. Even if the priests had been right in their theology, even if there had really existed angry deities who could be bribed in the way alleged, such a process of bribery would still have no more to do with morality than a system for winning money at Monte Carlo. And the modern ecclesiastic *as such* has little more to say upon the subject of morality than his earliest predecessors. Ask the average clergyman what is the most important thing—“the one thing needful”—for men, and he will answer, salvation. Ask him again what is salvation, and he will tell you it

consists in escaping hell and going to heaven. Ask him once more how this is to be accomplished, and he will tell you, first by believing that the anger of the Deity has been appeased by the blood of His Son, and secondly by worshipping the Deity for having vouchsafed to accept this propitiation. It is the same old story. Never have ecclesiastics *as such* appealed to the highest instincts of mankind, but always to the lowest—to the desire for pleasure and to the hatred of pain. Every *religious* teacher—Isaiah, Zoroaster, Confucius, Gautama, Christ—has said to his fellows: “Your first and all-comprehensive duty is to become good; and so far from worshipping evil, you must persistently, vehemently abhor it.” But the advice of the ecclesiastics is precisely the opposite. They say to us: “You must avoid pain at any cost—no matter though it involves the worship of a Devil. You need not trouble yourselves about the means, so long only as you make sure of the end. You have nothing to do with the character of the God we bid you worship; let it suffice that He will send you to hell if you

do not worship Him." Ecclesiasticism has therefore been the greatest obstacle to the moral development of mankind. It is the most demoralising agency to be found in the history of the race. The priests have stimulated human selfishness instead of restraining it. They have taught men to prefer safety to virtue. They have taught men to play fast and loose with the distinctions between good and evil, right and wrong, deity and devil. They have taught men to worship beings that ought to be despised. They have inculcated the prostitution of the conscience for the salvation of the soul.

And the influence of ecclesiastics has been no less damning to the human intellect. In course of time they invented elaborate systems of theology, containing all sorts of ridiculous and impossible doctrines. And these doctrines we are expected to receive without investigation. Philosophy Aristotle neatly defined as the art of doubting well. But of doubt the priests have always had an unholy horror. The word "free-thinker" they invariably use as a term of reproach. They would have all men slaves. Even

Mr Haweis wants to keep the creeds and other antiquated formularies of the Church, though he proposes to "interpret them in the light of modern knowledge." Imagine the feelings of a scientific man, if such a suggestion were made to him in regard to the scientific statements of Aristotle or of Plato! As long as they dared, ecclesiastics endeavoured, by torture and by murder, to put a stop even to physical investigations. They have persistently opposed the progress of the world. The organic growth of the race, which educated men now know to be a fact, is quite beyond the ecclesiastical range of vision, and indeed quite incompatible with ecclesiastical systems. Every such system professes to be complete in itself, and disclaims all connection with the other religions and philosophies of the world. Its crowning glory is to exist in an irrational isolation. Its supreme aim is to bring all human thoughts and endeavours within the limits of its own cut-and-dried theology.

On every page of history will be found confirmation of the fact that Ecclesiasticism is a disgrace and a curse to humanity. In the infancy of the

world men thought only of avoiding pain and securing pleasure, and they eagerly adopted any expedients that were suggested to them, however contemptible or absurd. But as time goes on, as they read and reflect, they will discover that the gods of ecclesiasticism were the purest fictions, and that, even had they been real, duty would require us to execrate and resist them. Each individual will by-and-by feel that he himself also is a man, and he will refuse to accept, at the bidding of another, what his reason or his conscience condemns. In the future men will everywhere come to believe in progress; the advocates of stagnation will find themselves without a single devotee; and ecclesiasticism will perish, never to rise again.

“Let men but think, and priests are priests no more.”

Ecclesiasticism.

Mr Haweis wants to keep the creeds and other antiquated formularies of the Church, though he proposes to "interpret them in the light of modern knowledge." Imagine the feelings of a scientific man, if such a suggestion were made to him in regard to the scientific statements of Aristotle or of Plato! As long as they dared, ecclesiastics endeavoured, by torture and by murder, to put a stop even to physical investigations. They have persistently opposed the progress of the world. The organic growth of the race, which educated men now know to be a fact, is quite beyond the ecclesiastical range of vision, and indeed incompatible with ecclesiastical systems. Such a system professes to be complete and disclaims all competition with the sciences and philosophy. Its highest glory is to express the supreme aim of the world, and its highest endeavour is to be complete in the domain of abstract theology.

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IV.

Dogmatism in Theology.

THE distinction between creed and dogma, though simple enough, is but seldom recognised. Creed means that which is believed in the present, dogma that which must not be disbelieved in the future. In the one case the belief is held tentatively, in the other it is assumed to be final. People often imagine they are defending dogmas when they refer to the utility of creeds. But they are doing nothing of the kind. Formulating what we believe is quite different from declaring we will never believe anything else. So far from being identical, the two things are antagonistic. If the tentative belief be useful, the assumption of its finality must be pernicious. Every genuine science has

its creed — its register of results; and this is used as a stepping-stone to further advances. But whenever dogma is substituted for creed, we get pseudo-science, science falsely so called, the aim of which is not advancement in knowledge but stagnation in ignorance.

The teaching of Aristotle, for instance, was converted by the Schoolmen into a system of Dogmatics. Everything contained in Aristotle was asserted to be true; everything not contained in Aristotle was asserted to be false. For centuries research was laid under a ban. Professors in the universities were enjoined never to contradict Aristotle, never even to add to Aristotle. The monk who thought he had discovered some spots on the sun was supposed to be effectually answered by his Father Superior who said to him: "My son, your glass or your vision must be defective; for I have read through Aristotle many times, and have seen no mention of any such thing." *Iste sol erat* was the anagram which these foolish disciples of the Stagyrice composed out of the letters of his name. And this anagram was their gospel. To twinkle with a borrowed

light became the highest ideal of intellectual achievement.

As it was with Aristotelianism in the middle ages, so has it been with Theology in every age. I need not inquire into the abstract possibility of a genuine science of Theology. I am concerned here only to point out that what is now called Theology is not a science at all. There is not a single scientific characteristic about it. The spirit of inquiry is hateful to theologians; the demand for verification they call Infidelity, if not Atheism; free-thought, the thought of science, they invariably condemn—they use the word as a term of reproach. Nor must it be for a moment supposed that Roman Catholics are pre-eminently guilty in this respect. Protestants, though they talked about the right of private judgment, never understood what it meant. Luther was just as dogmatic as any occupant of the papal chair. "Reason," he said, "should be destroyed in every Christian." Soon after England had shaken off her allegiance to Rome, an Act of Parliament was passed "for the suppression of diversity of opinion." And Theology

never changes, never improves. It cannot. Dogma must be unalterable, or it would not be dogma. Writers like Hatch and Colenso are not recognised as theologians by the authorities in my own¹ Church, nor indeed in any other. Hatch was denounced in St Paul's Cathedral by an Oxford Professor, Canon Liddon. Colenso was inhibited by various bishops from preaching in their dioceses, and his book on the Pentateuch was condemned by Convocation, the members of which — many of them at least — confessed, with a *naïveté* worthy of the middle ages, that they had never read a line of it. Every attempt to make Theology scientific the Church crushes if possible, or, if that be impossible, ignores. Ecclesiastics of every school are agreed in the denunciation of free-thought. "Avoid inquiry," said Newman, "for it will lead you where there is no light, no peace, no hope; it will lead you to the black pit where there is perpetual deso-

¹ Some of those clever persons who write about books which they have never read, sent paragraphs to the newspapers stating that this little essay showed I had left the Church of England. I beg leave to call their attention to the words "my own."

lation." "Oh, sirs," said Spurgeon, "could ye roll into one mass all sins, could ye take murder and adultery and everything that is vile and unite them into one vast globe of black corruption, they would not equal the sin of unbelief. This is the monarch sin, the quintessence of all guilt, the mixture of the venom of all crimes, the masterpiece of Satan." And when Mrs Besant said to Pusey, "I must find out for myself what is true," the Doctor replied, "It is not your duty to ascertain the truth. The responsibility is not yours, so long as you accept what the Church has laid down for your acceptance."

And there is even less warrant for this theological bigotry than there was for the dogmatism of the scholastic philosophers. What the Aristotelians received from their master was the result of patient reflection and investigation on the part of that giant mind, and it formed a necessary stage in scientific discovery. Theology, on the contrary, begins and ends with mere arbitrary assertions, repeated and re-repeated, but never critically examined. The theologians

tell us that these assertions have been “revealed” and are therefore infallible. But it is easy to show that an infallible revelation is the purest fiction.

It is supposed that the Scriptures, or the Councils, or both, are infallible sources of revealed truth. In regard to the first but little need be said. I will not dwell upon the *a priori* improbability — or rather impossibility, since it involves a contradiction in terms — that a Being worthy of the name of God should have revealed the means of salvation only to a few of His creatures, leaving the rest ruthlessly to their doom. It is sufficient to point out that the supposed revelation is full of contradictions. Since of two contradictory statements one must be false, it follows that the book which contains them both is not always correct—that is to say, is not infallible. And we need not be at all surprised to find contradictions in such a heterogeneous mixture of literary productions. There is but one reason for regarding the Scriptures as a single book, and that is the fact of their being bound by

a single cover. With the exception of the cover, everything connected with the Bible tends to show that it is a collection of many books, written by very different men with very different ideas and motives. Kings and Chronicles, for example, give the lie to one another on almost every page. It is generally believed by scholars that the Chronicler deliberately falsified the earlier records with a view to clerical prestige. But whatever the cause of the contradictions, there they are. Some of the sacred books, moreover, consist mainly of compilations, which the compiler did not take the trouble to make coherent. Any one who reads carefully the first two chapters of Genesis, for instance, must perceive that the Elohist account of creation is absolutely irreconcilable with the Jehovistic. Nor are Scriptural contradictions confined to matters of fact. The Bible contradicts itself just as much in its moral and religious theories. There is infinite antagonism between the Song of Deborah and the teaching of Jesus, between the God who ordered women and infants to be slaughtered and the heavenly

Father whose tender mercies are over all His works.¹ To talk of the Bible as the Word of God, therefore, is ridiculous. It may be the Word of many gods; it certainly is not the Word of one. And as for its infallibility, that is disproved by hundreds of contradictions, any one of which would have been sufficient for the purpose.

Then what of the Councils, which are supposed to have interpreted and developed the teaching of the Bible? Well, I will not speak of the antecedent improbability that an infallible decision could be reached by adding together a number of fallible votes, nor of the antecedent improbability that the truth should have been miraculously revealed to a majority of the committee-men, while the rest were left altogether in the dark. We have only to consider the circumstances under which the Councils were held and the character of the individuals who composed them, and we shall be at once convinced that their discussions could not possibly

¹ See the chapter on "The Gods of the Bible" in my 'Church and Creed,' p. 233.

have been conducted with the calmness and impartiality which are absolutely essential to the attainment of truth.

Jortin has enumerated some of the motives by which the Councillors must have been influenced. "It might be," he says, "by reverence for the Emperor who summoned them and who sometimes himself presided; it might be by fear of offending a great prelate, such as the Bishop of Alexandria or Rome, who had it in his power to insult and plague all the bishops within and without his jurisdiction; it might be by the dread of passing for heretics, and so being calumniated, reviled, hated, anathematised, excommunicated, imprisoned, banished, fined, beggared, starved; it might be by a deference to the majority, or by a love of domineering; by private friendships or by private feuds; by old prejudices, by the hope of gain, by good nature, by the fatigue of attending and the desire to get home," &c. Such motives as these must have had their weight, even if the bishops had been fairly anxious to arrive at truth. But they never were. "A General Council," says

Dean Milman, "was convoked to settle some questions which had already disorganised the peace of Christendom. It was a field of battle, in which a long train of hostilities was brought to an issue. Men therefore met with all the excitement, the estrangement, the jealousy, the antipathy, engendered by fierce and obstinate controversy. Each bishop was committed to his own opinions and was exasperated by opposition. They tried to triumph over their adversaries rather than dispassionately to seek for truth."

All this was more or less inevitable. But the character of the majority of the bishops made matters worse. Gregory of Nazianzen, who had himself presided at one of those meetings, says: "I have never known an assembly of bishops terminate well. They strive only for power. They behave like angry lions to the small, and like fawning spaniels to the great. It would seem as though a herald had convoked to the Council all the gluttons, villains, liars and false-swearers of the Empire. I will never more sit in one of these assemblies of cranes and geese." The first Council, that of Nicea, was

about the most respectable of them all. But even there the reverend members were so full of mutual recrimination, so eager to get themselves heard and to drown the voices of their brethren, that the Emperor, who was President, read them a lecture on the unseemliness of their behaviour. Constantine was not a very fastidious gentleman. He had murdered his nephew, his son, and his wife. Yet even he was shocked at the conduct of the men who, according to the theologians, were under the immediate control of the Holy Ghost! At another of these Councils the bishops first on the scene tried to get the vote taken before the other bishops could arrive! At the third of these deliberate assemblies, afterwards nicknamed the Robber Council, the Right Reverend the Bishop of Constantinople knocked down and trampled on the Right Reverend the Bishop of Alexandria, and kicked him till he died!

There is no reason then *a priori* to suppose that the decisions of these Councils would possess any special value, much less that they would be infallible. And their fallibility is conclusively

settled *a posteriori*, for the decisions of one Council were frequently condemned by another. The English Church rejects as unauthoritative all but the first four ; but even so we are left with an authority that contradicts itself. Let us take as an example the curious history of what is called the Nicene Creed. The greater part of this Creed was formulated at the first Council. It was intended to be final, and was accepted as such by the second and third Councils ; indeed the latter excommunicated and anathematised any one who should presume to alter it. Yet the fourth Council did alter it, omitting several sentences and adding several others ; and the Creed, as we now have it, contains the *filioque* clause, which was put in by the Council of Toledo, whose authority our Church does not recognise at all. The position of an English Churchman in regard to the Nicene Creed is truly embarrassing. One clause comes from a Council whose decisions he is told he need not acknowledge ; other clauses were condemned in anticipation by a Council whose decisions he is told he must acknowledge ; and

he is expected to believe that this jumble of inconsistencies is "revealed truth."

When we thus examine the authorities for which infallibility is claimed, we find no evidence in favour of it, but a great deal of evidence against it. Both Scriptures and Councils abound in contradictions, which afford incontrovertible proof of fallibility. It follows then that there is no creed, no single sentence of a creed, which we are bound unquestioningly to accept. Theological dogmatism would exact from us a submission to which it has no right. It is therefore an impertinence. There is no creed, no single sentence of a creed, which we ought not, before accepting, very carefully to investigate. Theological dogmatism would dissuade us from our duty. It is therefore a crime.

V.

King's College Council.

FROM the time of Bruno, who was expelled from almost every college in Europe, down to the present day, the expulsion of Professors from their Chairs has always been a favourite device with the most zealous defenders of what is called "the faith." Every such expulsion is of more than temporary and personal interest; for it points to the existence of forces within the Church which, if not kept in check, would most assuredly bring about its destruction. I have therefore thought it desirable to relate my own experience at King's College. In one way what happened to me was of no particular importance even to myself. But questions are nevertheless suggested by it, which deserve the

serious consideration of all who have at heart the welfare of the Church.

Shortly after the appearance of my book on 'Inspiration,' I received a letter from the Principal, in which he upbraided me for relating a certain anecdote¹ about Smith's 'Biblical Dic-

¹ The anecdote, and the passage in which it occurred, were as follows. It was the conclusion of a sermon on the "Inaccuracies of the Bible" :—

"But, I hear some one say, it would have been better had I let the subject alone. Would it? I will tell you a story. When Dr William Smith was bringing out his 'Biblical Dictionary,' being a prudent editor and understanding the taste of the public extremely well, he determined that the articles should contain as much science as was compatible with orthodoxy, and no more. The one on the Deluge was to be written by a man whom the Doctor considered safe, but when it was finished it turned out to be quite heterodox. There was no time to procure another, as that part of the Dictionary had to appear at once : so when people looked for Deluge they discovered only 'see Flood.' A fresh writer was then found ; but when his article was returned, it was worse than the first. It was not allowed to appear : Dr Smith simply wrote, 'Flood, see Noah.' How he managed with this article I don't know. But probably by that time the public would stand a little more science. Now, in the editor of a Dictionary I admire such conduct ; it shows great business capacity. But in a clergyman we expect something more than business capacity—at least *I* do. It is a clergyman's duty—if he be fit for his office—to *teach* the people committed to his charge. It is

tionary'—of which, by the way, he was himself co-editor. He enclosed a note of expostulation from Dr William Smith; and he also added that he was much shocked at many of my

his duty, so far as in him lies, to remove their prejudices, to correct their errors, to give them ever deeper and fuller views of truth.

“I know the discussion of a subject like the present is apt to give offence, and that to two very different classes. There are some devout persons who have been accustomed from their infancy to regard the Bible as infallible, and when this infallibility has been disproved they feel shocked and stunned,—they imagine that they must no longer love the Bible as they did. For these persons I have great sympathy; and I hope to show them, before I have finished the present course of sermons, that, in spite of all its faults, the Bible does stand alone, pre-eminent above all the other literature of the world. But there is another class of persons for whom I confess I have no sympathy. They are not devout, but only lethargic. They have a lazy disinclination to look difficulties in the face, a cowardly fear of investigating their beliefs, a puerile dread of what is stigmatised as doubt. They flatter themselves that they already know as much as is necessary for salvation, and they are determined never, if they can help it, to know anything more. A new idea disturbs, startles, terrifies them. It is the correct thing, they consider, to hold that there are no discrepancies in the Bible, and rather than discover any, they would be content never to open the book again. Of course upon such people my work is quite thrown away. I am sorry for that, but it is not my fault.”

theological views. I replied that the story in question was a very old one, that it had existed in print for many years in Colenso's 'Pentateuch,' but that I should be happy to publish any disclaimer which Dr Smith thought fit to send me. I made no reference to my theological heresy; for, though I had all possible respect for Dr Wace as Principal, I could not manage to regard him as my bishop. Some time afterwards I received the following letter:—

"KING'S COLLEGE, *March* 11, 1889.

"DEAR DR MOMERIE,—I mentioned to you a short time ago that some statements in your new volume occasioned me grave anxiety in reference to your position as a member of the staff of our theological department. You took however no notice of my observation, and have thus obliged me to consider the matter without further personal reference to yourself.

"Having thus considered it with much care and anxiety, and, as I hope, with due respect to your work and position, I am sorry to say I have come to the conclusion that it is my duty to ask the Council whether the theological students should for the future be allowed to attend your lectures. I do not mean to suggest that the opinions you have expressed are inconsistent with your tenure of the professorship of Logic and Metaphysics in King's College. It is

requisite for that purpose that you should be a member of the Church of England, but not that you should agree to all that is required of her ordained ministers. Nor need I even inquire how far your opinions are capable of being so interpreted as to be not inconsistent with your position as a clergyman in our Church. But I feel bound to ask the Council whether they are consistent with the particular office of preparing young men for ordination. Such statements as that on p. 10, that 'there is a practically infinite difference between the God of the Patriarchs, who was always repenting, and the God of the Apostles,' or on p. 13, that there is a 'superhuman cruelty in the Jehovah of the Pentateuch;' or on p. 42, that 'it is strange that persons who have read the 25th chapter of St Matthew should still believe in the doctrine of Justification by Faith,' though it is expressly asserted in the Thirty-nine Articles; or on p. 201, that 'the Christianity of Christ and the Christianity of Christendom are two distinct things, so distinct as to be often antagonistic and contradictory;' or on p. 208, that 'there will come a time when the hollowness of orthodox Christianity will be discovered, and when the real Christianity of Christ will take its place.' Statements like these, printed and published by a member of our theological staff, seem to me calculated to undermine in the thoughts of our students the authority of the formularies which, as a theological school, we engage to enforce. It will be for the Council to judge how far this is the

case ; and they will of course be glad to consider anything that you may desire to urge to the contrary. The matter will come before them on Friday next, and I will read to them any letter that you may think fit to write in reply to this one ; and if you would kindly be in attendance at four o'clock on that day, they would no doubt, if you desired it, be glad to see you.—I remain, yours truly, HENRY WACE.”

In two days the whole matter would have been decided at a small, ordinary meeting of the Council.¹ I therefore wrote to a few of the governing body with whom I was personally acquainted, among others to the late Dean of Wells, protesting against this unseemly haste, and I sent a letter to the Principal, with the request that he would read it to the Council. In this letter I said : “ I have no desire to retain the theological students, if for any reason the Council think fit to withdraw them. But I

¹ According to the constitution of King's College, the governors—among whom are the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief-Justice, the Home Secretary, the Speaker, the Lord Mayor, the Duke of Cambridge, the Marquis of Salisbury, and Mr Gladstone—belong *ex officio* to the Council, but they do not, of course, attend the ordinary meetings. It is only in the case of the appointment or removal of a Principal that the sanction of the governors is essential.

should have been glad if time had been given me to send a copy of 'Inspiration' to every member of the governing body: and had I been allowed to do so, the ultimate decision would have been more likely to represent the opinions of the majority." Dr Plumtre was also good enough to write to the secretary and to the Bishop of London, "protesting against action being taken on such short notice and with such imperfect materials for a decision, and proposing that the book should be referred to the Bishop of London, the other bishops on the Council, and the Deans of St Paul and Westminster, to consider and report thereon." The protest brought me immediately another epistle from Dr Wace.

"KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, *March* 14, 1889.

"DEAR SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date, enclosing a letter to the Council of the College.

"As the first observation you address to them is that if sufficient time had been given you, you would have sent to every member of Council a copy of your book, in order that it might be 'criticised as a whole and not from certain passages selected and put together antagonistically,' I write at once to say that I will send word by to-night's post or by telegraph to

all members of the Council, that the matter will be postponed until their meeting on the 12th of April next. Meanwhile I will send to all of them copies of my letter to you, of your reply, and of this letter.

“As you refer to the Bishop of London, I beg to say that of course I should not have taken the action I did without consulting him, as chairman of our Council when the Archbishop of York is absent.

“I am sorry that you have nothing to say to myself on the subject, and I remain, yours faithfully,

“HENRY WACE.”

On receipt of this communication I at once sent copies of my book to the governors and all other members of the Council; and, lest by any oversight they might not be informed of the meeting, I wrote a letter to each of them, acquainting him with the date on which it would be held, and requesting him, if possible, to be present.

At the time appointed a very large number of the governing body assembled. Mr Gladstone¹ made the speech of the day. I do not

¹ Twenty-five years before he had been present at a similar meeting, when it was proposed to remove Frederick Maurice from his chair. “I stayed for the King’s College Council, but without effect,” wrote Mr Gladstone on October 27, 1853, to his friend the Bishop of Oxford. “They have done the deed—

know exactly what he said, for the discussion was conducted with closed doors. But, when I met him shortly afterwards, he expressed the hope that some compromise might be arrived at between the Council and myself. So this, I imagine, was the tenor of his speech. Nothing definite was decided at the first meeting; but the Bishop of London, as chairman, was requested to talk the matter over with me.

I had an interview accordingly with his lordship. I will give to the best of my recollection the gist of what he said.

“There was considerable difference of opinion among the members of the Council as to whether or not your views could be legitimately held by a clergyman of the Church of England, but they all agreed in deploring the manner in which you are accustomed to deal with sacred subjects. The story, for example, on p. 22! When a man commissioned

i.e., declared Maurice's statements to be of dangerous tendency, and resolved that his connection with the theology of the College ought not to continue. I moved that the Bishop of London be requested to appoint theologians to examine, but in vain. Sir J. Patteson, Sir B. B. Brodie, and Mr Green were with me. I imagine there will be no small uproar about the business. I hope you did not disapprove my suggestion.”

by God to preach to his fellow-sinners tells good stories, disgrace is brought upon religion and the Church. Your style of preaching and your heterodoxy may damage the reputation of the College, and the bishops may in consequence refuse to accept our students as candidates for orders. Besides, you are likely to do great harm to the students themselves. After attending your lectures, they may read your books. Well, the subjects you discuss and your manner of discussing them are bad enough even in the case of a man like yourself, but if the ordinary theological student attempted to follow in your steps, the results would be shocking."

With regard to the theological opinions expressed in 'Inspiration,' his lordship had not much to say. He thought that in one instance I had flatly contradicted myself; for though I said the Bible as a whole *was not*, I admitted certain parts of its teaching *were*, unique.¹ He thought that in calling the author of Ecclesiastes a cynical voluptuary, I had gone beyond the limits of legitimate criticism.² He thought,

¹ I was unable to see the contradiction; but, out of deference to the Bishop's judgment, I have since made the admission more circumspectly, and without using the word unique.

² My reasons for this view I have given elsewhere at length. See 'Agnosticism,' part ii.

lastly, that I had misrepresented Luther's doctrine of justification by faith.¹

After these remarks and criticisms, the Bishop asked me if I would think it all over, and then tell him what, under the circumstances, I considered it right to do.

When I reflected on my conversation with his lordship, I became much impressed with the idea that I might possibly be injuring the College. Under the old system my chair belonged to the department of theology, and all the theological students were obliged to attend my lectures. If the bishops refused to ordain men who had been brought under my influence, the theological department of the College would become "almost a nullity." I felt it my duty to do what I could to prevent such a catastrophe, and it seemed to me that the threatened danger might be avoided if my classes were made for the future optional instead of compulsory. I therefore wrote to the Bishop to that effect. "I see no

¹ I have added an appendix to the second edition of 'Inspiration,' in which this objection is disposed of by quotations from Luther himself.

reason," I added, "for pointedly *excluding* the theological students. I do not suppose they will have the time, even if they had the inclination, to undertake extra subjects; and if any one did propose to take up mine, he could be privately advised by the Principal not to do so. In fact I think the change might be professedly based on the students' want of time."¹

After this I had another interview with the Bishop, who agreed to my proposal, with the exception of the last sentence. He said that the Council would soon meet again, and that a motion would probably be made to the effect that my chair should be moved from the theological to the scientific department. He asked me if I should approve of this, and I said, Yes, secretly admiring the ingenuity of the compromise. Before I left, the Bishop gave me some parting advice—I must say in a kind and fatherly fashion—concluding with the words: "You are undoubtedly one of the

¹ I have often heard it said that the theological students of King's College have to do three years' work in two.

ablest men we've got, but if you persist in telling good stories you will ruin your career."

At the second meeting of the Council, Mr Gladstone was again present. He proposed and carried the resolution which the Bishop had mentioned. The Master of the Temple proposed a vote of censure on 'Inspiration,' but this was lost.

The Council sent me the briefest possible intimation of their proceedings in the following secretarial letter:—

"KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, W.C.,
April 19, 1889.

"DEAR PROFESSOR MOMERIE,—At a special meeting of the Council held to-day, it was resolved that in future the Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics be attached only to the General Literature and Science Department of the College. The Bishop of London stated that this arrangement had your own concurrence.—I remain, dear Professor Momerie, very truly yours,
J. W. CUNNINGHAM."

Some time afterwards Dr Vaughan wrote to me as follows:—

"LLANDAFF, *August 7, 1889.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—Hearing that some very incorrect rumours have found their way into the papers with

reference to some late proceedings in the Council of King's College, I have thought it most respectful to you to give you the true account, leaving you free to use my letter as you may think fit.

“It appeared to me that the proposal to remove your Professorship from the Theological to the General Department of the College was one wanting in straightforwardness, inasmuch as it assigned no reason for the change, and was also calculated to show a comparative indifference on the part of the Council to the soundness of the teaching of non-theological students.

“Believing that there was a substantial agreement amongst us as to the character (in certain respects) of the volume brought before us for examination, I proposed that we should plainly express the regret which we felt as to some of its doctrinal statements, and as to the tone of its dealing with sacred subjects—both of which points I believe to have been touched upon by the Bishop of London in private conference with you—and that we should leave the matter there, without proceeding to any such action as should put a stigma upon you, in the form of a virtual prohibition of the attendance of candidates for ordination at your lectures. I thought that the verbal expression of regret might have weight with you, and might produce the effect which all desired, without calling public attention within or outside the College to the discussion which had arisen.

“I did not imagine that in making this suggestion I should be thought to be bearing hardly upon you,

inasmuch as others were proposing a *practical* censure, only to be justified by such a disapproval as my amendment expressed, and open, in my judgment, to serious objections on the ground which I have indicated above.

“I do not ask what your own view of the question might be as it affects my conduct in the matter. I am only desirous that you should know what that conduct was, and should not suppose me to have taken a line conspicuously unfriendly.—Believe me, my dear sir, sincerely yours,
C. J. VAUGHAN.”

I received from several of my old students letters expressive of sympathy and regret. I give one here, but withhold the writer's name, because he is in orders, and his sympathy was perhaps, ecclesiastically speaking, ill-advised

“October 8, '89.

“DEAR SIR,—Thank you very much for your prompt reply to my letter of inquiry.

“In common with other students of the theological department who have attended your lectures, I feel the deepest concern at the loss we have sustained in the transference of your chair to another department of the College. You are completely severed from the very men who most stand in need of, and who most would profit by, your teaching. The subjects of logic and metaphysics do not now form part of the course of

study in our department; and this sudden change is very much felt by those of us who entered the College under the distinct impression that these subjects would continue to be part of the course of study.

“To the new students this change is not of course a matter of concern; they cannot be expected to miss what they never expected to have. But I can assure you that to many of those who have sat under you in the past, the rumour that you will no longer lecture to this department, confirmed by the absence of your subjects from the time-table, has come as very ill news indeed.—I am, dear sir, yours very faithfully,
“_____”

So ended my first controversy with the authorities of King's College. Several questions are suggested by it which I will content myself with merely asking. Some time or other they must be definitely answered, and the answers which are given will seriously affect the future of the Church.

I. Why was the public kept in ignorance of the proceedings of the Council? The matter under discussion was no mere personal controversy between myself and them. It involved the education of hundreds of future clergymen, and through them would affect, to some extent, the

future of the entire Church. No account was vouchsafed of what had actually happened. Why? Were the members of the Council disturbed by recollections of a similar meeting, in which some of them had taken part twenty-five years before? The College is still suffering from the stigma of having turned out Frederick Maurice. Of a truth theological prosecutions are fraught with danger. They are almost as risky as the casting of the boomerang; there is so apt to be a recoil. On the present occasion the Council may have had a vague feeling that the public, or at any rate posterity, would not approve of their decision. Or did they act as they did from a tender regard for me? Was the secrecy kept up for their own reputations' sake or for mine? If the latter, it was mistaken kindness, as I should much have preferred publicity. If the former, were they justified in protecting themselves at my expense? The public knew that something had been done to me, but they did not know what, nor why. I am unable to imagine any motive for the secrecy other than those I have suggested; but if the

Council really had a sufficient reason for their conduct, what was it?

II. Have not the members of King's College Council a somewhat curious conception of the priestly office? When my chair was removed from the department of theology, the study of logic was eliminated from the theological course. Because the style of a certain Professor happened to displease the Council, the priests of the Church of England, so far as King's College is concerned, are not in future to have any acquaintance with the science of reasoning. I should have thought that for clergymen, who must, or ought to, grapple with the deepest mysteries and problems of existence, a knowledge of logic was a *sine qua non*, and that they, more than most men, required to be well grounded and disciplined in the principles and practice of reasoning. But the Council seems to be of opinion that, so long as the students can be kept in ignorance of heterodox views, so long as they can be shielded from the temptation to adopt a popular style, they will be fully equipped for the Christian ministry.

I cannot but ask, Is this conception of the

ministry a worthy one? And what is likely to be the future of a Church whose priests have never been taught the difference between an argument and a fallacy?

III. Why is it that ecclesiastics as a rule so passionately detest "good stories"? Of course, every one is agreed that certain stories would be inapplicable to certain subjects and occasions, and some persons, no doubt, object to any story on any occasion. *De gustibus non est disputandum.* But I have looked carefully through the whole of my book, and I can only find one story, and even that had been considered worthy of quotation by the author of a learned treatise. It may be said there are other things in 'Inspiration' which might provoke a smile. Well, there are. But if everything of this description were omitted, the book, which now consists of 320 pages, would still contain 318. Yet the Bishop and the Council would seem to have been more perturbed, if possible, by these two pages than by the theological heresies scattered pretty freely over the rest. Why? What is the cause of the perturbation? Has it any rational justi-

fiction? and if so, what? Is it quite certain that there is eternal antagonism between seriousness and smiles? And may not pulpit conventionality be more injurious to the cause of real religion than the keenest sense of humour?

IV. Why were the Principal and some members of the Council so upset by the "doctrinal statements" contained in 'Inspiration'? Few of those statements were new; and most of them were at least as old as Colenso. Mr Gladstone is said to have given quotations from the Fathers, which showed that I was to some extent supported by those eminent antiquarian authorities. The supposition that the Church of England is in the main orthodox is the most curious of all delusions. Take any set of opinions you please as the standard of orthodoxy, and it will still remain true that the majority of the clergy are heterodox. There is not a single doctrine or ceremony in regard to which the clergy are agreed. Why then did 'Inspiration' call forth an outburst of orthodox zeal? Macaulay says that English people are subject to epidemics of virtue. While the disease rages they are

virulent and dangerous. But it soon passes away, and then they relapse again into their usual condition of indifference. It would seem as if English ecclesiastics were sometimes afflicted by a similar epidemic of orthodoxy. Almost all the "doctrinal statements" of 'Inspiration' have been argued in the Law Courts and declared legal; and indeed since 1865, when the clerical subscription was changed, it would be very difficult to prove that any doctrinal statement was illegal. Besides, the doctrinal heresies of 'Inspiration' are accepted by many clergymen besides myself. They are accepted even by dignitaries of the Church. What was the meaning then of the sudden scare which my book produced? And why was I selected as a scapegoat? To any one who is acquainted with English theology, the attack on 'Inspiration' seems almost as ridiculous as the Manchester ritualism scandal, which had occurred a few years before.¹ I cannot but ask myself whether this want of consistency and common-sense is not more injurious to the Church than any possible heresy.

¹ See p. 128.

V. Would it not be well if the Church of England began to learn the lesson, which has been in some degree recognised by the Church of Rome, that there may be "diversities of gifts, but the same spirit"? Amongst the members of any large society difference of opinion and difference of method are inevitable. The Church of England in the past has been accustomed to ignore or to suppress individuality. Might she not in the future endeavour to utilise it? When I returned to the College, after my fate had been decided, the porter was kind enough to say he was glad to see me back, and he added with a smile, "We cannot all think alike." Was not the smile of the porter more philosophical, more Christian, more in harmony with the evolution of the race, than the frown of the Reverend Principal?

In 1891 I was expelled. The circumstances which led to this were the following. It had long been my intention to deliver a series of

lectures on the mischievous effects of Ecclesiasticism, in which I should point out in detail the evil it had done in science, in art, in literature, in society, in every department of life. The first of the series was introductory, and was entitled "The Corruption of the Church." I endeavoured to show that the orthodoxy common to all the Churches was a monstrous outgrowth of Ecclesiasticism, a shapeless congeries of crude, illogical, half-heathenish notions, which, despite the texts of Scripture generally quoted in support of them, ran counter to the general tenor of Biblical teaching, and were most certainly anti-Christian. A few days after its delivery I received a letter from the Secretary of the College, informing me that "the Principal would ask the Council to declare my chair vacant, in consequence of the reports of my lecture which had appeared in the newspapers." The chair was now of no pecuniary value, for the removal of the theological students had taken away most of the fees, and I was intending very shortly to resign it. But common-sense—not to say a sense of justice—seemed to demand that my

dismissal, if I was to be dismissed, should be at all events honestly discussed. So I wrote to Mr Gladstone and told him what was happening. I knew of course that he did not personally sympathise with my views; but I was equally sure that he would not think it seemly for the Council to take action, merely upon "reports which had appeared in the newspapers." Mr Gladstone was kind enough to send me the following letter:—

"18 PARK LANE, *June 20, 1891.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—It was with nothing less than extreme pain and disappointment that I learned your name was again coming forward, after the short interval of peace, as a subject of adverse criticism at King's College.

"I know nothing of the lecture which has furnished the occasion, except from a brief report in the newspapers, which seemed (pardon me for saying so) to be charged with exaggeration. I am not in favourable circumstances for taking a part, for I have not yet recovered my strength, and am advised to go to the sea next week. I should approach the subject with the same peaceful disposition as heretofore, and should hope for the action of a peaceful spirit on all sides. I should have a strong desire to act with the Bishop of London not only on account of his official position,

but from confidence in his breadth, clear-sightedness and impartiality. I shall acquaint him with the purport of this letter.

“My interest in the College is more than half a century old, and my desire is ever to see it rest on the basis of true freedom of research, combined with reasonable discipline. And viewing the marked ability of some published arguments of yours on the subject of belief, I shall most deeply regret any incident which may establish or widen a breach between you and an honoured institution.—I remain, my dear sir, faithfully yours,
W. E. GLADSTONE.”

I wrote to the Bishop of London, as chairman of the Council, telling him that I was going to redeliver the lecture in a fortnight, and suggesting therefore the propriety of waiting till a verbatim report of it could be obtained. To this letter I received no reply.

The meeting was held, and my chair was declared vacant. I was not a little surprised and amused to read in the papers that I had been dismissed for “breaches of discipline.” Who invented this phrase for the Council I do not know. It does credit to its author. It is scarcely synonymous with “delivering a lecture, the reports of which had appeared in the news-

papers," but it has the advantage of sounding better.

Now what do you suppose it was that had caused all this trouble? "Reports that appear in the newspapers," like most other things, have combined advantages and disadvantages. On the present occasion they saved the Council the trouble of listening to the lecture. But on the other hand they prevented the Council from knowing precisely what it was about. I think I shall not give them credit for too much acuteness when I say, if they had heard the lecture they would have seen that to dismiss me for delivering it was an act of self-stultification. For it differed neither in matter nor manner from any of my previous writings. I had found it necessary to say over again a good deal of what I had said many times before. There was not an idea—scarcely even a sentence—in it, for which an equivalent could not be found in works of mine which had been long before the public. As one of my critics bluntly but truthfully expressed it, I had merely "hashed up again my old sermons." I could have understood the

Council being astonished at the lecture if my books had been usually orthodox, if they had been written in the chastened style, say for instance, of Dr Wace. But none of them had ever possessed these merits. The 'Guardian' said, when I was removed from the Theological Department: "Professor Momerie's works, so far as we have examined them, combine bad theology and bad taste in an almost unique degree. He is not a fit person to be a teacher at all, unless shallowness and flippancy constitute fitness. We can only regret that he should be tolerated in any corner, however obscure, of any educational establishment." So that my lecture was just what might have been expected—precisely the kind of thing which it had been agreed to tolerate in the "obscure corner" of the Scientific Department. And the Council, in coming to a different conclusion, must have been misled by "the reports which had appeared in the newspapers."

Other and more serious reflections were also suggested by their action. The 'Church Chronicle' had the following leader upon the authorities of King's College:—

“Our readers will have noticed in the ‘Observer’ and other papers a statement to the effect that Dr Momerie has been dismissed from his Professorship of Logic and Metaphysics at King’s College for a breach of discipline. Thinking they would be glad to have an authoritative statement on the subject, we communicated with Dr Momerie, asking whether the statement was true or no. We regret to be compelled to admit that the statement is true, so far as the dismissal is concerned. It was not, however, for a breach of discipline that the Council of King’s College took this extraordinary step. Dr Momerie has been dismissed for the heinous offence of making statements in a public lecture which every one, who has any pretensions to any knowledge of the theological controversies of the day, is well aware that he has long ago made in his printed works.

“But we are asked why the Council of an educational establishment should have considered that the opinions of a Professor of such subjects as logic and metaphysics, on the honesty or dishonesty of the Church of which he is a member, should be in any way likely to influence the value of his lectures upon a non-theological subject. The reason is not far to seek, and once again those in authority in our Church have given an opportunity to our enemies to fling in our teeth, that we make use of whatever control we obtain over great educational foundations to fill the chairs of those foundations, not with men of the highest ability in the several subjects which they

teach, but with men who are prepared to bow the knee to ecclesiastical authority in matters of doctrine.

“It is urged that the candidates for orders who are studying at King's College might possibly attend Dr Momerie's lectures. What on earth has this to do with it? What on earth is the use of priests, whose only knowledge of metaphysics is that derived from a lecturer whose ideas are strictly orthodox from the point of view of a narrow theology? We fail, indeed, to see why the lecturer who fills that chair should not be a professed atheist, if only he be a liberal-minded man. It would do theological students a great deal of good if the educational air in which they were brought up were freer. The result of the present system is that there is scarcely a priest in the Church of England whose ideas on mental and moral science are worth a single jot. Such ideas as they have are so ridiculously narrow that they would be better without them at all. Dr Momerie has stated that the best men do not nowadays take orders. This is strictly true; and our position, brought into contact as we are daily with priests of all ranks and conditions in the Church, gives no slight weight to our opinion on the subject. Is it likely that such action as that recently taken by the Council of King's College will attract men of liberal minds? Is it not likely that they will be afraid that a course of reading for orders may narrow their sympathies and dwarf their ideas of right and wrong? Are they likely to care to minister in a Church which condescends to such petty tricks to

silence those of her priests who dare to think for themselves and to express their opinions freely? A young friend of ours, on seeing this announcement in the 'Echo,' stated that, if this were the case, the dream of his life, to take orders in the Church of England, was shattered for ever. 'I cannot,' he said, 'prostitute my mind to such a course of training as seems to be involved in attaining my end, and I cannot conscientiously work under men whose ideas of fairness are represented by such a move, and who so evidently allow personal jealousy of a man, simply because he is making a little stir, to sway their actions when they are placed in positions of authority.'

"Let it be clearly understood that we do not wish to be considered to indorse all that Dr Momerie has said in his recent lecture. Still less are we prepared to defend the manner in which he said it: it was defensible only on the ground that he was addressing an audience of low mental calibre. Our point is this: If Dr Momerie is a man who carries real weight, mere dismissal from a professorship for which he is really too good a man is not likely to crush him, and is quite sure to bring ridicule on those who are responsible for the step—the more so that all the world knows that he has only been dismissed six months before the date on which he had intimated his intention to resign. On the other hand, if Dr Momerie is a man who carries no weight, it is not a very dignified action on the part of a body of ecclesiastical dignitaries to make a tremendous demonstration over performing

what then appears as an act of petty cruelty on a level with pulling off a fly's wings. And, in either case, the roundabout, underhand way in which the ecclesiastical vengeance has been wrought is a disgrace to our Church, and a source of peril to that respect in which all who love her would wish to see her held by men of straightforward dealings."

When the time comes round again—in another twenty-five years or so—for the College to vindicate its orthodoxy by the expulsion of a Professor, I do trust that the authorities will make more sure of their ground. I bear them no malice. They have done me no earthly harm. I can quite believe that they acted as they thought the interests of the College required. I am sorry for our present estrangement. But estrangements do not always last for ever. I remember a curious incident that happened shortly after I was appointed to my Chair. The College was celebrating its jubilee. In the speech which the Principal delivered on the occasion he mentioned the bygone professors of whom the College felt

especially proud ; and among them was Frederick Maurice. Who knows ? Perhaps when the centenary is celebrated, it may be conceded that I was passably qualified, if not for the exalted position I at first occupied among the Professors of Theology, at any rate for the "obscure corner" of the Scientific Department.

VI.

Clerical Untruthfulness.

PRIESTS, as such, are not lovers of truth. Cardinal Manning used to lament the growth of rationalism,—used to complain that men no longer loved truth *as truth*. He did not see that rationalism IS the love of truth as truth. The rationalist loves truth so much, that he will put himself to the trouble of investigation rather than believe what is false. But when ecclesiastics speak of truth—or, as they generally call it, *the truth*—they are thinking only of orthodoxy; they mean not verified facts but unverified opinion. And in defence of unverified opinion they have rarely hesitated to lie. Many of the Fathers laid it down as an axiom that falsehood for the sake of proselyt-

ism is not reprehensible. Origen bluntly said, "It is our bounden duty to lie and deceive, if thereby we can catch souls." For the purpose of catching souls there was no deceit too gross for them to practise. Artifices, fictions, frauds formed the staple of the Fathers' arguments. They assailed their enemies with the most unfounded calumnies. They invented miracles by the thousand for the sake of glorifying their departed friends. They habitually falsified facts, so as to bring them into harmony with their own views and interests. Eusebius, who is oddly enough called a historian, informs his readers that he is going to relate only what will add to the prestige of the Christians, and to suppress everything else. The clergy during the first few centuries were guilty of the most impudent forgeries the world has ever seen. Thinking it would be good fun to make the pagan oracles predict the decay of paganism, they got hold of the Sibylline books and interpolated prophecies of the fall of Rome and the desolation of Italy. Sometimes a person without any name or position would write a treatise, and

secure the success of his production by palming it off on the world as the work of some celebrated author or authors long since dead. You will find many such books mentioned in every ecclesiastical history. There were the Apostolical Canons, the Apostolical Constitutions, some of the Ignatian Epistles, the False Decretals, and a host of others. The Athanasian Creed is well known to have been a forgery of this description. Athanasius had no more to do with its composition than you or I. The clergy tampered even with the Bible itself. They did not scruple to forge texts in support of their favourite opinions. For instance, the doctrine of the Trinity not being taught in the New Testament as they considered it should be, they put in a verse of their own—"There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." The history of this verse is now so notorious, that it has been omitted from the Revised Version. Such was the radical untruthfulness of those who formulated for us what they were pleased to call *the* truth. "The phrase Christian verac-

ity," said Herder, "deserves to rank with the phrase Punic faith."

The barefaced lying of the early Church has now given place to ingenious prevarication. Modern theologians remind one of a medieval legend. The devil asked a monk, wishing to lead him into heresy, "What do you believe?" The monk replied, "I believe what the Church believes." "But what does the Church believe?" said the devil. "The Church believes what I believe," answered the wary monk. Theologians to-day are just as much afraid of committing themselves. When, *e.g.*, they are speaking of the authority of the Bible, their language is so veiled and guarded that it may mean almost anything or almost nothing. Instead of the word infallibility, which is definite, it is now customary to use the ambiguous term inspiration — a term that is often applied in common speech to the works of Shakespeare and Newton and other great thinkers and discoverers. The theologians use it in a different sense; but in what sense they always carefully conceal, or at all events never clearly explain.

In fact it has been lately pointed out with exultation by several eminent ecclesiastics that, though the Church teaches inspiration, she has never defined it. If this means anything, it means that all you have to do is to accept a certain term—that it does not in the least degree matter what you understand by it. Those who speak in this way are either unconsciously talking nonsense or consciously endeavouring to deceive.

Take up almost any volume of sermons you please, and you will find it full of what looks like studied ambiguity. Dr Vaughan, if I may mention again his remarkable discourse, declares that the Bible is a unique revelation from the Deity, and nevertheless maintains that to concern one's self with its scientific inaccuracies is to be guilty of "silly trifling." If this means anything, it means that it is our duty to ascribe the Bible to God, however unworthy of a Deity criticism may show it to be. Had he said this plainly, no one would have believed him. But his vague language sounds pious, and is therefore accepted by many as gospel truth. Canon Knox-Little, preaching some time ago in St Thomas's, Regent

Street, said to his congregation: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and it will deliver you from intellectual perplexities." If this means anything, it means that intellectual perplexities may be solved by religious emotion. He might just as well have said that they may be solved by falling in love. The mind can no doubt be diverted from a difficulty by religious excitement, by the family affections, by attention to business, and by a hundred other causes;¹ but diverting the mind from a difficulty is not, and never will be, the same thing as explaining it. If the Canon had said in simple words that the best way of solving a problem was to forget it, the congregation would have perceived at once that he was merely throwing dust in their eyes. He may not have known it was dust; he may have deceived himself by the vagueness of his own language: there is such a thing, no doubt, as unconscious lying. Or perhaps he may have thought that the dust would do them good.

¹ Darwin used to say that he was so engrossed with science and so happy in his home, that he had no time to take any interest in religion.

But however honest and kind his intentions may have been, his teaching is essentially mischievous—all the more mischievous because it sounds so well.

We find the same kind of ambiguity, again, in regard to the authority of Councils. There is no earthly reason for supposing that they were inspired. It is distinctly stated in our twenty-first Article that “they may err and have erred.” Yet the clergy persistently treat their decisions as if they were infallible—at least, such of their decisions as happen at present to be considered orthodox. “The notes of the Catholic Creed,” says Mr Gore, “still ring on. Christian dogma claims the same permanence as the Christian Church.” He speaks with awe of the ancient creeds, and asks with bated breath, “Lives there the man with soul so dead as not to venerate them on account of their antiquity?” Before we venerate them, we must consider by whom and under what circumstances they were framed. And if we turn to Milman or Mosheim, or any other ecclesiastical historian, we find that the great majority of the Councillors cared nothing

for the victory of truth, but wanted only victory for themselves. There have been no assemblies since the world began less influenced by the spirit of honest inquiry than the Councils of the Christian Church. It passes my comprehension how any man who is sane, and honest, and acquainted with the facts of the case, can ask us to venerate the creeds which those Councils formulated.

But the clerical mind is impervious to facts. It is as true to-day as it ever was that theologians regard their own opinions as absolutely final. Facts which clash with their opinions they either deny or ignore. When Bishop Colenso pointed out the inaccuracies of the Pentateuch, his book was condemned by Convocation, and many of those who voted for its condemnation acknowledged with pride that they had never read a line of it. If there *were* any facts that disproved the infallibility of the Bible, so much the worse for the facts—and for the man who had discovered them. After Colenso came the 'Essays and Reviews,' the writers of which attempted to deal with

some of the problems of theology in a strictly scientific spirit. They too were condemned—condemned in the same ignorant and dishonest way. Dr Temple, one of the contributors, wrote that remarkable letter of expostulation from which I have already quoted. “I for one,” he said, “joined in writing the book in the hope of breaking through that mischievous reticence which, go where I would, I perpetually found destroying the truthfulness of religion. . . . What can be a grosser superstition than the theory of literal Inspiration? But because that has a regular footing, it is to be treated as a good man’s mistake, while the courage to speak the truth about the first chapter of Genesis is regarded as a wanton piece of wickedness. . . . And so utterly regardless are their lordships how much or how little penalty they inflict, that the censure is drawn in terms that are not intelligible without the production of another document which is not produced, and thus has the added force which in these cases always accompanies a vague denunciation.” Of late years the practice of denunciation has

been discontinued. Objectionable facts are not denied, but simply disregarded; and those who bring them forward are not censured,—they are severely let alone. This modern policy of silence proceeds from the fear, and not from the love, of truth. The members of Convocation have discovered that the blood of the heretics is the seed of rationalism; that the condemnation of facts serves only to bring them into greater prominence, to make them more quickly and more widely known. They recognise the prudence of saying nothing.¹ But whether they speak

¹ No one can be so silent as an ecclesiastic when it suits him. In the diocese of Bath and Wells there occurred a year or two ago a remarkable example of silence under extreme provocation. The Rev. S. D. Brownjohn, rector of East Lydford, was much troubled by the discrepancy between the Prayer-book and science. He had written out his difficulties in the form of "An Appeal to the Clergy," as he wanted others to unite with him in trying to get the discrepancy removed. But before publishing this Appeal he wrote to his Diocesan, "confessing his inability to see how the conclusions of science could be reconciled with the belief in the descent of all mankind from the Scriptural Adam, and its associated doctrines of original sin and original righteousness, but intimating his readiness to abandon the publication of the pamphlet, if only he had good reason for believing *either* that the Church felt herself in a position to confute the conclusions of science in their bearing

or whether they forbear, the majority of ecclesiastics are indifferent, if not opposed, to truth. And when I think of their modern devices—such as wilful prevarication, deliberate ambiguity, and, worst of all, the conspiracy of silence—I confess I almost wish we were back to the plain, straightforward lying of the early Fathers. It was so much easier to deal with, so much less damaging to truth.

on the subject, *or*, failing that, was preparing to make such alterations in her formularies as might be judged needful to bring them into harmony with these conclusions." The Bishop was polite enough to reply, but requested Mr Brownjohn to treat his letter as a private communication. His lordship had nothing to say which he was willing for any one to hear.

VII.

The Drift of Religious Thought in England, and its bearing on the Future of the English Church.

WHAT looks like chance is often an important part of the machinery of evolution. We have a remarkable illustration of this fact in the drift of religious thought, especially in England and in the English Church. When we compare theological with philosophic thought, we are at once struck by the extraordinary difference between them. Philosophy is constantly progressing through the voluntary efforts of its votaries. Every great philosopher, every humble student, sets himself to correct, to develop, to carry further, the thoughts of those who have gone before him. In theology on the contrary there is but

little voluntary movement, and that little is generally in a backward direction. Among the clergy, as a rule, there is no desire for advance. Retrogression is their ideal. To believe what St Augustine or Calvin or Luther believed, to wear the same clothes and perform the same rites as obtained in the reign of Edward VI., to go back to some bygone age and stop there—this for hundreds and thousands of clergymen is the *summum bonum*. But just as matter, in spite of its own inertia, is always moving, so there is really a progressive drift in religious thought, although the clergy, with but few exceptions, are doing their best to remain stationary. The drift of thought, chiefly unconscious and involuntary, which is taking place in the English Church, I propose now to investigate.

Speaking of the Church of England some time ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury observed that there was no other Church in the world where so much liberty was allowed a man. This is absolutely, undeniably true. Some of its individuals, of its institutions, of its parties, are narrow enough; but, as a whole, it is extraor-

dinarily broad. There is not one single doctrine or ceremony in regard to which the clergy are agreed. The views which they hold are divergent oftentimes to the point of contradiction. Some of the clergy, for instance, adopt the expiatory view of the atonement, and believe that Christ's vicarious suffering "satisfied the justice of God" and so saved us from hell. Others look upon this theory as no better than a "doctrine of devils." Some, again, think that the Saviour's connection with the Father was unique not only in degree but in kind, and they speak of His human existence as the *incarnation*. Others—one or two—speak of it merely as *the* incarnation, that is, the incarnation *par excellence*; for they hold that all men are incarnations more or less. As to the Trinity, some adopt the formula "three persons in one God" in the vulgar acceptance of those terms—in the sense, namely, of three individual gods in the Godhead. A few interpret "person" according to its original meaning of "character," and understand by the persons of the Trinity only different manifestations of one indivisible God. In regard to miracles, some acknowledge

an indefinite number, including even the theosophical; some, though doubtful of theosophy, believe in the miraculous power of the saints; some restrict themselves to the miracles mentioned in the Bible; some draw the line at the New Testament; some believe only in the miraculous conception and physical resurrection of Christ; while some regard even these stories as after-growths, and are ready to subscribe to the famous dictum of Professor Jowett, "Men will in time give up miracles as they have already given up witchcraft." With reference to prayer, some assert that we may ask for health, wealth, fine weather, and all the good things of this life, with a considerable likelihood of getting them, even at the cost of a violation of the laws of nature; others relegate prayer entirely to the spiritual sphere, and maintain that the only gifts we can receive in answer to it are faith, hope, "grace," and the like; while others tell us that even here the effect is subjective rather than objective—that we are made better, not by any direct action of the Deity, but simply by our own desire for improvement. As to the

sacraments, some believe in "baptismal regeneration," and think that an infant is really "born again" when a few drops of water are sprinkled on it by a priest; while others look upon this dogma as a vain, not to say blasphemous, superstition. And regarding the Eucharist, some are transubstantiationists, acknowledging the real, physical presence of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine; others, preferring Luther's idea of consubstantiation, believe that His spiritual presence goes along with the elements; and others adopt the Zwinglian view, that the effect of the bread and wine is merely to stimulate the imagination of the communicants. As to future punishment, some declare that a large proportion of the race are predestined to damnation, and that by no conceivable effort can the reprobate avert their doom; others say that salvation is provided for all men, and that they can be lost only by their own voluntary rejection of it; and others again assure us that there is no such thing as being lost—in the vulgar sense, and that hell is but a name for punishment, the purpose of which is in reality to save us, if

not here, at any rate hereafter. As to the Bible, some believe that it was "written by God," and must therefore be infallible throughout; others restrict its infallibility to moral and spiritual subjects; others again assert that even in these matters its teaching is often degraded, and that much of what it says about right and wrong and the nature of the Deity is utterly false and profoundly pernicious. As for the Prayer-book, some profess to accept the Thirty-nine Articles and all the rest of it; while to others it seems a very unsatisfactory compilation, often flatly contradicting both the Bible and itself. And the ceremonies of the Church of England vary no less than the doctrines. Its ritual ranges from the baldest evangelicalism, where the sole vestments are a surplice and "decent tippet," and where the dreary monotony is relieved only by a choir singing out of tune, to the most advanced Puseyism, where you find chasubles, copes, mitres, acolytes, incense, confession, services of reconciliation, and everything that has ever received the sanction of Rome. Finally, there is not complete agreement among the clergy even in regard to the

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value and importance of the Christian religion; for one well-known divine—Canon Taylor—emphatically asserts the superior efficacy, under certain circumstances, of the religion of Mohammed.

Now the priests of the Church of England, holding these different doctrines and practising these different rituals, are all “successors of the apostles”; at least they have all received episcopal ordination, and they must all therefore be in possession of the advantages which such ordination confers. Some of them, no doubt, would be ready to accuse the others of having “fallen from grace”; but, fallen or not, they continue to be members of the Church and to minister as priests at its altars. The efforts which are occasionally made to turn them out are almost always unsuccessful, and at the present moment there is every possible diversity both of opinion and practice among those who are actually holding the priestly office. This may be regarded—no doubt it often is—as an unpleasant fact; but its unpleasantness does not make it any the less real. Whether people like it or not, the

fact remains that in the English Church, as at present constituted, the priesthood is open to men altogether irrespective of the doctrines they believe and the ceremonies they practise. Neither doctrines nor ceremonies have anything to do with our Church *as such*. In the language of logicians, they are merely its accidents, not part of its essence.

Prosecutions for heresy, when they fail as they generally do, and sometimes even when they partially succeed, bring this fact into striking relief—an irony of retribution which must be very galling to the prosecutors. In the judicial decision given in connection with the ‘Essays and Reviews,’¹ it was laid down that the books of the Bible may be subjected to the fullest and freest criticism, and that a clergyman is within his rights even if he accuses “an inspired author” of wilful and deliberate dishonesty. We are legally debarred, it is true, from denying the canonicity of any of the Scriptures; but the greatest heretic in the world can never feel tempted in that direction. For to be canonical

¹ See the report of the Williams and Wilson trial.

and to be in the Bible are synonymous expressions. The books of the Bible *are* the books of the Bible, and no sane man would ever dream of saying they are not. What occurred some years ago in Manchester affords a still more remarkable illustration of the fact, that theological prosecutions serve only to emphasise our Church's indifference to theology. In that town were two priests, named respectively Green and Knox-Little, who both professed the same "high" creed and both practised the same elaborate ritual. The former, being the less popular of the two, was less expensive to prosecute; he was therefore selected for that purpose by the Church Association, and was condemned to a term of imprisonment. While he was still in jail, Knox-Little was promoted to a canonry. Here was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the opinion that our Church concerns herself with creeds or rituals. It was shown to be the falsest of delusions. For of two men whose creeds and rituals were identical, the one was placed in a cathedral stall and the other found himself in an ecclesiastical dungeon. The punishments and rewards of the

Church of England are administered with sublime disregard for the doctrines and ceremonies of their recipients.

Even in past generations the clergy differed to a very considerable extent from the Prayer-book and from one another, but up to the year 1865 they went on quietly making a subscription which implied that they were all agreed. The declaration contained these words: "I, A. B., declare my unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer." We should probably be required to sign the same subscription to-day but for the intervention of the late Dean of Westminster, from whom it received its death-blow. I may mention, however, that two ineffectual attempts to relax the subscription had been previously made,—the one in 1772 by Archdeacon Blackburn, and the other in 1840 by Bishop Stanley, father of the Dean. But in 1862 the late Dean of Westminster addressed a protest to the Bishop of London, and pointed out the extreme absurdity of flying in the face of facts, and the gross immorality of exacting a subscrip-

tion which could only be a lie. The Dean said that the clergy could not assent to the literal and dogmatic meaning of the six hundred propositions on the most intricate and complex subjects which the Articles embody; they could not assent to the literal and dogmatic meaning of all the sentences in the Liturgy, many of which are poetic and devotional in form, but which must be received, according to a strict subscription, in their most matter-of-fact signification; still less could they assent to both these sets of propositions, emanating from ages unlike each other and each no less unlike our own. And the Dean further showed that, even supposing the clergy could assent to all and everything contained in the Prayer-book, as a matter of fact they did not. The sixth Article, for example, to take one of his illustrations, "understands by 'Holy Scriptures' those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." Taken literally, subscription to those words would exclude from the clerical profession all who receive as Holy Scripture the Epistle

to the Hebrews, the Apocalypse, the Second Epistle of St Peter, the Epistles of St James and St Jude, and the Second and Third Epistles of St John, of whose authority it is well known there was considerable doubt in the early Church. Yet this statement of the Article was not only overridden, but even forgotten; and the vast majority of the clergy, in defiance of the Article and of their subscription to it, received as Holy Scripture without scruple those books of whose authority there was doubt in the Church for no less than three important centuries. They even attacked as heretical those who adopted the language of the Article itself. "So that," concluded the Dean, "if once we press the subscriptions in their rigid and literal sense, it may safely be asserted that there is not one clergyman who can venture to cast a stone at another: they must all go out, from the primates at Lambeth and Bishopsthorpe to the humblest curates of Wales and Westmoreland."

On these grounds therefore Stanley prayed the Bishop of London, the rest of the Episcopate, and the Legislature in general, to take

the whole question of subscription into their serious consideration. In the following year a Royal Commission was appointed, and the result of their inquiry was the introduction of a bill by Lord Granville, in which the old form of subscription was completely set aside. The new form ran thus: "I, A. B., do solemnly make the following declaration: I assent to the Thirty-nine Articles of religion and to the Book of Common Prayer. I believe the doctrine of the Church of England, as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God."

The enormous scope of the change may scarcely at first sight be apparent in this clumsy form of words. But it was brought out clearly enough by Mr Buxton in his speech before the House of Commons. He said:—

"It was the express intention of the Commissioners to relax the extravagant stringency of the existing tests; in other words, to make it possible for men to minister at the altars of the Church, though they might dissent from some part of her teaching. . . . Instead of declaring his assent to all and everything the Prayer-book contains, a clergyman now only declares his assent to the Prayer-book itself, that is

to say, to the book as a whole, and his belief that the doctrine of the Church therein set forth is agreeable to the Word of God. He does not declare that the doctrines, in the plural number, or that each and all of these doctrines, are agreeable to the Word of God, but only the doctrine. It was expressly and unanimously agreed by the Commission that the word 'doctrine' should be used in the singular number, in order that it might be understood that it is the general teaching of the Church, not every part and parcel of that teaching, to which assent is given."

This Act of Parliament¹ is very seldom mentioned, and I believe that it is very little known. But whether the clergy are aware of it or not, the Act has been passed, and the character of our Church, as essentially a broad Church, has been thereby legally determined.

For let us ask, as all intelligent men and women sooner or later will ask, What is this "general teaching of the Church," this "doctrine in the singular number"? It is, it can only be, Christ. And there is but one all-comprehensive synonym for Christ, — namely, righteousness. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Him-

¹ 28 and 29 Vict., c. 122.

self a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Every Christian Church properly so called must be concerned exclusively, or at any rate chiefly, with the promotion and development of righteousness. And this fact is admitted in the Prayer-book, though the admission was probably neither seen nor intended by its compilers. According to one of the rubrics preceding the communion service, only "the notorious evil liver" can be kept away from "the table of the Lord." It was perhaps thought that this would be taken in connection with the catechism and the confirmation services; and it may have been assumed that all who had gone through the preliminary training would continue orthodox to the end. But nothing is said to that effect; and therefore, though a man refuses to accept the creed adopted for him by his godfathers and godmothers, though he no longer agrees with the profession of faith which he made at his confirmation, though he is a very sceptic of sceptics,—he must, according to the law of the land, unless he is a notorious evil liver, be received by the priest as a com-

municant. So that we have, in every celebration of the communion, little as the clergy seem to suspect it, another witness to the fact that our Church *as such* cares nothing for doctrines or ceremonies; that righteousness, or rather the absence of flagrant unrighteousness, constitutes a sufficient title to its membership.

This conception of the Church, though unorthodox, is Scriptural. "In every nation he that worketh righteousness is accepted," and is therefore a member of "the general assembly and church of the first-born." And I have shown over and over again¹ that Christ held the same views as to the nature of religion. In one sense then, the broadest of Broad Churchmen may be accused of going backward as far as the rest of his clerical brethren; nay farther, for they generally find themselves satisfied with the third or fourth century. But just as there are two kinds of scepticism, the one which doubts for the sake of doubt, the other which "seeks only firm ground of assurance," so there are two kinds of retrogression.

¹ See, for example, my 'Church and Creed,' pp. 80-91.

Some go back that they may ultimately stand still, others that they may find the best path for progress. Nor is it difficult to show that a return to the idea of the paramount importance of righteousness is essential to the development, and even to the existence, of the Churches.

No Church can permanently survive unless it appeals to the reason, the conscience, the common-sense, of mankind; unless it is felt to be in harmony with the organic development of the race. But Ecclesiasticism shocks our reason by its silly claim to infallibility and finality; it outrages our conscience by its wicked preference of creed to conduct; it violates our common-sense, for its very deities are represented as more or less arbitrary, unreasonable and bad. Further, Ecclesiasticism is quite incapable of development within itself, and it is a hindrance to all development without. The theology inherited from St Augustine or Calvin cannot grow, except it may be by the addition of a few theorems as uninteresting, not to say irritating, as the rest. The ritual which comes to us from Edward VI. cannot be expanded,

except perhaps by the addition of a few trimmings to ornaments that are already more than sufficiently gorgeous. And what is worse than its own incapacity for growth, is the obstruction which Ecclesiasticism offers to the progress of the world. The organic growth of the race, as I have said before, is a conception quite beyond the ecclesiastical range of vision, and indeed quite incompatible with the ecclesiastical system. That system professes to be complete in itself, and disclaims all connection with the other religions and philosophies of the world. Its crowning glory is to exist in an irrational isolation. Its supreme aim is to bring all human thoughts and endeavours within the narrow limits of its own cut-and-dried theology.

In these days of advancing knowledge and advancing courage, such a system cannot have long to live. The Churches at present are in a state of unstable equilibrium, and within a measurable distance of annihilation. Though scarcely any of the clergy can be called thinkers, there are still among them, I admit, many scholars of deservedly high reputation. But

in fifty years' time even the scholars will be conspicuous by their absence. In the English universities it is but rarely nowadays that distinguished students go into the Church. Educated men, who feel that their heads and lives are worth something, refuse to fling them into the vortex of Ecclesiasticism. And unfortunately Ecclesiasticism is generally confounded with the Church. It is not understood that *the* Church properly so called is something different, something infinitely superior, to any temporal and local church, such as that of England or that of Rome. It is not understood that the true Church is absolutely opposed to Ecclesiasticism. Those who take orders in any particular church almost invariably do so with the view of keeping alive its errors, scarcely ever for the purpose of leading it to the truth. And so it comes about that the ranks of the clergy are recruited every year from a lower intellectual class. But if only men can be got to see the essential difference between churches as they are and churches as they should be; if they come to understand that there is no

necessary connection between "going into the Church" and supporting the corruptions of Ecclesiasticism,—then the best of our graduates will begin to feel that there is still noble work—the very noblest—to be done "in orders," and clergymen themselves in the future will be among the most powerful opponents of Ecclesiasticism. At any rate, whether the clergy take part in its destruction or whether it is destroyed in spite of them, it is most assuredly doomed.

The Churches of the future will be founded on the idea of righteousness. "Other foundation can no man lay." Any narrower Church is unworthy of humanity and of God, and will in the natural course of events be swept away. The gods of Ecclesiasticism have very often been devils. But the true God is a perfectly good Being, and His Church must therefore be co-extensive with the race. In righteousness, and in righteousness alone, we have an idea that will unite all men by a common bond. In righteousness, and in righteousness alone, we have an idea capable of indefinite expansion,

of unceasing application to the ever-changing, ever-growing necessities of human life. A Church founded on the idea of righteousness is a Church which all wise men must approve, which all good men must love, for righteousness is absolutely necessary for the wellbeing of mankind. A Church founded on the idea of righteousness is part of that eternal and universal Church, which existed long before the Christian era, which will continue to exist when every ecclesiastical institution in Christendom has collapsed. Ecclesiasticism must be destroyed before religion can begin. The churches of men must be revolutionised in order that the Church of God may be saved.

And, as I have shown, the revolution which is necessary can be effected more readily in the English Church than in any of the rest. It is, so to speak, revolutionised already by implication. The Church of England, as by law established, is actually standing on the true foundation. If only she will not tear herself away, if her clergy will but recognise where they have drifted in the course of evolution, or rather let

us say in the providence of God, she will enter on a career of triumphant and never-ending progress. In her comparative liberality, which has been recognised and approved by the Primate, in the victory which the spirit of liberalism is gaining over the spirit of ecclesiasticism, lies the possibility of her redemption, nay more the possibility of her redeeming by example all the other churches of the earth.

THE END.



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