

CHRISTIANITY:
VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF OUR PRESENT
KNOWLEDGE AND MORAL SENSE.

“For no mere can he who understands but one religion understand even that religion, than the man who knows only one language can understand that language.”—*Primitive Culture*, E. B. Tylor.

“Woe to the Philosopher who will not condescend to flatter in his picture of man! . . . he sets the reading public against him; he is refuted beforehand or worse than refuted, for he is laid aside unread.”—*Minor Works*, Geo. Grote.

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*Viewed in the Light of our Present Knowledge
and Moral Sense.*

PART I.—RELIGION: PRIMITIVE, AND AMONG
THE LOWEST RACES.

PART II.—THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

By CHARLES BRAY,

AUTHOR OF THE "PHILOSOPHY OF NECESSITY;" "A MANUAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY,
OR SCIENCE OF MAN," ETC.



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CHRISTIANITY.

PART I.

RELIGION : PRIMITIVE AND AMONG THE LOWEST RACES.

"Everything that exists depends upon the Past, prepares the Future, and is related to the whole."—Oersted.

"I view all beings, not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived before the first bed of the Silurian system was deposited."—*Origin of Species*, C. Darwin, first Edition, pp. 488-9.

"Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation."—*Ibid.*, p. 488.

"The variation of human thought proceeds in a continuous manner, new ideas springing out of old ones, either as corrections or developments, but never spontaneously originating. With them as with organic forms, each requires a germ or seed. The intellectual phase of humanity, observed at any moment, is therefore an embodiment of many different things. It is connected with the past, is in unison with the present, and contains the embryo of the future."—*The Intellectual Development of Europe*. J. W. Draper, vol. ii. p. 109.

THESE views embody the philosophy of the present day, and it is a no less interesting than profitable study to follow the evidence in the works of Lubbock, Tylor, Draper, Darwin, Wallace, Spencer, and others, upon which these truths are founded. By slow and gradual, and probably unbroken links, the whole physical world has been evolved, and this is no less true of the world of mind. There has been nothing spontaneous, nothing supernatural, but everything that exists in the growth of mind, as in the physical world,

depends upon the past, prepares the future, and is related to the whole. We must go back to pre-historic times to explain the thoughts and feelings, the aptitudes and prejudices, the customs and languages of the present. Many things otherwise utterly incomprehensible are "survivals" of primæval barbaric life and thought. Customs differ widely according to climate and the world's age. There is no telling in what form they may come down to us, but they are evidence that one human nature is common to all the races and tribes scattered over the habitable globe. The world, at the present time, furnishes illustrations of all the forces that have been at work in its original formation both physical and mental. Heat and water, certainly, are a little moderated in their action, but as rude savages as the world has ever known still continue to exist, and the extremes of civilization are as great now as at any previous era. In the north, where the cold imposes considerable limitation to the pleasures of life, the Esquimau enters his house by the chimney, the occupants passing in and out "by means of a strong pole notched deep enough to afford a little holding for a toe" ("Pre-historic Man," p. 393, by Sir John Lubbock). A more civilized person would no doubt prefer a ladder, and perhaps a different place of entrance, but this mode of ingress and egress may have conveniences that are not at once obvious to a European. In the midst of all the ice and snow in these regions, the great want is water. The houses being built of ice and snow, a temperature above 32 degrees would make them what would be considered unpleasantly damp to a European. But fortunately for this phase of domestic comfort they have no wood, but use blubber and oil to keep up a tolerable temperature. They use lamps outside and consume an immense quantity of blubber inside. The temperature of their bodies is about the same as our own! they are heated from within by the slow combustion—the union of carbon and oxygen—of what

thus constitutes both food and fuel. The heat is sustained by thick skins. The inhabitant of Central Africa, on the contrary, enters his house, very much of the same shape, by a hole at the bottom, through which he crawls on his hands and knees. The Fuegians of the Antarctic region are a much lower race than their Esquimaux brethren of the Arctic, and the Australians, Papuans, and Fijians are lower still. The Fuegians, when hard pressed for food in severe winters, kill an old woman, and when asked why they did not kill their dogs, they said "Dog catch ioppo" (*i.e.*) otters. We should justly consider this a rather narrow view of utilitarianism, and the conscience does not appear to speak very loud in this stage of civilization: all doubtless have their ideas of right and wrong, slightly varying, however, in their significance: thus a savage explained that if anybody took away his wife that was bad, but if he took another man's that would be good (Tylor, vol. ii., p. 289). The marriage ceremony among the Bushmen of Australia is very simple and inexpensive. The man selects his lady-love, knocks her down with a club, and drags her to his camp. In South Africa, in the British settlement of Natal, the natives are beginning to show marked evidence of civilization. Mr Fronde tells us that a young Zulu, by hiring himself out at six shillings a day, soon finds himself in a position to buy a couple of wives; he makes them work for him as well as for their own living, and he thus sets up as a gentleman for life, and a very troublesome one we are told.

An interesting question has, however, arisen in Dutch Porneo as to the extent of the duty a wife owes to her husband. The circumstances, as detailed in a letter written from Bandjermassin, and published in a Java paper, are as follows:—"It seems that a fugitive rebel chief, who is now well stricken in years, has lately with commendable prudence been making arrangements as to the disposition of his property after his departure

from this life. Among other directions he has given orders that immediately on his decease his two youngest wives shall be killed in order that they may accompany him to the next world. The two ladies for whom this honour is designed strangely enough fail to appreciate it, and have fled to the Dutch fort on the Tewch, where they have put themselves under the protection of the commandant. The venerable chief is naturally incensed at their having taken this ill-advised step, and has expressed his intention of compelling the fugitives to return to their domestic duties without further nonsense. His indignation is shared by his family, friends, and followers, who have rallied round him in his trouble, and by the latest accounts he was preparing to attack the fort where his wives had taken refuge. In the meantime, the government steamer 'Baritoy' had been despatched to the assistance of the commandant, with a reinforcement of twenty-five soldiers; and a howitzer, with artillerymen, had also arrived at the fort. This painful family difference has naturally created a profound sensation in the colony, and it is to be hoped that it will be satisfactorily arranged without a recourse to arms."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

The conventional practices and views of etiquette of what we call savages differ considerably from our own; thus, with us, to pull a man's nose is not considered polite, whereas the Esquimaux pull noses as a mark of respect ("Pre-historic Man," p. 456). Among them also the temporary loan of a wife is considered a mark of peculiar friendship ("Primitive Culture," vol. ii., p. 136). Civilization borrows the wife without the consent of the husband.

The inhabitants of the Eastern Archipelago are of increasing interest as our intercourse with them extends. Little, however, comparatively, is yet known of the natives of New Guinea and the neighbouring islands, and that little certainly does not reveal them to us as a very interesting people. The principal

supply of meat is from human flesh, and that not always from the bodies of their enemies, for Mr Kiehl tells us, in an article read before the London Anthropological Society, that the people "of the Solomon Archipelago are obliged to build their houses in the most inaccessible spots on the rocks, even to the very summit of the peak on Eddystone Island, to prevent being treacherously killed at night and eaten by the very friends with whom they feasted the day before on a roasted enemy's body, or perhaps on a raw one; those of Vaati, who, as late as 1849, were yet all cannibals, preferring children to adults, and girls to boys." Mr Kiehl thinks it by no means a sufficient excuse for this that other animal food is scarce, for although there are neither cattle nor sheep, still there are plenty of dogs, fowls, pigeons, and fish. When we consider, he says, how many Hindoos live altogether without animal food, "the Papuans must be a desperately wicked people." Their social customs are certainly unpleasant. "What good," he says, "can be said of such people as the natives of Vaati, whose custom it is, when they wish to make peace, to kill one or more of their own people, and send the bodies to those with whom they have been fighting, to eat? On the death of chiefs it is the frequent custom among them to kill two, three, or more men, to make a feast for the mourners. When parents are unwilling to bear the fatigue of rearing their children, or when they find them a hindrance to their work, they often bury them alive.' As these interesting creatures are near relations to the Fijians, who are about to become British subjects, it is as well to know something about their habits, and it is pleasing to think also, that they are "beginning to find out that trading with the white men is more advantageous than killing and eating them." Commerce is everywhere the great civiliser. Mr Kiehl says, "I regret not to know anything about the religion of the Papuans. The practice of circumcision seems to point to at least some form of

religious observances." Unless eating their fellows is another form, we certainly cannot say much for their devotional aspirations.

I mention those things to show that the savages now in the world are as primitive and varied in their individual habits and customs as in pre-historic times, and that we may probably learn as much, by the study of their interesting ways, of the origin of many of our own modes of thought and action as by going far back into the past.

It is a question whether all our altered customs are improvements. Thus at Tahiti and some other islands, tattooing was almost universal, and a person not properly tattooed would be as much reproached and shunned, as if with us he should go about the streets naked ("Primitive Culture," p. 377), and the Fijian fully believed that a woman who was not tattooed in an orthodox manner during life, could not possibly hope for happiness after death (*Idem*, p. 459). This mode of painting our clothes upon our bodies would certainly save much thought and time that might be devoted to more useful purposes, and it would probably save many of those colds that are caught by going about only half-naked, when people are in what they call full-dress.

But it is the religions of the world that furnish the largest amount and best illustration of "survivals." The ideas upon which they are mainly founded have been thousands of years forming, and the question immediately presents itself how far opinion and conduct based on such ideas are in conformity with modern knowledge, or only with such knowledge as was available in the earlier and ruder stages of culture? Upon investigation, it is evident that the religious opinions of the present day are results adopted from previous systems which have come down from the earliest age, and that they could not otherwise have found acceptance now. We should shrink with horror from our

present theological creeds, if they had not come down to us from a thousand generations of the past.

The deities of savages are evil, not good; they may be forced into compliance with the wishes of man; they require bloody, and rejoice in human, sacrifices; they are mortal, not immortal; a part, not the author of, nature; they are to be approached by dances rather than by prayers; and often approve what we call vice, rather than what we esteem a virtue ("The Origin of Civilisation," by Sir John Lubbock, p. 195). For like ourselves, "they think the blessings come of themselves, and attribute all evil to the interference of malignant beings" (*Idem*, p. 196).

"They have much clearer notions of an evil than of a good Deity, whom they fear, believing him to be the occasion of sickness, death, thunder, and every calamity that befalls them" (*Idem*, p. 212).

The Tartars of Katschiutze (like our Pessimists) consider the evil spirit to be more powerful than the good. (*Idem*, p. 213).

All religion is originally based on fear—love does not enter till long after—fear of the invisible and unknown, and all cause at first is invisible and unknown. Darwin in "Expressions and Emotions in Men and Animals," p. 144, speaking of the effect of fear among some of the larger baboons, says of one of them (*Cynopetheus Niger*) that "when a turtle was placed in its compartment, this monkey moved its lips in an odd, rapid, jabbering manner, which the keeper declared was meant to conciliate and please the turtle." Here we have probably the origin of what is now called Divine Service. "In awe," Tylor tells us, "the Philippine Islanders, when they saw an alligator, prayed him with great tenderness to do them no harm, and to this end offered him whatever they had in their boats, casting it into the water" ("Primitive Culture," p. 209). "Primos in orbe deos fecit timor." "As an object of worship, the serpent is pre-eminent among animals. Not only

is it malevolent and mysterious, but its bite—so trifling in appearance, and yet so deadly, producing fatal effects rapidly, and apparently by no adequate means—suggests to the savage almost irresistibly the notion of something divine, according to his notions of divinity” (Sir John Lubbock). “All things that are able to do them hurt beyond their prevention,” says Tylor, “the primitive man adores” (“*Primitive Culture*,” p. 340). The first idea of God is almost always as an evil spirit, and among the savages of the present day, religion is anything but an ennobling sentiment. Thus the Caffres believe in the existence of a heaven for those only who had killed and eaten many of their enemies, while those who were effeminate would be compelled to dwell with Aygnan, their devil (“*Pre-historic Man*,” p. 469).

The Maories were perpetually at war during life, and hoped to continue so after death. They believed in a spirit named Atona. When any one was ill, Atona was supposed to be devouring his inside, and their religious service was curses and threats, on some occasions attended with human and other sacrifices in the hope of appeasing his wrath. The New Zealanders believed that the greater number of human bodies they eat, the higher would be their position in the world to come. Under such a creed, we are told there is a certain diabolical nobility about the habit, which is, at any rate, far removed from the grovelling sensuality of a Fijian. Certainly to qualify yourself to go to heaven by eating your fellow-creatures, is much more spiritual than to eat them from mere gluttony.

The Dayaks considered that the owner of every human head they could procure would serve them in the next world, where indeed a man's rank would be according to the number of heads in this; a young man might not marry till he had procured a head. Way-laying and murdering men for their heads was the Dayak's religion. To be an acknowledged murderer is

the object of the Fijian's restless ambition. Even among the women there were few, who, in some way, had not been murderers. To this they were trained from their infancy. One of the first lessons taught an infant, is to strike its mother. Mr Ellis tells us that no portion of the human race was ever perhaps sunk lower in brutal licentiousness, than this isolated people. Certainly their customs and conscience differed a little from our own, but notwithstanding, we are told that Captain Cook and his officers lived with the natives "in the most cordial friendship," and took leave of them with great regret, and Mr Ellis says, they showed great anxiety to possess copies of the Bible, when it was translated into their language. "They were," he says, "deemed by them more precious than gold—yea, than much fine gold;" no doubt being very discriminating as to the quality of gold, and able also to appreciate the dealings of God's chosen people with the Canaanites, in which the inhabitants of whole cities were murdered in cold-blood—men, women, and children, ruthlessly slaughtered—more highly than we should.

Among most savages it was considered the right thing, and there was no resisting public opinion, that wives, friends and slaves, should accompany their chiefs into the next world. By some they were strangled, by others buried alive. "The Gauls in Cæsar's time," Tylor tells us, "burned at the dead man's sumptuous funeral, whatever was dear to him, animals also, and much-loved slaves and clients ("Primitive Culture," vol. i. p. 419).

The ancient Gauls had also a convenient custom of transferring to the world below the repayment of loans. Even in comparatively modern times, the Japanese would borrow money in this life, to be repaid with heavy interest in the next (*Idem*, p. 443). When a New Zealand chief died, the mourning family gave his chief widow a rope to hang herself with in the woods, and so rejoin her husband. In Cochin China, the common people object to celebrating their feast of the

dead on the same day with the upper classes, for this excellent reason, that the aristocratic souls might make the servants' souls carry their presents for them—which presents were given with the most lavish extravagance (*Idem*, p. 441). As to what became of the objects sacrificed for the dead—straggled wives, servants, golden vessels, gay clothes or jewels—although they rot in the ground, or are consumed on the pile, they nevertheless come into the possession of the disembodied souls they are intended for, not the material things themselves, but phantasmal shapes corresponding to them (*Idem*, p. 439).

The native Australian goes gladly to be hanged, in the belief that he would “jump up whitefellow, and have plenty of sixpences;” and the West African negroes commit suicide when in distant slavery, that they may revive in their own land (*Idem*, vol. ii. p. 5).

Souls are supposed to appear in the other world in the same age and condition as they leave this, consequently true religion, and the liveliest filial piety require that parents should be dispatched before they get too old. They are generally, where this belief obtains, buried alive, with their own joyous consent.

The Fijians consider the gods as beings of like passions with themselves. They love and hate; they are proud and revengeful, and make war, and kill and eat each other; yet they look upon the Samoans with horror, because they have no religion, and no belief in any such deities. “It has been asserted,” says Sir John Lubbock over and over again, “that there is no race of men so degraded as to be entirely without a religion—without some idea of a Deity. So far,” he says, “from this being true, the very reverse is the case” (*Idem*, p. 467). Let us hope so!

Primitive men, as mankind do now, worshipped Unknown Cause—the powers of nature; every tree, spring, river, mountain, grotto, had its divinity; the sun, the moon, the stars, had each their spirit. The names of

the Semitic deities, Max Müller tells us (*Fraser*, June 1870), are mostly words expressive of moral qualities, they mean the strong, the exalted, the Lord, the King; and they grow but seldom into divine personalities. The Aryan *noes* are recognised everywhere, in the valleys of India, in the forests of Germany, by the common names of their deity, all originally expressive of natural powers, thousands of years before Homer or the Veda, worshipping an unseen being under the self-same name, the best, the most exalted name they could find in their vocabulary. The popular worship of ancient China was, Max Müller says, a worship of single spirits, of powers, we might almost say of names; the names of the most prominent powers of nature which are supposed to exercise an influence for good or evil on the life of man. If the presence of the divine was perceived in the strong wind, the strong wind became its name; if its presence was perceived in the earthquake and the fire, they became its name; "wherever in other religions we should expect the name of the Supreme Deity, whether Jupiter or Allah, we find in Chinese the name of Tien or Sky." "Do we still wonder," he says, "at polytheism or mythology?"

No doubt the first religious worship was of the powers of Nature or Spirits—a sort of deprecation of their evil influence, and of their power to hurt. But whence came man's knowledge of spirits? From his own supposed double nature. When a man died, he felt that with the life something had left the dead upon which life and consciousness, *i.e.*, all the difference between life and death, depended. This he called his soul or spirit. In sleep, he often dreamed of distant places, and he thought his spirit went there; in dreams also his dead comrades often appeared to him, and he thought therefore they continued to exist somewhere. Out of this dream has grown the popular religion in all times and in all countries: Man has an instinctive love of life and dread of death, and he thinks he must

live again somewhere, because he wishes to do so, accordingly the somewhere was soon found—a place above for the good, and below for the bad, where people would be rewarded or punished as they might behave themselves here. No one liked to part for ever with his parents, children, and friends, and if there was not a place where the bereaved could meet them again, why, there ought to be, and that soon settled it. A place was wanted also for the naughty people, and the people we did not like, to go to. The primitive notions of this Future State differed considerably from our own, only the worst part of it has come down to us—an eternity of torture for the great majority?

Of the locality of this Future State, Herbert Spencer says, "The general conclusion to which we are led is, that the ideas of another world pass through stages of development. The habitat of the dead, originally conceived as coinciding with that of the living, generally diverges—here to the adjacent forest, and elsewhere to distant hills and mountains. The belief that the dead rejoin their ancestors, leads to further divergences which vary according to the traditions. Stationary descendants of troglodytes think they return to a subterranean other world, whence they emerged; while immigrant races have for their other-worlds, the abodes of their fathers, to which they journey after death, over land, down a river, or across the sea, as the case may be. Societies consisting of conquerors and conquered, having separate traditions of origin, have separate other worlds, which differentiate into superior and inferior places, in correspondence with the respective positions of the two races. Conquests of these mixed people by more powerful immigrants, bring further complications—additional other worlds, more or less unlike in their characters. Finally, where the places for the departed, or for superior classes of beings, are mountain tops, there is a transition to an abode in the heavens; which, at first near and definite, passes into the remote

and indefinite, so that the supposed residence of the dead, coinciding at first with the residence of the living, is little by little removed in thought: distance and direction grow increasingly vague, and finally the localization disappears in space." ("The Principles of Sociology," p. 232.)

This dream of a double self—of a living soul and spirit, the cause of life and all mental action, if it has done good, has also done infinite mischief in the world. On the one side it is true that children in many cases would scarcely have been induced to take care of their parents in old age, if it had not been from fear of their ghosts when they were dead, and on the other, in China, ancestor worship is the dominant religion of the land, and it has had more to do with checking civilization there, than anything else. The Chinese look backwards, not forwards, and "for thousands of years this great people have been seeking the living among the dead." It is the ghosts of their fathers and mothers that they are always thinking of, and of the harm that they may do them, every unknown cause with them being a spirit. This is why mines cannot be worked, or railways made, lest these interesting relics should be disturbed, and this insult to the remains of the dead visited upon the living: and after the birth of a Chinese baby, it is customary to hang up its father's trousers in the room, wrong way up, that all such evil influences may enter into them, instead of into the child. All diseases are supposed to come from such source, or from some tormenting, offended deity, the latter being most easily appeased by the offer of a hog; in the same way as the Negroes of Sierra Leone sacrifice an ox when they want "to make God glad very much, and do Kroomen good."

At the present day when an affectionate wife says to a sneezing husband, "Bless you, my dear," the expression comes from the time when sneezing was thought to indicate "possession" by an ancestral

spirit; and the Hindu when he gapes still snaps his thumb and finger, and repeats the name of some god—*Rama*, to prevent an evil spirit going down his throat.

It has been in this kind of chaotic superstitious atmosphere, in which everything was supposed to be brought about by spirits, that what are called our religious instincts, were originally formed. This is the soil in which even our present ideas of God, the Soul, and Immortality first took root.

Mr Tylor says (vol. ii. p. 286) "Conceptions originating under rude and primitive conditions of human thought, suffer in the course of ages the most various fates. Yet the philosophy of modern ages still, to a remarkable degree, follows the primitive courses of savage thought." This is true as regards our philosophy, but it is still more true with respect to our religion, for ancestor-worship in the saints, and intercession to them and to the "mother of God, the Queen of heaven," and anxiety for the future condition of this dream-created soul, still rule the mind of Christendom. Propitiation and sacrifice form the substance of all religions in their earliest stages. Man first of all, and above all, fears the spirits and gods that his imagination has created, and he offers up to them what he most values, and which he thinks, therefore, they will most value—his finest fruit, the firstling of the flock, even his own children. An only son was thought to be the greatest and most acceptable sacrifice. When the Carthaginians got into trouble, three hundred children of the first people of the city were offered up in the fire to their God; so willing has man always been to cast upon another the burden of his own misdeeds. The religion of the present day is little more than a "survival" of the past, and "throughout the rituals of Christendom stands an endless array of supplications unaltered in principle from savage times—that the weather may be adjusted to our local needs, that we may have the victory over all our enemies, and that life, and health, and wealth, and

happiness, may be ours." ("Primitive Culture," vol. ii. p. 336).

We are told that man is especially distinguished by the possession of a conscience which, like a heavenly messenger, guides him in his choice in the immutable and eternal distinctions between right and wrong. If this be so, it is in a very incipient state in primitive man, and this guide itself seems to require educating and guiding quite as much as any other of his faculties. Thus Dr Seeman tells us of the Fijians, that "in any transaction where the national honour had to be avenged, it was incumbent on the king and principal chiefs—in fact a duty they owed their exalted station, to avenge the insult offered to the country, by eating the perpetrators of it." He adds, "I am convinced, however, that there was a religious, as well as a political aspect of this custom." No doubt conscience gave them a high sense of their social, political, and religious *duties*, only they differed slightly from us, as to the mode in which they should be carried out. So also of the practice, where from a religious sense of duty, children eat their parents, when they got old and infirm, waiting however, till the season when salt and limes were at the cheapest.

The savage theory of the universe refers its phenomena to the action of pervading personal spirits, similar to what in dreams they have made out their own spirits to be; the powers of nature are everywhere spiritualized and personified. With increasing knowledge unity is given to these powers, and we have a God One and Indivisible: at least this becomes the creed of the highest minds, the multitude still continue to find a separate God in everything, and for everything. (An excellent account of how these so-called religious ideas of the existence of the "double" or soul, of a future state, and another world, arise in the minds of savages, from which they have come down to us, changed from a very definite and material conception to a very indefi-

nite and immaterial one, is to be found in Mr Herbert Spencer's "Principles of Sociology," now publishing.)

From this point, says Dr J. W. Draper, that is, from the very earliest ages when the comparative theology of India was inaccessible, "there are two well-marked steps of advance. The first reaches the consideration of material nature : the second, which is very grandly and severely philosophical, contemplates the universe under the conceptions of space and force alone. The former is exemplified in the Vedas and Institutes of Menu, the latter in Buddhism. In neither of these stages do the ideas lie idle as mere abstractions ; they introduce a moral plan, and display a constructive power not equalled even by the Italian Papal system. They take charge not only of the individual, but regulate society, and show their influence in accomplishing political organizations, commanding our attention from their prodigious extent, and venerable for their antiquity.

"I shall, therefore, briefly refer, first, to the elder, Vedaism, and then to its successor Buddhism. The Vedas, which are the Hindu Scriptures, are asserted to have been revealed by Brahma. They are based upon an acknowledgment of a universal spirit pervading all things : 'There is in truth but one Deity, the Supreme Spirit, the Lord of the Universe, whose work is the Universe.' 'The God above all Gods, who created the earth, the heavens, and the waters.' The world, thus considered as an emanation of God, is therefore a part of him ; it is kept in a manifest state by his energy, and would instantly disappear if that energy were for a moment withdrawn. Even as it is, it is undergoing unceasing transformations, everything being in a transitory condition. The moment a given phase is reached, it is departed from or ceases. In these perpetual movements, the present can scarcely be said to have any existence, for as the past is ending, the future has begun.

“In such a never-ceasing career all material things are urged, their forms continually changing, and returning, as it were, through revolving cycles to similar states. . .

“In this doctrine of universal transformation there is something more than appears at first. The theology of India is underlaid with Pantheism. “God is One because he is All.’ The Vedas in speaking of the relation of nature to God, make use of the expression that he is the Material as well as the Cause of the Universe, ‘the Clay as well as the Potter.’ They convey the idea that while there is a pervading spirit existing everywhere of the same nature as the soul of man, though differing from it infinitely in degree, visible nature is essentially and inseparably connected therewith: that as in man the body is perpetually undergoing change, perpetually decaying and being renewed, or, as in the case of the whole human species, nations come into existence and pass away, yet still there continues to exist what may be termed the universal human-mind, so for ever associated and for ever connected are the material and the spiritual. And under this aspect we must contemplate the Supreme Being, not merely as a presiding intellect, but as illustrated by the parallel case of man, whose mental principle shows no tokens except through its connections with the body; so matter, or nature, or the visible universe, is to be looked upon as the corporeal manifestation of God.

“We must continually bear in mind that matter ‘has no essence, independent of mental perception; that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms; that external appearances and sensations are illusory, and would vanish into nothing if the divine energy which alone sustains them were suspended but for a moment.” — (“The Intellectual Development of Europe,” Vol. i. pp. 54, 55, 56.) Truly, there is nothing new under the sun. Here we have the most advanced Pantheistic Theology of the present day, and being given some two thousand years before the Christian era it would seem

almost as if the Vedas were inspired. Here also, we have the Idealism that constitutes the creed of so many of our most cultivated philosophers. However pure a doctrine may be at its source, as it comes from the highest minds, it is soon perverted to suit the lowest, and high and simple and true as it seems to me this doctrine is, it was soon twisted into every possible form of error and superstition that was best calculated to give the Brotherhood command over the ignorant multitude. It soon needed Reforming, and Buddhism came before the world as that Reformation.

Buddhism most probably dates from about 1000 years before Christ, and Draper says it is now professed by a greater number of the human race than any other religion.

“The fundamental principle of Buddhism is that there is a supreme power, but no Supreme Being. . . It is a rejection of the idea of Being, an acknowledgment of that of Force. If it admits the existence of God, it declines him as a Creator. It asserts an impelling power in the universe, a self-existent and plastic principle, but not a self-existent, an eternal, a personal God. It rejects inquiry into first causes as being unphilosophical, and considers that phenomena alone can be dealt with by our finite minds. . . . Gotama contemplates the existence of pure force without any association of Substance. He necessarily denies the immediate interposition of any such agency as Providence, maintaining that the system of nature, once arising, must proceed irresistibly according to the laws which brought it into being, and that from this point of view the universe is merely a gigantic engine. Equally does Gotama deny the existence of chance, saying that that which we call chance is nothing but the effect of an unknown, unavoidable cause.” (“Intellectual Development of Europe,” vol. i. p. 65.) I scarcely need point out the similarity existing between this creed and that of the leading physicists of the present day.

“As to the external world, we cannot tell how far it

is a phantasm, how far a reality, for our senses possess no reliable criterion of truth. They convey to the mind representations of what we consider to be external things by which it is furnished with materials for its various operations; but unless it acts in conjunction with the senses, the operation is lost, as in that absence which takes place in deep contemplation. It is owing to our inability to determine what share these internal and external conditions take in producing a result, that the absolute or actual state of nature is incomprehensible to us. Nevertheless, conceding to our mental infirmity the idea of a real existence of visible nature, we may consider it as offering a succession of impermanent forms, and as exhibiting an orderly series of transmutations, innumerable universes in periods of inconceivable time emerging one after another, and creations and extinctions of systems of worlds taking place according to a primordial law.

“Of the nature of man, Gotama tells us that there is no such thing as individuality or personality—that the Ego is altogether a nonentity. In these profound considerations he brings to bear his conception of force, in the light thereof asserting that all sentient beings are homogeneous. . . . Each one must however work out his own salvation, when, after many transmigrations, life may come to an end. That end he calls Nirwana—Nirwana, the end of successive existences. It is the supreme end, Nonentity. The attaining of this is the object to which we ought to aspire. . . . The pantheistic Brahman expects absorption in God; the Buddhist, having no God, expects extinction.

“India has thus given to the world two distinct philosophical systems—Vedaism, which makes its resting-point the existence of matter, and Buddhism, of which the resting-point is force. The philosophical ability displayed in the latter is very great; indeed, it may be doubted whether Europe has produced its metaphysical equivalent.” (*Idem*, 66, 67, 68.)

It need scarcely excite our surprise then if our Christian missionaries make but little progress in India. It is worthy of note with reference to those who assert that the "Immortality of the Soul" is among the unextinguishable instincts of our nature, that in the two religions of the world—if we must call them two—which contain the greatest number of adherents, not Immortality is sought, but absorption in God, or Nirwana, both of which include the extinction of the individual. The Lazarist Huc testifies that they die with incomparable tranquillity, and adds, they are what many in Europe are wanting to be. It is worthy of note also how much there is in each system in accordance with the most advanced modern thought: the one as Idealism, the other as represented by the recent discovery of the Persistence and Correlation of Force. For if Vedaism connects itself with Matter, it is Matter as regarded only as "the corporeal manifestation of God," and I have endeavoured to show elsewhere how and where, as so regarded, Materialism and Absolute Idealism meet. ("Illusion and Delusion," published by T. Scott.) In my work also "On Force, and its Mental Correlates" (Longmans & Co.), I have endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the following propositions:—

There is but one Reality in the universe, which Physical Philosophers call "Force;" and Metaphysicians "Noumenon." It is the "Substance" of Spinoza, and the "Being" of Hegel.

Everything around us results from the mode of action or motion, or correlation of this one force, the different Forms of which we call Phenomena.

The difference in the mode of action depends upon the difference in the structure it passes through; such Structure consisting of concentrated Force, or centres of Force, and has been called Matter. "Every form is force visible; a form of rest is a balance of forces; a form undergoing change is the predominance of one over others."—*Huxley.*

Heat, Light, Magnetism, Electricity, Attraction, Repulsion, Chemical Affinity, Life, Mind, or Sentience, are modes of action or manifestations of Force, and die or cease to exist, when the Force passes on into other forms.

Cause and Effect is this sequence or correlation ; and each cause and effect is a new Life and a new Death : each new form being a new creation, which dies and passes away, never to return, for "nothing repeats itself, because nothing can be placed again in the same condition : the past being irrevocable."—*W. R. Grove*. "There is no death in the concrete, what passes away passes away into its own self—only the passing away passes away."—*Hegel*.

Force passing through a portion of the structure of the brain creates the "World" of our intellectual consciousness, with the "Ego" or sense of personal identity ; passing through other portions the world of our likes and antipathies—called the moral world : Good and Evil being purely subjective.

The character and direction of Volition depend upon the Persistent Force and the structure through which it passes. Every existing state, both bodily and mental, has grown out of the preceding, and all its Forces have been used up in present phenomena. Thus, "everything that exists depends upon the past, prepares the future, and is related to the whole."—*Oersted*.

As no force acts singly, but is always combined with other forces or modes of action to produce some given purpose or particular result, we infer that Force is not blind but intelligent. As Force is intelligent and One, it would be more properly called Being—possessing personality ; and that being we have called God. "He is the universal Being of which all things are the manifestations."—*Spinoza*.

All power is Will power,—the will of God. "Causation is the will, Creation the act of God."—*W. R.*

Grove. The will which originally required a distinct *conscious* volition for each act has passed, in the ages, generally into the unconscious or automatic state, constituting the fixed laws and order of nature.

PART II.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

“The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly, is to fill the world with fools.”—*Herbert Spencer.*

WE in this Christian country are brought up in the belief that the Jews were chosen by God to perpetuate a worthy representation of Himself in a Pagan world given up wholly to idolatry: that the character and attributes of the Creator, as given to man in the books of the Old Testament, are a Revelation from God Himself. On examination this turns out to be by no means the case. The Hebrew god is made entirely after the likeness of man; wiser and more powerful, but with all his vices as well as his virtues greatly exaggerated—a conception fitted only for a barbarous age and a barbarous people; and notwithstanding some sublime *poetical* passages of the later prophets, altogether inferior to that formed by the wise men of other Eastern nations. To Jewish conception, even to the last, the Creator of the Universe was the family God of the Patriarchs—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the titular or national God of the Hebrews, and it was not till after the Babylonian captivity that the “chosen people” abandoned altogether other supposed protecting deities, and became confirmed monotheists. Thus the religious history of the Jewish people in the historical books of the Old Testament, presents a series of vacillations between the worship of Jehovah and that

of the gods of the surrounding nations; the people serving that god who they think will afford them the most powerful protection. Hence the jealousy of Jehovah, and the term the living God, and the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods but me." It will be necessary to show this, as Christianity is based on Judaism, and the orthodox theology of the present day is derived more from the Old Testament than the New. I shall let the Bible speak for itself.

"And God said, let us make man in *our own image*, after our likeness."—Gen. i. 26.

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made, and he *rested* on the seventh day from all His work which He had made."—Gen. ii. 2.

"And they (Adam and Eve) heard the voice of the Lord God *walking* in the garden in the *cool* of the day."—Gen. iii. 8.

Cain and Abel from the very first make offering unto the Lord of fruit and flesh, and "of the fat thereof," and they are accepted by him."—Gen. iv. 3, 4, 5.

And the Lord appeared unto him (Abraham) in the plains of Mamre accompanied by two angels, and they eat of a calf that was "tender and good," and the Lord said unto Abraham Wherefore does Sarah laugh, &c., and the Lord went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham."—Gen. xviii. 1, 7, 8, 13.

The Lord also afterwards appeared unto Moses, on his desiring to see the glory of God. And he (Moses) said, I beseech thee show me thy glory. And he (the Lord) said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live. And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover

thee with my hand while I pass by : and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts : but my face shall not be seen."—Gen. xxxiii. 18-23.

And the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark, and the Lord shut him in."—Gen. vii. 1, 16.

"And when Noah came out of the ark he builded an altar unto the Lord ; and took of *every* clean beast, and of *every* clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

"And the Lord *smelled a sweet savour* ; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."—Gen. viii. 20, 21.

"And the Lord *came down* to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded," and the Lord said, "Go *u*, let us *go down* and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."—Gen. xiv. 5, 7.

"It repenteth the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him in his heart."—Gen. vi. 6.

"And God heard the voice of the lad ; and the angel of God called to Hagar *out of heaven*."—Gen. xxi. 17.

"And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice, and let Israel go ? I know not the Lord (Jehovah) neither will I let Israel go. And they said, *The God of the Hebrews* hath met us, let us go three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God : lest He fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword."—Exod. v. 2, 3.

"And I will *harden Pharaoh's heart*, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you."—Exod. vii. 3, 5.

"And I (Jehovah) will give the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians : and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty. But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment : and ye shall put them upon your sons, and

upon your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians." —Exod. iii. 21, 22.

"And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent them such things as they required, and they spoiled the Egyptians."—Exod. xii. 36.

When "wrath is gone out from the Lord, and the plague is begun, Aaror *put on incense*, and made an atonement, and the plague was stayed" (Num. xvi. 46-48.)

God's promise to Abram. "Thou art the Lord God, who didst choose Abram, and brought him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham, and foundest his heart faithful before Thee, and mad'st a covenant with him to give the lands of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites to give it, I say to his seed, and hast performed Thy words: for Thou art righteous" (Neh. ix. 7-8). Of how this promise was kept we need give only one illustration.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses ; *and slew all the males*. And Moses was wroth, and ordered every male among *the little ones* to be killed in cold-blood, and every woman that had known man : "but all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves." "And there were 32,000 persons in all, of women that had not known man by lying with him" (Num. xxxi. 1, 2, 7, 14, 17, 18, 35.)

"Righteous" is not perhaps exactly the word which we should now apply to such dealings ! And the children of Israel said to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hands of the Philistines." And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the

Lord : and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel ; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel : but the Lord *thundered with a great thunder* on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them ; and they were smitten before Israel (Samuel, 1 Book, vii. 8, 9, 10.)

The Lord fights for Israel, and casts down hailstones from heaven ; “ they were more which died with hailstones than they which the children of Israel slew with the sword ; ” and he makes the sun and moon to stand still until the people are avenged. “ Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man ; for the Lord fought for Israel. (Num. x. 8, 14.)

Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem ; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech (Judges ix. 23.) Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead ? and one said in this manner, and another said in that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith ? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He said, thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also ; go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets (1 Kings xxii. 20, 23.)

God's throne is in heaven. “ The Lord hath pre-

pared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all (Ps. ciii. 19.)

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah vi. 1, 3.)

For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods (Ps. cxxxv.)

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh (Ps. ii. 4.)

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. (Mal. iii. 16.)

In every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts (Mal. i. 11.)

I saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand, and on His left (Micaiah.)

Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills (Ps. i. 7, 15.)

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. (Ps. xxiv. 1-2.)

The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels (Ps. lxxiii. 17.)

After the Chaldean captivity, when it was thought to be beneath the dignity of God to appear personally, these angels are very active and much more plentiful.

Then the Lord employs his destroying angel to slay 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. David also sees an angel.

So the Lord sent pestilence upon Israel : and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it : and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, it is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem (1 Chron. xxi. 14. 6.)

Here is Daniel's description of the angel Gabriel :—
 "A man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz : his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (Dan. x. 5-6.)

This God of the Hebrews is certainly not a very sublime conception, and it is difficult to say in what it differs from that of other primitive savages. He shows himself in bodily presence as a man to Adam and to Abram, walks in the *cool* of the evening, shows his parts behind to Moses, *comes down* to prevent a tower being built up into heaven, spoils the Egyptians, utterly exterminating the Canaanites, man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass, that he may give their land to his chosen people, sending lying spirits into his prophets, and in fact possessing all man's greatest vices greatly exaggerated. He is angry, furious, cruel, vindictive, jealous, treacherous, partial, and by the smell of a sweet savour of poor innocent slaughtered beasts and birds, and by incense and sackcloth and ashes is turned from his purpose and repents. The Hebrew God is everywhere represented as delighting in blood, requiring the first-born of both man and beast to be offered up to him, and a lamb to be supplied to him both night and morning throughout the year. Is

it not strange that this barbarous conception of a blood-thirsty people should have been chosen by the modern world as the foundation of its religion, and can we wonder that the picture of such a Being, painted as we are told by himself, should have had a most deleterious effect on the moral sense of all who have been introduced to it, or that those who prefer to believe in no God at all, rather than in such a God, should increase daily?

The Jews have continued to "spoil the Egyptians," that is, all the nations among whom they are thrown, until this day, and this spoiling the Egyptians is quoted as a precedent for every kind of cheating and dishonesty among all who are disposed to prey by false pretence upon their fellow creatures. The religion of the Hebrews was like that of every savage nation. It consisted of Prayer and Supplication and Sacrifice. All unusual and extraordinary phenomena, all good gifts and evil fortune came direct from God, and they sought by gifts to him of what they thought he would like best, and by praise and adulation which they knew *they* most liked, to propitiate him, and win his favour. This was accomplished by a Priesthood who made it difficult to approach him except through themselves, and who claimed a reversionary interest in all gifts offered to him.

It is true that more refined notions of deity prevailed among "God's chosen people," as civilization advanced, and after they had spent seventy years in captivity in Babylon, and had become acquainted with the much higher "revelation" of Zoroaster. Still their most sublime and poetical conception never rose above that of a mighty magician, speaking the word of power; the heaven his throne, and the earth his footstool; to whom belonged,—not the countless worlds of which they had no idea, but the cattle upon a thousand hills; riding upon the wings of the wind; governing the world by his angels, and in whose name every possible atrocity

is committed : to whom such men as Jacob, David, and that wisest of all men, Solomon, with his three hundred wives, and nine hundred concubines, are represented as especially acceptable and favoured, but who show an utter indifference to any moral law whatever. Notwithstanding this, we have that good man, the late Dr Norman Macleod, telling us almost with his last words, that "The Bible practically says to all seekers after God, 'Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.' It professes to give a true history, in harmony with reason, conscience and experience, of God's revelation of Himself during past ages, culminating in Jesus Christ, and continued in the Church by His Holy Spirit."—*Good Words, June 1875, p. 420.*

Hear also His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest authority of all. He says, "Good Words," May 1875, "As to morality, upholding as we do the immutable and eternal distinction between right and wrong, and thankful that in all but degraded specimens of the human race there is a conscience capable of learning these distinctions. . . . We believe that the Great Being who controls the universe is in Himself the very good, and very right." Now as His Grace identifies the Great Being who controls the universe with the Hebrew God of the Bible, and as we cannot certainly classify His Grace among "the degraded specimens of the human race," we are obliged to conclude that his conscience has yet something to learn. An aged and much respected dissenting Minister tells me that "The Bible will treat you as you treat it," that is, you may find whatever you are looking for, and only nineteenth century ideas are looked for ; we look for a reformed God, and a reformed religion, and this is the only way I can account for the judgments of the good men I have quoted above, and also for the fact that such chapters as Gen. xix., xxxvii., Jud. xix., 2 Sam. ix., xiii., &c., are allowed to be retained, although they would not obtain admission into any book in the present day in any refined and civilized community.

But even among those who reject Revelation as a revelation, the deistic conception of God as a governing power *outside the universe* is probably as childish as the original one conceived in the childhood of the world, when all the earth was supposed to be filled with his *glory*.

The cosmogony of the Hebrews, as might be expected, is exactly upon a par with their Theology. The earth, according to their revelation, was the centre of all things; it was flat, founded upon the seas, and could not be moved. The sun, and moon, and stars, are so many lamps placed in the firmament to give light to the earth. The firmament or sky is a solid structure, and supports a great ocean like that upon which the earth rests, in which are little windows through which pour the waters of this upper ocean—under the earth is the land of graves, called sheol, and is the hell, to which it is said, Christ descended.* Above the waters of the firmament is heaven, where Jehovah reigns, surrounded by hosts of angels. It is to this heaven that christians say Christ ascended, his disciples and a vast multitude having seen him *go up*, where he *sitteth* on the right hand of God. There is some little discrepancy as to whether Christ is sitting or standing, as St Stephen saw him standing, and we might well believe it was “sometimes one and sometimes the other,” if the Athanasian creed, supported by the church, did not say that we shall be damned if we do not believe he is sitting. Between the firmament and the earth is the air, which is the habitation of evil spirits, and properly belongs to Satan, the “prince of

* Mr George Smith informs the *Daily Telegraph* that some of the Assyrian tablets discovered by Mr Smith and presented by the proprietors of the *Telegraph* to the British Museum, contain a much longer and fuller account of the creation and fall of man than the Book of Genesis. In particular, the fall of Satan, which in the Bible is only assumed, is in these records reported at length, and the description of this being is characterized by Mr Smith as “really magnificent.”

the powers of the air." As to the order of creation, the sun is made on the fourth day, the changes of day and night preceding it. The sun and moon are subordinate to the earth. It took no less than five days to create the earth, while for the sun, the whole starry host, and the planets it took only one day, but then they were made just to light up the earth. It was for professing some little doubt as to the accuracy of this plan of the universe that poor Galileo was persecuted and imprisoned, and the special charge against Giordano Bruno was that he had taught the plurality of worlds, a doctrine, it was said, repugnant to the whole tenor of Scriptures, and inimical to revealed religion, especially as regards the plan of salvation. For this he was to be punished as mercifully as possible, and "without the shedding of blood," the horrible formula for burning people alive. It was this adoption of the Jewish sacred writings as the standard of all knowledge, this conflict between religion and science, this attempt to put the Cosmos into a quart pot, that has put a logger on science, even up to the present day. The so-called revelation now stands in the way of mental science as it formally did in the way of physica; but as our astronomy has come from science and not from revelation, so also must our mental and moral philosophy. Mohammedanism released the people of Asia, Africa, and the Continent of Europe, from those narrow and erroneous scriptural dogmas, and the thick darkness of papal Rome, and left science free; and the lamp of discovery was kept burning through Arabian learning, and the highest civilization we have yet reached, that of the Moors in Spain. We are evidently approaching another Reformation in which Science not in one department only, but in all, shall be left entirely free. The intellectual development of Europe has reached that stage where Arabism left us in the 10th and 11th centuries. Through the influence of Rome the world then took the wrong way; had it adopted Averhoism, which was rejected only by a

small majority, we should have been then where we are now.

But if the Jewish conception of God was a most unworthy one, what must we say of that of the orthodox Christian? Why, that it is infinitely worse. With both he is the Creator of all things, therefore, of evil and good, but with the former evil is confined to time and this world, while with the latter it is absolute and endless. Thus, according to the orthodox creed the Almighty and All-wise, with a perfect knowledge therefore of what he was doing, and full power to do otherwise, made our first parents, Adam and Eve, and put them into Paradise, with the full knowledge that they would get themselves immediately turned out for a single act of disobedience. They were not to eat of a certain magic tree, for if they did so *on that day* they should surely die. But our poor inexperienced mother Eve, not knowing even what death was, was beguiled by a talking serpent, into eating, and Adam, like a gentleman, determined to share the consequences with his wife: and if they had merely died on that day they would only have been where they were before they were made. But did God keep His word? No, they did not die that day, but after cursing the earth for their sake, they were kept alive to fill it with their children, all of whom, with themselves, were condemned to everlasting torture for this single act of disobedience. But God had already arranged a scheme by which the world might be saved; He would give His only begotten Son; Christ was to die for our salvation, an innocent person for the guilty; but the conditions were such that God in His infinite fore-knowledge knew perfectly well they would not be accepted, and that the great majority would be damned, notwithstanding this infinite loving kindness, and awful sacrifice. From the "Westminster Confession of Faith," we learn that by the decree of God, for *the manifestation of His glory*, some

men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

“Those angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”

“The rest of mankind, God was pleased, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to *ordain* them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.” Glorious justice indeed ! an infinite punishment for a finite sin ; or rather for no sin at all, for if the causes that produced the act had not been *adequate* to the result, God could not have foreseen it.

“Our first parents, we are told, on the same authority, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin God was pleased, according to His wise and holy council, to permit, *having purposed to order it to His own glory.*” Thus He permitted a subtle and powerful being to tempt our first parents, knowing full well the result, and having already prepared a place of eternal torment, that he might “order it to His own glory.”

J. S. Mill says (“Autobiography,” p. 41.) “I have a hundred times heard him (his father) say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression ; that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity.”

The Rev. Dr Norman Macleod, however, says, “God has manifested in humanity the same kind of joy He Himself had in beholding the works which He had made very good, and in which He rested and reposed”

("Good Words," June 1875, p. 421.) Fancy such a work being "very good;" but we trust the Doctor did not believe it, any more than we do ourselves. He may, however, possibly have held with Luther, that it is by faith we are saved and Luther says, "it is the highest degree of faith to believe Him merciful, who saves so few and damns so many: to believe him just who of his own will makes us necessarily damnable." However laudable such a degree of faith may be, we must confess ourselves unequal to it, for it points to a devil, not a god, and one wonders how such a horrid conception could ever get into people's heads, and over form the faith of a civilised people. It has taken ages of "survivals" of hideous barbarism from the earliest ages to put the idea together, and ages of transmission to propagate the faith. No one coming fresh to it could entertain it for a moment. It is absurd to say that God's original intentions were frustrated with respect to man; it is a *contradiction* to suppose that anything can take place contrary to the will and wish of Almighty power and wisdom. The "Spectator," (Nov. 7, 1874), however, regards it "as a higher act of power to create free beings, and therefore beings liable to sin on their own responsibility, than to create only those whose natures are for ever fixed in the grooves of good;" that is, it may be a much higher act of power to create beings capable of damning themselves to all eternity, than to create them so good that they could not do it; granted, but then what shall we say of the wisdom? We very much doubt, however, whether omnipotence itself *could* create a free, that is self-originating, uncaused act of any kind; it is very certain it never has. It is wonderful that it never seems to occur to the orthodox school, that if God had kept His word, and Adam had really died, and another pair had been created, less "free" to damn themselves and all their posterity, how much trouble might have been spared. There would have been no necessity then to "keep a devil," or a

place of eternal torment, and the Son of God need not have died, and this, as it appears to poor human reason, might have been turned equally to God's glory. "If Christ, as St John writes, appeared on earth to destroy the works of the devil, He might have been dispensed with if no devil had existed" (Strauss.)

This doctrine of the atonement, of sacrificing an innocent person for a guilty one, and that in Christ's case only for an elect few: for although "many are called few are chosen"—must have come down from the very earliest times. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Heb. ix. 22) must be a "survival" from pre-historic men and the most barbarous races. The law of vengeance, life for life, blood for blood, was the savage law; and what was thus acceptable to man was thought to be the most acceptable to his Deity that he wanted to propitiate. Hence human sacrifices. An only son being the dearest to man was thought to be most acceptable to God. At length animals were substituted for human beings, as in Abraham's case, the ram for his only son Isaac, and the first-born among the Hebrews ceased in time to be sacrificed according to primitive barbaric custom, and was redeemed by a ram or a lamb. In Exodus and Leviticus we have a whole ceremonial worship based upon sacrifices, as we are told, by divine command. "Thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin-offering for atonement" (Ex. xxix. 36, &c.) The Jewish ritual is full of bloody sacrifices, and Paul, not Christ, has made it the key-stone of the Christian system, in the blood of God's only begotten and beloved Son. This doctrine of propitiation by blood—of being washed clean in blood, could never have entered a civilised man's head or heart; we have gradually been accustomed to it from the earliest times, until like the sun's rising, it excites no wonder.

That all should fall for the sin of one—of Adam, and all be saved by the sacrifice of an innocent person, is so

great a breach of all moral law that we rather wonder how the Archbishop of Canterbury reconciles it with "the immutable and eternal distinctions between right and wrong." There can be little doubt that the confounding of all moral distinctions in the "spoiling of the Egyptians," and the sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty as a plan of salvation, must have had a most deleterious influence upon the conscience of all who have believed in them, as part of the direct ordinances of God. "The covenant of grace in which the guilty are pardoned through the agony of the just—and a God kept holy in His own eyes by the double violation of His own standard of rectitude," can in no way be reconciled with the intellect or our moral sense.

But these dire chimeras, these awful and blasphemous slanders upon the character of God, are silently dying out before the gradually increasing intelligence of the age, as witchcraft has done before. We no longer burn thousands of old women for having personal intercourse and dealing with the "prince of the powers of the air," and theological dogma is giving place, even in the church itself, to practical religion. There are still, however, many good people who think it desirable to retain these horrible lies and libels upon our Creator, in order to frighten men into being good, and the hope of an immortality attended with such results is thought to be a high and ennobling sentiment. At the present time (June 1875) a case is going through the Court of Arches, *Jenkins v. Cook*, in which the Rev. F. Cook refuses to allow Mr. Jenkins to partake of "the body and blood of Christ, which, as the Church Catechism tells us, "is *verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful at the Lord's Supper," with his fellow-communicants, because he had expressed doubts about the verbal inspiration of the Bible and the personality of Satan; he had even gone the length of supposing that there were parts of "God's Holy Word" that were better left out, and he had prepared a selec-

tion for his young family. On the other hand, we have an article in the "Contemporary," for May, by Prof. J. B. Mayor, in which he says, "reason and conscience inevitably revolt against such a gospel as this (that hopeless misery is the destiny of the larger proportion of created souls), yet how are those who believe in the inspiration of the Bible to avoid accepting it? Accept this or give up Christianity is the alternative presented to many minds at the present day—an alternative enforced with equal vehemence by the extremists on either side. It is this which is the great stumbling-block; not, how can I believe in this miracle or that miracle? but how can I accept a revelation which appears to me to contradict the first and deepest of all revelations, God is just, and God is good? He who would solve this problem and justify to man the ways of God, as revealed in Scripture, would, indeed, do a great and excellent work. Maurice did something by calling attention to the distinction between endless and eternal."

A great many equally good and learned men, in the interests, as they believe it to be, of religion, are making similar useless distinctions, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, and by taking things in a non-natural sense, the spiritual instead of the literal meaning, by turning affirmed facts into allegory, &c., are earnestly striving to make black appear white and save their livings; the church, as they believe, being much better reformed from within than from without. The question which is really interesting and pressing, according to Principal Tulloch, is not how to get outside the church, but how to enlarge and make room inside it for varieties of Christian intelligence and culture.

But we may read the signs of the times when the "Edinburgh Review," not now the organ of advanced but of conservative liberalism, is disposed to go much further than "the distinction between endless and eternal," and to throw over the Old Testament alto-

gether and much even of the New (Oct. 1873, on Dr Strauss). "We are not Jews," it says, "and there is no reason in the world why we should be weighted with the burden of understanding and defending at all risks the Jewish Scriptures." It also says, "Is it right, is it truthful, is it any longer possible, in the face of all that is now known upon the subject, to pretend that legendary matter has not intruded itself into the New Testament as well as into the Old?" Still the writer contends for the precious truths which notwithstanding this lie enshrined in "Oriental metaphor" and "Mediæval dogma," and accuses Strauss of "ignorant blasphemy or hypocritical sarcasm," for professing to understand these things literally, and to believe that they form any part of Christianity. This is the attitude that is now assumed by those who do not wish to give up the Bible altogether. They fall back upon what *they* call Christianity, by which they mean the example and moral teaching of Christ, as far as that can be ascertained. It is very difficult to ascertain what Christ did, and still more to say what he taught. We have the fourth Gospel, and the Epistles of Paul, and of Peter, James, and Jude, all of which have added to and differ from what Christ himself taught. The theologic system that has come down to us is in reality not Christianity, but much has been added to it which Christ himself, as a religious reformer, strongly protested against. The bloody doctrine of sacrifice and atonement, which had been derived from a primitive savage state, was re-introduced and made the cornerstone of the new faith; in fact, orthodox Christianity is more indebted to Paul and the Alexandrine School, as represented in St John's Gospel, than to its putative founder.

In the midst of the myths and legends that have surrounded Christ, it is very difficult to say who and what he was. Without believing at all in the supernatural, I yet believe that he wrought most of the

miracles that are ascribed to him, and that this apparently miraculous power deceived him and his disciples and ourselves. This power was not peculiar to Christ, for a power of curing many kind of diseases has attended, and still attends, many individuals. One of the best known cases on record is that of Valentine Greatrakes, an Irish gentleman, but no saint, born in 1628. He was invited by the King to London, whither he went, curing very many by the way. There the Royal Society, then young, investigated the matter, publishing some of his cures in their Transactions, and accounting for them as produced by "a sanative contagion in Mr Greatrakes' body, which had an antipathy to some particular diseases and not to others." We are told by a contemporary writer, Henry More, what particular diseases this sanative contagion had an antipathy to, viz., "cancers, scrofula, deafness, king's evil, headache, epilepsy, fevers (though quartian ones), leprosy, palsy, tympany, lameness, numbness of limbs, stone, convulsions, pty sick, sciatica, ulcers, pains of the body, nay, blind and dumb in some measure, and I know not but he cured the gout." Now if we leave out the cures that were said to be wrought by Christ that the prophecies might be fulfilled, we have here most of the diseases that he was able to cure, for we must not forget that people's want of faith prevented his being successful in all times and all places. He knew also when "virtue," this sanitary power, went out of him, as when touched by the woman with the issue. We may doubt as to the source of this power, but that it exists there can be no doubt. I have seen six cases, including toothache, lameness, and rheumatism cured or relieved in less than a quarter of an hour by the simple contact or laying on of hands, and I have carefully watched many permanent cures by the same person, by what appeared to me an excess of vital power or of the "vis medecatrix." Now if Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, found himself possessed of such a power, he would

of course ascribe it to Divine origin and believe that he was intended by the Almighty for some special mission, most probably the Messiah, which all the Jews were expecting, to deliver them from the Roman yoke and to place them in the exalted position which had been promised to the seed of Abraham, and to which there had been already several pretenders. He himself does not appear to be quite certain as to the character of his mission, for when sent to by John, asking, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" he replied, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see, the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them," intimating that this was all he knew. There is little doubt, I think, that on his entry into Jerusalem he expected a rising of the people in his favour, and probably divine assistance in that direction, as he daily received it, as he thought, in others. When that did not take place, and he saw that a revolt against the Roman power was vain and hopeless, he did not the less doubt his own Divine mission, of which he received daily proofs in the miracles which he wrought; but he began to see that the promised kingdom was not to be of this world, but upon a second coming, which was to take place even in that generation, and when he should be accompanied by such divine power as would establish this Heavenly Kingdom for ever. In the meantime he began to prepare for that martyrdom that had always attended all the great prophets and all previous claims to the Messiahship. He prayed that this might pass from him; but was nobly prepared to meet it if such was God's will, and never once does he seem to have doubted that he was under God's special care for a special purpose, except in his own most pathetic and despairing cry upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Christ died as a rebel to the

Roman Empire, and in the full persuasion that on his second coming, then near at hand, all things would be made subservient to himself and to his followers, and that the Jewish nation especially should have the pre-eminence that had been promised to them. In this belief, his disciples, who had daily witnessed his apparently miraculous power, joined him, and expected to sit on *twelve thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is impossible not to feel love for Christ, especially when we think of the horrid suffering to which he was subjected by his fellow-creatures, and to feel respect for him as the most amiable and greatest of our moral and social reformers, but I cannot look upon him as a perfect character, or his example as one that could be followed in the entirely altered conditions we have now. There is much in the spirit of Christ's character that is most loveable and estimable, but to attempt to follow his example would as certainly bring us within the power of the police, as it did him in his day. In all the phases of social life, as a son, as a cecelebrate, as a producer or worker, his example is certainly one that cannot be followed. As Strauss says, we must have a definite conception of him whom we are to imitate as an exemplar of moral excellence, and there are not such essential facts in the life of Jesus firmly established; neither are we clearly cognizant of his aims, nor the mode and degree in which he hoped for their realization. It is in the spirit of his doctrine only, that he can be held up as an exemplar, and that certainly, excellent as it is in many points, would not tend to the full development of all our faculties.

But whence did Christ get his knowledge, which seems greatly to have exceeded that of his time, and most certainly that of his condition as a carpenter's son? What sources were open to him? Was he one of those seers or clairvoyants which the world has occasionally known, and in that sense inspired? The power of healing and of

this kind of intuitional knowledge, are seldom found together. It is very difficult to ascertain what Christ really did teach. There were no short-hand writers in those days, and the traditional reports we have, would come to us strained through, and coloured by, the much lower minds of his followers. We must therefore take the spirit of his teaching, and not take it literally; and we must recollect that much of what he taught was under the firm conviction that the world was coming to an end, probably in that generation. The morality of the New Testament, to which the Broad Church is now driven, giving up the conventional theological creed, furnishes no system of morals, or one upon which a science of mental and moral philosophy can be based. The sun still goes round the earth in the mental science of the New Testament, as much as it did in the physics of the Old, for of course there can be no science of mind, if the mind obeys no law, and it has power to resist the strongest motives, as the advocates of Free Will affirm. If, on the contrary, the mind necessarily obeys its own laws, then we require a re-modelling of the whole of Christ's morality, as it must be based upon a different idea of responsibility to that which he taught; for the whole tendency of Christianity is to separate conduct from its immediate and natural consequences, and to place such consequences far away, or even in some distant world; whereas the only divine judgment or responsibility which science can admit, is that only "which fulfils itself hour by hour, and day by day." Thus Christ taught, as his especial doctrine, the Fatherhood of God; now in the sense that God ever interferes with natural law in our favour, this is not true, and if not true, however comforting such a doctrine of a Heaven-Father, or Father in Heaven, may be to weak people, it had better be given up, as the truth must always serve us best. God has put everything we require within our reach, and has appointed a way by which it may be attained, and has lent us his power to

act for ourselves, and after that we have no right to expect he will interfere personally in our behalf, and if he did, it could only be to our injury, by weakening that self-reliance upon which certainly all progress, if not our very existence, depends. If we do not take this natural course towards the object of our desires, we are punished in the consequences, and as such punishment is for our good, God never injures us by forgiving our sins.

And this is what I have principally to say against Christianity. It has attempted to come between man and the natural consequences of his actions; it has filled the world with eleemosynary charity, and has thus weakened his most important springs of action.

Here we have the orthodox creed on this subject, "If man is compelled to distinguish between right and wrong, he is a responsible agent, subject to penalties for the misuse, &c., of his moral powers. He must be responsible to some one. That *some one* must be omniscient and omnipotent (or little less) in order to act as Judge of humanity, and to mete out adequate rewards and punishments. As these adequate rewards and punishments do not follow in this life, there must be a future state. If not, there would exist in man a whole class of moral faculties which seem to find in the present state of things an appropriate field for their exercise, but which man is under no necessity of using." (The Dean of Canterbury on "Science and Revelation"). Now it is the consequences of man's actions that enable him to distinguish between right and wrong, and at the same time mete out an adequate reward and punishment. He is judged at once, and by an infallible judge, and where the rewards and punishments, the pains and pleasures attending his actions, may be of some use to him and not carried on to some future state or other world, where the conditions being different, they can be of no use whatever. Man is responsible to himself, and to the society of which he forms a member. This idea

of vengeance, this notion that has come down from savage life of apportioning a certain amount of useless suffering to a certain amount of sin, pervades the whole of the Bible. We are told also that man is endowed with certain faculties for the exercise of which no proper field has been furnished him by natural means, and that therefore it requires a supernatural interposition to provide him with one. We know of no faculties that man possesses, that are not brought into daily use, that he could live without, or which are not active in providing an improved state of things *here in this world*, for himself and fellows.

The two great commandments of Christianity are that we should "Love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves." Now is this possible? If not, is it not time that we should give up pretending that it is? Can we love the God of the Hebrews who puts whole towns to the sword, men, women, and little children, and every living thing, and who throws great stones out of heaven upon the retreating hosts, and who kills more in that way, than are killed by the sword? Can we love the God of the Christians who has *ordained* an eternity of torture for the majority of his weak and erring creatures, having full power to save them or not to have created them? It is true we can make an idol of all the highest attributes with which we are acquainted and give it a personality after our own image, and love that, but that is not God. Can we love the Great Unknown? We may love goodness and beauty, but they must take some form to enable us to do so, we cannot love a mere abstraction. The Universal Father works for the good of all, and does not recognise individuals. Love is a human feeling applicable to our fellow creatures, and is not applicable, as it appears to me, to the All Supreme, which supports the Universe, or rather which is the Universe. We cannot know enough of this power to make it an object of love, however much it may create a feeling of reverence and

awe, and this idea and feeling increase the higher our conception rises of the Great Supreme. We may love Christ as the highest manifestation of God we may know, but this is a very different and inferior feeling to that which we have for the Great All. As to "loving our neighbour as ourselves" that is neither possible nor desirable. Suppose my neighbour is a nasty sneak, a mere animal, full of low and vicious propensities, why should I love him? I am not called upon to love vice in any form, although it is my neighbour, and to do so, as man's conduct is governed by the consequences, would be holding out a premium for vice. Let my neighbour make himself loveable, and I cannot help loving him. On principle I may do him all the good I can—getting him hanged perhaps being the greatest good I can do him—but as to loving him, I must decline. We can only love what is loveable, and believe what is credible. It is true that orthodoxy professes to *love* the Being who may send themselves or their best and dearest friend to spend an eternity in "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels," and as to belief, it thinks that any fool can believe what is credible, but that that only is a saving and justifying faith which believes what is incredible. If all that it is meant to inculcate is a settled principle of good-will to all men, that certainly is a most desirable feeling to encourage, even towards the unworthy. The same may be said about loving our enemies. Why should we love our enemies? The interests of the community, and therefore of morality, do not require it. We cannot do more for our friends. It is true we may bless them that curse, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, and we can do what pious people are very fond of doing, pray for our enemies; but as to loving them! when by doing them all the good we can, *if they deserve it*, we have made them our friends, then we may love them. Does God love his enemies when he exacts an infinite

penalty for a finite fault, or is it not true that he prepares an eternity of torment for them? "They shall drink," John says, "the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." How the holy angels must enjoy the sight! we are told also on the same 'loving' authority, 'they have no rest day nor night, they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them, they blaspheme God, they gnaw their tongues for pain.'" Moses says, "Slay every man his brother," rather than allow the existence of heretics, but Moses did not believe in a future state, and therefore he could not damn them as well. Christ says, "He that believeth not in me the wrath of God abideth on him"—"He that believeth not shall be damned," and Paul says of the unbelievers in his day, "God shall send them strong delusion (as he had previously done to Pharaoh and to Ahab), that they should believe a lie, that they may all be damned."

All that can come of setting up a false standard, and professing to love our enemies, is a pharisaical hypocrisy. What we have to do is to love the true, the good, and the beautiful; to stand up for the right regardless of consequences, and to maintain an unending battle against evil in all its forms. This may be done in all kindness, and in the full conviction that "Society prepares crime, and the guilty are only the instruments by which it is executed."—*Quetelet*. It is justice that ought to rule the world. We are governed by the consequences of our actions, and if we can get love without being loveable, and good for evil, the chief motives to be good and loveable are taken away. The same reasoning applies to the whole doctrine of the non-resistance of evil. Not to resist evil is to encourage it. If a man smite us unjustly on one cheek, and turning the other to be smitten would prevent its recurrence, let us do it.

With a good man it might do so, but with the great majority it would only encourage them to further aggression. To give a man my cloak who had taken my coat would be a premium for robbery; and to give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow of me not to turn away, as a rule, would be equally a premium for improvidence. So also to take no thought for the morrow, to trust to God to clothe us as he does the lilies of the field, would sap self-reliance and self-dependence, the foundation of all morality. No society that ever existed in Christ's time or since could hold together on such principles, translate them into whatever transcendental or aesthetic language we may.

As to the golden rule, which is not peculiar to Christianity, viz., "that we should do as we would be done by," it can only be received in spirit, in a very broad and general application, for people differ so in bodily and mental constitution that what suits one person by no means suits another. It is not at all safe to judge of other people by ourselves. Not to do to others what we would not like to have done to ourselves is a much safer way of putting it.

We must notice also, it is that we may be rewarded, not that we may do right, is the inducement everywhere held out.

With reference to prayer, Christ says, "when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." We are expressly told that we are not to pray standing in the synagogues, that we may be seen of men; that we are not to use vain repetitions and much speaking, for that our Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask Him. The whole of Christendom has systematically set these injunctions at defiance, for there would be little use for the priests were they carried out, and with one sex at least, church-going would be less popular if they were

not to be "seen of men." The last new bonnet is a great stimulant to devotion. The great majority of Christians, who believe their saints to be ubiquitous, or omniscient, and who pray to those who are always listening, to intercede with the Mother of God, to petition her Son, to ask his Father, can have little faith that the "Father knows what things we have need of, before we ask Him," or that if he does, he is very hard to persuade to let us have them. His Holiness, the Pope, in his Encyclical, recently issued, enjoins incessant prayer, employing a Mediatrix with Him, the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, who sits, he says, as a queen upon the right hand of her only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in a golden vestment, clothed around with various adornments. There is nothing she cannot obtain from him.

Now is it likely that God will be constantly altering the course he has appointed for our well-being at our ignorant intercession? Surely he knows what is right, and will do it, without our asking him or constantly reminding him! No amount of toadying, which we call worship, or serving him, will induce him to do otherwise than what is right, or prevent him from doing it, whether "we praise him," or "acknowledge him to be the Lord," or not. The savage with the noise of pots and pans tries to prevent an eclipse, that is, to prevent the sun eating up the moon, or *vice versa*, and the noises we make in the churches to bring or prevent rain, or in any way to alter the course of natural law, may be expected to be equally efficacious. The whole tendency of modern research goes to show that if law is anywhere, it is everywhere.

The Kyoungtha of Chittagong are Buddhists. Their village temples contain a small stand of bells and an image of Buddha, which the villagers generally worship, morning and evening, first ringing the bells to let him know that they are there (Sir John Lubbock's "Origin of Civilisation," p. 220). This is no more than polite or

politic; we ring our bells merely to call the people together, thinking God is *always ready* to listen to petitions, to do for us what he has given us full power to do for ourselves, or simply perhaps, to reverse the order of nature, upon the invariability of which the good of all depends. Surely it is better that all people should know that miracles will not be constantly worked on their behalf. It is true that by the laws of the mind, prayer often answers itself, and we get what we ask for, but should we mock God that we may be so benefited? No man prays for the success of his chemical experiments, neither will he for moral results when he knows as much of the likes and antipathies of human beings, as he does of the attractions and repulsions of atoms. Our present practice is a "survival" of primitive barbarous times, when all evil was supposed to come directly from spirits, or from the gods, and prayer was the only means supposed capable of averting such evils. We certainly have no right to reflect on less civilised times and nations for their superstition, so long as we expect the ordinary course of nature to be altered in our behalf whenever we choose to ask it.

It never seems to occur to those who pray without ceasing, to ask the question that if in answer to their repeated importunity, God delivers them from evil, why an infinitely powerful, good, and benevolent being does not deliver all from evil, without asking. If it were right in their case it would be right in all; but it would be not right. Any interference with the established order of nature would render both reason and instinct useless, and would weaken those springs of action on which all progress depends.

The late Rev. Charles Kingsley, says, speaking of Atheism;—"Has every suffering, searching soul, which ever gazed up into the darkness of the unknown, in hopes of catching even a glimpse of a divine eye, beholding all, and ordering all, and pitying all, gazed up in vain? Oh! my friends, those who

believe or fancy that they believe such things, must be able to do so only through some peculiar conformation, either of brain or heart. Only want of imagination to conceive the consequences of such doctrines can enable them, if they have any love and pity for their fellow-men, to preach those doctrines without pity and horror. They know not, they know not, of what they rob a mankind already but too miserable by its own folly and its own sin, a mankind which, if it have not hope in God and in Christ, is truly—as Homer said of old—more miserable than the beasts of the field. If their unconscious conceit did not make them unintentionally cruel, they would surely be more silent for pity's sake; they would let men go on in the pleasant delusion that there is a living God, and a Word of God who has revealed him to men, and would hide from their fellow-creatures the dreadful secret which they think they have discovered—that there is none that heareth prayer, and therefore to him need no flesh come."

No doubt this is very eloquent, but if such eloquence were compatible with reason, I should ask, who is it that professes to have discovered "the dreadful secret," that the majority after a moment spent here, are consigned to *endless* torments, where there "is none that heareth prayer, and therefore to Him need no flesh come." Surely Atheism is better than this orthodox belief, and if any have discovered that it is a blasphemous libel upon our Creator, the sooner they proclaim it the better. The good, most loving, and gentle Cowper, the Poet, not having felt, as he and his Parson thought, sufficient evidence of conversion, lived year after year in the full belief that God had utterly rejected him, and on his death-bed exclaimed, "I feel unutterable despair." The self-righteous people who feel so certain of their own salvation, forget, or more probably selfishly disregard, the numberless cases of this kind, of sensitive people being driven, as poor Cowper was, to despair; they think it so hard that

any should be deprived of the comforting notion. It is a great mystery, they say, but it is one of their own making: they first make it dark, and then complain that they cannot see.

I need not say any more, I think, to show that the Christianity of Christ, however much of excellence there is in it, is not up to the thought and moral sense of our time. Great efforts are being made to adapt it to the altered conditions by new and forced meanings, and by dropping, what no forcing can adapt, as not abiding principles intended for our times. So far as attempts have been made to put Christianity systematically into practice, they have been failures.

The early Christians were communists—they had all things in common; and no doubt it is better adapted to such a social system than to any other. When all are dependent upon each and each upon all; when all have a direct and immediate interest in the well-being, physical, moral, and intellectual of every member of the community, when conscience or the sense of duty is as strong a feeling as hunger and pride and vanity are now, when the unselfish feelings shall decidedly predominate, then some form of Christianity will be practicable. But society in no country has ever yet approached such a state. Communism is still, and may continue so for ages, the great Socialist Utopia.

Where Christianity has been attempted to be carried out as a system of theological belief; where he “who believeth shall be saved and he who believeth not shall be damned,” the burnings of millions of people have not brought us any nearer to it in practice. People will continue to believe that what appears to them to be black and not white, is black, whether they are to be burned here and hereafter for it or not; and as to “renouncing the devil and all his works,” and burning some nine millions of poor old women and others for supposed personal dealings with him, the devil, or at least the principle of evil, is nearly as rampant as ever. It would have been much

more convincing if those who burned others for want of faith, had exhibited a proper evidence of their own, which they never did. "And these signs shall follow them that believe:" says Mark xvi. 17, 18, 19, "In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." But such is the perversity of human nature, that had such powers attended their faith, they would probably have been burned for witchcraft. "So *then*," Mark goes on to say, xvi. 20, "after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received *up* into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."

The asceticism, which is a part of Christianity, has done the world infinite mischief, if it were only in depriving it of the offspring of so many of its highest minds, who were either imprisoned, burnt, or voluntarily retired from it. What wise man had time to marry when he had an eternity to prepare for? what good man would run the risk of introducing beings to a life of everlasting torment? The stake was so great, that no wonder that among those who were not good utter selfishness prevailed, and men thought only of their own salvation. The soul was the only thing to be thought of, the body was despised, mortified, degraded, and neglected. Monks, nuns, and hermits were the only sensible people. Prayer was the only occupation in which a man could profitably engage, and consequently no more attention was given to the body than its natural wants absolutely required. This absurd depreciation of the body, the sole instrument of thought, has continued to the present time.

It is absurd to say that we owe modern civilization to Christianity. Islamism was a real reform on the state of society induced by the Christianity of that day, and carried willingly all the East and the great cities of its birth along with it; and when it had reduced Europe

to the dark ages, we were saved again by the Moors and Saracens, and a return to Greece and Rome. The Greek and Roman philosophers aim at the perfect development of the individual man—mind and body—and of the individual state. “Magnanimity, self-reliance, dignity, independence, and, in a word, elevation of character, constituted the Roman idea of perfection; while humility, obedience, gentleness, patience, resignation are Christian virtues” (Lecky, vol. ii., pp. 72, 155), and it is not, I think, saying too much to affirm, that had the principles of Christianity been really practised, modern civilization could never have existed. His Excellency Iwakura Tomomi, chief of the supreme Japanese Embassy, which visited England a few years ago, has presented to the Library of the India Office a set of the Chinese version of the Buddhist Scriptures. The work weighs 3½ tons. A selection is probably, *in their case*, allowed to be made for the use of families. If, as is reported, the Chinese and Hindus are about to send missionaries to Europe, they certainly cannot come Bible in hand.

The time was when people were really in earnest about their religion, but now all living faith in the dogmas of the past seems to have died out. Where the idea of duty first makes its appearance is in the sacrifices to the dead. The most costly gifts of men, and women, and horses, and dogs, and arms, and money, were presented to the dead, and buried or burned with them. The Chinese, however, are a practical people, and Tylor tells us that in China “the fanciful art of replacing these costly offerings by worthless imitations is at this day worked out into the quaintest devices—the men and horses dispatched by fire for the service of the dead are but paper figures and the manufacture of stock-money, both in gold and silver, is the trade of thousands of women and children in a Chinese city” (“Primitive Culture,” vol. i. p. 445). Such a change has come over our religion,—which has now become a

mere conventional custom of what is called good society—a great sham which thousands of men, women and clergymen are engaged in manufacturing. There is no doubt we are bordering on change.

Not that we expect this change to be rapid; all permanent change is very slow. Besides the two extremes of the positivists and scientific men at one end, and working men at the other—who regard religion as allied always with monarchy and aristocracy, and as offering post-obit bills on heaven for what they think they are unjustly deprived of here—the great body of society looks upon Christianity as containing their highest ideal of excellence. Its dogmas are a dead letter to all but a very few, people have got used to them, or they are interpreted so as not to shock their moral sense, or they are regarded as awful mysteries to be cleared up in another world, and without which their religion would be mere morality and not half so acceptable. Add to this that custom, conventional usage, fashion, and respectability, with the toll-gates of birth, marriage and death, are all on the side of the national religion, and we certainly need expect no sudden change. The Christianity of the present day is not taken from the Bible, but is Bible doctrine strained through the mind of the nineteenth century, and many good people still prefer to call themselves Christians because there is nothing really at present equally good and of equal authority to take its place. There cannot be a doubt that church membership, whether of churchmen or dissenters, helps to keep people within the broader and most obvious moral laws; and it will be some time before the mass of the people will set themselves to learn what is true in order that they may do what is right, or that they will do what is right because it is right, and not from the hope of reward or from the fear of punishment. We must wait; in the meantime let no one fear or hesitate to proclaim what he believes to be the truth and of highest excellence.