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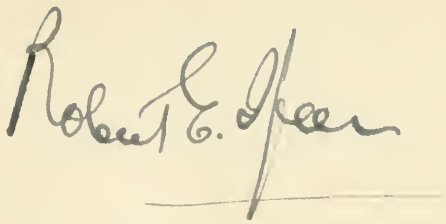

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AN AGNOSTIC'S APOLOGY

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AN AGNOSTIC'S APOLOGY

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

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NOTE

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January 1903.

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AN AGNOSTIC'S APOLOGY

The name Agnostic, originally coined by Professor Huxley about 1869, has gained general acceptance. It is sometimes used to indicate the philosophical theory which Mr. Herbert Spencer, as he tells us, developed from the doctrine of Hamilton and Mansel. Upon that theory I express no opinion. I take the word in a vaguer sense, and am glad to believe that its use indicates an advance in the courtesies of controversy. The old theological phrase for an intellectual opponent was Atheist—a name which still retains a certain flavour as of the stake in this world and hell-fire in the next, and which, moreover, implies an inaccuracy of some importance. Dogmatic Atheism—the doctrine that there is no God, whatever may be meant by God—is, to say the least, a rare phase of opinion. The word Agnosticism, on the other hand, seems to imply a fairly accurate appreciation of a form of creed already common and daily spreading. The Agnostic is one who asserts—what no one denies—that there are limits to the sphere of human intelligence. He asserts, further, what many

theologians have expressly maintained, that those limits are such as to exclude at least what Lewes called 'metempirical' knowledge. But he goes further, and asserts, in opposition to theologians, that theology lies within this forbidden sphere. This last assertion raises the important issue; and, though I have no pretension to invent an opposition nickname, I may venture, for the purposes of this article, to describe the rival school as Gnostics.

The Gnostic holds that our reason can, in some sense, transcend the narrow limits of experience. He holds that we can attain truths not capable of verification, and not needing verification, by actual experiment or observation. He holds, further, that a knowledge of those truths is essential to the highest interests of mankind, and enables us in some sort to solve the dark riddle of the universe. A complete solution, as everyone admits, is beyond our power. But some answer may be given to the doubts which harass and perplex us when we try to frame any adequate conception of the vast order of which we form an insignificant portion. We cannot say why this or that arrangement is what it is; we can say, though obscurely, that some answer exists, and would be satisfactory, if we could only find it. Overpowered, as every honest and serious thinker is at times overpowered, by the sight of pain, folly, and helplessness, by the jarring discords which run through the vast harmony of the universe, we are yet enabled to hear

at times a whisper that all is well, to trust to it as coming from the most authentic source, and to know that only the temporary bars of sense prevent us from recognising with certainty that the harmony beneath the discords is a reality and not a dream. This knowledge is embodied in the central dogma of theology. God is the name of the harmony; and God is knowable. Who would not be happy in accepting this belief, if he could accept it honestly? Who would not be glad if he could say with confidence: 'the evil is transitory, the good eternal: our doubts are due to limitations destined to be abolished, and the world is really an embodiment of love and wisdom, however dark it may appear to our faculties'? And yet, if the so-called knowledge be illusory, are we not bound by the most sacred obligations to recognise the facts? Our brief path is dark enough on any hypothesis. We cannot afford to turn aside after every *ignis fatuus* without asking whether it leads to sounder footing or to hopeless quagmires. Dreams may be pleasanter for the moment than realities; but happiness must be won by adapting our lives to the realities. And who, that has felt the burden of existence, and suffered under well-meant efforts at consolation, will deny that such consolations are the bitterest of mockeries? Pain is not an evil; death is not a separation; sickness is but a blessing in disguise. Have the gloomiest speculations of avowed pessimists ever tortured sufferers like those kindly

platitudes? Is there a more cutting piece of satire in the language than the reference in our funeral service to the 'sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection'? To dispel genuine hopes might be painful, however salutary. To suppress these spasmodic efforts to fly in the face of facts would be some comfort, even in the distress which they are meant to alleviate.

Besides the important question whether the Gnostic can prove his dogmas, there is, therefore, the further question whether the dogmas, if granted, have any meaning. Do they answer our doubts, or mock us with the appearance of an answer? The Gnostics rejoice in their knowledge. Have they anything to tell us? They rebuke what they call the 'pride of reason' in the name of a still more exalted pride. The scientific reasoner is arrogant because he sets limits to the faculty in which he trusts, and denies the existence of any other faculty. They are humble because they dare to tread in the regions which he declares to be inaccessible. But without bandying such accusations, or asking which pride is the greatest, the Gnostics are at least bound to show some ostensible justification for their complacency. Have they discovered a firm resting-place from which they are entitled to look down in compassion or contempt upon those who hold it to be a mere edifice of moonshine? If they have diminished by a scruple the weight of one passing doubt, we should be grateful:

perhaps we should be converts. If not, why condemn Agnosticism?

I have said that our knowledge is in any case limited. I may add that, on any showing, there is a danger in failing to recognise the limits of possible knowledge. The word Gnostic has some awkward associations. It once described certain heretics who got into trouble from fancying that men could frame theories of the Divine mode of existence. The sects have been dead for many centuries. Their fundamental assumptions can hardly be quite extinct. Not long ago, at least, there appeared in the papers a string of propositions framed—so we were assured—by some of the most candid and most learned of living theologians. These propositions defined by the help of various languages the precise relations which exist between the persons of the Trinity. It is an odd, though far from an unprecedented, circumstance that the unbeliever cannot quote them for fear of profanity. If they were transplanted into the pages of the 'Fortnightly Review,' it would be impossible to convince anyone that the intention was not to mock the simple-minded persons who, we must suppose, were not themselves intentionally irreverent. It is enough to say that they defined the nature of God Almighty with an accuracy from which modest naturalists would shrink in describing the genesis of a black-beetle. I know not whether these dogmas were put forward as articles of faith,

as pious conjectures, or as tentative contributions to a sound theory. At any rate, it was supposed that they were interesting to beings of flesh and blood. If so, one can only ask in wonder whether an utter want of reverence is most strongly implied in this mode of dealing with sacred mysteries; or an utter ignorance of the existing state of the world in the assumption that the question which really divides mankind is the double procession of the Holy Ghost; or an utter incapacity for speculation in the confusion of these dead exuviæ of long-past modes of thought with living intellectual tissue; or an utter want of imagination, or of even a rudimentary sense of humour, in the hypothesis that the promulgation of such dogmas could produce anything but the laughter of sceptics and the contempt of the healthy human intellect?

The sect which requires to be encountered in these days is not one which boggles over the *filioque*, but certain successors of those Ephesians who told Paul that they did not even know 'whether there were any Holy Ghost.' But it explains some modern phenomena when we find that the leaders of theology hope to reconcile faith and reason, and to show that the old symbols have still a right to the allegiance of our hearts and brains, by putting forth these portentous propositions. We are struggling with hard facts, and they would arm us with the forgotten tools of scholasticism. We wish for spiritual food, and are

to be put off with these ancient mummeries of forgotten dogma. If Agnosticism is the frame of mind which summarily rejects these imbecilities, and would restrain the human intellect from wasting its powers on the attempt to galvanise into sham activity this *caput mortuum* of old theology, nobody need be afraid of the name. Argument against such adversaries would be itself a foolish waste of time. Let the dead bury their dead, and Old Catholics decide whether the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, or from the Father alone. Gentlemen, indeed, who still read the Athanasian Creed, and profess to attach some meaning to its statements, have no right to sneer at their brethren who persist in taking things seriously. But for men who long for facts instead of phrases, the only possible course is to allow such vagaries to take their own course to the limbo to which they are naturally destined, simply noting, by the way, that modern Gnosticism may lead to puerilities which one blushes even to notice.

It is not with such phenomena that we have seriously to deal. Nobody maintains that the unassisted human intellect can discover the true theory of the Trinity; and the charge of Agnosticism refers, of course, to the sphere of reason, not to the sphere of revelation. Yet those who attack the doctrine are chiefly believers in revelation; and as such they should condescend to answer one important question. Is not the denunciation of reason a commonplace with

theologians? What could be easier than to form a catena of the most philosophical defenders of Christianity who have exhausted language in declaring the impotence of the unassisted intellect? Comte has not more explicitly enounced the incapacity of man to deal with the Absolute and the Infinite than a whole series of orthodox writers. Trust your reason, we have been told till we are tired of the phrase, and you will become Atheists or Agnostics. We take you at your word: we become Agnostics. What righ have you to turn round and rate us for being a degree more logical than yourselves? Our right, you reply, is founded upon a Divine revelation to ourselves or our Church. Let us grant—it is a very liberal concession—that the right may conceivably be established; but still you are at one with us in philosophy. You say, as we say, that the natural man can know nothing of the Divine nature. That is Agnosticism. Our fundamental principle is not only granted, but asserted. By what logical device you succeed in overleaping the barriers which you have declared to be insuperable is another question. At least you have no *primâ facie* ground for attacking our assumption that the limits of the human intellect are what you declare them to be. This is no mere verbal retort. Half, or more than half, of our adversaries agree formally with our leading principle. They cannot attack us without upsetting the very ground upon which the ablest advocates of their own case rely. The last English

writer who professed to defend Christianity with weapons drawn from wide and genuine philosophical knowledge was Dean Mansel. The whole substance of his argument was simply and solely the assertion of the first principles of Agnosticism. Mr. Herbert Spencer, the prophet of the Unknowable, the foremost representative of Agnosticism, professes in his programme to be carrying 'a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel.' Nobody, I suspect, would now deny, nobody except Dean Mansel himself, and the 'religious' newspapers, ever denied very seriously, that the 'further step' thus taken was the logical step. Opponents both from within and without the Church, Mr. Maurice and Mr. Mill, agreed that this affiliation was legitimate. The Old Testament represents Jehovah as human, as vindictive, as prescribing immoralities; therefore, Jehovah was not the true God; that was the contention of the infidel. We know nothing whatever about the true God was the reply, for God means the Absolute and the Infinite. Any special act may come from God, for it may be a moral miracle; any attribute may represent the character of God to man, for we know nothing whatever of His real attributes, and cannot even conceive Him as endowed with attributes. The doctrine of the Atonement cannot be revolting, because it cannot have any meaning. Mr. Spencer hardly goes a step beyond his original, except, indeed, in candour.

Most believers repudiate Dean Mansel's arguments. They were an anachronism. They were fatal to the decaying creed of pure Theism, and powerless against the growing creed of Agnosticism. When theology had vital power enough to throw out fresh branches, the orthodox could venture to attack the Deist, and the Deist could assail the traditional beliefs. As the impulse grows fainter, it is seen that such a warfare is suicidal. The old rivals must make an alliance against the common enemy. The theologian must appeal for help to the metaphysician whom he reviled. Orthodoxy used to call Spinoza an Atheist; it is now glad to argue that even Spinoza is a witness on its own side. Yet the most genuine theology still avows its hatred of reason and distrusts sham alliances. Newman was not, like Dean Mansel, a profound metaphysician, but his admirable rhetoric expressed a far finer religious instinct. He felt more keenly, if he did not reason so systematically; and the force of one side of his case is undeniable. He holds that the unassisted reason cannot afford a sufficient support for a belief in God. He declares, as innumerable writers of less power have declared, that there is 'no medium, in true philosophy, between Atheism and Catholicity, and that a perfectly consistent mind, under those circumstances in which it finds itself here below, must embrace either the one or the other.'[1] He looks in vain for any antagonist, except the Catholic

[1] *History of my Religious Opinions*, pp. 322-3.

Church, capable of baffling and withstanding 'the fierce energy of passion, and the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious matters.'[1] Some such doctrine is in fact but a natural corollary from the doctrine of human corruption held by all genuine theologians. The very basis of orthodox theology is the actual separation of the creation from the Creator. In the 'Grammar of Assent,' Newman tells us that we 'can only glean from the surface of the world some faint and fragmentary views' of God. 'I see,' he proceeds, 'only a choice of alternatives in view of so critical a fact; either there is no Creator, or He has disowned His creatures.'[2] The absence of God from His own world is the one prominent fact which startles and appals him. Newman, of course, does not see or does not admit the obvious consequence. He asserts most emphatically that he believes in the existence of God as firmly as in his own existence; and he finds the ultimate proof of this doctrine—a proof not to be put into mood and figure—in the testimony of the conscience. But he apparently admits that Atheism is as logical, that is, as free from self-contradiction, as Catholicism. He certainly declares that though the ordinary arguments are conclusive, they are not in practice convincing. Sound reason would, of course, establish theology; but corrupt man does not and cannot reason soundly. Newman, however, goes

[1] *Ibid.* p. 379. [2] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 392.

further than this. His Theism can only be supported by help of his Catholicity. If, therefore, Newman had never heard of the Catholic Church—if, that is, he were in the position of the great majority of men now living, and of the overwhelming majority of the race which has lived since its first appearance, he would be driven to one of two alternatives. Either he would be an Atheist or he would be an Agnostic. His conscience might say, there is a God; his observation would say, there is no God. Moreover, the voice of conscience has been very differently interpreted. Newman's interpretation has no force for anyone who, like most men, does not share his intuitions. To such persons, therefore, there can be, on Newman's own showing, no refuge except the admittedly logical refuge of Atheism. Even if they shared his intuitions, they would be necessarily sceptics until the Catholic Church came to their aid, for their intuitions would be in hopeless conflict with their experience. I need hardly add that, to some minds, the proposed alliance with reason of a Church which admits that its tenets are corroded and dissolved wherever free reason is allowed to play upon them, is rather suspicious. At any rate, Newman's arguments go to prove that man, as guided by reason, ought to be an Agnostic, and that, at the present moment, Agnosticism is the only reasonable faith for at least three-quarters of the race.

All, then, who think that men should not be dogmatic about matters beyond the sphere of reason or

even conceivability, who hold that reason, however weak, is our sole guide, or who find that their conscience does not testify to the divinity of the Catholic God, but declares the moral doctrines of Catholicity to be demonstrably erroneous, are entitled to claim such orthodox writers as sharing their fundamental principles, though refusing to draw the legitimate inferences. The authority of Dean Mansel and Newman may of course be repudiated. In one sense, however, they are simply stating an undeniable fact. The race collectively is agnostic, whatever may be the case with individuals. Newton might be certain of the truth of his doctrines, whilst other thinkers were still convinced of their falsity. It could not be said that the doctrines were certainly true, so long as they were doubted in good faith by competent reasoners. Newman may be as much convinced of the truth of his theology as Professor Huxley of its error. But speaking of the race, and not of the individual, there is no plainer fact in history than the fact that hitherto no knowledge has been attained. There is not a single proof of natural theology of which the negative has not been maintained as vigorously as the affirmative.

You tell us to be ashamed of professing ignorance. Where is the shame of ignorance in matters still involved in endless and hopeless controversy? Is it not rather a duty? Why should a lad who has just run the gauntlet of examinations and escaped to a country parsonage be dogmatic, when his dogmas are de-

nounced as erroneous by half the philosophers of the world? What theory of the universe am I to accept as demonstrably established? At the very earliest dawn of philosophy men were divided by earlier forms of the same problems which divide them now. Shall I be a Platonist or an Aristotelian? Shall I admit or deny the existence of innate ideas? Shall I believe in the possibility or in the impossibility of transcending experience? Go to the mediæval philosophy, says one controversialist. To which mediæval philosophy, pray? Shall I be a nominalist or a realist? And why should I believe you rather than the great thinkers of the seventeenth century, who agreed with one accord that the first condition of intellectual progress was the destruction of that philosophy? There would be no difficulty if it were a question of physical science. I might believe in Galileo and Newton and their successors down to Adams and Leverrier without hesitation, because they all substantially agree. But when men deal with the old problems there are still the old doubts. Shall I believe in Hobbes or in Descartes? Can I stop where Descartes stopped, or must I go on to Spinoza? Or shall I follow Locke's guidance, and end with Hume's scepticism? Or listen to Kant, and, if so, shall I decide that he is right in destroying theology, or in reconstructing it, or in both performances? Does Hegel hold the key of the secret, or is he a mere spinner of jargon? May not Feuerbach or Schopenhauer re-

present the true development of metaphysical inquiry? Shall I put faith in Hamilton and Mansel, and, if so, shall I read their conclusions by the help of Mr. Spencer, or shall I believe in Mill or in Green? State any one proposition in which all philosophers agree, and I will admit it to be true; or any one which has a manifest balance of authority, and I will agree that it is probable. But so long as every philosopher flatly contradicts the first principles of his predecessors, why affect certainty? The only agreement I can discover is, that there is no philosopher of whom his opponents have not said that his opinions lead logically either to Pantheism or to Atheism.

When all the witnesses thus contradict each other, the *primâ facie* result is pure scepticism. There is no certainty. Who am I, if I were the ablest of modern thinkers, to say summarily that all the great men who differed from me are wrong, and so wrong that their difference should not even raise a doubt in my mind? From such scepticism there is indeed one, and, so far as I can see, but one, escape. The very hopelessness of the controversy shows that the reasoners have been transcending the limits of reason. They have reached a point where, as at the pole, the compass points indifferently to every quarter. Thus there is a chance that I may retain what is valuable in the chaos of speculation, and reject what is bewildering by confining the mind to its proper limits. But has any limit ever been suggested, except a limit which comes in sub-

stance to an exclusion of all ontology? In short, if I would avoid utter scepticism, must I not be an Agnostic?

Let us suppose, however, that this difficulty can be evaded. Suppose that, after calling witnesses from all schools and all ages, I can find ground for excluding all the witnesses who make against me. Let me say, for example, that the whole school which refuses to transcend experience errs from the wickedness of its heart and the consequent dulness of its intellect. Some people seem to think that a plausible and happy suggestion. Let the theologian have his necessary laws of thought, which enable him to evolve truth beyond all need of verification from experience. Where will the process end? The question answers itself. The path has been trodden again and again, till it is as familiar as the first rule of arithmetic. Admit that the mind can reason about the Absolute and the Infinite, and you will get to the position of Spinoza, or to a position substantially equivalent. In fact, the chain of reasoning is substantially too short and simple to be for a moment doubtful. Theology, if logical, leads straight to Pantheism. The Infinite God is everything. All things are bound together as cause and effect. God, the first cause, is the cause of all effects down to the most remote. In one form or other, that is the conclusion to which all theology approximates as it is pushed to its legitimate result.

Here, then, we have an apparent triumph over Agnosticism. But nobody can accept Spinoza without rejecting all the doctrines for which the Gnostics really contend. In the first place, revelation and the God of revelation disappear. The argument according to Spinoza against supernaturalism differs from the argument according to Hume in being more peremptory. Hume only denies that a past miracle can be proved by evidence: Spinoza denies that it could ever have happened. As a fact, miracles and a local revelation were first assailed by Deists more effectually than by sceptics. The old Theology was seen to be unworthy of the God of nature, before it was said that nature could not be regarded through the theological representation. And, in the next place, the orthodox assault upon the value of Pantheism is irresistible. Pantheism can give no ground for morality, for nature is as much the cause of vice as the cause of virtue; it can give no ground for an optimist view of the universe, for nature causes evil as much as it causes good. We no longer doubt, it is true, whether there be a God, for our God means all reality; but every doubt which we entertained about the universe is transferred to the God upon whom the universe is moulded. The attempt to transfer to pure being or to the abstraction Nature the feelings with which we are taught to regard a person of transcendent wisdom and benevolence is, as theologians assert, hopeless. To deny the existence of God is in this

sense the same as to deny the existence of no-God. We keep the old word; we have altered the whole of its contents. A Pantheist is, as a rule, one who looks upon the universe through his feelings instead of his reason, and who regards it with love because his habitual frame of mind is amiable. But he has no logical argument as against the Pessimist, who regards it with dread unqualified by love, or the Agnostic, who finds it impossible to regard it with any but a colourless emotion.

The Gnostic, then, gains nothing by admitting the claims of a faculty which at once overturns his conclusions. His second step is invariably to half-retract his first. We are bound by a necessary law of thought, he tells us, to believe in universal causation. Very well, then, let us be Pantheists. No, he says; another necessary law of thought tells us that causation is not universal. We know that the will is free, or, in other words, that the class of phenomena most important to us is not caused. This is the position of the ordinary Deist; and it is of vital importance to him, for otherwise the connection between Deism and morality is, on his own ground, untenable. The ablest and most logical thinkers have declared that the free-will doctrine involves a fallacy, and have unravelled the fallacy to their own satisfaction. Whether right or wrong, they have at least this advantage, that, on their showing, reason is on this point consistent with itself. The advocate of free-will, on the other

hand, declares that an insoluble antinomy occurs at the very threshold of his speculations. An uncaused phenomenon is unthinkable ; yet consciousness testifies that our actions, so far as they are voluntary, are uncaused. In face of such a contradiction, the only rational state of mind is scepticism. A mind balanced between two necessary and contradictory thoughts must be in a hopeless state of doubt. The Gnostic, therefore, starts by proclaiming that we must all be Agnostics in regard to a matter of primary philosophical importance. If by free-will he means anything else than a denial of causation, his statement is irrelevant.

For, it must be noticed, this is not one of the refined speculative problems which may be neglected in our ordinary reasoning. The ancient puzzles about the one and the many, or the infinite and the finite, may or may not be insoluble. They do not affect our practical knowledge. Familiar difficulties have been raised as to our conceptions of motion: the hare and tortoise problem may be revived by modern metaphysicians ; but the mathematician may continue to calculate the movements of the planets and never doubt whether the quicker body will, in fact, overtake the slower. The free-will problem cannot be thus shirked. We all admit that a competent reasoner can foretell the motions of the moon ; and we admit it because we know that there is no element of objective chance in the problem. But the determinist asserts, whilst the libertarian denies, that it would be

possible for an adequate intelligence to foretell the actions of a man or a race. There is or is not an element of objective chance in the question; and whether there is or is not must be decided by reason and observation, independently of those puzzles about the infinite and the finite, which affect equally the man and the planet. The anti-determinist asserts the existence of chance so positively, that he doubts whether God Himself can foretell the future of humanity; or, at least, he is unable to reconcile Divine prescience with his favourite doctrine.

In most practical questions, indeed, the difference is of little importance. The believer in free-will admits that we can make an approximate guess; the determinist admits that our faculty of calculation is limited. But when we turn to the problems with which the Gnostic desires to deal, the problem is of primary importance. Free-will is made responsible for all the moral evil in the world. God made man perfect, but He gave His creature free will. The exercise of that free-will has converted the world into a scene in which the most striking fact, as Newman tells us, is the absence of the Creator. It follows, then, that all this evil, the sight of which leads some of us to Atheism, some to blank despair, and some to epicurean indifference, and the horror of which is at the root of every vigorous religious creed, results from accident. If even God could have foretold it, He foretold it in virtue of faculties inconceivable to finite

minds; and no man, however exalted his faculties, could by any possibility have foretold it. Here, then, is Agnosticism in the highest degree. An inexorable necessity of thought makes it absolutely impossible for us to say whether this world is the ante-room to heaven or hell. We do not know, nay, it is intrinsically impossible for us to know, whether the universe is to be a source of endless felicity or a ghastly and everlasting torture-house. The Gnostic invites us to rejoice because the existence of an infinitely good and wise Creator is a guarantee for our happiness. He adds, in the same breath, that this good and wise Being has left it to chance whether His creatures shall all, or in any proportion, go straight to the devil. He reviles the Calvinist, who dares to think that God has settled the point by His arbitrary will. Is an arbitrary decision better or worse than a trusting to chance? We know that there is a great First Cause; but we add that there are at this moment in the world some twelve hundred million little first causes which may damn or save themselves as they please.

The free-will hypothesis is the device by which theologians try to relieve God of the responsibility for the sufferings of His creation. It is required for another purpose. It enables the Creator to be also the judge. Man must be partly independent of God, or God would be at once pulling the wires and punishing the puppets. So far the argument is un-

impeachable; but the device justifies God at the expense of making the universe a moral chaos. Grant the existence of this arbitrary force called free-will, and we shall be forced to admit that, if justice is to be found anywhere, it is at least not to be found in this strange anarchy, where chance and fate are struggling for the mastery.

The fundamental proposition of the anti-determinist, that which contains the whole pith and substance of his teaching, is this: that a determined action cannot be meritorious. Desert can only accrue in respect of actions which are self-caused, or in so far as they are self-caused; and self-caused is merely a periphrasis for uncaused. Now no one dares to say that our conduct is entirely self-caused. The assumption is implied in every act of our lives and every speculation about history that men's actions are determined, exclusively or to a great extent, by their character and their circumstances. Only so far as that doctrine is true can human nature be the subject of any reasoning whatever; for reason is but the reflection of external regularity, and vanishes with the admission of chance. Our conduct, then, is the resultant of the two forces, which we may call fate and free-will. Fate is but the name for the will of God. He is responsible for placing us with a certain character in a certain position; He cannot justly punish us for the consequences; we are responsible to Him for the effects of our free-will alone, if free-will exists. That is the very con-

tention of the anti-determinist; let us look for a moment at the consequences.

The ancient difficulty which has perplexed men since the days of Job is this: Why are happiness and misery arbitrarily distributed? Why do the good so often suffer, and the evil so often flourish? The difficulty, says the determinist, arises entirely from applying the conception of justice where it is manifestly out of place. The advocate of free-will refuses this escape, and is perplexed by a further difficulty. Why are virtue and vice arbitrarily distributed? Of all the puzzles of this dark world, or of all forms of the one great puzzle, the most appalling is that which meets us at the corner of every street. Look at the children growing up amidst moral poison; see the brothel and the public-house turning out harlots and drunkards by the thousand; at the brutalised elders preaching cruelty and shamelessness by example; and deny, if you can, that lust and brutality are generated as certainly as scrofula and typhus. Nobody dares to deny it. All philanthropists admit it; and every hope of improvement is based on the assumption that the moral character is determined by its surroundings. What does the theological advocate of free-will say to reconcile such a spectacle with our moral conceptions? Will God damn all these wretches for faults due to causes as much beyond their power as the shape of their limbs or as the orbits of the planets? Or will He make some allowance, and decline to ask for

grapes from thistles, and exact purity of life from beings born in corruption, breathing corruption, and trained in corruption? Let us try each alternative.

To Job's difficulty it has been replied that, though virtue is not always rewarded and vice punished, yet virtue *as such* is rewarded, and vice *as such* is punished. If that be true, God, on the free-will hypothesis, must be unjust. Virtue and vice, as the facts irresistibly prove, are caused by fate or by God's will as well as by free-will—that is, our own will. To punish a man brought up in a London slum by the rule applicable to a man brought up at the feet of Christ is manifestly the height of injustice. Nay, for anything we can tell—for we know nothing of the circumstances of their birth and education—the effort which Judas Iscariot exerted in restoring the price of blood may have required a greater force of free-will than would have saved Peter from denying his Master. Moll Flanders may put forth more power to keep out of the lowest depths of vice than a girl brought up in a convent to kill herself by ascetic austerities. If, in short, reward is proportioned to virtue, it cannot be proportioned to merit, for merit, by the hypothesis, is proportioned to the free-will, which is only one of the factors of virtue. The apparent injustice may, of course, be remedied by some unknowable compensation; but for all that appears, it is the height of injustice to reward equally equal attainments under entirely different conditions. In other words, the

theologian has raised a difficulty from which he can only escape by the help of Agnosticism. Justice is not to be found in the visible arrangements of the universe.

Let us, then, take the other alternative. Assume that rewards are proportioned, not to virtue, but to merit. God will judge us by what we have done for ourselves, not by the tendencies which He has impressed upon us. The difficulty is disguised, for it is not diminished, and morality is degraded. A man should be valued, say all the deepest moralists, by his nature, not by his external acts ; by what he is, not by how he came to be what he is. Virtue is heaven, and vice is hell. Divine rewards and punishments are not arbitrarily annexed, but represent the natural state of a being brought into harmony with the supreme law, or in hopeless conflict with it. We need a change of nature, not a series of acts unconnected with our nature. Virtue is a reality precisely in so far as it is a part of nature, not of accident ; of our fate, not of our free-will. The assertion in some shape of these truths has been at the bottom of all great moral and religious reforms. The attempt to patch up some compromise between this and the opposite theory has generated those endless controversies about grace and free-will on which no Christian Church has ever been able to make up its mind, and which warn us that we are once more plunging into Agnosticism. In order to make the Creator the

judge, you assume that part of man's actions are his own. Only on that showing can he have merit as against his Maker. Admitting this, and only if we admit this, we get a footing for the debtor and creditor theories of morality—for the doctrine that man runs up a score with Heaven in respect of that part of his conduct which is uncaused. Thus we have a ground for the various theories of merit by which priests have thriven and Churches been corrupted ; but it is at the cost of splitting human nature in two, and making happiness depend upon those acts which are not really part of our true selves.

It is not, however, my purpose to show the immorality or the unreasonableness of the doctrine. I shall only remark that it is essentially agnostic. Only in so far as phenomena embody fixed 'laws' can we have any ground for inference in this world, and, *à fortiori*, from this world to the next. If happiness is the natural consequence of virtue, we may plausibly argue that the virtuous will be happy hereafter. If heaven be a bonus arbitrarily bestowed upon the exercise of an inscrutable power, all analogies break down. The merit of an action as between men depends upon the motives. The actions for which God rewards and punishes are the actions or those parts of actions which are independent of motive. Punishment amongst men is regulated by some considerations of its utility to the criminal or his fellows. No conceivable measure of Divine punishment can

even be suggested when once we distinguish between divine and natural ; and the very essence of the theory is that such a distinction exists. For whatever may be true of the next world, we begin by assuming that new principles are to be called into play hereafter. The new world is summoned into being to redress the balance of the old. The fate which here too often makes the good miserable and the bad happy, which still more strangely fetters our wills and forces the strong will into wickedness and strengthens the weak will to goodness, will then be suspended. The motive which persuades us to believe in the good arrangement hereafter is precisely the badness of this. Such a motive to believe cannot itself be a reason for belief. That would be to believe because belief was unreasonable. This world, once more, is a chaos, in which the most conspicuous fact is the absence of the Creator. Nay, it is so chaotic that, according to theologians, infinite rewards and penalties are required to square the account and redress the injustice here accumulated. What is this, so far as the natural reason is concerned, but the very superlative of Agnosticism ? The appeal to experience can lead to nothing, for our very object is to contradict experience. We appeal to facts to show that facts are illusory. The appeal to *à priori* reason is not more hopeful, for you begin by showing that reason on these matters is self-contradictory, and you insist that human nature is radically irregular, and there-

fore beyond the sphere of reason. If you could succeed in deducing any theory by reason, reason would, on your showing, be at hopeless issue with experience.

There are two questions, in short, about the universe which must be answered to escape from Agnosticism. The great fact which puzzles the mind is the vast amount of evil. It may be answered that evil is an illusion, because God is benevolent; or it may be answered that evil is deserved, because God is just. In one case the doubt is removed by denying the existence of the difficulty, in the other it is made tolerable by satisfying our consciences. We have seen what natural reason can do towards justifying these answers. To escape from Agnosticism we become Pantheists; then the divine reality must be the counterpart of phenomenal nature, and all the difficulties recur. We escape from Pantheism by the illogical device of free-will. Then God is indeed good and wise, but God is no longer omnipotent. By His side we erect a fetish called free-will, which is potent enough to defeat all God's good purposes, and to make His absence from His own universe the most conspicuous fact given by observation; and which, at the same time, is by its own nature intrinsically arbitrary in its action. Your Gnosticism tells us that an almighty benevolence is watching over everything, and bringing good out of all evil. Whence, then, comes the evil? By free-will; that is, by chance! It is an exception, an exception which covers, say, half

the phenomena, and includes all that puzzle us. Say boldly at once no explanation can be given, and then proceed to denounce Agnosticism. If, again, we take the moral problem, the Pantheist view shows desert as before God to be a contradiction in terms. We are what He has made us; nay, we are but manifestations of Himself—how can He complain? Escape from the dilemma by making us independent of God, and God, so far as the observed universe can tell us, becomes systematically unjust. He rewards the good and the bad, and gives equal reward to the free agent and the slave of fate. Where are we to turn for a solution?

Let us turn to revelation; that is the most obvious reply. By all means, though this is to admit that natural reason cannot help us; or, in other words, it directly produces more Agnosticism, though indirectly it makes an opening for revelation. There is, indeed, a difficulty here. Pure theism, as we have observed, is in reality as vitally opposed to historical revelation as simple scepticism. The word God is used by the metaphysician and the savage. It may mean anything, from 'pure Being' down to the most degraded fetish. The 'universal consent' is a consent to use the same phrase for antagonistic conceptions—for order and chaos, for absolute unity or utter heterogeneity, for a universe governed by a human will, or by a will of which man cannot form the slightest conception. This is, of course, a difficulty which runs

off the orthodox disputant like water from a duck's back. He appeals to his conscience, and his conscience tells him just what he wants. It reveals a Being just at that point in the scale between the two extremes which is convenient for his purposes. I open, for example, a harmless little treatise by a divine who need not be named. He knows intuitively, so he says, that there is a God, who is benevolent and wise, and endowed with personality, that is to say, conceived anthropomorphically enough to be capable of acting upon the universe, and yet so far different from man as to be able to throw a decent veil of mystery over His more questionable actions. Well, I reply, my intuition tells me of no such Being. Then, says the divine, I can't prove my statements, but you would recognise their truth if your heart or your intellect were not corrupted: that is, you must be a knave or a fool. This is a kind of argument to which one is perfectly accustomed in theology. I am right, and you are wrong; and I am right because I am good and wise. By all means; and now let us see what your wisdom and goodness can tell us.

The Christian revelation makes statements which, if true, are undoubtedly of the very highest importance. God is angry with man. Unless we believe and repent we shall all be damned. It is impossible, indeed, for its advocates even to say this without instantly contradicting themselves. Their doctrine frightens them. They explain in various

ways that a great many people will be saved without believing, and that eternal damnation is not eternal nor damnation. It is only the vulgar who hold such views, and who, of course, must not be disturbed in them; but they are not for the intelligent. God grants 'uncovenanted mercies'—that is, He sometimes lets a sinner off, though He has not made a legal bargain about it—an explanation calculated to exalt our conceptions of the Deity! But let us pass over these endless shufflings from the horrible to the meaningless. Christianity tells us in various ways how the wrath of the Creator may be appeased and His goodwill ensured. The doctrine is manifestly important to believers; but does it give us a clearer or happier view of the universe? That is what is required for the confusion of Agnostics; and, if the mystery were in part solved, or the clouds thinned in the slightest degree, Christianity would triumph by its inherent merits. Let us, then, ask once more, Does Christianity exhibit the ruler of the universe as benevolent or as just?

If I were to assert that of every ten beings born into this world nine would be damned, that all who refused to believe what they did not hold to be proved, and all who sinned from overwhelming temptation, and all who had not had the good-fortune to be the subjects of a miraculous conversion or the recipients of a grace conveyed by a magical charm, would be tortured to all eternity, what would an orthodox

theologian reply? He could not say, 'That is false'; I might appeal to the highest authorities for my justification; nor, in fact, could he on his own showing deny the possibility. Hell, he says, exists; he does not know who will be damned; though he does know that all men are by nature corrupt and liable to be damned if not saved by supernatural grace. He might, and probably would, now say, 'That is rash. You have no authority for saying how many will be lost and how many saved: you cannot even say what is meant by hell or heaven: you cannot tell how far God may be better than His word, though you may be sure that He won't be worse than His word.' And what is all this but to say, We know nothing about it? In other words, to fall back on Agnosticism. The difficulty, as theologians truly say, is not so much that evil is eternal, as that evil exists. That is in substance a frank admission that, as nobody can explain evil, nobody can explain anything. Your revelation, which was to prove the benevolence of God, has proved only that God's benevolence may be consistent with the eternal and infinite misery of most of His creatures; you escape only by saying that it is also consistent with their not being eternally and infinitely miserable. That is, the revelation reveals nothing.

But the revelation shows God to be just. Now, if the free-will hypothesis be rejected—and it is rejected, not only by infidels, but by the most consistent theo-

logians—this question cannot really arise at all. Jonathan Edwards will prove that there cannot be a question of justice as between man and God. The creature has no rights against his Creator. The question of justice merges in the question of benevolence ; and Edwards will go on to say that most men are damned, and that the blessed will thank God for their tortures. That is logical, but not consoling. Passing this over, can revelation prove that God is just, assuming that justice is a word applicable to dealings between the potter and the pot ?

And here we are sent to the 'great argument of Butler.' Like some other theological arguments already noticed, that great argument is to many minds—those of James Mill and of Dr. Martineau, for example—a direct assault upon Theism, or, in other words, an argument for Agnosticism. Briefly stated, it comes to this. The God of revelation cannot be the God of nature, said the Deists, because the God of revelation is unjust. The God of revelation, replied Butler, may be the God of nature, for the God of nature is unjust. Stripped of its various involutions, that is the sum and substance of this celebrated piece of reasoning. Butler, I must say in passing, deserves high credit for two things. The first is that he is the only theologian who has ever had the courage to admit that any difficulty existed when he was struggling most desperately to meet the difficulty ; though even Butler could not admit that such a

difficulty should affect a man's conduct. Secondly, Butler's argument really rests upon a moral theory, mistaken indeed in some senses, but possessing a stoical grandeur. To admit, however, that Butler was a noble and a comparatively candid thinker is not to admit that he ever faced the real difficulty. It need not be asked here by what means he evaded it His position is in any case plain. Christianity tells us, as he thinks, that God damns men for being bad, whether they could help it or not ; and that He lets them off, or lets some of them off, for the sufferings of others. He damns the helpless and punishes the innocent. Horrible ! exclaims the infidel. Possibly, replies Butler, but nature is just as bad. All suffering is punishment. It strikes the good as well as the wicked. The father sins, and the son suffers. I drink too much, and my son has the gout. In another world we may suppose that the same system will be carried out more thoroughly. God will pardon some sinners because He punished Christ, and He will damn others everlastingly. That is His way. A certain degree of wrongdoing here leads to irremediable suffering, or rather to suffering remediable by death alone. In the next world there is no death ; therefore, the suffering won't be remediable at all. The world is a scene of probation, destined to fit us for a better life. As a matter of fact, most men make it a discipline of vice instead of a discipline of virtue ; and most men, therefore, will presumably be damned. We see the

same thing in the waste of seeds and animal life, and may suppose, therefore, that it is part of the general scheme of Providence.

This is the Christian revelation according to Butler. Does it make the world better? Does it not, rather, add indefinitely to the terror produced by the sight of all its miseries, and justify James Mill for feeling that rather than such a God he would have no God? What escape can be suggested? The obvious one: it is all a mystery; and what is mystery but the theological phrase for Agnosticism? God has spoken, and endorsed all our most hideous doubts. He has said, let there be light, and there is no light—no light, but rather darkness visible, serving only to discover sights of woe.

The believers who desire to soften away the old dogmas—in other words, to take refuge from the unpleasant results of their doctrine with the Agnostics, and to retain the pleasant results with the Gnostics—have a different mode of escape. They know that God is good and just; that evil will somehow disappear and apparent injustice be somehow redressed. The practical objection to this amiable creed suggests a sad comment upon the whole controversy. We fly to religion to escape from our dark forebodings. But a religion which stifles these forebodings always fails to satisfy us. We long to hear that they are groundless. As soon as we are told that they are groundless we mistrust our authority. No poetry

lives which reflects only the cheerful emotions. Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought. We can bring harmony out of melancholy; we cannot banish melancholy from the world. And the religious utterances, which are the highest form of poetry, are bound by the same law. There is a deep sadness in the world. Turn and twist the thought as you may, there is no escape. Optimism would be soothing if it were possible; in fact, it is impossible, and therefore a constant mockery; and of all dogmas that ever were invented, that which has least vitality is the dogma that whatever is, is right.

Let us, however, consider for a moment what is the net result of this pleasant creed. Its philosophical basis may be sought in pure reason or in experience; but, as a rule, its adherents are ready to admit that the pure reason requires the support of the emotions before such a doctrine can be established, and are therefore marked by a certain tinge of mysticism. They feel rather than know. The awe with which they regard the universe, the tender glow of reverence and love with which the bare sight of nature affects them, is to them the ultimate guarantee of their beliefs. Happy those who feel such emotions! Only, when they try to extract definite statements of fact from these impalpable sentiments, they should beware how far such statements are apt to come into terrible collision with reality. And, meanwhile, those who have been disabused with Candide, who have felt the

weariness and pain of all 'this unintelligible world,' and have not been able to escape into any mystic rapture, have as much to say for their own version of the facts. Is happiness a dream, or misery, or is it all a dream? Does not our answer vary with our health and with our condition? When, rapt in the security of a happy life, we cannot even conceive that our happiness will fail, we are practical optimists. When some random blow out of the dark crushes the pillars round which our life has been entwined as recklessly as a boy sweeps away a cobweb, when at a single step we plunge through the flimsy crust of happiness into the deep gulfs beneath, we are tempted to turn to Pessimism. Who shall decide, and how? Of all questions that can be asked, the most important is surely this: Is the tangled web of this world composed chiefly of happiness or of misery? And of all questions that can be asked, it is surely the most unanswerable. For in no other problem is the difficulty of discarding the illusions arising from our own experience, of eliminating 'the personal error' and gaining an outside standing-point, so hopeless.

In any case the real appeal must be to experience. Ontologists may manufacture libraries of jargon without touching the point. They have never made, or suggested the barest possibility of making, a bridge from the world of pure reason to the contingent world in which we live. To the thinker who tries to

construct the universe out of pure reason, the actual existence of error in our minds and disorder in the outside world presents a difficulty as hopeless as that which the existence of vice and misery presents to the optimist who tries to construct the universe out of pure goodness. To say that misery does not exist is to contradict the primary testimony of consciousness; to argue on *à priori* grounds that misery or happiness predominates, is as hopeless a task as to deduce from the principle of the excluded middle the distance from St. Paul's to Westminster Abbey. Questions of fact can only be solved by examining facts. Perhaps such evidence would show—and if a guess were worth anything, I should add that I guess that it would show—that happiness predominates over misery in the composition of the known world. I am, therefore, not prejudiced against the Gnostic's conclusion; but I add that the evidence is just as open to me as to him. The whole world in which we live may be an illusion—a veil to be withdrawn in some higher state of being. But be it what it may, it supplies all the evidence upon which we can rely. If evil predominates here, we have no reason to suppose that good predominates elsewhere. All the ingenuity of theologians can never shake our conviction that facts are what we feel them to be, nor invert the plain inference from facts; and facts are just as open to one school of thought as to another.

What, then, is the net result? One insoluble doubt has haunted men's minds since thought began in the

world. No answer has ever been suggested. One school of philosophers hands it to the next. It is denied in one form only to reappear in another. The question is not which system excludes the doubt, but how it expresses the doubt. Admit or deny the competence of reason in theory, we all agree that it fails in practice. Theologians revile reason as much as Agnostics ; they then appeal to it, and it decides against them. They amend their plea by excluding certain questions from its jurisdiction, and those questions include the whole difficulty. They go to revelation, and revelation replies by calling doubt, mystery. They declare that their consciousness declares just what they want it to declare. Ours declares something else. Who is to decide? The only appeal is to experience, and to appeal to experience is to admit the fundamental dogma of Agnosticism.

Is it not, then, the very height of audacity, in face of a difficulty which meets us at every turn, which has perplexed all the ablest thinkers in proportion to their ability, which vanishes in one shape only to show itself in another, to declare roundly, not only that the difficulty can be solved, but that it does not exist? Why, when no honest man will deny in private that every ultimate problem is wrapped in the profoundest mystery, do honest men proclaim in pulpits that unhesitating certainty is the duty of the most foolish and ignorant? Is it not a spectacle to make the angels laugh? We are a

company of ignorant beings, feeling our way through mists and darkness, learning only by incessantly-repeated blunders, obtaining a glimmering of truth by falling into every conceivable error, dimly discerning light enough for our daily needs, but hopelessly differing whenever we attempt to describe the ultimate origin or end of our paths; and yet, when one of us ventures to declare that we don't know the map of the universe as well as the map of our infinitesimal parish, he is hooted, reviled, and perhaps told that he will be damned to all eternity for his faithlessness. Amidst all the endless and hopeless controversies which have left nothing but bare husks of meaningless words, we have been able to discover certain reliable truths. They don't take us very far, and the condition of discovering them has been distrust of *à priori* guesses, and the systematic interrogation of experience. Let us, say some of us, follow at least this clue. Here we shall find sufficient guidance for the needs of life, though we renounce for ever the attempt to get behind the veil which no one has succeeded in raising; if, indeed, there be anything behind. You miserable Agnostics! is the retort; throw aside such rubbish, and cling to the old husks. Stick to the words which profess to explain everything; call your doubts mysteries, and they won't disturb you any longer; and believe in those necessary truths of which no two philosophers have ever succeeded in giving the same version.

Gentlemen, we can only reply, wait till you have some show of agreement amongst yourselves. Wait till you can give some answer, not palpably a verbal answer, to some one of the doubts which oppress us as they oppress you. Wait till you can point to some single truth, however trifling, which has been discovered by your method, and will stand the test of discussion and verification. Wait till you can appeal to reason without in the same breath vilifying reason. Wait till your Divine revelations have something more to reveal than the hope that the hideous doubts which they suggest may possibly be without foundation. Till then we shall be content to admit openly, what you whisper under your breath or hide in technical jargon, that the ancient secret is a secret still; that man knows nothing of the Infinite and Absolute; and that, knowing nothing, he had better not be dogmatic about his ignorance. And, meanwhile, we will endeavour to be as charitable as possible, and whilst you trumpet forth officially your contempt for our scepticism, we will at least try to believe that you are imposed upon by your own bluster.

THE SCEPTICISM OF BELIEVERS

Good people sometimes ask why materialist and infidel doctrines spread in spite of the incessant and crushing refutations to which they are so frequently exposed. It is scarcely necessary to insist upon one very obvious answer. Many diseases are fatal to men; one should be fatal to religions—the disease of being found out. Hume died over a century ago, and grave theological professors are still trying hard to believe in the miracle of the swine. Is it strange that the authority of professors has become shadowy? The old belief in truth has become weak, partly because it is so often a sham belief, and partly because it is chiefly a negative belief. No man makes converts who does not believe what he says, nor will he make them easily when his creed consists chiefly in denying the strongest and most fruitful convictions of his neighbours. A creed which is always on the defensive must be decrepit. I will not dwell upon the first of these explanations. It is not pleasant to insist upon the hypocrisy, generally unconscious, of the respectable world. But I propose to consider the

other explanation, which is, perhaps, a little more in need of defence.

It sounds paradoxical to declare that the orthodox belief is essentially sceptical. The unbeliever is still identified with the Mephistopheles whose essence it is to deny. He denies, it is said, a hereafter and a Divine element in the present. The denial implies the abandonment of the most cheering hopes and the highest aspirations of mankind. Therefore, to charge with scepticism those who are fighting against Materialism and Atheism is at best to indulge in a frivolous *tu quoque*. A similar retort, however, is common enough in the mouths of the orthodox. Nor is the taunt without foundation. Quasi-scientific persons are given to dabbling in gross superstition. Of the two, the Catholic confessor has obvious advantages over a medium, and one would, perhaps, prefer the service of the ancient Church to sitting at the feet of a Harris or a Blavatsky. The remark has a real significance. To speak brutally, faith oftens means belief in my nonsense ; and credulity, the belief in the nonsense of somebody else. It is, unfortunately, true that the rejection of one kind of nonsense does not imply the rejection of all nonsense, and it follows that scepticism and credulity may mean the very same thing—the acceptance, namely, of a doctrine which is sceptical in so far as it contradicts my opinion, and credulous in so far as it agrees with yours. It is worth while to consider the point a little more closely.

Scepticism — in the fullest sense of the word, a rejection of belief as belief—is, if not a strictly unthinkable, at least a practically impossible, state of mind. Metaphysicians may play with such a doctrine, or may impute it to their antagonists. If they succeed in fastening that imputation upon any system, they have virtually established a *reductio ad absurdum*. To make doubting, as doubting, a principle is impossible. In regard to the great bulk of ordinary beliefs, the so-called sceptics are just as much believers as their opponents. Hume, for example, was as certain as Newton that an unsupported apple would fall, though he endeavoured to deduce his certainty from experience. The thinkers generally charged with scepticism are equally charged with an excessive belief in the constancy and certainty of so-called 'laws of nature.' They assign a natural cause to certain phenomena as confidently as their opponents assign a supernatural cause. No man of any school denies the possibility of attaining certainty in regard to such laws as are verifiable by experience. The real problem is not, Ought we to believe—but, Why ought we to believe—that two and two make four, that there is a place called Rome, or that the planets obey the laws of gravitation? The believer in necessary truths assumes by the form of his argument that his opponents do in fact believe, and cannot help believing, the truths which he asserts to be necessary, though they may deny the propriety of the epithet.

The most thoroughgoing empiricist may suggest that truths, such as those of geometry, would cease to be valid under some other conditions, but he does not deny their validity within the whole sphere of actual experience. By attacking the supposed distinction between the two classes of truth, he elevates the claims of empirical as much as he depresses those of *à priori* knowledge. We can no more alter the intensity of belief in general than we can change our centre of gravity without some external point of support. One set of thinkers holds that we must pierce to the absolute or transcendental in order to provide foundations for the whole edifice of belief. Another set holds that such a foundation is not discoverable, but adds that it is unnecessary.

The point is obscured by the habit of speaking of 'belief' in general, without reference to its contents, and of proceeding to imply that it is in some way a creditable, whereas unbelief is a discreditable, state of mind. The obvious reply is, that belief and unbelief are the very same thing. It is a mere question of convenience whether I shall express myself in negative or positive terms; whether I shall say 'man is mortal,' or 'man is not immortal.' The believer at Rome is the infidel at Mecca, and conversely. The believer in the geocentric system has not more or less belief than the believer in the heliocentric system—he has simply an opposite belief. To say, therefore, that belief *qua* belief is better or worse than unbelief is a contradiction

in terms. Assertion is denial; and it is a transparent though a common fallacy to give an absolute character to a proposition which by its very nature can only be true in a particular relation. Belief and unbelief being identical in nature, either is good just so far as it is reasonable or logical; so far, that is, as it embodies the rules which secure a conformity between the world of thought and the world of fact. A great deal of slip-shod rhetoric about faith and reason is dissipated by this simple consideration. We are told of the blessedness of a childlike and trusting frame of mind. These question-begging epithets are out of place in logic. A childish and credulous state of mind is a bad thing; and we can only decide whether the complimentary or uncomplimentary adjectives are appropriate by knowing whether the state of mind is reasonable in the given case. Has our confidence reasonable grounds or not? No other test than the purely logical test can even be put into articulate shape. If we insist upon using 'scepticism' to designate a mental vice, we must interpret it to mean, not doubt in general, but unreasonable doubt; and in this sense the most sceptical man is he who prefers the least weight of evidence to the greatest—or, in other words, he is identical with the most credulous.

Faith, indeed, may in one sense be called a virtue, even in regard to questions of pure reason. It is our duty to believe what appears to us to be proved. The proposition seems to be superfluous, because from a

purely logical point of view the two things seem to be identical. 'To know,' it may be said, includes 'to believe.' Yet, as a matter of fact, it is as common to know without believing as to believe without knowing. The reason has to reckon with instincts not less powerful than irrational. I may know that I am absolutely safe when I am at the brink of a precipice, but my body declines to be convinced, and shudders and turns giddy in spite of conclusive evidence. A demonstration may be as clear to me as a proposition of Euclid; but fear of authority, or dread of consequences, or mere blind sympathy with others, may prevent its real assimilation. To believe what we know to be certain may at times even require a kind of intellectual heroism. And, therefore, when Locke laid down the principle that we should in all cases proportion our beliefs to the evidence, he was indeed uttering what seems to be a truism, but what was, nevertheless, a highly important truth. The supremacy of reason within its own sphere is rightful, but is seldom actual, and a downright defiance of logic is not an impossibility, though it is an absurdity. In a relevant sense again, faith is indeed the name of one of the highest of virtues; of the enthusiasm which keeps the world from corruption, and now and then lifts it out of its ancient ruts. The phrase in this acceptation includes not merely the intellectual conviction, but the moral purpose. Psychologists have to distinguish between the intellect and the emotions; but they do not exist as two separate entities. They

are, rather, seen to be separate aspects of an indissoluble unity. Thought without feeling is an empty form, and feeling without thought a mere formless chaos. Faith is often used to designate that state in which a man's affections or passions are definitely organised and brought to bear upon some definite purpose, and which therefore implies a framework of distinct convictions directing and combining the impulses of his moral nature. We honour the old heroes who 'through faith put to flight the armies of the aliens,' and gave up life for a worthy end. We honour the man who has faith in his friends, in his country, in his cause, or in human nature; for such faith implies, not merely an intellectual state, but the capacity for love and self-sacrifice and generous devotion. Such devotion calls for no sacrifice of the most absolute truthfulness. The enthusiast has, it is true, a special temptation to certain illusions. The mother who loves her children sometimes exaggerates their merits, and the philanthropist thinks men a good deal fitter for the millennium than the cool observer would admit. Poetic genius, we are told, lies perilously near to madness, and the hero is own brother to the fanatic. We regard such errors leniently, for danger to mankind does not lie in the direction of their excessive frequency. Yet, so far as there is error there is weakness. Nelson's patriotism led him to entertain the erroneous belief that one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen. Fortunately, he had too much

genius to act upon it unreservedly. He took very good care in his battles that two Englishmen should be opposed to one Frenchman. We can therefore smile at a theory which represents merely the exuberance of an enthusiasm which knew how in practice to obey the rules of common-sense. But the belief, taken seriously by a stupid leader, would have meant a certainty of disaster. The hero is not the man who miscalculates or overlooks the risk, but the man who measures it fairly, and dares it when it must be dared. Blindness to danger is only a sham version of true heroism. The more accurate our estimate of facts the greater our capacity, though at times, also, the greater the strain upon our powers. If enthusiasm often generates delusion, that explains why so much honest enthusiasm runs to waste; why a fond parent spoils the child to whose faults he is blind; why the patriot ruins his country by impracticable enterprise, and the philanthropist stimulates and encourages the evils which he intends to cure.

Once more, faith in this sense has its negative aspect. It is as emphatic in its rejection of one ideal as it is in its acceptance of another. The early Christians were Atheists from the Pagan point of view. Some of the sternest and most vigorous faiths that the world has known have shown themselves chiefly in the iconoclastic direction. English Puritans and Hebrew Prophets denounced their opponents as idolaters, and expressed the most unequivocal dis-

belief in the virtues of sacerdotal magic. The keenest fanatics in recent years have, perhaps, been the Russian 'Nihilists,' who show their faith by believing in nothing. The simple-minded assumption, therefore, that faith is to be measured by quantity of belief: that a believer and an unbeliever differ in this, that one has thirty-nine articles of belief, and his opponent only thirty-eight, or, perhaps, simply a negation of all, clearly gives an inaccurate measure of the facts. The man has most faith, in the sense in which faith represents a real force, whose convictions are such as are most favourable to energetic action, and is freest from the doubts which paralyse the will in the great moments of life. He must have a clear vision of an end to be achieved, devotion to which may be the ruling passion of his life and the focus to which all his energies may converge. If we are to follow the Holy Grail, a belief in its existence and in its surpassing value must be inwoven in the very tissue of those intimate beliefs which form each man's universe. But it is not to be assumed that because we place our object in the heaven of simple believers, or in the philosopher's transcendental world of pure ideas, that it supplies a stronger or a loftier faith. We know too well, by long experience, how shifting and phantasmagoric are the visions which haunt the region of transcendentalism. If, indeed, beliefs drawn from some supernal region can enable us to solve the dark riddles of existence, if they can suggest loftier

motives and clearer rules, they may be essential to a worthy conduct of daily life. If, on the other hand, the attempt to soar above our atmosphere be destined to inevitable failure, if the Holy Grail is a mere chimera, a shadowy reflection of realities cast upon the surrounding darkness, our devotion may only land us in hopeless perplexity. Explain it as we may, or regard it as inexplicable, we have thoughts and sensations, pains and pleasures, a solid earth to live upon, and fellow-men to love and hate, to rule, to obey, or to help. How to regulate our lives and what end to pursue is a problem for which we all have to find some tolerable solution. What creed will give us the clearest rules, and reduce the inevitable uncertainty to a minimum? To answer that question is to say which creed leaves least room for the scepticism which clouds our vision and favours the faith which is the other side of energetic conduct. In considering it we must take into account, not only the positive but the negative implications of any given creed. We must ask for more than positive and arbitrary directions. No creed is at a loss for directions of that kind. Eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; mortify the flesh, for death comes to-morrow, are equally precise rules, and may commend themselves to different minds. We have further to ask, Whether the philosophy upon which the creed reposes is not merely such as to give definite rules, but such as to base them upon the most satisfactory and verifiable

grounds. A rule which we feel to be arbitrary is as good as no rule at all.

I propose, therefore, to dwell for a little upon the negations of the orthodox creed; to show how it implicitly denies some of the most important truths upon which our rule of conduct must repose, and, though it issues the most absolute commands, really leaves room for doubts by offering a sham solution. The convinced Christian, or Buddhist, or Mahomedan has, of course, a faith, and a set of positive prescriptions. Such faiths have, in their time, worked miracles, and no doubt still possess a vast vitality. But if to the most thoughtful minds these solutions have become untenable, it is because they deny positive principles which have been slowly growing and strengthening for centuries, and because they, so far, have a stronger affinity to scepticism than to genuine faith.

Let us look, first, at the historical creed, which for centuries could only be assailed at the risk of the unbeliever's life. A man believes in the supernatural birth of the founder of his religion. He denies, then, that a certain event took place in accordance with the laws exemplified in all ordinary cases. Unless he can give some adequate reason for taking the case out of the ordinary category, he impugns the validity of the inductive process upon which he counts at every step in daily life. He is so far a sceptic as he is throwing doubt upon the validity of one of the

primary ratiocinative processes. The same is true whenever an event admitted to have happened is ascribed by one party to supernatural interference. Somebody expressed surprise the other day that men of science should take into account the existence of flint implements, and refuse to take into account the existence of the Bible and Christianity. I never happened to hear of the man of science who denied the existence of either. Does the man really decline to take a fact into account when he declares it to be altogether exceptional and supernatural, or when he explains it as resulting from the normal operation of known forces? Is it more sceptical to say that somebody compiled the book of Genesis from old legends by the same faculties which enabled another man to compile the 'Iliad,' or to say that nobody could have told the story of Adam and Eve without the direct assistance of God Almighty? In the ordinary case, the fact, as well as the explanation, is doubted. We refuse to believe in the story of the Magi because it involves impossibilities and rests upon no evidence. Somebody—we know not who—wrote—we know not when—on some authority—we know not what—a story which implies a belief in exploded doctrines, and showed, by ignoring all difficulties, his utter innocence of anything like historical criticism. To disbelieve his evidence implies the assumption that such evidence is fallible, and that unfounded stories may obtain currency in a sect when they honour the

founder of the sect. No human being denies these assumptions. Everyone who asserts the truth of this particular legend is ready to assert them in the case of every sect but his own. The phenomenon which we all admit is the existence of a certain narrative. One person classes it with authentic history, another with a well-known variety of popular legend. Neither denies the existence of much authentic history and of much popular legend. How are we to decide which is right? Surely by Hume's very simple principle. There is nothing inconsistent with the admitted rules derived from experience in admitting the story to be a legend; but there is an admitted contradiction to such rules in supposing the truth of astrology and of stars standing over the birthplace of prophets.

On what principle, then, does it show more faith to admit than to reject such legends, unless faith be defined, with the schoolgirl, as a belief in what we know to be false? Excellent people still think themselves entitled to take an air of moral superiority because they accept marvellous stories without a fragment of evidence. To argue against such a position would be too degrading. When I read that one eminent person believes in devils possessing pigs, and another in the existence of Noah's ark, I am simply surprised. I fully believe that they are sincere; but I wonder how I should convey a belief, even in their sincerity, to anyone born out of the magic circle.

Such people, at any rate, are safe from any arguments of mine. I can only suggest that they should study the works of Voltaire. He was a 'scoffer,' it is true, though a scoffer with a more masculine faith in reason than can be found among the ninety-and-nine just persons who never saw a joke in their lives. The beliefs he combated are, in point of fact, ridiculous; they have passed beyond the sphere of reason. If you would in any sense answer him, it must not be by holding on to Jonah's whale, but by cutting yourself loose from that unfortunate monster. How degrading this desperate clinging to every rag of old superstition must appear to those who have the use of their intellects may be sufficiently evident from a too famous utterance of Newman. Admitting that the Old Testament was in contradiction with modern astronomy, he held that both might still be true. Science says that the earth goes round the sun; theology, that the sun goes round the earth. That sounds, no doubt, like a contradiction; but then, theology, or the Bible, spoke in a metaphysical sense, and metaphysicians (some at least) tell us that space is subjective, or don't know what to make of it. The argument would be admirably suited to the famous case of Mahomet: the mountain came to him just as truly as he went to the mountain; but if any Mahomedan made the statement, and defended it in such a way, we should probably accuse him of gross equivocation. At least, one

might have expected Jehovah, if he was the author of the statement, to have hit upon some phrase which would have conveyed the truth without apparently sanctioning a delusion. By accepting it as somehow true sense we are, indeed, enabled to believe as an historic fact that the God of heaven and earth stopped a revolution of this planet in order that one barbarous tribe might massacre a few more thousands of another. If Jehovah was capable of such a stroke to get the better of Chemosh, I can only say that he was not the kind of character whom I should choose for a Deity. According to M. Renan, the whole blunder probably arose from the prosaic construction of a poetic figure. If Milton came to be regarded as an inspired poet, we should make a similar history from his words in the 'Christmas Hymn':

> The stars in deep amaze
> Stood fixed with steadfast gaze.

Strange that the hyperbole of an ancient writer of war-songs should have led a man of genius two or three thousand years later to grovel in such humiliating sophistries, and think that he was so doing worthy homage to the Almighty!

I can only marvel that any man should seriously suppose that all that is most precious and elevating in his beliefs should be held on the tenure of the acceptance as historical facts of legends only to be paralleled by the stories of folk-lore. I can no more

understand that any serious injury can come to my moral nature from disbelief in Samson than from disbelief in Jack the Giant-killer. I care as little for Goliah as for the giant Blunderbore. I am glad that children should amuse themselves with nursery stories, but it is shocking that they should be ordered to believe in them as solid facts, and then be told that such superstition is essential to morality. It is the more shocking because the idolatry of the Bible deprives it of its strongest interest. It is just by reading what is called destructive criticism that we discover the unique interest of the Bible. Accept the Jewish legends as historical truth, and you have to believe in a state of things grotesque in itself and absolutely divorced from all living realities. Warburton argued—how far he argued sincerely is a curious puzzle—that God Almighty was really once Jehovah, and governed the Chosen People by a system totally different from that upon which He governed the rest of the human race. The whole history was an exception to all other history. That is only to bring out in its most brutal form the assumption which underlies the orthodox doctrine. Will anyone now dare to say that the God of the universe was once the God of a small tribe; that he reflected all its national characteristics, was savage, vindictive, and arbitrary; that he then used temporal instead of eternal punishments, and with very partial success tried to help his favourites in their struggle for exist-

ence? Yet, so far as we are to take the Jewish legends as history of outward fact, instead of historical documents illustrating the Jewish stage of mental development, we fall into Warburton's amazing misconstruction. The whole story is torn from all historical context, and becomes a barren collection of marvels. Once apply the true historical method—assume that the Jew belongs to human nature, that he has the same passions, senses, and thoughts as other men, and the story suddenly becomes alive, and gains all the interest of a genuine human narrative. The critic may blunder in his interpretation of fragmentary documents of uncertain origin and composition; he may be fanciful, and apt to see too far into millstones; but the astonishing difference is that he now deals at least with the possible and the credible. To read such a book, for example, as Renan's 'History of the Jews' is to receive a new, though a human, revelation. We have a conceivable account of an imaginable history; we lose stories of wonder as foolish and fanciful as those which surround the cradles of other races, but in return we see the people themselves; we watch the slow struggle out of primitive superstitions, the development under unique conditions of institutions of singular interest; we come to understand that the Prophets were not propounders of queer conundrums, to be answered in a later number, but the vigorous advocates of great principles, half-understood, and mingled with many gross superstitions and narrow prejudices,

yet able to elevate the race and to leave the deepest and most permanent of impressions upon the history of mankind. The study becomes correlated with all that we have learnt from analogous studies elsewhere, and the whole story pregnant with a new interest. It is unique, but no longer exceptional. It does not imply that the general laws of Nature are broken, but only that they are exemplified under special conditions. We have before us men and women, not the strange imagery of a world of gods and devils; we give up floods to the top of Ararat, and stars stopped to win a border skirmish, and we see for the first time a vivid and living picture of a great race struggling under the conditions which govern all human endeavour. All generous and far-seeing theologians are beginning to acknowledge this. The historical method has been admitted into the Churches. Even apologists acknowledge the working of a Divine Power, not only within the precincts of Palestine, but throughout the vast regions and ancient civilisations where the very name has never been heard. They have given up the theory that other people's gods were simply devils, and recognise them as partial manifestations of the power which created our own. They hesitate, indeed, about the New Testament. Jehovah has become a rather questionable personage; but they still maintain that God once became man—with characteristics very unlike those of Jehovah. Yet the New Testament history is as much in need of a

reconstruction as the Old. To take one extreme case, there are few things more curious than the fate of the Apocalypse. We now know, beyond all reasonable doubt, the date of its composition. We can read its 'prophecies' with the clearest understanding of their meaning. To do so, we have only to assume that by Jerusalem the writer meant Jerusalem, and to accept what he tells us himself of the meaning of the horns of the beast. We can interpret the wonderful 666 without any risk of driving ourselves mad by the process. What is the gain and the loss? We have to admit that the prophecy, like most others, went wrong when it began to deal with the future. We have to admit that the Almighty did not propose a strange series of puzzles, of which nobody ever has or ever will be able to make head or tail. The necessity of that assumption only arises when we assume, in contradiction to all experience, that a prediction must have been fulfilled allegorically because it was certainly not fulfilled according to its plain meaning. We gain a most striking illustration of the state of mind of the race among which Christianity was being founded: of the fierce fanaticism which animated the Jews in the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem; and of the nature of the belief in the advent of a Messiah, which formed so important an element in the new religion. So read, the book ceases to be a preposterous enigma, and becomes a startling revelation of thoughts and aspirations, most strange in themselves, and yet most

important to an understanding of the greatest of religious revolutions.

Or we may observe how a simple adoption of the historical attitude of mind brings out the figure of the Apostle of the Gentiles. It has been the interest of orthodox interpreters of all sects to slur over the great struggle which made Christianity a world religion. Peter and Paul, as the author of the Acts already tried to make out, were completely at one, as how should they be otherwise if both were channels of the same Holy Ghost? Reading Paul's epistles without first carefully blinding our eyes, we can see how desperate was the struggle between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians; what efforts it cost to disengage the Christian theology of later days from the swaddling-clothes which first hampered it in Palestine; and how singular a mixture of theories struggles in the argumentation of the Apostle, illogical, perplexed, and occasionally shocking, but yet showing the firmest of world-shaping beliefs. Accept every utterance as that of a Divine authority, and we are forced to shut our eyes to all that gives them a true human interest, and to see the enunciation of pure, absolute truth in the most confused and desperate struggle of conflicting theories that ever agitated a great but still an eminently human mind. Or consider what a blindness is necessary to read the Gospel of St. John after the old fashion, as a genuine story of an eyewitness, instead of a series of mystical declamations representing the

influx of a theosophical theory. To the orthodox, Christianity is something dropped out of the infinite, with no affinity to existing thoughts or real explanation from the conditions of the time. To the reader who will place himself at the historical point of view, it is the product of all the social and moral and intellectual forces of the time; its origin must be studied in the vast political and social changes implied in the foundation of the Roman Empire and in the developments of Greek philosophy, mixed with Jewish tradition, as well as in the development of the Jewish nation itself. Briefly, the orthodox hypothesis, so far as it is accepted, effectually cuts off every real human interest from the contemplation of the greatest drama ever played upon the stage of the world.

The sum or kernel of all these difficulties appears in our view of the central character of the history. You still cling to the conception of a Godman. It is needless to do more than allude to all the hopeless struggles of the human intellect trying to reconcile itself to such a conception. Take Christ for a man, exemplifying all the laws of human nature, which are as much verified by the most exceptional as by the most ordinary example, and what do you lose? Is the moral beauty of the Sermon on the Mount diminished or affected in the smallest degree by the fact that it came from human lips? Truth is truth, and beauty, beauty, whatever its source. But

at every stage of the life, the attempt to identify a human being with the Author of all Nature only leads to hopeless incoherence. The logical result is surely that of the early heretics, condemned, like other heretical results, because it was so obviously logical—that the human Christ was a phantasm. Think only of the last words on the Cross, as reported in the Gospel according to St. Matthew: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Nothing can be more terribly pathetic if we read it as the despairing utterance of a martyr yielding at the last moment to a hideous doubt. But if it be taken as the utterance of a Divine being, what can we make of it? I will not give the obvious answer.

I can only hint at a truth which is gradually coming to be appreciated. The Bible has been made an idol, and therefore made grotesque. The faith which accepts its absurdities as divine is destructive of the human interest. A strong faith of that stamp really means a dull imagination. The livelier the imaginative faculty, the firmer the grasp of the vital laws of the world. Monsters in art, centaurs and angels, are proofs that their creators did not really see the human being, but only his outside. The grotesque in art and religion is merely a proof that the infantile imagination has no grasp of realities. Floods drowning the world, rivers turned to blood, and the sun standing still to light a massacre, are toys of an arbitrary fancy, which can join incongruities

without a sense of absurdity. The imagination of the trained and powerful intellect which makes the past present rejects the absurdity, because it perceives the true forces which worked three thousand years ago as they work now; and in that perception is the true source of all genuine interest in the past. To make history historical is the problem of the time, and we need not fear that history will be the loser. But this is only one illustration of confusions which still perplex popular thought. Historically speaking, Jehovah was developed into the God of the Jewish Prophets, and has since been developed into the God of Spinoza. The continuity of the process has concealed the monstrous absurdity of identifying the two. On such strange assumptions the world becomes chaos, and therefore scepticism the only rational frame of mind. Hume long ago pointed out that the heathens saw their god in the interruptions to order, while philosophers see God in the preservation of order. The ordinary mind placidly combines the two views, and smooths over obvious difficulties by logical sleight of hand too familiar to be worth examination. It has been argued by orthodox writers that the heathen were really Atheists because their gods were merely particular individuals, not the Supreme Being. Is not the argument equally applicable against anyone who, believing in the God of philosophy, persists in identifying him with the old Hebrew deity? Is it theism or atheism to hold

that the ruler of the universe is the strange being who met Moses and his wife at an inn, and tried to kill their son? Metaphysicians have asked us to accept Jehovah's vagaries on the ground that the motives of the Absolute and Infinite Being are necessarily inconceivable. Jehovah, unluckily, is only too easily conceivable. Whether his existence be credible is another question. But so long as such tricks of logical fence are put forward as serious, one thing, at least, is evident. History is a chaos. A belief in God is asserted to be the one source of true happiness and morality. But, on the older hypothesis, this belief is only accessible through inspiration. It is dropped into the world at a particular place: to ask why that place and time should be selected is simply irrational, for it depends upon the arbitrary pleasure (arbitrary, so far as we can know) of the incomprehensible Being. Through countless ages that light was confined to a single tribe, while an incalculable majority of the human race was left in utter darkness, and, according to some logical persons, damned for not seeing. Even since the light has come, it has not yet reached a third part of the human race. It is so far from being clear, that it has formed one main obstacle to the spread of scientific truth; and so far from regenerating mankind, that they have seen it only to relapse into infidelity, materialism, and atheism. To give any sort of theory of this force is to transgress the limits of the human intellect; and

yet it is the one force upon which our temporary and eternal welfare depends. The human mind, indeed, has revolted against such doctrines. They are denied, I am glad to say, by modern divines as emphatically as I could deny them myself. The Deity whom good men revere to-day is not the savage, jealous tyrant of ancient times, nor the cruel persecutor of error and protector of favourites who is now accepted by the most ignorant and belated minds. The gods of the heathen were not devils, but faint reflections of the true Deity. The world outside the sacred circle of Judaism or Christianity was still under a providential guidance; the heathens and heretics whom Dante still kept out of heaven may now obtain admission, though not, perhaps, as of legal right. All this and much more may be said for intelligent theologians who cannot bear to abandon, but do their best to elevate, the old phrases. I only suggest that they might show a little more gratitude to the deists and sceptics who have forced them to learn the lesson. The higher point of view—no one worth notice will deny it to be the higher—is gained precisely by approximation to the Agnostic. So long as the miraculous is admitted, we admit the arbitrary. Belief in the supernatural is the belief in a dualistic theory, in an established order liable to spasmodic and inexplicable interferences from without. Since, then, supernatural is divine, it is just the force which works for the good which is intrinsically incom-

prehensible. The wind bloweth where it listeth. The huge, blind, God-forsaken world blunders on in its own way, but here and there a flash from a world beyond enlightens a man or a race, and forms a divine province in an empire of chaos. To get rid of this doctrine is to get rid of the supernatural; to admit that the religions of the world are all more or less faulty and more or less successful attempts of the race to form a theory of the world suitable for its guidance; and that all progress, moral, social, or religious, is due to the working of natural instincts, the epithet being not superfluous only because it is necessary to exclude the supernatural. Allowing this, all history becomes continuous and intelligible. Here is no mysterious intrusion of internal forces impinging upon the world from no one knows where; no truth revealed in one longitude and latitude, and hidden from others in proportion to their distance; and no order which is not the work of the men who are at once the product and producers of society. After admitting this, you may, as you please, call the whole 'divine' or 'natural.' But the essential point is the unification of principle which excludes all supernatural intrusions, and which, by affording solid ground for scientific reasoning, gives the only basis unassailable by a mischievous scepticism.

If history is a chaos, so long as one main factor in history is taken to be the arbitrary or supernatural, what are we to say of the science of which history is

the embodiment? What kind of a psychology must be constructed upon the lines thus laid down? You believe that Christ was God incarnate; I hold that He was a human being. Your most respectable argument is from the moral qualities manifested in His works and words. You regard them as so exceptional that the difference between Christ and other men is only explicable by the intrusion of the supernatural power —nay, of an infinite power. He is not merely exceptional as a Shakespeare or a Newton may be exceptional, but so exceptional that the existence of such a man is inconceivable. His character implies, not an extreme case of the laws of human nature, but something for which those laws would be utterly unable to account. The difference between the highest and the lowest of human beings—nay, the difference between man and beast, must surely be an inadequate measure of the difference between the divine and the human. I, on the contrary, hold that Christ was a man, and so far have surely a higher opinion of human nature than you. I regard the character of Christ as within the range of human possibilities. The power of love and self-sacrifice, the simplicity and charm of the character are such, I hold, as may be, and have been exemplified in other men in varying degrees. Why should I be forced to postulate an incarnation of deity to account for goodness, even in a superlative degree? Your answer has been often given by theologians. It is, simply, that human nature is corrupt

and virtue supernatural. Christ is the type of the perfect man, indeed, and a type, one would think, should embody qualities possible at least to the race. But the answer is that man can only approximate to this type by supernatural aid. Human nature is the residuum left when all good impulses are supposed to come from without. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. From ourselves come nothing but lust, hatred, and the love of darkness. Certainly, therefore, humanity cannot produce a Christ —nor even a decent member of society. Where we find purity, love, or heroism, we may be sure that they cannot have sprung upon mortal soil. They must have been transplanted from a supernatural paradise ; sporadic plants, which have strayed beyond the guarded walls of Eden, and can only struggle against the foul indigenous products by the constant care of the Divine gardener. Our need for supernatural aid is measured by our sense of human impotence. The doctrine of the corruption of human nature is, therefore, a central fact in the most vigorous theology. The belief in God is, so far, simply the opposite pole of disbelief in man. They are reciprocal dogmas, allied as the light and the shadow. The various doctrines of redemption and atonement are realised in proportion as this belief is held, and die away as it grows faint. And, so far, the belief in a supernatural religion is the other side of a disbelief in all human virtue, which does not repose on a supernatural basis, and

is not enlightened by supernatural revelation and stimulated by hopes and fears to be realised in a supernatural world.

Undoubtedly this interpretation melts into other theological doctrines which sometimes express the very reverse. For the higher conceptions of the Divine Being suppose His co-operation to be constant in such a sense that we can hardly distinguish the statement that virtue is supernatural from the statement that it is natural. It may then seem to become little more than a question of words. If man is not good by nature, and yet God, who is Nature, is always ready to make him good, it is rather hard to distinguish the provinces of grace and Nature. The mention of this, indeed, is enough to indicate how much scepticism really lurks in the theological point of view. The endless and radically insoluble controversies as to the relations between nature and grace are a sufficient proof that upon this cardinal point of the system anything like rational agreement is impossible. The knot cannot be untied, though it may be cut. It has perplexed all the greatest theologians since it brought St. Paul into hopeless confusion in the Epistle to the Romans, and has not been solved, though it has passed pretty much out of the sphere of living interest. It is one more proof of the hopeless perplexity caused by the introduction of an arbitrary term into controversy, and the utter impossibility of drawing any clear distinction between the Divine and the natural.

From the anthropomorphic point of view or the pantheistic you may come to some definite conclusion, but when the point of view shifts from one to the other, and God is sometimes synonymous with Nature and sometimes with an intrusive agent, the result must be intellectual chaos, and chaos is the correlative of scepticism.

Is the coherence of our moral convictions bound up, as theologians assert, with the preservation of theological dogma, or is it true, here as elsewhere, that the attempt to get to the transcendental must land us in a vacuum, where there is no foundation for any settled belief? Let me briefly recapitulate the Agnostic's position. He wishes, if he deserves to be taken at his word, to place morality on a scientific basis. He must, therefore, begin by rejecting one main contention of the theologian. He must get rid of the whole scheme of thought which asserts the necessity of a belief outside the scope of scientific inquiry. Morality, like the political sciences, must be placed upon an inductive basis, or be on the same plane with those truths which, if fully ascertainable, would form the science of 'sociology.' We may determine, within limits, what are the laws of growth of the social organism and the conditions imposed by its environment. We can see what are the instincts which contribute to its development and stability, and what, consequently, are the laws which, if recognised and accepted, will contribute to its health. To lay them

down is to construct the moral code. This, indeed, is practicable, because the race has in fact been engaged from its origin in feeling out the rules essential to its welfare. They have neither been imported from without nor deduced from abstract speculation. Men have discovered that murder is injurious to society, as they have discovered that intoxication is prejudicial to health—by trying the experiment on a large scale. The so-called intuitions have no supernatural character, but are assumptions verifiable by experience, as they are the embodiment of past experience. In their main outlines they are as much beyond the reach of confutation as any of our primary beliefs. They are as certain, when regarded as statements of the conditions of social welfare, as are the assertions about the conditions of individual welfare; as the opinions that men are mortal, that fire burns, that water drowns, that certain foods are poisonous, and that jumping over a cliff is likely to shorten life. We can see how the development of society is conditioned by, and tends in turn to stimulate the growth of, the higher instincts, which are inexplicable within the limits of individual experience. We can see how their growth is interwoven with the growth of the intellectual and emotional nature, and determine the conditions favourable to their strength. We are thus enabled to consider by what means the rules deduced from social welfare may be incorporated with the rules for individual welfare. The Agnostic has, of course, to admit

that anti-social instincts exist, and will exist for some time to come. He does not believe in the dogma of 'corruption,' in the incapacity of the race to improve itself—for all history, upon his view, testifies to its power of gradual self-elevation. But he must, like everyone else, recognise the slowness and the difficulty of the operation. Evil can only be kept down by strenuous activity, though an activity more sure of success as it becomes more enlightened and farseeing. The guarantee for success is just the fact that a vigorous morality is by its nature one aspect of a strong vitality. Since the social instincts are in the strictest sense natural, since they strengthen and adapt themselves to the growing needs of society, and survive the decay of the multitudinous creeds in which they have been partially incorporated, he may reasonably hope that the upward progress of mankind will continue, and may even be accelerated. As the race becomes more intelligent and more distinctly conscious of its aims, the victory will become more certain, and be won at a smaller cost.

The moral progress in which we believe has of course shown itself in the religious convictions of mankind. The gods have been reformed as well as their worshippers. It is true that they normally lag rather behind the age in virtue of their conservative tendencies. They represent the morality of yesterday rather than the morality of to-morrow. But only a bigot will deny the utility of conservatism, and the

attempts to widen and improve a moral law may sometimes appear as revolutionary attacks upon the law itself. There is a value, therefore, in the retarding force, though it is apt to condemn its natural opponents as the agents of diabolical degeneration. We should not retort the injustice, nor refuse to acknowledge that the religions of to-day preach a morality generally sound in substance, however they may misconceive its origin. In this, as in other questions, the opponents of progress have been really saturated by the ideas of which they failed to recognise the truth, and can put the substance of the evolutionist doctrine into theological terminology. The essential difference depends upon the admission or the exclusion of the supernatural; that is, upon the question whether the Divine element is to be identified with the natural order, or represents an intrusive and arbitrary interference; whether we are or are not to accept a dualism in which the world is the scene of conflict of two radically opposed powers, one of them nominally or 'potentially' Almighty, but in point of fact encountered and often checkmated by its base opponent. So long as we are in the old position, the very basis of ethical theory is insecure. It is laid in the clouds, not on the solid earth. Morality is supposed to be binding because based on the will of God; but of what God? The gods of the heathen were unpleasantly like devils. They sanctioned 'hate, revenge, and lust.' The Devil, indeed, is simply a deposed deity, or the

product of a process of differentiation dating back from a period at which there was no perceptible distinction. If we listen to the mutual recriminations of theologians, we must admit that this rather important contrast has not even yet been made so clear as might be wished. We are told, for example, by one set of very enthusiastic believers, that the God of Calvinism, in his most pronounced attributes, has a strong resemblance to the Evil One, although we are also told that he represents merely the explicit and logical recognition of a doctrine really held by the loftiest theologians. In any case, it is clear that the sound theory of morality can only be deduced from the sound theology. The moral law, then, must be based on the will of the true God. But the phrase at once suggests the infinite jumble of chaotic controversy which has no issue because it belongs essentially to the region of the arbitrary. There is no ethical doctrine which may not assert itself in theological language. Are actions right because God wills them, or does God will them because they are right? If because God wills them, how are we to know His will? If for antecedent reasons, then must not reason, instead of the Divine will, be the true ground of morals? There are theological utilitarians and theological intuitionists. One theologian holds that a direct revelation was necessary for the discovery of the moral law; another, that morality is a science of observation, and that God

merely assigns as its end the greatest happiness of the greatest number. A third holds that morality is deducible from pure reason, and that revelation and experience are alike superfluous. On one system, the essence of morality is the proclamation of future rewards and punishments. On another, the unselfish love of God is the only foundation of true virtue, which is a sham so far as it is adulterated by any admixture of personal interests. To one theologian the virtues of the heathen are but splendid vices, while another sees in them proofs of the universality of Divine influence. One argues that all natural impulses are good because Nature is the work of God, and his opponent replies that all Nature is under a curse, and man's heart corrupt to the core. The foundation of one system is that God desires the happiness of man in this world; and another declares all human happiness to be an illusion. One holds asceticism to be simple folly; another thinks it the shortest road to heaven. The antinomian thinks that as God has once for all elected or rejected him, his actions are of no importance; and the sacerdotalist holds that by accumulating active observances he can establish an indefeasible claim upon his Creator. One thinks it blasphemous against God's omnipotence to claim any share in the work of salvation; another considers it an insult to God to suppose that salvation will not be conceded to good works. One sees in the goodness of God an assurance that all men will be ultimately

happy, and another infers from His justice that the vast majority will be doomed to endless torture.

It is true that such contradictions matter less than would appear at first sight. Somehow or other, metaphysicians have a wonderful facility for deducing the same conclusions from the most opposite premisses. That is, perhaps, because metaphysics is not really what it professes to be, the exposition of first principles, from which the inferior truths are deducible, but an attempt to give explicitly the logic of the processes already employed by the common-sense of mankind. Professing to make no assumption, it really assumes all previous knowledge. At any rate, we have the comfort of believing that ethical rules have little dependence upon theories of moral philosophy. I only mean to urge that the assumptions of theology in general, even if they be granted, land us in inextricable labyrinths of dialectics. No doctrine seems to me to be less tenable than that which asserts that morality requires a theological foundation. To connect ethics with theology of the lower type is, in fact, to define it as obedience to the will of an arbitrary being, who may be the reflection of some barbarous ideal, or who may be a metaphysical entity indistinguishable from the abstract Nature. It is a long way from crude anthropomorphism to that bloodless spectre of a theological morality which appears, for example, in the 'categorical imperative' of Kant. Kant's moral law is a command

which survives mysteriously when the giver of the command has evaporated. In their anxiety to get rid of the 'expedient' and 'empirical,' philosophers remove the law to a region where it has no relation to facts. It becomes mere 'law' in the abstract, of which it is the only condition that it shall not be self-contradictory, and which is, therefore, equally applicable to any set of rules whatever. The essence of morality becomes merely a logical formula, and is fit only for a state of things in which fact can be woven out of syllogism, and the loom at which the universe is wrought can be worked in a professor's lecture-room. Such philosophy, though it still calls itself theistic, is the very antithesis of the old doctrine which goes by the same name. In the primitive stage, morality is the law given by a particular being known under definite historical conditions. To get rid of the arbitrary and empirical element we substitute a being who inhabits the region of the inconceivable, and of whom we cannot think directly without falling into hopeless antinomies. Instead of the arbitrary and particular, we have the hopelessly vague and unintelligible. The true method of escape is surely different. Morality must be represented as dependent, not upon the authority of a particular person, invisible or otherwise, nor relegated to the region where we are hopelessly suspended in the inane, but based upon a knowledge of the concrete constitution of human nature and society.

To make a moral law otherwise than from a study of human life will be possible when it is possible on the same terms to construct a physiology and a system of therapeutics ; and meanwhile it remains in ethics what the attempt to square the circle is in the history of mathematics. The charge against the Agnostic, that he weakens his belief in morality because he brings it within the sphere of experience, is just as true as would be the same charge against the man of science, who appeals to facts instead of evolving the facts from the depths of his consciousness.

The theologian occasionally shows a leaning to such transcendental theories, though he ought to know that their inevitable catastrophe is in a reduction of theology to pantheism. But the theology which can appeal to the imagination remains at some intermediate stage between the purely anthropomorphic and the purely metaphysical. The doctrine of another world of which, as of all matters of fact, the absolute system of morality must be independent, is still for him the pivot of morals. It is in rejecting this part of the doctrine that the 'scepticism' or positive unbelief of the Agnostic is most keenly denounced. Once more, which is the sceptic ? The early Christians, like the modern Socialists, dreamed of a speedy advent of the millennium ; a faith flushed with excessive confidence, and capable of transforming, if not of regenerating, society, naturally generates such visions. Modern Socialists generally assign the next

century as the period at which we shall all have achieved Utopia. The Christian held that his generation would not pass away before the Messiah was revealed in supernatural glory. The belief was in harmony with his whole theory of the world. His hopes naturally pointed to dreamland—to a world of catastrophes and surprises. Everything was to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of a supernatural trumpet. The true believers were to be caught up into heaven, and set upon the thrones provided for them, and the unbelievers to be cast into the sea of fire and brimstone. The world had been, and might be again, the scene of tremendous and spasmodic convulsions, to be anticipated only in virtue of supernatural revelation. God had sent His Son upon earth to reveal the one true light, and suddenly to establish a Divine kingdom. Ages have passed, and faith has grown dim, and the prophecies and revelations have had to be twisted and spiritualised, and have slowly sunk into enigmas to exercise the fertile ingenuity of learned folly. The belief in the Second Advent has faded into inanity, although, like certain men of Galilee, some may still stand gazing into heaven, forgetting the solid earth at their feet. If by the faith which is to save the world you still mean faith in the supernatural, you still hold that faith comes by revelation, or by an inexplicable means upon incalculable occasions. And if the only light which can lighten the world shines

at the arbitrary bidding of an inscrutable Being, its occultations are equally mysterious. They are workings of the Devil, whose very existence in a God-governed world is a mystery. Friday asked Robinson Crusoe, why does not God kill the Devil ? and neither Robinson Crusoe nor anybody else has hitherto been able to answer the question. The spread of infidel opinions is, more or less, supposed to be the work of the Devil. But why the Devil should suddenly get into the pulpit, and why his preaching should be so successful, are still inscrutable mysteries. The showing forth of the light and its obscuration equally belong to the region where the human intellect has no footing. To the Agnostic, even the spread of an error is part of the wide-world process by which we stumble into mere approximations to truth. It is explicable from the necessities of the case that partial illusions should arise at each successive stage of our onward movement. But if the old Faith be absolutely true, and also dependent on the catastrophe of a revelation, the whole process of the evolution of truth becomes hopelessly unintelligible. The new ideas which stir the intellectual movement of the world are regarded with suspicion, for God may be again leaving the field to the Devil as it was left of old. The corruption of our nature may be once more showing itself and getting the upper hand. Increase of knowledge shakes the old creeds, and increase of wealth shakes the old structure. The sacred authority

decays, and the orthodox believer has to choose between equivocating and straining and twisting the old phrases to a new meaning, or in closer conformity with the logic of his belief, announcing that the old world is once more going to the devil, and that the evil principle, disguised as an angel of intellectual light, is seducing us to close our eyes to all that is elevating and purifying.

This, as I take it, is the scepticism which really underlies the theological belief. The belief in progress has been transferred to his opponent, for the belief in progress is the popular version of the doctrine of evolution. The doctrine of evolution is the uncompromising application to all phenomena of history and thought of a genuine belief in causation, or of an expulsion of the arbitrary. The theologian, unless he elects to become a pantheist, must struggle against a mode of thought which runs counter to his fundamental assumptions. The scientific reasoner holds by the continuity and uniformity of Nature ; theology accepts a dualism which implies catastrophe and the interference of a radically unknowable factor. Therefore, the belief in progress which substitutes a development of natural forces for a Second Advent, and foresight based upon knowledge of facts for a miraculous prediction of the mysterious, is essentially incongruous to theology. The theologian abandons the only clue which can lead us to some foresight here in the attempt to find a certainty in the clouds. Faith

in the beyond really implies scepticism as to the present, and those who most fervently assert their belief in an omnipotent and perfect Governor of the world are, therefore, those who can speak most bitterly and with the least hopefulness of the world which He governs. They can wrap themselves in dreams of heaven, and see the blind masses plunging, possessed of devils, into the depths of destruction.

The belief in progress has its own delusions. The Socialist may be doomed to a disappointment like that which awaited the early Christian. The Son of Man did not appear in the clouds, and I fear that it will be some time before the world will be freed from all cruelty and injustice. Yet the Socialist dream has the advantage that it points to an end not by its nature unobtainable, and is therefore capable of being pursued with some hopes of slow approximation. We must, perhaps, admit that even progress cannot be infinite. After some millions of years the earth, like its satellite, must become a wandering graveyard, and men and their dreams will in that case vanish together. Our hopes, like most things, must be finite. We must be content if they are enough to stimulate to action. We must believe in a future harvest enough to encourage us to sow, and hold that honest and unselfish work will leave the world rather better off than we found it. Perhaps this is not a very sublime prospect. Life, says the most candid of theologians—and he certainly tried to prove it—is,

perhaps, but a poor thing. Yet it is tolerable so long as one can believe that our fellow-men have enough of healthy and noble instinct to secure a steady, if a chequered, social growth ; that their instincts do not depend upon knowledge of the unknowable, and will survive our petty systems founded upon irrational guesswork. It is something to feel a confidence, based upon experience, that we have nothing to fear from unlimited inquiry and thoroughgoing destruction of fictions, and that we may hope, not merely for an increased power of man over Nature, but for a higher, more rational, social order, and more widely extended sympathies. Extension of knowledge implies also a more accurate appreciation of the conditions of human welfare and a more intelligent cultivation of the emotions and sympathies on which it depends. We can build without fearing that any infidel Samson will suddenly crush the pillars of our temple. We cannot flatter ourselves that our personal stake in the universe is more unlimited in regard to the future than in regard to the past and the distant ; but that reflection may be rather consoling than otherwise to some who fancy that they and the universe will have had about enough of each other in threescore years and ten. That may be a matter of taste ; but in any case, when we see daily with more clearness that all intellectual progress involves a systematic interpretation of experience and a resolute exclusion of all imaginary *à priori* data, it is desirable that we should look in the direction in which alone

experience can enlighten us, and accept realities in exchange for dreams. Scepticism about the shifting phantasmagoria of theology is less paralysing than the scepticism which, when it speaks frankly, rejects realities, and when it does not, attempts to mystify us by a jargon which hopelessly confounds the two.

DREAMS AND REALITIES

Strange spectacles meet us everywhere in a period of speculative fermentation, when men's thoughts are heaving and working they know not why, and their minds, like those of half-aroused sleepers, are unable to distinguish between dreams and perceived realities. Our conceptions of the unknown world are naturally most sensitive to every change of belief. They grow fantastic and unsubstantial, like shadows at the close of day. From every pulpit we hear passionate assertions of the transcendent importance and enduring vitality of some form of belief in a future life. What the belief ought to be, and upon what logical foundation it should be based, becomes ever more uncertain. In all ages there has, of course, been a vast gap between the ostensible creed upon such matters, and that which has really consistency and vividness enough to affect men's conduct. Preachers and their adversaries agree as to the matter of fact, that the hopes and fears of future retribution fail to exert an influence upon the ordinary human being bearing any proportion to

the greatness of their object. Whether men's intellects are too sceptical, or their imaginations too sluggish, they are strangely indifferent to the most tremendous threats and the most inspiring promises.

Such a phenomenon has never been otherwise than normal. The only remarkable fact about modern sentiment is the degree in which the language used by believers betrays the absence of reasoned grounds of conviction and the vacillating and indefinite nature of the conception obtained. In a curious discussion recently published in the 'Nineteenth Century,' one of the ablest advocates of the orthodox position said that he believed 'because he was told.' As he was arguing against persons who told him not to believe, this was merely another way of saying that he believed because he chose. The saying, however, was but an epigrammatic avowal of the inconclusiveness of the ordinary argument for a future life. That argument proceeds smoothly so long as it is simply an assault upon materialism. But the idealist position may be victoriously established without leading us a step further. Hume was the natural development of Berkeley. Idealism of a newer fashion than Berkeley's may have other issues; but if it avoids the sceptical conclusion in regard to all theology, it will probably land us in some form of pantheism entirely irreconcilable with a belief in that indestructible spiritual atom called a soul. The logical gap, which inevitably occurs, has to be filled by some scholastic show of

argument, or by a recourse to the supernatural authority, or, more frequently, by setting the emotions in the place of reason.

The real appeal—that which persuades although it can scarcely be said to convince—is the appeal to the emotions. It is the vehement assertion that without this belief life would be intolerable; that the world would become hideous, morality paralytic, and religion an empty name. No creed, it is urged, could have any real hold upon mankind of which the Christian dogma of personal immortality did not form an organic part. It should follow that such a doctrine has formed part of all widely-spread and enduring creeds. This statement, indeed, brings us into rude conflict with the most notorious facts. The briefest outline of the religious history of mankind shows that creeds which can count more adherents than Christianity, and have flourished through a longer period, have yet omitted all that makes the Christian doctrine of a future state valuable in the eyes of its supporters. But, even if we could get rid of so stupendous a fact as, for example, the existence of the multitudinous creeds of the East, by expedients scarcely admissible in the days when religion is being studied in a scientific spirit, we should find some strange puzzles within the limits of the Christian Churches.

Thus, for example, the most fervent preachers of Christianity are committed to the assertion of the essential continuity of their own with the Jewish

creed. Everyone, infidel or orthodox, will agree that, of all creeds known to mankind, the Jewish has stamped itself most deeply into the very fibre and intimate constitution of the believing race. And yet it is a palpable fact that the creed of the early Jews virtually ignores all distinct reference to a future state. If some indirect and constructive allusions can be tortured out of special texts by the ingenuity of commentators, the general silence is the more remarkable. The doctrine which forms a corner-stone of Christianity appears as an extraneous addition appended by way of afterthought to the main structure of Judaism. The Christian priest calmly reads to his hearers the melancholy scepticism of the Jewish Preacher, and assures them that every word is divinely inspired. 'The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion in anything that is done under the sun. . . . Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.'

If some of the Preacher's phrases may be forced to look another way, his doctrine is one which reads strangely in a Christian mouth; so strangely, one may say, that if his book were now discovered for the

first time, it would have as little chance of being added to the canon as the magnificent stanzas of Omar Khayyam of being incorporated with the gentle pietism of the 'Christian Year.' Or, again, what is the true moral of the Book of Job, accounted to be the most impressive poetical treatment in all literature of the great problem of the unequal distribution of good and evil? Is it to be found in the odd statement—certainly not very edifying from any point of view—that Job was rewarded with six thousand camels and fourteen thousand sheep, besides oxen, asses, sons, and daughters; or is it not virtually a splendid declamation in favour of Agnosticism? The problem of the universe is insoluble. The wisest of us cannot presume to comprehend even a fractional part of the vast scheme of the universe. The ways of the God who made Behemoth and Leviathan are past finding out, and we must not presume even to try to understand. When Dante incarnated in poetry the deepest thought of an age really penetrated to the core with a belief in future retribution, we know how he answered the problem. He replied by the most elaborate and minute description of that future world in which the demands of a rigid justice will be satisfied to the uttermost scruple. It is plain that the faintest hint of such a solution was scarcely present to the mind of his Jewish predecessor when awed, overpowered, and driven to the most sceptical utterances by the pressure of this tremendous problem.

It is surely strange that the most impressive books in the Hebrew canon are such as could be accepted almost without reservation by the sceptic who is reproached for denying their Divine authority.

We have all had the contrast strangely brought before us in what is called our 'sublime' Funeral Service. Who has not listened to the grand Psalm declaring that man passes away like a sleep or like the grass, which is green in the morning and withered in the evening, and finding comfort only in the thought that our little lives are in the hands of the Supreme Master; and afterwards to the strange chapter from St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, where the one noble outburst of rhetoric has to be reached through strange tortuous special pleadings, arguments from superstitious practices, false analogies about 'wheat or some other grain,' and the queer irrelevance about 'evil communications' corrupting 'good manners'? Which is the most congenial sentiment at a moment when our hearts are most open to impressions? Standing by an open grave, and moved by all the most solemn sentiments of our nature, we all, I think—I can only speak for myself with certainty—must feel that the Psalmist takes his sorrow like a man, and as we, with whatever difference of dialect, should wish to take our own sorrows; while the Apostle is desperately trying to shirk the inevitable, and at best resembles the weak comforters who try to cover up the terrible reality under a veil of well-

meant fiction. I would rather face the inevitable with open eyes.

But, in any case, a Christian preacher should be the last man to deny that a religion which pointedly omits all reference to the doctrine of immortality may yet, under some conditions, lay the most vigorous grasp upon human nature, and supply the life-blood of a Puritanical code of morality. The Christian creed itself includes contrasts which are from some points of view even more remarkable. The discussion as to the logical basis of belief has suggested another as to the superstructure. Canon Farrar has lately[1] published a set of sermons upon 'Our Eternal Hope,' which have been criticised by the representatives of various shades of Christian opinion in the 'Contemporary Review.' It is barely possible, with the best intentions, to take such a discussion seriously. Boswell tells us how a lady interrogated Johnson as to the nature of the spiritual body. She seemed desirous, he adds, 'of knowing more; but he left the subject in obscurity.' We smile at Boswell's evident impression that Johnson could, if he had chosen, have dispelled the darkness. When we find a number of educated gentlemen seriously inquiring as to the conditions of existence in the next world, we feel that they are sharing Boswell's *naïveté* without his excuse. What can any human being outside a pulpit say upon such a subject which does not amount to a confession of

[1] 1878.

ignorance, coupled, it may be, with more or less suggestion of shadowy hopes and fears? Have the secrets of the prison-house really been revealed to any man, that he should dare lay down its geography as Mr. Stanley can describe the course of the Congo? Dante did so once; and the very vigour of his realism suggests hallucination, if not consciousness of a deliberate invention. But Dante was at least creating outward symbols for a vivid sentiment. The darkness has gathered since his days; it is hardly to be dispelled by special pleading as to the meaning of texts and the opinions of respectable divines. It is due to the 'utter dearth of metaphysical knowledge,' says Canon Farrar, that we cannot now understand that eternal is a word having no relation to time. Alas! if we had all the knowledge of that kind which has accumulated in all ages we should, as Voltaire forcibly observed, know *fort peu de choses.* The question as to what the Jews meant, or St. Paul meant, or what the Articles mean, is doubtless very interesting in certain relations, but one would like to see a rather clearer recognition of the fact that such meanings have but an infinitesimal bearing upon the ultimate problem itself. St. Paul was doubtless among the greatest of the sons of men, but is there the smallest reason for supposing that he knew anything more about that problem than Plato, or Confucius, or Comte, or the humblest of their disciples? The veil which covers that mystery is one which

depends upon the constitution of the human mind, and is not drawn back as its faculties grow. The keenest eye is no more able than the feeblest to get beyond the regions of light.

When men search into the unknowable, they naturally arrive at very different results. There are, according to Canon Farrar, four different forms of creed within the Christian Church. Most Protestants are of opinion that we shall be divided into two classes hereafter, the good being eternally happy, and the wicked eternally tortured. Catholics hold that there is a large intermediate class of morally imperfect people, who are only tortured for a long time until they become good. A third class thinks it more reasonable to suppose that the bad will be simply extinguished instead of tortured. A fourth holds the pleasant creed that after a certain time everybody will be infinitely and eternally happy. As, moreover, there are radical differences of opinion upon the significance of every word employed, it is obvious that we might again subdivide the classes into many others. Now it is to be observed that the nominal believers in an everlasting hell-fire have included, by general admission, the great numerical majority of Christians. The greatest divines, philosophers, poets, and reformers—such men as Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, and Luther—have accepted and enforced this belief. It is plainly the belief of the average multitude in those sects which represent the most vigorous forms

of Christianity. Protestants, Papists, and Greeks vie with each other in setting forth the doctrine in the most forcible manner. No one who has listened to a revivalist sermon or looked at the pictorial representations common in Catholic countries, can deny that the belief is profoundly interwoven with the religious instincts of the masses. Destroy hell, and you destroy that part of the Christian creed which most impresses the popular imagination, and in some sects may almost be called the keystone of the arch.

Further, the third form of doctrine appears on Canon Farrar's showing to be nearly peculiar to the Rev. E. White, whilst the fourth is avowedly held only by the small and decaying sect of Universalists in America. Indeed, Canon Farrar does not himself deny the existence of hell; he only thinks that fewer people will go there, and perhaps find it much less disagreeable than is generally supposed. He also holds that the fate of every man will not be irrevocably and definitely fixed at death, and so leaves room for a purgatory differing in certain respects from the purgatory of the Roman Church. He quotes a good many writers who, from the time of Origen, have more or less sympathised with these views; nor would anyone deny or wish to deny that a large number of the most philosophical Christians, especially in recent times, have greatly softened the doctrine, and cherished hopes amounting more or less nearly to a final restitution of all men. A leaning to scepticism, or a more

sensitive imagination, or some loftier philosophy than that of the average believer, has enabled most men to extenuate or to spiritualise a doctrine inconceivably repulsive in its more intense forms.

It remains true that the milder form of belief is the exception. The fact that it is so is admitted, and, indeed, Canon Farrar writes just because he admits it. His own opinion, he says, 'is not, and never has been, the opinion of the numerical majority'; and it has been explicitly condemned by a whole crowd of eminent writers. 'Thousands of theologians,' as he says, 'have taught for thousands of years' that 'the vast majority are in the next world lost for ever.' The whole of Canon Farrar's contention is, therefore, not that the doctrine which he assails is heretical, but that his own doctrine may also be admissible. The early Church, it appears, was 'wisely silent,' and 'allowed various mutually irreconcilable opinions to be held by her sons without rebuke.' The Church wisely admits that it has nothing to say as to the most important of all conceivable questions; it allows us to believe in a maddening or an intoxicating doctrine. We may hold that the great majority of the human race are destined to endless torture, and—if Canon Farrar establishes his point—we may also hold that nobody will be tortured eternally, and that the great majority will be eternally happy. The pleasant belief may perhaps be admitted by the side of the painful one, but, even in that case, Canon Farrar cannot retort upon his

opponents the imputation of heresy. His opinion *may* be, theirs *must* be, admissible.

What, then, is the doctrine which, by the general agreement, is an allowable, if not the only allowable, interpretation of the Christian creed? It is a doctrine of which Canon Farrar cannot speak without indignation. If anything can justify a man in such a sentiment it is the vision of unutterable horror upon which some theologians declare themselves able to gaze with complacency. But can this language be used without drawing up an indictment against Christianity itself? In one of these sermons Canon Farrar discusses the question which has been lately raised, whether life is worth living. He reaches, of course, the orthodox conclusion that life would not be worth living without the eternal hope of Christians. The Atheist ought to admit that life is a failure. The Christian can reply, 'Life is infinitely worth living, and death is even infinitely more worth dying'; and the reason is, that 'to die is to be with God for evermore.' Who is the 'Christian' who gives this reply? If he is a believer in the creed of the majority of 'thousands of theologians' during 'thousands of years,' he believes that for most men to die is to be shut out from God and doomed to hell-fire for evermore. He believes that, for the majority of the race, it would have been infinitely better not to have been born. The infidel may look forward to annihilation as a release from the troubles of existence. The

Christian looks forward to a state of things in which most human beings will long for annihilation and know that it is impossible. They are doomed to the state described by the great poet, in which it is the worst aggravation that they have 'no hope of death.'

Canon Farrar tells us himself what is the effect of such a creed upon a generous mind. He 'declares and calls God to witness' that if the popular doctrine of hell were true he would resign all hope of immortality, if he could thereby save, 'not *millions*, but *one* human soul from what fear and superstition and ignorance and inveterate hate and slavish letter-worship have dreamed and taught of hell.' If *αἰώνιος* means what some people take it to mean, he would ask God that he might die as the beasts that perish, 'rather than that his worst enemy should endure the hell described by Tertullian, or Minucius Felix, or Jonathan Edwards, or Dr. Pusey, or Mr. Furniss, or Mr. Moody, or Mr. Spurgeon, for one single year.' In other and less excited words, however discouraging infidelity may be, the creed held upon this point by the majority of Christians, by most theologians, and by the most effective preachers, is incomparably worse. It is only in accordance with this view that Canon Farrar observes that the doctrine is one main cause of infidelity, and that it is a 'wild and monstrous delusion' to suppose that it deters from vice. Christians who

are in the habit of asserting that the doctrine of personal immortality is the great bulwark of morality, and the great advantage of their own creed over infidelity, may do well to reflect upon this avowal of so eloquent and enthusiastic an advocate. If your creed is so pleasant and delightful, why does it produce this passionate revolt from an earnest adherent?

For reasons to be presently given, I think that Canon Farrar has exaggerated the horrors of the belief. If, however, we are to assume that Christians believe in hell as they believe in Paris, as a sober, serious matter of fact, my only complaint against Canon Farrar's language would be that all rhetoric becomes simply impertinent in presence of such an abomination. To hold the belief groundlessly is a misfortune deserving of the sincerest sympathy; to propagate it without certainty, an offence deserving of the gravest reprobation. Scorn, indeed, rather than anger is the emotion provoked by the resuscitation of these shadowy relics of the torture-chamber. The preacher who affects to produce them knows that they are rotten, and will crumble if he dares to expose them to any real strain. The question, however, still remains which I have just asked. If Canon Farrar's view be correct, the doctrine of popular Christianity is, in one word, damnable. How does he propose to defend the Church distinguished above all others for the force with which it has propagated this devilish sentiment?

The ordinary mode of evasion is familiar enough. We know it well in the allied question of toleration. For many generations the chief Christian sects persecuted right and left; they burnt, hanged, flogged, dragonaded, enforced penal codes, drove the best part of the population into banishment, and, in short, oppressed the unfortunate minority—whichever it might be—by every conceivable instrument of tyranny. When some heretics began to denounce the practice under which they suffered, the doctrine of toleration was hooted down as savouring of Socinianism, deism, and atheism. Thanks to the rationalist spirit within and without the Churches, thanks above all to the influence of such men as Voltaire, men of all creeds have slowly come to admit that religious persecution is a detestable crime, and one of the most fruitful of all the causes of misery that depend upon the human will. And then the advocates of the Churches turn round and declare, with astonishing self-possession, that they are not responsible; persecution is quite irreconcilable with the true spirit of Christianity. If Philip II., or Louis XIV., or Henry VIII. chose to persecute, so much the worse for them and their instruments. Yes; but why did you not find that out a little sooner? If I were a landlord, and had calmly sat by whilst my agent extorted rents from my tenants by dint of applying thumbscrews and rubbing pepper on their eyelids, am I, when my tenants have grown

strong enough to turn the tables, to say quietly, 'Oh, it was quite against the letter of my instructions'? Why, then, did not I return the rents, punish the agent, and make my instructions a little plainer? And now for me, a fallible human being, substitute what you take to be the immaculate Church of God, the medium through which eternal truth is revealed to erring man; suppose that this Church profits and thrives for a time by help of the most atrocious crimes that have ever disgraced mankind; that, far from reviling the criminal, it has always denounced the victim, and now, when it is down and the victim on his legs, that it complacently observes that it was all a mistake; what am I to think of such a revelation and its God? You can damn men readily enough for not holding the right shade of belief about mysteries which you loudly proclaim to be inconceivable; did you ever—when you were strong enough—bring your tremendous arsenal of threats to bear upon men who were making a hell upon earth, and committing every abomination under the sun in your name and for your profit? You did not explicitly approve; or, rather, the persons who approved in your name did it without proper authority. But what is the good of a body which can allow its whole influence to be used in favour of unspeakable atrocities, till its power of inflicting them has vanished? Persecution is either an imperative duty, or it is one of the worst of crimes. The Church, on Dr. Farrar's principle,

'wisely' allows us to hold either view. We can only say, if it be right, uphold the doctrine and encounter the disapproval of the conscience of mankind; we can, at least, honour your courage. But if it be wrong, you cannot sneak out of your responsibility by help of your legal quibblings without admitting that your true Church which is to guide us unto all truth has only a potential existence, whilst the concrete Church which we can all see and recognise may be an accomplice in the worst and most demoralising of all the cruelties that have left their stain upon history.

And now, may we not say just the same of this doctrine of everlasting damnation? Whilst the Christian creed flourished—and I use the word Christian to mean the actual creed which was implicitly accepted by concrete human beings—dominated their consciences, and was vividly realised by their imaginations, not a doubt could be uttered of the truth of this dogma. Protestants and Papists agreed in enforcing it. Catholics are now apt to claim that they are not more intolerant than Protestants. Formerly it was their popular and most troublesome argument against such men as Chillingworth, that a Protestant could not be saved on the Papist theory, whilst a Papist might possibly be saved on the Protestant theory. Threats of hell-fire crossed each other as thickly as bullets in a battle. Turks, Jews, and heretics, and even unbaptized children, the vast majority of the whole race, were consigned to its

flames as freely as brutes to annihilation, by 'thousands of theologians' and millions of ordinary believers. Only a few milder thinkers could breathe a half-suppressed whisper of doubt under imminent peril of heresy. Fanatics, preachers, and orators exhausted their ingenuity in giving form and reality to the conception. Men, women, and little children were driven into paroxysms of hysterical excitement, numbers into madness, by vehement and unreproved declamation. Every cruelty of the persecutors was justified by the necessity of saving souls from hell. And now, at last, your creed is decaying. People have discovered that you know nothing about it; that heaven and hell belong to dreamland; that the impertinent young curate who tells me that I shall be burnt everlastingly for not sharing his superstition is just as ignorant as I am myself, and that I know as much as my dog. And then you calmly say again, 'It is all a mistake; this, and that, and the other excellent man cherished a benevolent doubt; perhaps *αἰώνιος* necessarily means a limited time, or has necessarily no relation to time at all, or has both meanings at once; only believe in a something—and we will make it as easy for you as possible. Hell shall have no more than a fine equable temperature, really good for the constitution; there shall be nobody in it except Judas Iscariot and one or two more; and even the poor Devil shall have a chance if he will resolve to mend his ways.'

This, again, is all very well, and no doubt the terror can easily be exterminated after we know it to be baseless. But then, what are we to think of the religion in which so fearful a belief grew and flourished; a belief which, according to you, is calculated to drive men mad, to make them pray for annihilation as infinitely preferable to the state which it reveals, and which, so far from exerting a moral influence, pollutes the imagination and lowers the tone of character of all who accept it? Your contention is really that the historical Christianity, the actual belief of millions of men and women, deserves upon this head all that its fiercest adversaries have ever said against it. You add, indeed, that a religious creed may be put together in conformity with the official documents which omit this ghastly superstition. Possibly, but a creed must be judged by its fruits, by the effect which it actually produces upon living men and women; and if in its actual working it formulates or protects such detestable doctrines as this, it is useless to complain of the facts. If Christianity meant really what it meant for Mr. Maurice, or Mr. Erskine of Linlathen, or Canon Farrar, it would be a very much milder form of belief than it has actually been. Only, as a matter of fact, it has had quite a different meaning for Tertullian, Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, Luther, 'thousands of theologians,' and millions upon millions of professed believers. The fact affords a conclusive presumption that the belief is what Dr.

Newman would call a development, not an 'incrustation.' It must have an organic connection of some kind with the vital principles of the creed, or it would not have grown so vigorously and flourished so persistently wherever Christianity has been strongest. Accidental dogmas may be engrafted upon a creed here and there under special circumstances; they die and drop off when the conditions alter; but a phenomenon so universal and enduring could hardly be produced unless there were an underlying logical necessity which binds it indissolubly with the primary articles of the faith. It is, one must assume, a consequence of the mode of conceiving the universe implied in the very structure of Christianity, not an addition from without. In any case, we are virtually asked to adopt a new creed because the old has fostered a detestable superstition. It is no strained inference that some more radical remedy is required than a simple omission of a particular clause of the revealed code. The whole must require to be remodelled. We cannot retain the amiable parts of a doctrine whilst leaving out the sterner elements, or be sure that we can clip and mangle without emasculating.

Is, then, the Christian doctrine of a future world to be regarded as simply a curse to mankind? That seems to be the reasonable inference from Canon Farrar's assertions, though it is as far as possible from being the inference which the Canon draws. If I took

his representation of Christianity to be true, I should regard it as necessarily including a very large element of devil-worship. No dogma can be of more importance than one which serves as the basis of the whole moral system, and governs the whole application of religious principle to conduct. If the accepted version of this doctrine be utterly repulsive, we should be forced to hold that Christianity poisons the springs which it represents as the sole support of the spiritual life. No other doctrine is so important in regard to practice, and none so horrible. And yet I believe, as I suppose all moderately intelligent persons believe, that Christianity not only represents the teaching of many of the greatest and most moral of mankind, but was for centuries one of the chief reforming agencies in the world. I leave it to Canon Farrar and those who agree with him to solve this paradox upon their own principles Upon mine the explanation is simple enough. It is that the so-called belief in a future life —whether in hell or in heaven—has always been in reality a dream, and not strictly speaking a belief at all. Occasionally this dream, like others, passes into hallucination ; as a rule it is as flimsy in its texture as other dreams, and really supplies new symbols for the emotions instead of suggesting genuine motives for action. The ignorant and the childish are hopelessly unable to draw the line between dreamland and reality ; but the imagery which takes its rise in the imagination, as distinguished from the perceptions,

bears indelible traces of its origin in comparative unsubstantiality and vagueness of outline. If Christianity counselled men in sober earnestness to interpret the universe as significant of a cruel and arbitrary despotism, it would deserve unmixed reprobation. The true statement is that it generates fantastic and sometimes horrible dreams, which are insufficiently distinguished from realities. The confusion has sometimes disastrous results ; but they are not such as might be anticipated from the matter-of-fact statement which confounds poetry with prose and shadow with substance.

There is, of course, a logical groundwork for this as for other widespread beliefs. The sources of the illusion, indeed, are so numerous and plausible that the only difficulty of explaining is in the selection. When, for example, another being has become inwoven with our habitual experience; when we have learnt to interpret various phenomena as signs of a living presence, the process becomes so spontaneous and instinctive that we cannot speedily unlearn it. We actually feel (who has not felt ?) the pressure of the hand that is still for ever, and hear the footstep that is no longer caused by the living form. It is as hard to reduce the touch or sound to the bare testimony of the senses as for an educated man to see in a book the bare black-and-white symbols without imbibing the meaning beyond. There is, indeed, a contradiction to thought once organised by experience in supposing that the dead can still speak or move. But the infan-

tile intellect is tolerant of contradictions; it is not surprised on discovering that a body which was covered with earth and burnt with fire is again appearing in its former state; and the fact that death ends life is but slowly forced upon it by experience. If my dog saw something which recalled me after my death, he would accept the vision without the least shock of surprise; the childish mind certainly, and, we may presume, the savage mind, is in the same stage. As it begins to become sensible of the empirical truth that the dead do not rise, whilst still believing that they are sometimes seen and felt, it tacitly solves the contradiction by imagining another life, a race of dim shadows which haunt the graves of the dead and visit the dreams of survivors. Recent philosophers have shown us how the experience of dreams and other phenomena may suggest or corroborate a similar theory, until a spirit-world is created more populous than the world of the living, and inhabited by beings, some of whom gradually decay, whilst others are gradually promoted to the honours of godhood.

But if the framework of the belief is suggested by misinterpreted experience, all that fills it up, that gives it definite form and substance and colour, is necessarily the work of the creative imagination. This land of vague shadows is the natural heritage of the poet. Its population is in part supplied by ordinary dreams, and the waking dreams naturally find in it a congenial dwelling-place, where they can acquire a

kind of shadowy reality. Even the most orthodox of intelligent persons intimate that the particular symbols—the fire of hell and the harps of the blessed—have no more than a poetic or symbolical truth. The whole question is as to the extent of the share contributed by the imagination. A very slight comparison of the fully-formed belief with the ostensible logical groundwork will suggest how little is due even to a mistaken system of reasoning. I do not know whether it is the orthodox view that the immortality of the soul is capable of proof, or that the doctrine can only be known through revelation. In any case, the supposed ' proof ' leaves innumerable questions undecided. The pre-existence of the soul is as plausible a dogma as its post-existence ; we may as easily believe that it emerges from and returns to the vast ocean of Divine existence as that it persists permanently and separately ; and the whole theory of ' future rewards and punishments '—of the doctrine that our condition through all eternity is to be determined by our conduct here—is palpably gratuitous from any philosophical point of view. That which distinguishes the Christian system from systems which can reckon a much greater number of disciples is precisely that for which no shadow of proof can be advanced ; and, moreover, it is that upon which the whole value of the dogma depends in the eyes of believers.

The simple explanation is that the whole process is poetical in substance. It is the construction of an

ideal world, which may be in some sense congenial to the imagination. The conscience as trained by great Christian teachers creates spontaneously a system of retribution inconsistent with a pre-existent state, or an ultimate absorption of the soul in the infinite. The dream-world is framed to suit the moral theory, instead of the morality being adapted to facts. The illegitimate nature of the process betrays itself in the arbitrary and even repulsive conclusions ultimately reached; but it is the normal process of the imaginative faculty.

The world of dreams, in fact, if not created, is moulded by our desires. It is the embodiment of our hopes and fears. The historical conditions which render certain impulses prominent at particular epochs, determine also the direction which will be taken by our wandering fancies. The plastic world of the imagination yields to every passionate longing that stirs our natures. Pure emotion knows of no limits. The more vividly we feel, the less we attend to the conditions of feeling. Absorbed in love or hate, we cannot for the moment even conceive the possibility of satiety, and imagine raptures indefinitely protracted. Past feelings survive, and the future is anticipated, and we imagine a state independent of time, and in which destruction has no place. We are irritated by the unsubstantiality of the images created, and we try to compensate their faintness by magnifying them to gigantic and more than gigantic proportions. The

phantasms die away rapidly as we wake, and we stimulate our jaded and flagging imaginations by drawing indefinitely upon the boundless resources of dreamland.

A world thus framed may at times represent the strength of love. We cannot and we will not believe in the loss of those whose lives seemed to be part of our essence. A belief caused by (I cannot say based upon) this passionate yearning is so pathetic and even sacred that the unbeliever may well shrink from breathing his doubts in its presence. It is, no doubt, mainly this sentiment which makes criticism unwelcome. Yet for that reason it makes an answer imperative. You ask me for consolation under a blow which has wrecked your happiness. The only consolation which would really satisfy you would be the assertion that the blow has not really fallen. We try to make such an assertion. Do we ever console anyone? Does the dream of the assumed blessedness of the change really alleviate the sorrow of the loss? Considering, indeed, that the future state may represent eternal misery as well as eternal happiness, we may ask whether the 'consolation' is quite reasonable. Why is everyone entitled to assume that his own friends have gone straight to heaven? But, not to dwell upon this, what is the real source of such consolation as can be obtained? A heart-breaking sorrow is as much a fact as a bodily pain. A man in the tortures of some cruel disease is in torture, and there is no use

in denying the fact. It is not a question of stating a fact, but of prescribing a discipline. The loss of our dearest may inflict pain, from which we would willingly purchase relief by the tortures of the worst disease. It may, like the loss of a bodily organ, shatter the pillars of existence; we may know that our lives will be henceforth maimed and unreal; that we shall move about like ghosts, watching, but not sharing in, the panorama of existence. What can we say by way of 'consolation' that shall not be a mockery? I believe that we can only say one thing, the one thing which has been said in various forms by Wordsworth. It is simply the truth that deep emotion, even the most painful, may be 'transmuted' into nobler feeling; that sorrow may make the heart softer and widen the sympathies; that the eye which has 'kept watch o'er man's mortality' may henceforth see the world in soberer colouring, but may see more truly and more tenderly. There is no fact to be announced which will alter the truth. In that sense there is no consolation. But it is some encouragement to a brave man to feel in the midst of sorrow that it may bring him nearer to his kind, and fit him to play a worthier and manlier part through the space that is left to him.

To the demands made by such emotions as this one must reply respectfully. But it must be added that a belief in a future life sometimes means the intense dislike of a selfish nature to part from all chance of enjoyment. It is mere greediness for life, and

means so strong a regard for one's own wretched little individuality that the universe seems worthless unless it is preserved. Or it may be the expression of the intense longing for rest of the weary and heavy-laden, to whom life is an incessant struggle against overpowering forces, who have come to regard all desires as torments, and whose ideal is an everlasting repose scarcely distinguishable from annihilation. The more active intellect frames a different ideal: it feels that the physical needs, and the sensual desires which correspond to them, are the conditions that clog its energies, and longs for a region where the pure intellect and the finer essence of love may have room for action in perfect independence of those degrading incumbrances. The moralist longs for a state in which good and evil shall be finally and unalterably divided, and the harrowing sense of unequal distribution of happiness and misery cease its tormenting discords. The philosopher longs for a final revelation of truth, and the bigot for a world in which heretics will be tormented. The Nihilist and the ascetic and the sensualist, the lofty and the common-sense moralist, the selfish and the benevolent man, the mystic and the hard logician, will each create a heaven or a hell of his own; and the future world, created by a creed which represents a wide and carefully-elaborated system of speculation, will blend more or less consistently many different conceptions. Only it is as well to remark that when people begin

to quarrel about their dreams, the whole fabric is apt to show its baselessness ; and further, that opponents should remember that one of the conditions of dream-land is that it should admit the phantoms of terror as well as of ecstasy. Wake, and the phantoms will disappear ; but if you choose to dream, you must have your nightmares as well as your visions of undying bliss. Dreams must be at least distorted and grotesque shadows of realities. Since life is at best a hard struggle, you can only create a heaven at the price of supposing a counterbalancing hell. That is a law of the imagination which will fulfil itself in spite of the best-meant efforts. Heaven and hell are correlatives, and rise and fall together. Hell, so far as it is real, is the hell within us. Shame, remorse, unavailing regret for the past, are the very materials out of which it is constructed. It is precisely the shadow of the mental anguish cast upon the misty world of dreams. To produce ' conviction of sin ' is the aim of all Christian preaching ; the more intense the conviction, the more vivid the phantoms generated in the mind. The triumph of good may be logically interpreted to mean the extinction of evil. But in the logic of the imagination, since our satisfaction in the good is bound up with, if it does not rather spring out of, our misery under evil, the triumphant good is inconceivable without the prostrate evil. The background of darkness is necessary to make the glory visible. Our hopes are but the obverse of our fears.

Whatever the meaning of *αἰώνιος*, the fearful emotion which is symbolised is eternal or independent of time by the same right as the ecstatic emotion. It is as impossible to separate light from darkness, height from depth, object from subject, as to conceive of good without conceiving evil. And, indeed, the logic of the creed really falls in with its symbolism. Time can have nothing to do with arguments about the absolute and the infinite ; and if a sense of the real existence of evil is at the root of our religious beliefs, its existence at all implies its existence in eternity. You may escape verbally by denying that evil has any real existence, but that is to adopt an optimism, impossible as a genuine creed, and radically alien to the Christian sentiment. You may escape from Manichæism, terribly plausible as it is, by representing evil as limited and prostrate, but you cannot destroy evil without destroying its antithesis. To cultivate a strong sense of the corruption of humanity, a dogma which is of the essence of Christianity, without stimulating the belief in hell, is the hopeless task of proving at once that sin is destructive, and that it has no real existence.

Canon Farrar may denounce to his heart's content the hell created by savage intolerance, or by the coarse terrorism which outrages the conscience with its elaborate images of physical horror. We may be heartily glad that such denunciations at the present day can be uttered even by an orthodox divine, but the phantasms cannot be finally exorcised so long as

the popular imagination is invited and encouraged to dwell upon the future world, and to invert the true order by basing realities upon dreams. Hell, with the loftier theologians, meant a stern and righteous hatred of sin—a vigorous grasp of the fact that the past is irrevocable, and the future its necessary development; that ill deeds have consequences reaching forwards through all conceivable time, never to be wiped out by any bitterness of repentance; and that, in a world which is one incessant struggle, the triumphant nature must be idealised, not as seated on a throne of everlasting indolence, but with feet planted on the neck of evil—evil prostrate, but always ready to burst into renewed activity upon the least intermission of watchfulness. Given such sentiments and convictions, and the same method of imaginative projection, they must always be interpreted in the same symbolism. Hell must be an integral part of the ideal world so long as the radical convictions of Christianity retain their genuine vitality. Simply to suppress it is to substitute a vapid optimism which will never satisfy men nourished upon the Christian version of the unmistakable facts of the universe. Eternal damnation is as much a necessity of the imagination as a logical deduction from the fundamental principles of the creed.

So far, again, as hell was merely a translation into poetical symbols of their genuine beliefs, we must make allowances for the apparently atrocious

language of men like Augustine, or even Jonathan Edwards. We pardon a child or a peasant for using language which to us is horrible, partly because the immature mind can only use such phrases as infinite and eternal by way of vague superlatives, and partly because it does not so much believe in errors, as fail to distinguish between belief and fancy. Its discrimination is not logical, but imaginative. The images which it creates are distinguished from the realities which it perceives, not by being less believed in, but by being of a more shadowy texture. The same leniency of construction must be extended to great men who were themselves in a more infantile stage of mind, or who had inherited infantile modes of conception. The underlying emotion deserves our respect, although the images which it generated become grotesque and horrible when we have learnt to put more bluntly the decisive dilemma of fact or fiction.

The true evil is not that the dreams sometimes take hideous shapes, but that all mixture of dreams and realities involves distortion of facts. Dreamland is, of course, the natural empire of magic, sacerdotal or other. The phantoms of the imagination do, in fact, obey laws different from those of reality. In that region fancy determines, instead of being determined, by fact. A charm cannot turn aside a real bullet, but it may well govern the flight of an imaginary missile. Expiatory rites which dull the

pangs of conscience really release us from the hell which conscience creates. Here, therefore, is the source of all the quack remedies for remorse which assume that the past can be wiped out by changing the play of the imagination. Luther was content with abolishing that part of the imaginary world from which priests derived their chief claim to authority. So long as purgatory was admitted, he saw that it would generate the superstitions from which Canon Farrar supposes it to be separable. Admit that the future state is modifiable, and men will try to modify by the only method available for the imaginary world—some form, namely, of supernatural charm. But Luther's reform still left room for other modes of spiritual quackery. The Protestant could get rid of the hell within him by the simple method of persuading himself that he personally was saved. Conviction of salvation *is* salvation in dreamland. If priests had no longer the keys of the next world, the believer could alter his own fate by the paroxysm of excitement which he called a conversion. Such methods do in fact affect a man's dreams, and are inevitably adopted when dreamland is asserted to be the sole reality. The preachers might appeal to good feelings, as the discipline of the Church might be exerted for moral purposes. But the method necessarily generated under certain conditions the corrupt Protestantism which attributed a supernatural value to a mere imaginative change,

and the corrupt Catholicism which attributed the same efficacy to external rites. When we abandon ourselves to the guidance of our imagination, we shall inevitably believe in remedies which have only an imaginary validity.

A belief in a future world is necessary, so we are told, to morality. We reply that the future world owes its conformation in great part to the play of the moral instincts. We agree that it once provided the only mode through which those instincts could find expression. We maintain that, in this sense, hell, with all its fantastic horrors, has yet been associated with the most vital of all regenerative forces. But then in that very fact lies the danger of prolonging the association when the belief has become a mere effete shadow. You would still frighten men into virtue by bugbears. To make your threats effective at all, you must exaggerate the dream indefinitely to compensate for its unreality. Then it shocks and revolts instead of governing the conscience, and you imagine expedients for softening the shock which you have produced. They are seen to be immoral because arbitrary and unreal, and you then try to deprive the nightmare of its horrors. You will find that a mere rose-coloured dream fails to satisfy the deepest instincts which lie at the root of your religion. And meanwhile the whole vision has become so shadowy and uncertain that its hopes and its terrors cease alike to have any tangible influence.

If the other world is to supply the sole adequate motives of morality, then morality is to be based on a foundation more vague and shifting than the spectre projected upon a mountain cloud.

The theory of the Almighty Chief Justice is, perhaps, too antiquated for serious discussion. If any reference must be made to it, it is because, although the argument is not explicitly stated, its validity is often tacitly assumed. Though abandoned in actual controversy, the presumption of its utility is still taken for granted. It may, therefore, be just worth while to note that the whole doctrine really belongs to a bygone stage of mythology; to a belief, not in God, but in an anthropomorphic deity, and to a deity of a low type. He was the product of a society in which justice was still confounded with revenge. It would be unfair to judge his conduct by modern canons of morality were he not still occasionally resuscitated. We have agreed now that human laws should be reformatory instead of vindictive. The measure of their goodness is, that they should inflict a minimum of suffering, and that they should be subservient to the great purpose of reforming, if not the criminal himself, at least the society. Though they must still be aimed at deterring from crime, they should not inflict, even upon the criminal, sufferings more than are required for that purpose. The so-called divine law, of which the sanction was hell-fire, produced, on the contrary, a

maximum of suffering for a minimum of effect. Its principle would, therefore, be simply revenge of the most savage kind; and reformation, though one might have supposed an Omnipotent Being to be capable of doing something in that direction, a subsidiary consideration, if a consideration at all. The reforming effect of a law depends, not upon its severity simply, but upon the general recognition of its justice. But when this deity is promoted to be the absolute creator of the universe, when he has himself made the beings whom he tortures for ever, and placed them in a world full of temptations, it is obvious, to put it mildly, that his 'justice' must be understood in a non-natural sense. To reconcile the theory of a 'Moral Governor of the Universe' with the theory of an Omnipotent Creator who dooms his failures to endless torment, is a problem which I gladly leave to theologians.

The substance of morality is distorted as well as its supposed sanction. In dreamland we get rid easily enough of all the pressing material wants of life. If to be moral is to fit ourselves for dreamland, we should therefore become ascetics or mystics, and abandon as insoluble and unimportant the problems which are most urgently pressing upon mankind. The saintly ideal may doubtless be beautiful, but there is an ineradicable taint of the morbid and sickly in its very beauty. It has the same relation to actual life as the wizards and knights of chivalrous romance

to real soldiers or philosophers. To present a lofty ideal for our imitation is among the most important functions of all great religious or poetical teaching. But the imagination which soars too far above the earth into the regions of the purely arbitrary ends by creating the grotesque and unreal. We want to know what a man should be under the actual conditions of hungering, thirsting social beings, and we are presented with an emaciated invalid with a pair of impossible wings tacked mechanically to his shoulders. Such religion orders men not to reform the world, but to retire from it in despair, and to aim at an ideal which is radically unattainable. So, again, we may trace the opposite development, in which we separate the worlds of dreaming and reality effectually enough. We are sensual or cruel or avaricious in this life, and reconcile ourselves to evil by dreaming in the most edifying fashion. We are niggardly tradesmen on week-days and plunged in saintly devotion on Sabbaths, or indulge in every luxurious enjoyment, secure of an absolution by proper compliance with the ceremonies that satisfy our imagination.

Such evils are common enough in all ages, and will probably be common in one form or another in all time to come. They are stimulated and nourished by any form of belief which helps us to regard morality as ultimately dependent upon anything but a compliance with the actual conditions of the real,

tangible, and visible world in which we live. The more extreme aberrations of asceticism and antinomianism, of excessive faith in priestly magic and in supernatural conversions, are, of course, rare in a civilised society which knows pretty well that its dreams are woven of unsubstantial materials. The hell of the present day is objectionable for a rather different reason. It can hardly be said, I think, with fairness, that it is ever a product of commonplace selfishness. The selfish man is too comfortable to want a hell. So long as we do not look beyond that part of the universe which is buttoned within our own waistcoats, we can generally make ourselves tolerably happy. The other world is generally created by a deep sense of evils so inextricably intertwined with our present state that we frame an imaginary world where all great problems are solved, and dwell upon it till we half-believe in its reality. It is not that which makes 'life worth living,' for it is the embodiment of a profound discontent with the world as it is; but it is that which might make life better worth living if its force were expended, not upon dreams, but realities.

Amiable and philosophical minds cling to this belief, because they believe in all sincerity that to abandon it is to abandon the world to sensuality, materialism, and anarchy. To these we can only say that it is surely undesirable to associate the features of morality and our highest social interests with a belief

which daily proves more shadowy in outline, more palpably demoralising as it is more distinctly realised, and more obviously divorced from any reasonable speculation, until even its advocates can say little more than that they wish it were true. If the association be really enforced by logic, there is no more to be said; only in that case it is desirable that an exhibition of the logical ground should be less frequently superseded by a simple appeal to emotion. It is surely a misfortune that morality should be ostensibly based upon a conception which is avowedly little more than a vague 'perhaps.'

The tendency to cling desperately to dreamland is more frequently an utterance of that refined Epicureanism which is one of the worst and commonest tendencies of the day. It is the tendency which in one direction generates the cant of 'art for art's sake' —the doctrine, that is, which would encourage men to steep themselves in luxurious dreaming, and explicitly renounce the belief that art is valuable, as it provides a worthy embodiment for the most strenuous thought and highest endeavour of the age. In politics it corresponds to the doctrine that men should be diverted from dangerous aspirations towards social reform by bribes administered to their lower passions, and that acquiescence in enervating despotism should be preserved by lavish expenditure upon frivolous or corrupting indulgence. The religion which falls in with such conceptions is a fashionable accomplishment, governed

by the canons of good taste instead of argument, and is equivalent to a systematic cultivation of some agreeable emotion. The so-called believer of this type is a cynic in a thin disguise. He is partly aware that his belief is a sham, but is not the less resolved to stick to so pleasant a sham. He answers his opponents by a shriek or a sneer. The sentiment which he most thoroughly hates and misunderstands is the love of truth for its own sake. He cannot conceive why any man should attack a lie simply because it is a lie, and supposes that the enemy is prompted to disperse his dreams by coarse brutality and malignant hatred of the beautiful. His most effective weapon is the petulant sarcasm which was once used by sceptics because they were not allowed to argue seriously, and is now used by believers because they cannot. His indignation is the growl of the sluggard who will not be roused from his dreams. Why cannot men be satisfied to amuse themselves with the reverend phantoms of the past, instead of prying into all manner of awkward questions, upsetting established convictions, and pressing every comfortable old creed to give a rigid account of its validity and utility? An honest believer is not necessarily or probably an obstructive or a bigot; but obstructive and repressive tendencies predispose a man to accept the intellectual attitude which justifies him in complacently asserting that the actual world is going straight to the devil, whilst he masks a selfish indifference under cover of loftier aspirations

towards the world of the imagination. Dreamland once provided a safe issue for much discontent, for it sanctified a policy of submission to tyranny and abnegation of social duties. Though it has grown more shadowy, it still provides a pleasant refuge for the far less vigorous sentiment of men who see that the world has escaped from their guidance, and who welcome a good excuse for folding their arms, sneering at busy agitators, and declaring that the sole worthy aim of human effort is to be found in dreamland, instead of amidst the harsh shock of struggling realities.

WHAT IS MATERIALISM?[1]

Metaphysical arguments are apt to take the form of disputes about words. A system of classification is already implied in a nomenclature; and new theories are smuggled into belief under the disguise of improved definitions. Philosophers are constantly at cross-purposes over the misunderstandings which are thus introduced. The technical terms of metaphysics become a coinage of ambiguous value. This coinage is again modified in the heated furnace of theological controversy. When it has passed into still wider circulation, and even become part of the stock-in-trade of the popular novelist, the old sharpness of impression is utterly worn away. The currency becomes hopelessly debased. Phrases once used to convey refined logical distinctions are now only fit to take place among the clumsy missiles with which popular orators bombard the objects of their hatred.

This seems to apply to the word 'Materialist.' That word has a philosophical, a theological, and an

[1] From a discourse delivered at South Place, Finsbury, on March 21, 1886.

ethical bearing. Various meanings have become attached to it in the course of many controversies. When they are lumped together, and this or that thinker is denounced as a Materialist, he often finds himself saddled with opinions which he would be the first to disavow. If he tries to make distinctions, he is supposed to be quibbling, to be refusing to follow his own reasoning to its logical conclusion, or to be trying to dissociate himself from those who are really his allies. 'You are not a Christian: then you hold that the only aim in life is the gratification of the senses.' That is a pleasant bit of popular logic, to which freethinkers are pretty well accustomed. I have been told, as a matter of course, that I am a Materialist. I do not think that I am one in the proper sense of the word, but I willingly leave it to others to label me with such tickets as they please in the museum of heresies. Still, as the phrase seems to me to imply a common misconception, I think it only right to try to say, as frankly as I can, what is, in fact, my opinion upon such matters. I premise, however, that in dealing with such a question briefly and with the least possible use of technical terms, I cannot hope to observe all the proper metaphysical niceties. In all probability I shall fall into inaccuracies both of thought and language. I shall merely try to express myself as well as I can in phrases intelligible to the 'general reader,' but I should not think my opinion worth the trouble of expression

were it not that I take myself to be aiming at conclusions to which far more competent thinkers are gravitating. I do not profess to offer any solution of so vast a problem; only to indicate the direction in which, as I hold, a solution is probably attainable.

Materialism should, apparently, denote the doctrine that matter is the ultimate reality. Nothing really exists except matter, in various combinations from stones to brains. Spiritualism must be the doctrine that mind is the ultimate reality. Nothing really exists except thought in its various modifications. The statement is simple and clear enough if we assume that matter and spirit are words which represent distinctly known entities. But this is exactly one of the cases in which we have already begged the question when we have given the names. If asked whether I accepted either of these doctrines, I could not say Yes or No till I had asked some question as to the meaning of the words. I might, for example, urge that spiritual and material do not represent two different categories, either of which can be contemplated alone, but that they correspond to two methods of combining experience, each legitimate within its own sphere; and that when we try to get beyond the necessary limits of knowledge, each conception will land us into insuperable difficulties.

Materialism, we may say, represents the point of view of the physical inquirer. A man is a materialist for the time being so long as he has only to do with

that which may be touched, handled, seen, or otherwise perceived through the senses. We know all that can be known about it when we have combined all that our senses can tell us. Through the senses we define its configuration, or, in other words, its relations in space. The senses, indeed, reveal other than space-properties: they tell us of the colours, sounds, smells, and so forth which are in some sense inherent in certain bodies; and these, of course, are an essential part of our conceptions of the various objects. But we treat these so-called secondary qualities as in some way dependent upon the geometrical properties. They point out rather than constitute the object. We reach the ultimate goal of physical sciences by establishing certain formulæ expressible solely in terms of space and time. We measure everything that can be measured in miles and feet, hours and seconds; and the general problem is to determine the rules according to which one set of positions will at any given time transform itself into another. The physicist, of course, speaks of 'forces' and of 'energy.' But he has nothing to do with the meaning of such words, apart from what he calls their 'measures.' They are merely shorthand symbols for certain changes measurable in space and time. The force of gravity, for example, is measured by the velocity generated in a given time—that is, by the rate at which a body is moving after it has been falling in vacuum for a second. To say that it varies inversely

as the square of the distance is to say that, of two such bodies, the one which is at twice the distance from the assumed centre will begin to move with a quarter of the velocity. Of the force, considered apart from its measure, we can say nothing whatever; and it was precisely by confining their attention to the measure that scientific reasoners were able to get rid of metaphysical puzzles which had made progress impossible. From the simplest to the most complex scientific problem we have still the same procedure. Astronomical problems are solved when, from the position of certain bodies at one time, we can infer their position in another, the forces being known in the sense that their measure is known. In more refined inquiries we have to pass beyond all possible limits of observation, and to postulate atoms which, by their nature, are imperceptible. But they still have to move according to the analogy of perceivable bodies, and the use of them is justifiable because they bring us back to conclusions which are again within the limits of perception. The recognised aim of all scientific inquiry is to give quantitative relations—that is, to lay down formulæ expressed in terms of time and space, and nothing else. Scientific method, again, is nothing but a more refined and systematic application of methods more or less roughly implied in every moment of our lives. All human action upon the external world, including our own bodies, consists simply in changing the positions of pieces of matter.

To move a thing is to impose upon it certain relations expressible in terms of space and time; and, so far as action implies thought, it implies innumerable more or less conscious judgments of the same kind. To make these judgments articulate and explicit is to make them scientific. The whole structure of scientific knowledge is built up from such elements, and is, therefore, nothing but a system of formulæ in terms of space and time. So long as we are dealing with the so-called physical sciences, nobody objects to this procedure. We are only systematising and giving precision to our thought. But a difficulty occurs when the man of science begins to deal with organised and living matter; when he tries to unify knowledge by reasoning from the principles of physical science in the departments claimed by the philosopher and the psychologist. The brain is a piece of matter; thought is somehow dependent upon the action of the brain; a stone impinges on a nerve; a message is sent to the brain, and returns in the shape of a muscular impulse. Is the whole of this process to be explained by a set of movements of vibrating atoms? Are we to give up the belief that our thoughts and emotions have something to do with our actions, and to conceive of the mind as a phantom looking on (if a phantom can look on) at the mysterious dance of a whirlwind of infinitesimal particles of dust? It is undeniable that these questions lead to enormous difficulties. How are we to state the relation between brain and mind?

That they are related is undeniable; but the boldest theorist would hesitate to state definitely what is the nature of the relation. It seems that we are so far from being able to answer the question correctly that we cannot as yet even put the question accurately. When this is the state of the case for even the most competent inquirers, I think that one who does not profess to be competent should be modest enough to confess himself a provisional Agnostic. He must admit that, so far from having a solution, he does not quite perceive where the difficulty lies, though he is painfully aware that it exists; nor feel certain whether it is or is not one of the questions to which an answer may be reasonably anticipated. There are probably some facts which we shall always have to accept as ultimate—to be admitted but not to be explained. Yet, within such narrow limits as are imposed by the nature of the case and my own incompetence, it may be possible to suggest the point of view from which it may appear that the danger is, after all, a bugbear, and that there is no fear that any conceivable progress of physical science will even tend to destroy our belief in our own consciousness.

Materialism has an undoubted plausibility. To common-sense, nothing can be more real than the stone which Johnson kicked to confute Berkeley. Strip it of the secondary qualities which are obviously dependent upon the observing eye, and the residuum is a block of solidified space: matter resisting and embodying

geometrical relations, and nothing else. Out of such blocks, finite or infinitesimal, the whole material universe is constructed for the mathematician; and in the age of Newton metaphysicians naturally took the mathematical point of view, and applied mathematical methods to all truth. They felt themselves in presence of a mathematical world, which threatened to be not only real but the sole reality. Innumerable devices were tried to get rid of this oppressive reality, or to make conceivable its relations to an immaterial soul. How could a soul know anything of matter except by a continuous miracle? But if it could not know it, must we not resign all pretensions to a knowledge of reality? If matter, instead of the consciousness, is to be the mere phantom, does not the whole world become a dream, an unreal web spun by the dreamer—a 'subjective' construction which has no longer any safe anchorage in fact? What are these mysterious entities, time and space, which define the nature of the material world? Do we know of them as something existing altogether independently of ourselves, or are they made by our minds? and can we, if so, soar into transcendental regions altogether outside of them? So long as the philosopher attempts to perform such feats, the ordinary mind, to which common-sense supplies the pole-star, will prefer to hold by the reality of sticks and stones, even though such a belief may end in Materialism; or, more probably, it may contentedly retain contradictory elements of thought

without seeking to solve the antinomies which bother the metaphysician. A stone is 'real,' and a thought is 'real'; but how the realities are related is a question beyond the ordinary interest. This bare reference, however, to the controversies which have raged through centuries is enough to recall the innumerable pitfalls which beset the unwary wanderer on every side. That Serbonian bog is not yet mapped, and no plain pathway has been constructed through its labyrinth.

What are time and space? Eternal and self-existent realities, or transformed sensations, or mental forms somehow imposed upon chaotic sense materials? A lifetime may be devoted to studies which will convince us that no answer can be given. We may, however, say in some sense, without fear of contradiction, that in any case we cannot get outside our own consciousness. We know nothing directly except the modifications of our consciousness, thoughts, sensations, emotions, volitions and so forth; and all statements of knowledge carry with them a reference, explicit or implicit, to the knower. An object without a subject is a meaningless phrase. The basis of the knowledge of every individual is his own current of consciousness, which is transformed into knowledge by reflection. What, then, are we doing when we raise this vast structure of physical science, composed essentially of time and space formulæ? We are filling up the gaps in our immediate perceptions. Each man's

experience is fragmentary, discontinuous, and narrow. He sees infinitesimal arcs, and connects them by drawing the whole circle. We extend the range and supply the intervals of our knowledge. We are doing so somehow every instant of our lives, and when we reach the furthest limits of the physical sciences we are still doing the same. I shut my eyes for an instant, and believe that my pen and paper are still there. I believe that I should see them if my eyes were open, and that other persons may see them still. If I look back to the past, or forward to the future, or away to the furthest abysses of space, I am carrying on the same construction. I am 'producing' the curve of which a minute element is before my eyes. I form, then, a kind of hypothetical consciousness, of which my own is an essential part, but which extends indefinitely beyond it. By this artifice (if it may be called so) I state a general truth without explicit reference to my own perceptions. I do so when upon seeing a man first at one window and then at another I supply the intermediate positions and infer his relations to other objects by correcting my own perspective. Kepler constructed the solar system in the same way. He observed a planet in certain positions; he supplied the intermediate positions by discovering the curve which passed through all the observed positions; and to do so he had to place himself in imagination at a different point of view from which the relations asserted to exist might be

matters of direct observation. All scientific progress is a development and a more distinct articulation of the same procedure.

I do not inquire what is the ultimate meaning of space, or 'outness,' what precisely we mean when we say that a thing is 'outside' ourselves or outside another thing. I only say that we are not in this process getting rid of an observer, but only hypothetically extending his powers. We are 'producing' our curves: seeing in imagination what we should see through a telescope or a microscope, or should see if we moved to Sirius, or could touch a ray of light; what we should see if we could live a thousand years hence or had lived a thousand years ago: or if we could see the back of our heads as well as what lies in front of us. We are still only doing what we are doing when we shut our eyes or imagine the chair behind us. We thus obtain formulæ which are independent, in a sense, of our particular position. Yet they are so constructed that when the necessary data are filled in they give the experience corresponding to that position.

'This is a table' is a phrase which in the first place asserts that I have a certain set of organised sense-impressions. But it also means that you have an analogous set of impressions, and that if we changed places we should also change sensations. It is a compact formula, which not only indicates the sensations of an observer at a particular time and place,

but also gives the sensations of every other observer as those which would be perceived by the same observer at other times and places. It is a general formula with an indefinite term, such that when that term is filled in or defined it indicates the sensations corresponding to any particular case. We are, as it were, postulating an omnipresent consciousness, which may be for the moment focussed at any particular point, and the one phrase defines what will be its perceptions at that point. This habitual reference to the common instead of the particular generates the impression that I am somehow laying down truths, 'objective' in the sense of having no reference at all to my individual experience. Such formulæ have been constructed from the experience of the race at large, and therefore are independent in one sense of my personal experience. Yet, in fact, each man is necessarily his own base, from which all things are measured for him; and he only discovers wider formulæ in which his own experience is included, not formulæ from which it is excluded. We do not get a step nearer towards the abolition of the subject. When we speak of what happened when the solar system was still an incandescent mist, we are only extending our experience, as we do when we say that the fire is still burning in the room we have left. To say what would or did happen, outside of all experience, actual or potential—that is, supposing all experience to be annihilated—is to use

words without meaning, as much as to say what I feel when I don't feel.

If I have not said, I have aimed, I think, at saying something which will, perhaps, be admitted in regard to the physical science—to the body of truth made up of time and space formulæ. But the further question remains, What other kinds of knowledge can we attain, and how are they related to this? So far we are at the materialist point of view. We are enabled to see what we should see with increased faculties, and to trace the changes of the vision backwards and forwards. But nothing is so far revealed to us which is not an object of sight, or of one of the senses. What are the senses concerned in weaving this marvellous web of the outward universe may be disputed; but they do not in any case include all the affections of our consciousness. A stone, according to common-sense, is a reality; but so undoubtedly is a toothache. Although the pain is associated in some sense with certain objects existing in space, in this case with a tooth in a certain visible condition, it is merely associated. The pain is a perfectly distinguishable sensation by itself, and the emotions—fear and love and anger, for example—are just as 'real' as the stone, or as the sensations which reveal the stone, to us. Why, then, if our various feelings, using the word in the most general sense, are all on the same plane; if one has as good a claim to real existence as the other; if I recognise each

simply because it is an element in my reflective consciousness, am I induced to assign superior 'reality' to one class? A man slaps my face; have I not as good a right to say that the pain is real, or the resentment real, as that the hand or the face is real? One answer would seem to be simple. All knowledge of the outside world is derived through the sensations of sight and touch, and so forth, which constitute, or are, in any case, implied in our perceptions of material objects. I know of this room and this table because I can see, touch, and grasp them. I know that there is another person in it because I can see, touch, and grasp his body. If my senses of touch, sight, and so forth, could be annihilated, I could have no knowledge whatever of anything but my own immediate feelings. Laura Bridgeman could acquire knowledge through the sense of touch alone, without seeing or hearing. But what could she have known had she been also deprived of the sense of touch? She might have had a series of painful and pleasurable sensations; but for her the universe would have been annihilated, or she would have been her own universe. I know of more than I can directly perceive, but I know it by an inference. I see a man's hand tremble as I see a candle flicker. I infer a draught of air from the flickering, that is, something the existence of which is again perceptible to the senses. I infer that the man is afraid, but I can never directly perceive his fear. The inference is no doubt justifiable,

because the belief in a consciousness like my own, associated in some way with certain sensible manifestations, enables me to foresee a number of phenomena, the existence of which can be again verified through the senses. A man whose hand trembles is frightened; as I know because my own hand trembles under similar emotions, and because a man with a trembling hand generally runs away. My knowledge, however, that there is a man at all, and my further knowledge that he has the emotion of fear, is derived through the same senses which reveal to me the existence of the chair and the table.

In both cases the judgment of 'reality' implies a certain inference. When I say there is a real candle, I assert implicitly that the candle is there for you as for me; I make an inference which, if I am dreaming, may be a wrong inference, and, indeed, is often wrong. A fact, says somebody, is a bundle of inferences. I assume, to justify the inference, that we live in the same world, or that certain general formulæ are true both for you and me, and will give either your sensations or mine when the proper data are inserted. But I am not directly conscious of your sensations; I can no more see your sensation of light than I can see your emotion of fear. Materialists are, indeed—and it is characteristic of the difficulty—sometimes betrayed into erroneous language upon this point. They find themselves logically bound to speak of a blue sensation instead of a sensation of

blue. To me, and I fancy to common-sense, such a combination of words is without a meaning.

The difference of the two processes indicates the source of the illusion which we are considering. We construct a universe extending indefinitely in space and time beyond our own immediate perceptions. We thus obtain general statements of fact which bear no explicit reference to our own personal experience. We fancy that we thus get an ' objective ' universe in the sense in which ' objective ' means outside all consciousness, instead of meaning a formula common to all consciousness. The formula which is true for you and me, and for all other conscious beings, is taken to be true without any reference to consciousness at all. We forget that not only the sensations of light and heat, for example, have no meaning apart from a sentient being, but even that light and heat as used for the supposed physical causes of the sensations, vibrating atoms and so forth, have no meaning apart from the percipient being. Then, further, as we know of emotions other than our own only through the sensations which inform us of material objects, as we know the man's fear only through his trembling, we attribute a superior reality to the sensations which determine the knowledge. My own consciousness tells me that fear is as ' real ' as sight or touch is. But as I know of your fear only through the visible and tangible manifestations, I take it to be somehow dependent upon them. Because my knowledge is

dependent, I take the fact to be dependent. The order of inference is mistaken for the order of existence. The emotion is taken to be an appendage to the external sign of emotion. Thus, we first forget that all knowledge of the facts implies an inference from our sensations; then we attribute a reality to sensations apart from the sensitive being; and we suppose the other modifications of consciousness revealed to us through the sensations to be less real, or to be dependent upon the sensations for what reality they possess.

The argument which I have thus tried to express has, I should say, two applications. In the first place, it condemns Materialism so far as Materialism professes to state that 'matter' is an ultimate reality, and that thoughts and emotions are mere nothings or phantasms. We are sometimes told that the solar system was once a 'cosmic mist,' a whirl of incoherent atoms, which has gradually shaken down into such order as we see around us. In the early stage no human consciousness was possible, and therefore we, organised and living beings, are merely the product of a blind fate. Assuming the fact, which at least cannot be disproved, we have only to reply that all that science can reveal to us is not a state of things which existed outside consciousness, but that which was perceived if there was a perceiver. We are still only extending backwards the series of our own sensations. I abstract from my own consciousness, but not from consciousness itself. I cannot get into a world outside of

all experience. We try to do so, verbally at least, when we invent the imaginary substratum in which sensible qualities somehow stick, instead of using the word as a mere name for the coherence of certain groups of sensation. We cannot peep behind the curtain

> Immerst in darkness, round the drama rolled,
> Which for the pastime of eternity
> Thou didst thyself enact, conceive, behold.

The curtain is the reality. The effort to look behind it is an effort to get out of ourselves. It only plunges us into the transcendental region of antinomies and cobwebs of the brain. The unknowable, which lies beyond, is not made into a reality by its capital letter. It is a mere blank, with which we have nothing to do. And as for the 'blind fate' in which materialists are charged with believing, it is a mere word; except, indeed, that it indicates that we cannot get into a region beyond knowledge which will explain to us why there should be a world at all, or why it should be such a world as we know. We must be content to trace the facts and their laws; to infer to-day from yesterday, and to-morrow from to-day. But we can discover no 'fate' or 'compulsion,' blind or otherwise, beyond the facts. If we infer to-day from yesterday, we may equally infer yesterday from to-day. We may run, backwards or forwards, by the same right along the chain of causes. If I am a 'necessary' conse-

quence, given the atoms, the atoms were a 'necessary' antecedent, given me. I may go from causes to effects, or effects to causes; take what is called, when we wish to be philosophical, the 'teleological,' or the evolutionist view. They give merely the facts given in different orders. So far as we admit causation—and the admission is generally said to be legitimate—we are merely denying the intrusion of an intrinsically unaccountable element into the universe. We are, in fact, simply taking a continuous series and arbitrarily dividing it into two parts. We join them again by a gratuitous hypothesis of an imaginary 'fate,' or 'necessity.' We have, in reality, simply the facts themselves. If living beings arose from inanimate matter, that does not prove that life is a figment, but only that matter had other properties than those which we please to attribute to it. The difficulty is one of our own making, and we make it by the assumption that we know something, or possibly might know something, about matter 'in itself,' that is, apart from thought or feeling.

The same remarks apply to the supposed danger of resolving thought into mechanical processes. We are forced to suppose that somehow or other every mental process corresponds in some way to a cerebral process. To define the 'some way' is the problem which is at present hopelessly, or all but hopelessly, obscure. We are at the very threshold of the science, even if there be a conceivable science. Rather, it

seems that in some sense the coincidence must always remain as an ultimate datum of observation. We must apparently believe that when Shakespeare wrote 'Hamlet,' or Newton the 'Principia,' some corresponding process took place in the little lumps of matter which we call their brains. If, to make a bold assumption, we could say how the two processes correspond, to what would our achievement amount? We should, I think, have learnt what Berkeley called a natural language. Each process would be a 'sign' of the other. When Shakespeare was writing 'To be or not to be,' we should know that certain modifications of his nervous system took place simultaneously with the occurrence of certain thoughts and emotions in his consciousness. The students of 'psychophysics' are industriously labouring at the fringe of such inquiries. They are trying to make out certain natural hieroglyphics which correspond in some indefinite way to a language which is unknown, and of which even the grammatical construction is a mystery. If ever they obtain trustworthy results, we shall still know nothing but the bare fact of a coincidence. When I, looking into your brain, have certain sensations, I shall know that you have certain thoughts. But such a knowledge would not tend in any degree to weaken the conviction, which rests upon evidence as clear as any scientific proof, that a man's passions affect his conduct: that love, and hate, and lust, and fear, do determine our actions; although we

might, on this hypothesis, show that they were invariably accompanied by certain physical manifestations. At the worst, we should come to some such conclusion as was adumbrated by Locke in the proposition, which seemed so scandalous to his contemporaries, that God might superadd a faculty of thinking to matter. That would be to become materialists, with the explanation that matter was itself a kind of spirit. When we know what matter and spirit are, we may settle whether the conclusion is really scandalous or not.

There is, I have said, another application of our doctrine. It has already been indicated in the foregoing. We escape from the materialist conclusion by always keeping in mind the limitations of knowledge, or, in other words, by refusing to admit mere empty phrases as solutions. If we keep to the so-called common-sense point of view, we are left with two entirely disparate entities, matter and spirit, which cannot be brought together without a confusion of thought. If, as philosophers, we become sensible of this incoherence, and try to meet scepticism by pronouncing time and space to be independent realities, we get a solid mathematical universe of indestructible matter, with the soul looking on from a pineal gland or elsewhere, unable really to influence it, and only brought into connection with it by a standing miracle. If we pronounce time and space to be merely subjective, we take leave of all relation

to fact, and verbally construct the universe out of bare logic, or we create a mystical theory from emotions cast into some show of logical form. But such constructions, however ingenious, can lead to no conclusion, for they have renounced the only basis upon which genuine knowledge can be systematised, and end in presenting a shifting phantasmagoria of vision, coloured, as dreams are coloured, by the predilections of each dreamer. We have to hold fast to the realities. We must recognise the truth which is distorted by the materialist conclusion. Emotions and feelings, I have said, are as 'real' as stocks and stones. They play as real a part in the great drama, and from them it derives its whole interest for us. But, as I have also said, we can only know of the feelings of others through our sensations. Each of us is an absolute unit, cut off by an impassable abyss from a direct knowledge of other consciousness. But we weave the whole universe out of the senses, which somehow indicate the varying relations of bodies, and, through them, of other conscious beings to ourselves. Time and space are the warp and woof upon which is embroidered all the shifting scenery of consciousness. By means of it signals are thrown out to us from other centres: our isolation ceases, and our very thoughts are built up by the action and reaction of other minds. From the living body which I see or touch I infer unhesitatingly the existence of a mind analogous to my own, for only

so can I explain its actions. The belief in the existence of others is part of my most fundamental convictions; and my whole system of thought is developed through the constant necessity of harmonising my thoughts with yours. The meaning of objective truth is, simply, that which is true both for you and me. When I come to such a neutral 'form' as space or time, which is taken to be identical for us all, I can no longer call it either objective or subjective, or I may call it indifferently either. From the fact that it belongs to all percipient beings as percipient, we may infer that it is an essential property of thought, or is an ultimate condition of thought. It does not matter which.

At this point we come to that question with which Materialism is most frequently identified in popular discussions. I hold, like everybody else, that there are other centres of consciousness besides my own. Does this, then, imply a belief in a 'soul,' and, if so, in an immortal soul? Can that belief be resigned without giving up a belief in volitions, emotions, and reason? The materialist is popularly defined as a person who disbelieves in a soul, and is, therefore, among other things, logically bound to be a brute. One remark, however, is obvious in this connection. In the earlier stages of belief the soul is itself regarded as material. It is still in want of fire, food, and clothes; it requires support as a kind of outdoor pauper, and gradually dissipates like a vapour if it

does not prolong existence in some happy hunting-ground. Moreover, materialist conceptions of the soul long survive the savage state. 'Franciscus Ribera,' says Burton in the 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' 'will have hell a material and local fire in the middle of the earth, two hundred miles in diameter. But Lessius will have the local fire far less, one Dutch mile in diameter, because, as he demonstrates, that space cubically multiplied will make a space able to hold 800,000 millions of damned bodies (allowing each body six-feet square), which will abundantly suffice, because it is certain that there will not be 100,000 millions of the damned.' General Booth's followers might dispute the figures, but hardly the principle. The pictures and sermons by which the faith of the ignorant is stimulated, the proofs of a 'spirit' world offered by beings who untie knots and write upon slates—and must therefore be immortal—are sufficient illustrations of the popular mode of thought. Indeed, there still seems to be a vague impression that a body which is burnt instead of buried will be in difficulties at the Resurrection.

This is no accident of belief. Of course, every reasonable person explains these sensuous images as mere symbolism intended to convey a higher truth. But the question is, What remains when the imagery is banished? What conception remains when you seriously try to think of the soul apart from all embodiment? Leibnitz plausibly main-

tained that every created soul must have a body of some kind. The reason seems to be given by what I have already stated. We know of another consciousness only by means of the sensations which reveal the body. Our inference is justified because the assumption explains the actions of the body. I knock down a man and an image, and both fall because both are material. But when the man gets up and knocks me down, the result is not explicable by any merely mechanical action, and is fully explicable (that is, fully reducible to intelligible 'laws') by the assumption that he has certain passions and volitions. But annihilate the medium through which we know of these passions and volitions, and we find it difficult even to think of the consciousness behind: for there is nothing in front. Strip off all the web of sense-given fact which runs through and supports our whole conceptions of the world, and the residuum is painfully like nothing. Can we form any picture of thoughts and emotions going about bodiless and bare, with no link between them and ourselves? Are they not superfluous, if not rigorously unthinkable? Can we assert that there is anything knowable or conceivable which has not a material aspect? We can make a distinct picture of hell, as Ribera and Lessius seem to have done, because we are allowed to leave material bodies to be damned. But it is very difficult to form any conceptions of heaven, where the souls are etherealised so as to have

no bodies at all. They are not allowed material pleasures or bodily appetites. It is impossible even to understand emotions in an eternal state where nothing happens and no action is rigidly possible. Even the ecstasies become unintelligible. Nothing seems to be left but purely intellectual perception, an eternal consciousness that two and two make four, which is not, after all, a very appetising prospect. What, indeed, can the most sublime philosophers or poets tell us about the soul, if they are in earnest when trying to present it without even the most rarefied fragment of matter ? Its very organisation seems to be dissolved. We know, indeed, the so-called arguments for the existence and immortality of the soul. I am not sure whether it is orthodox to believe in them, or to consider that the belief requires a revelation. The argument for immortality has, indeed, a parallel which may be impressive. The physicist gives us his version of the old doctrine, *ex nihilo nihil*, and tells us that the absolute creation or annihilation of a particle of matter is unthinkable. Even the orthodox, who assert creation from nothing, admit that such a process requires Almighty power : the inconceivable operation of an Inconceivable being. It seems to be our spontaneous impression that matter is really the permanent element. Our thoughts and fancies change and flicker, rise and vanish, while our bodies remain permanent objects of consciousness. The *animula vagula blandula* is a flitting phantom

which cannot hold its own in this solid world. But if we resolve to give up 'matter' in the transcendental sense, as a substance independent of thought, this contrast would vanish. There is nothing but consciousness: the perceived or the perceivable, and therefore always some perceiver. An eternity of potential percepts would seem to carry with it some statement of an eternity of perception. If all that we can know or perceive means only transformation, evolution, change, but never actual interpolation of a new or elimination of an old element, then the 'objective' formula should be in some way translatable into a 'subjective.' But this doctrine, whatever may be said for it, does not conduct us to what is called 'personal immortality.' We know that arguments upon that subject lead to results which are arbitrarily excluded. We cannot give ourselves souls without giving them to our dogs, and if to our dogs, perhaps to plants. It is still clearer that a belief in posthumous existence naturally implies a belief in pre-existence. 'To begin implies to end'; and to end implies to begin. If every cause has an effect, every effect has a cause. If the extinction of a soul is unthinkable, so is its creation. If you can really believe in the creation of a soul, that is because, for some reason, the imagination which resents the intrusion of a new stone or a new force into the universe does not resent the intrusion of so flimsy a thing as a soul. For the same reason, it cannot logically resent the

extinction. Had our religious opinions been developed from a different stock, we should have found it quite as easy to demonstrate the transmigration of souls as their future existence. The doctrine of pre-existence, indeed, was suppressed (as I suppose), not from philosophical objections, but on account of obvious ethical considerations. We are told that a beginning of life is inconceivable. Living organisms cannot have been developed, as it is not shown that they have been developed, from inanimate matter. Every living thing, then, is a continuation of some previously living thing; and the soul should therefore be continuous with a previous soul. I was actually part of my father, and he, if we go back far enough, with Adam and Adam's prehuman ancestors. The different souls are offshoots from some previous soul, and the unity of race implies an actual unity of substance. The argument seems to be more consistent than the argument for a separate creation of souls. Why should we not accept the theories which suppose a continuous emanation from, and absorption into, the world soul? We can, of course, put together a set of words about the absolute unity and simplicity of the soul. But mere word-barriers will never restrain a thought guided by obvious analogies. All that has to be done is to put our theory into the premisses, and bring it out triumphantly as the conclusion. I shall not attempt such arguments. My own soul, as far as I can judge, is a highly complex thing, and quite

capable of being dissolved or absorbed. But such questions must be left to the philosophers, who have found every variety of opinion thinkable and unthinkable. I am content to say that, so far as I can judge, nobody knows anything about it; and that we part company with reason once and for all when we try to reason about a thing without resting upon the experience which alone testifies to its existence or reveals the laws of its action. Perhaps it would even be thought wrong to be dogmatic upon such a question: were it not that it has been made a duty to be absolutely confident in answering questions where no two thinkers agree, or where the only agreement is that knowledge is impossible. I am fully content on such matters to accept authority; that is to say, the authority of competent reasoners, which has shown, as I think unmistakably, that there is a majority against any particular view, and that no view can be admitted except as a matter of arbitrary choice.

Without going further, we can turn to the ethical aspects of Materialism, upon which, in fact, the greatest stress is laid in popular controversy. To call a man a materialist is to say more politely that he is—or, upon his own showing, is bound to be—a hog; and that his hopes and fears turn exclusively, as Carlyle put it, upon the abundance or scarcity of pigs' wash. Materialism, according to Comte, was the explanation of the higher by the lower (in his classification of the sciences) – of the laws of life, for example, by the laws

of mechanics. A thoroughgoing materialist is still, as I have argued, at that point of view from which he has only to deal with the direct objects of the senses. He applies the method which is legitimate, so long as the phenomena concerned do not require the recognition of other consciousness than his own, to those phenomena which are only explicable through such a recognition. He should regard men, therefore, merely as machines, acting not from volitions determined by emotions, but from purely mechanical causes. He could draw no line of distinction between a human arm and the lever which it works. If we regard everybody except ourselves as mere tools, we are, of course, at the maximum of selfishness. There is no such thing as morality, for there is no such thing as sympathy. That such a position would be immoral needs no demonstration. Virtue must be a sham, and love or hate empty phrases. The question, however, occurs whether such a state of mind is possible. To be thoroughgoing materialists we must not only disbelieve in other men's feelings, but in our own; and outside of a lunatic asylum we can hardly maintain that men, including ourselves, are only teapots or eight-day clocks. The materialist, on this showing, is logically inconsistent if he allows that he possesses even the physical appetites. Even a drunkard is something more than a sponge. He imbibes liquid when he is thirsty, but he has sensations, emotions, and a will, if his volition only takes him to the public-house.

He still acts in a manner not to be explained by the purely physical data. A man, indeed, who should pay no regard whatever to the feelings of others, whose only aim was the gratification of his own lust, and who did not believe even in the lusts of others, would still be a materialist after a fashion. He would say, virtually, I have certain passions, but you are all dolls, or, at least, I shall treat you as such. The doctrine is illogical, unless upon a practically impossible theory of absolute egoism. I have argued that, even in constructing a world for ourselves, we proceed by assuming the existence of other consciousness than our own; and the progress of moralisation consists in a parallel regulation of the emotions. Our intellectual order is formed by recognising other minds; and the social order by harmonising our feelings with those of our fellow-beings. The connection is so intimate that it is difficult to imagine a materialism carried to the pitch of an actual disbelief in any feelings at all, or even of any feelings but our own. Yet it may be admitted that, if a man can hardly keep himself at the stage of a piece of wood, he can sometimes contrive to remain pretty nearly at the level of pigs' wash.

One conclusion, however, follows. We must always distinguish a man's philosophy—even supposing it to be perfectly sincere—and his practical application of it. My objection to Materialism is, simply, that it involves a contradiction; and therefore I have a

difficulty in saying what is its 'logical' result. If two and two make five, what is the sum of three and three? That is a question with which I do not see how to deal. And, in regard to Materialism, I have a similar difficulty about the primary assumption. It is the first step that costs. If any feeling can be 'explained' as a motion, perhaps our whole nature may be explained in the same way. If you can explain mere hunger and thirst, perhaps you can also explain love in the most 'spiritual' sense of the words, as absolute selfishness. The difference between the philosophical materialist and his antagonist is not that one asserts and the other denies the existence of certain facts which we call volitions, emotions, and so forth, but that they have different theories as to the way of explaining them. Supposing the materialist to be able to make that first leap across the chasm, I do not see why he should not recognise the reality of the emotions for which he professes to account, and assign to them the same laws of action as his opponent. The materialism which is really immoral is the practical, not the theoretical, materialism; nor do I believe that it springs from the theoretical. On the contrary, the theory is so opposed to ordinary common-sense, it is so impossible to argue a man out of a belief in his own emotions, that I do not see how it could ever exert much influence. The ordinary man cares for such theories as little as he cares for the most obscure dogmas that were ever nursed in

the brain of a mystical theosophist. Materialism in the practical sense arises from whatever conditions tend to isolate us from our fellows: from the grinding poverty which limits a poor man's thoughts to the simple gratification of his physical appetites; or from the isolation of a rich man, who discharges no useful function in society and indulges in luxurious dreaming as far as possible from the actual struggles of his kind.

But I am not merely enforcing the commonplace —sound enough in its way—that a man is often better than his philosophy—a fact but for which we should, indeed, be in a poor way—but attributing a more positive merit to materialists. In fact, it seems to me that some of the men who were attacked by that name did more than any of their contemporaries for the improvement of mankind. They may have thought themselves mere machines (as many of them certainly did not), but they acted as if they really desired the happiness of their fellow-creatures. When the Churches were on the whole chiefly inclined to preach that everybody should be content with the position in which Providence had placed him, they systematically studied the plans by which the providential arrangements might be improved. Nor is the explanation simply that they were inconsistent. Their aim—and I hold it to have been a right aim—was, briefly speaking, to apply scientific methods to social problems. They wished to systematise the obser-

vation of the phenomena which must be studied in order to found what we now call 'sociology.' They were led to crude assumptions and premature conviction that a science—political economy for example—had been definitely constituted, when, in fact, they had only begun to see their way to a method. As the physical sciences supply the type of systematic reasoning, they sometimes assumed too hastily that sociology was no more than a particular case of physical inquiry. Nobody now doubts that they reached some very crude results. But the introduction of a spirit of scientific inquiry, of methodised and accurate observation of facts, was an achievement of the highest possible significance. Moreover, it was true, although the truth was no doubt seen in a distorted shape, that social or moral science must be constituted, so far as it can ever be constituted, upon a base of physical science. It is because physical science has been so far established that we can conceive the possibility, and, in a modest way, hope for the establishment, of something which may more or less deserve the name of a science of human nature. The road, no doubt, will be long, and short cuts are doomed to failure ; but it is something to have set our faces in the right direction.

This brings us to the radical contrast. The great religions of the world have certainly been protests against Materialism, taking the word in its practical sense ; that is, they set forth ideals of life in which the intellect and the emotions are represented, as

well as the mere physical appetites, and in which, as a consequence, pure brutal selfishness ceases to be the sole motive. But the doctrine was necessarily presented in terms of that dualism which is accepted by the common-sense of mankind, and which descends from the old 'animistic' superstition. Man, it is assumed, is made up of soul and body. To the soul are assigned the higher faculties, and to the body the mere animal instincts. If, then, I accept this dualism, and deny the existence of the superior partner; or, even if I make the existence of the assumed soul dependent on the existence of the body, I may be supposed to deny the reality of all but the animal instincts. This might be the position of a thorough-going materialist. He might accept the antithesis and deny the existence of one of the correlative entities. What I should deny, however, is precisely the validity of the antithesis. I believe in a man, not in two men, one contained in the other like a kernel in a fruit, and capable of sometimes walking about separately. Nor do I assume that all the higher faculties belong to one of these agents, and the lower to the other. I do not believe that any metaphysician can separate soul and body by logical analysis, any more than I believe that a surgeon will some day discover a soul by skilful dissection of the brain. It is this crude hypothesis which makes the well-meant protest against Materialism subservient to doctrines equally mischievous. The spiritualist is tempted to

deny the existence of the body, and therefore to deprive himself of all basis for verifiable theories; or he identifies matter with evil, and condemns the natural instinct as intrinsically bad. He becomes a thoroughgoing ascetic in order to escape from materialism. The physical appetites are not to be regulated, but to be eradicated. Marriage is a temporary concession to human frailty; and the highest life is to leave the world, and flog yourself, and say prayers at the top of a pillar. An eminent theologian [1] compares the history of religion to the fairy-story of the mortal to whom it was granted to become whatever he wished, and who rose through successive stages to be king, kaiser, and pope, and then wished to become God, when he fell back to his original misery. So, he says, the Eastern Christians tried to raise themselves above the temporal world, and, finally, to be as God in knowledge and felicity. And then at once they fell back into barbarism, ignorance, and filth. Their religion had become a mere bundle of formulæ and rites, a religion of amulets, fetishes, and magic, so grovelling (he adds) that when Islam swept it away the superstition was yielding to a more spiritual creed. That is the penalty of trying to get really rid of the facts, to hunt chimeras, and find comfort in ecstasies and spiritual narcotics. The enterprise is impossible, because, after all, we must borrow our imagery from the sensible world; and the

[1] Harnack's *Dogmen-Geschichte*, ii. 414.

result is not to 'spiritualise' by exalting the faculties, but to materialise even the higher aspirations. If Materialism would lead to brutality and to logical absurdity, spiritualism may lead to conclusions which, practically carried out, would involve the decay or even annihilation of human society, by denouncing the strongest ties by which it is held together. Happily, the common-sense of mankind was in the West at last too strong for its logic. It developed a creed which was, at any rate, not incompatible with progress or with a practical appreciation of the value of the body and its instincts. Yet, according to the official orthodoxy, we still have, in name at least, the assertion of a doctrine, incompatible not only with Materialism, but with science. The centre of gravity, so to speak, of the universe is still to be placed in a transcendental, not in a material, that is, not in the real, world. The ultimate end of man is not to do his duty as member of a visible society, but to 'save his soul,' and get a place in the heavenly world. Industriously as this doctrine is preached, and vehemently as the importance and reality of the belief is asserted, the hopes and fears associated with it have become vague and shadowy. It is difficult even to understand how men can have fancied themselves seriously to believe in the fantastic imagery of the old heaven and hell. It is impossible to take the slightest interest in the old controversies which stirred all men's hearts, when they fancied that they could

determine by logical disputation, the nature and relations of the Supreme Being, unless we can translate their dialect into terms of realities, and discover that what was really at issue was something quite different from what was ostensibly discussed. Any theory which will really affect men's conceptions of duty and happiness must have its fulcrum on the solid earth, not in dreamland. The Churches have found out the open secret, though they are slow to confess it. A religious body goes on offering prizes in heaven and threatening sinners with the pangs of hell. But a priesthood, if it rules, must rule by obeying. What it has really to depend upon is the offer of something that people really want. It has now to show that it can help peasants to buy their farms or working-men to do without capitalists. It must promise to abolish pauperism, not declare that poverty is a blessing. It must not preach the charity which implies dependence, but the spirit of independence which makes charity needless. It must give up the attempt to put down socialism as wicked, and manage to persuade socialists that they will find in it a powerful ally—or slave.

The denunciations of Materialism are intelligible, and are, beyond all doubt, aimed at real evils. It is possible that, 2,000 years ago, the really immoral materialism could only be assailed in terms of the doctrine about 'immortal souls.' It is dangerous, however, to use that weapon now. You are telling

your hearer that his better instincts depend upon his acceptance of a shadowy and fading belief. He will not give up the body, which he can see and feel; but he may very easily disbelieve in his soul, and therefore, as you assert, in the instincts to which it corresponds. The true line, according to the Agnostic, is to abandon this unmanageable and unverifiable theory altogether, and to get rid of the recriminations as to the reality of one world or the other. The higher instincts are realities: realities as much as the bodily appetites and the pains and pleasures of which nobody can really doubt the existence. That is the critical point, and one which is as verifiable as any other by our direct consciousness and by systematic experience. The other problem—whether they are inherent in metaphysical entities, of which it is only clear that neither is conceivable alone—may be left to puzzle the heads of those who have a turn for dialectics in *vacuo*. The true question is, What are we? not How long will any one of us last? If we are only thirsting and hungering beings, let us eat and drink, whether we die to-morrow or live to eternity; we can do nothing else. If we are reasoning and loving and imaginative beings, then we must love and reason and imagine whether our little lives are 'rounded with a sleep,' or stretch on for uncountable æons. We live, in Wordsworth's famous phrase, by admiration, hope and love. That is true; but it is also true that we live by bread, and can neither hope, nor love, nor admire, unless we

fill our stomachs. The material conditions of life are essential; although other conditions are equally essential to higher forms of development. And, moreover, since all knowledge of the outer world comes to us through the senses, we must base every social and other theory upon the knowledge so attained. On such terms, indeed, it is impossible to attain to any knowledge of that supposed transcendental world, in which men have wandered, or fancied themselves wandering, so long and so fruitlessly; or about those imaginary entities, among which we divide our faculties, and which turn out after all to be mere sensible experience disguised. We can look backwards to past ages, or dimly divine some coming events. We cannot get behind the curtain, which is reality. If this be called Materialism, materialists we must be. But it is a materialism which denies neither the reality nor the value of the loftiest instincts which ever animated saint or hero. It takes those instincts for facts, and only disputes the theories framed to account for them under the influence of philosophical illusions. It does not, indeed, seek to raise the value of moral qualities by hyperboles about the Absolute and the Infinite. Their value is simply that they are essential to the welfare of the race. It asserts their reality most emphatically, for it connects them at every step with the most undeniable realities. The whole social framework is built up by instincts which grow as the

intelligence is developed, and the sympathy which binds men together becomes wider and stronger as the intellect takes us further out of ourselves. We do not really exalt men by taking leave of the facts and spinning those cobwebs of the brain which pass for ontological 'systems,' and are really a futile attempt to get rid of the fallacies involved in them all. Nor is the ideal of human nature really raised by trying to soar above the atmosphere. It means making the best of the materials at our disposal, and conformity to the known conditions of the world around us, instead of the construction of a fanciful palace under the guidance of arbitrary fancy.

NEWMAN'S THEORY OF BELIEF

Some persons, it is said, still cherish the pleasant illusion that to write a history of thought is not, on the face of it, a chimerical undertaking. Their opinion implies the assumption that all contemporary thought has certain common characteristics, and that the various prophets, inspired by the spirit of this or any other age, utter complementary rather than contradictory doctrines. Could we attain the vantage-ground which will be occupied by our posterity, we might, of course, detect an underlying unity of purpose in the perplexing labyrinth of divergent intellectual parts. And yet, making all allowance for the distortions due to mental perspective when the objects of vision are too close to our eyes, it is difficult to see how two of the most conspicuous teachers of modern Englishmen are to be forced into neighbouring compartments of the same logical framework. Newman and J. S. Mill were nearly contemporaries; they were probably the two greatest masters of philosophical English in recent times, and the mind of the same generation

will bear the impress of their speculation. And yet they move in spheres of thought so different that a critic, judging purely from internal evidence, might be inclined to assign them to entirely different periods. The distance from Oxford to Westminster would seem to be measurable rather in centuries than in miles. Oxford, as Newman says,[1] was, in his time, a 'mediæval university.' The roar of modern controversies was heard dimly, as in a dream. Only the vague rumours of portentous phantoms of German or English origin—Pantheism and neologies and rationalism—might occasionally reach the quiet cloisters where Aristotelian logic still reigned supreme. To turn from Newman's 'Apologia' to Mill's 'Autobiography' is, in the slang of modern science, to plunge the organism in a totally different environment. With Newman we are knee-deep in the dust of the ancient fathers, poring over the histories of Eutychians, Monophysites, or Arians, comparing the teaching of Luther and Melanchthon with that of Augustine; and from such dry bones extracting—not the materials of antiquarian discussions or philosophical histories—but living and effective light for our own guidance. The terminal limit of our inquiries is fixed by Butler's 'Analogy.' Newman ends where Mill began. It was precisely the study of Butler's book which was the turning-point in the mental development of the elder Mill, and the cause

[1] *Apologia*, 1st edition, p. 149.

of his son's education in entire ignorance of all that is generally called religion.[1] The foundation-stone of Mill's creed is to Newman the great rock of offence; the atmosphere habitually breathed by the free-thinker was to the theologian as a mephitic vapour in which all that is pure and holy mentally droops and dies. But, for the most part, Newman would rather ignore than directly encounter this insidious evil. He will not reason with such, but pass them by with an averted glance. 'Why,' he asks, 'should we vex ourselves to find out whether our own deductions are philosophical or no, provided they are religious?'[2]

That free play of the pure intellect, which with Mill is the necessary and sufficient guarantee of all improvement of the race, forms, according to Newman, the inlet for an 'all-corroding and all-dissolving' scepticism,[3] the very poison of the soul; for the intellect, when not subordinated to the conscience and enlightened by authority, is doomed to a perpetuity of fruitless wandering. The shibboleths of Mill's creed are mentioned by Newman—if mentioned at all—with unmixed aversion. Liberalism, foreshadowed by the apostate Julian, 'is now Satan's chief instrument in deluding the nations';[4] and even toleration—though one fancies that here

[1] Mill's *Autobiography*, p. 38.
[2] *Theory of Religious Belief*, 1843, p. 351.
[3] *Apologia*, p. 402.
[4] *Arians*, 1833, p. 117.

Newman is glad to find an expedient for reconciling his feelings to the logic which had once prompted him to less tolerant utterances - is a principle 'conceived in the spirit of unbelief,' though 'providentially overruled' for the advantage of Catholicism.[1]

For the most part, as I have said, the two writers are too far apart to have even the relation of direct antagonism. But as both are profoundly interested in the bearing of their teaching upon conduct, they necessarily come into collision upon some vital questions. The contrast is instructive. Mill tells us that the study of Dumont's redaction of Bentham made him a different being. It was the dropping of the keystone into the arch of previously fragmentary belief. It gave him 'a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion; the inculcation and diffusion of which would be made the principal outward purpose of a life.'[2] The progress of the race would be henceforward his aim; and the belief that such progress was a law of Nature could supply him with hope and animation. Here we have the characteristic divergence between the modes of thought native to science and theology. Utilitarianism, when Newman happens to mention it, is, of course, mentioned as equivalent to Materialism—the preference of temporal comfort to spiritual welfare. It prescribes as the ultimate end

[1] *Idea of a University*, 1875, p. 385.
[2] *Autobiography*, p. 67.

of all legislation the pursuit of 'whatever tends to produce wealth.'[1] From Newman's point of view, it is less 'a religion' than the antithesis of a religion, for the end which it proposes to men is, briefly, the sum-total of all the seductions by which the world attracts men from their allegiance to the Church. To emphasise and enforce this distinction, to show that the Christian morality tramples under foot and rejects as worthless all that the secular philosopher values as most precious, is the purpose of his subtlest logic and keenest rhetoric. The contrast between the prosperous self-satisfied denizen of this world and the genuine Christianity set forth in the types of the 'humble monk, and the holy nun,' is ever before him. In their 'calm faces, and sweet plaintive voices, and spare frames, and gentle manners, and hearts weaned from the world,'[2] he sees the embodiment of the one true ideal.

What common ground can there be between such Christianity and the religion of progress? 'Our race's progress and perfectibility,' he says, 'is a dream, because revelation contradicts it.'[3] And even if there were no explicit contradiction, how could the two ideas coalesce? The 'foundation of all true doctrine as to the way of salvation' is the 'great truth' of the corruption of man. His present nature is evil, not good, and produces evil things, not good

[1] *Subjects of the Day*, 1844, p. 98. [2] *Ibid.* p. 328.
[3] *Idea of a University*, p. 73.

things.[1] His improvement, then, if he improves, must be supernatural and miraculous, not the spontaneous working of his natural tendencies. The very basis of rational hope of progress is struck away. The enthusiasm which that hope generates in such a mind as Mill's is therefore mere folly—it is an empty exultation over a process which, when it really exists, involves the more effectual weaning of the world from God. In his sermons, Newman aims his sharpest taunts at the superficial optimism of the disciples of progress. The popular religion of the day forgets the 'darker, deeper views' (darker because deeper) 'of man's condition and prospects.' Conscience, the fundamental religious faculty, is a 'stern, gloomy principle,' and therefore systematically ignored by worldly and shallow souls.[2] A phrase, quoted in the 'Apologia'[3] with some implied apology for its vehemence, is but a vivid expression of this sentiment. It is his 'firm conviction that it would be a gain to this country were it vastly more superstitious, more bigoted, more gloomy, more fierce in its religion, than at present it shows itself to be.'[4] The great instrument of his opponents is as objectionable as their end is futile and their temper shallow. The lovers of progress found their hopes on the influence of illumination in dispelling superstition. 'Superstition,' replies Newman, 'is better than your so-called

[1] *Parochial Sermons*, v. 154.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 359.
[3] *Apologia*, p. 117.
[4] *Parochial Sermons*, i. 368.

illumination.' Superstition, in fact, differs from religion, not in the temper and disposition of mind which it indicates, but in the authority which it accepts; it is the blind man groping after the guiding hand vouchsafed to him in revelation.[1] The world, when trying to turn to its Maker, has 'ever professed a gloomy religion in spite of itself.' Its sacrifices, its bodily tortures, its fierce delight in self-tormenting, testify to its sense of guilt and corruption. These 'dark and desperate struggles' are superstition when set beside Christianity; but such superstition 'is man's purest and best religion before the Gospel shines on him.' To be gloomy, to see ourselves with horror, 'to wait naked and shivering among the trees of the garden . . . in a word, to be superstitious is Nature's best offering, her most acceptable service, her most matured and enlarged wisdom, in presence of a holy and offended God.'[2]

The contrast is drawn out most systematically in two of the most powerful of the lectures on 'Anglican Difficulties' (Nos. VIII. and IX.). They contain some of the passages which most vexed the soul of Kingsley, to whom the theory was but partly intelligible, and altogether abhorrent. They are answers to the ordinary objections that Catholicism is hostile to progress and favourable to superstition. Newman meets the objections—not by traversing

[1] See *Lectures on Justification*, 1838, pp. 364, &c.
[2] *Theory of Religious Belief*, pp. 105–6.

the statements, but by denying their relevancy. Catholic countries are, let us grant, less civilised than Protestant;[1] what then? The office of the Church is to save souls, not to promote civilisation. As he had said whilst still a Protestant (for this is no theory framed under pressure of arguments, but a primitive and settled conviction), the Church does not seek to make men good subjects, good citizens, good members of society, not, in short, to secure any of the advantages which the Utilitarian would place in the first rank, but to make them members of the New Jerusalem.[2] The two objects are so far from identical that they may be incompatible; nay, it is doubtful whether 'Christianity has at any time been of any great spiritual advantage to the world at large.'[3] It has saved individuals, not reformed society. Intellectual enlightenment is beyond its scope, and often hurtful to its influence. So says the Protestant, and fancies that he has aimed a blow at its authority. Newman again accepts his statement without hesitation. In truth, Catholicism often generates mere superstition, and allies itself with falsehood, vice, and profanity. What if it does? It addresses the conscience first, and the reason through the conscience. Superstition proves that the conscience is still alive. If divine faith is found in alliance, not merely with gross conceptions, but with fraud and

[1] *Anglican Difficulties*, 1850, p. 201. [2] *Parochial Sermons*, iv. 183.
[3] *University Sermons*, p. 40.

cruelty, that proves not, as the Protestant would urge, that good Catholicism may sanction vice, but that even vice cannot destroy Catholicism. Faith lays so powerful a grasp upon the soul, that it survives even in the midst of moral and mental degradation, where the less rigorous creed of the Protestant would be asphyxiated. If the power of saving souls be the true test of the utility of a religion, that is not the genuine creed which makes men most decorous, but that which stimulates the keenest sensibility to the influences of the unseen world. The hope of ultimate pardon may make murder more frequent, but it gives a better chance of saving the murderer's soul at the very foot of the gallows.

Applying so different a standard, Newman comes to results shocking to those who would deny the possibility of thus separating natural virtue from religion. Such, for example, is the contrast between the pattern statesman, honourable, generous, and conscientious by nature, and the lazy, slatternly, lying beggarwoman who has got a better chance of heaven, because in her may dwell a seed of supernatural faith;[1] or the admiring picture of the poor nun who 'points to God's wounds as imprinted on her hands and feet and side, though she herself has been instrumental in their formation.'[2] She is a liar or a hysterical patient, says blunt English commonsense, echoed by Kingsley; but Newman condones

[1] *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 207. [2] *Ibid.* p. 238.

her offence in consideration of the lively faith from which it sprang. On his version, the contrast is one between the world and the Church, between care for the external and transitory, and care for the inward and eternal. 'We,' he says, 'come to poor human nature as the angels of God; you as policemen.' Nature 'lies, like Lazarus, at your gate, full of sores. You see it gasping and panting with privations and penalties; and you sing to it, you dance to it, you show it your picture-books, you let off your fireworks, you open your menageries. Shallow philosophers! Is this mode of going on so winning and persuasive that we should imitate it?'[1] We, in short, are the physicians of the soul; you, at best, the nurses of the body.

Newman, so far, is the antithesis of Mill. He accepts that version of Christianity which is most diametrically opposed to the tendency of what is called modern thought. The *Zeitgeist* is a deluding spirit; he is an incarnation of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That two eminent thinkers should differ radically in their estimate of the world and its value, that the Church of one man's worship should be the prison of another man's reason, is not surprising. Temperament and circumstance, not logic, make the difference between a pessimist and an optimist, and social conditions have a more powerful influence than speculation in giving colour to the creeds of the day.

[1] *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 210.

Yet we may fairly ask for an explanation of the fact that one leader of men should express his conceptions by symbols which have lost all meaning for his contemporary. The doctrine which, to Mill, seemed hopelessly obsolete, had still enough vitality in the mind of Newman to throw out fresh shoots of extraordinary vigour of growth. To account for such phenomena by calling one system reactionary is to make the facts explain themselves. The stream is now flowing east because it was before flowing west:—Such a reason can only satisfy those who regard all speculation as consisting in a helpless and endless oscillation between antagonist creeds. To attempt any adequate explanation, however, would be nothing less than to write the mental history of the last half-century. A more limited problem may be briefly discussed. What, we may ask, is the logic by which, in the last resort, Newman would justify his conclusions? The reasoning upon which he relies may be cause or effect; it may have prompted or been prompted by the ostensible conclusions; but, in any case, it may show us upon what points he comes into contact with other teachers. No one can quite cut himself loose from the conditions of the time; and it must be possible to find some point of intersection between the two lines of thought, however widely they may diverge.

The task is the easier because Mill is not separated from Newman, as he was separated from Coleridge

or Maurice, by radical differences of intellectual temperament. Newman is, like Mill, a lover of the broad daylight; of clear, definite, tangible statements. There is no danger with him of losing ourselves in that mystical haze which the ordinary common-sense of mankind irritates and bewilders. From the age of fifteen, he tells us, dogma has been the fundamental principle of his religion.[1] Upon this point he has nothing to retract or to repent. 'Liberalism' was his enemy, because by liberalism he meant the anti-dogmatic principle; the principle which would convert religion into a sentiment, and therefore, for him, into a dream and a mockery. No one, of course, could be more sensitive to the mysterious element of theology; but, in his view, that dogma is not the less definite for being mysterious. If, on one side, it leads us to the abysses where the highest reason faints, yet, on the other, it may serve as a basis for truths as clear-cut and peremptory as those of the physical sciences.

The resemblance might be extended to another point. Newman has a scepticism of his own, which sometimes coincides with and sometimes exceeds the scepticism of Mill. He exceeds it, for he sometimes sanctions that dangerous mode of apology which would destroy the validity of the reasoning process itself in order to evade reasonable conclusions. Such, for example, is the remarkable passage in which he meets the objection from the incompatible asser-

[1] *Apologia*, p. 120.

tions of Scripture and science as to the motion of the sun, by saying that till we know what motion is we may suppose both the apparently contradictory assertions to be true.[1] So again, in the 'Grammar of Assent,' our belief in the uniformity of Nature is regarded as an illogical conclusion of the imagination,[2] a doctrine which he shared with the purely empirical school, but pushes to a practical application which they would regard as unauthorised. Here, as in so many cases, the typical dogmatist is more sceptical than the typical sceptic.

It is more noteworthy that Newman frequently insists upon the doctrine that physical science is consistent with atheism. 'It is a great question,' he says, 'whether atheism is not as philosophically consistent with the phenomena of the physical world as the doctrine of a creative and governing power.' And, therefore, he admits Hume's argument against miracles to be valid from a purely scientific aspect of things.[3] Elsewhere he admits the argument from design (though not the argument from order) to be inconclusive.[4] The statement, however qualified, falls in with the common assertion that a logical mind

[1] *Theory of Religious Belief*, p. 350. This sentence, says Froude, in the *Nemesis of Faith*, finally destroyed his faith in Newman (*Nemesis of Faith*, p. 158, second edition).

[2] *Grammar of Assent* (second edition, 1878), pp. 78, 355.

[3] *University Sermons*, p. 194; also in *Theory of Religious Belief*, pp. 186–7.

[4] *University Sermons*, p. 70. It is right to add Newman's qualification of this statement: '*Physical* phenomena *taken by themselves*,

must embrace either atheism or Catholicism.[1] The powerful passage which opens the 'General Answer to Mr. Kingsley' in the 'Apologia,' admits not only that it is hard to state the argument for theism with precise logical shape, but that a contemplation of the world would lead to 'atheism, pantheism, or polytheism,' were it not for the Divine voice which is uttered through the conscience.[2] Either there is no God, or He is separated from His creatures. The world is 'out of joint with the purposes of its Creator.' Hume would infer that we cannot argue to a God from the world; Newman, that as we know of a God, we must postulate a mysterious separation.

Although Newman is as certain of God's existence as his own, it is plain that much of this falls in with the argument, for example, of Mill's essay on Theism. His conviction is founded on a voice to which atheists are deaf; but in the interpretation of the testimony open to both parties, the divergence is only one of degree. There is, however, a characteristic difference in the mode of approaching the problem. Though Newman's writings abound in acute logical discussions, they deal very little with the purely

that is, apart from psychological phenomena, apart from moral considerations, apart from the moral principles by which they must be interpreted, and apart from the idea of God, which wakes up in the mind under the stimulus of intellectual training. The question is, whether physical phenomena logically *teach* us, or, on the other hand, logically remind us, of the being of a God.'—Note to *University Sermons*, p. 194.

[1] *Apologia*, p. 323.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 377, 379.

philosophical question. There is no direct argument, for example, as to the various metaphysical reasonings upon which theism has been defended or impugned. Such arguments have, of course, presented themselves to his mind ; but they have not sunk into it, and modified the structure of his thought. He denounces pantheism, atheism, and other forms of unbelief, but is not interested in their origin or logical meaning. He takes for granted that his hearers think of them with horror, and possibly he feels himself that there would be irreverence in the open discussion of such sacred topics.

His scepticism is of the historical variety. It implies the profound conviction that, although a reality as well as a show of demonstration is producible to duly-prepared minds for the central doctrine of the faith, yet, as a matter of plain, undeniable fact, no system of independent demonstrative theology, such as philosophers have dreamed, has ever established itself in the world. Theology cannot assume a place amongst the sciences, which rest on their own basis, and require no adventitious aids to commend themselves to the unassisted intellect. Perhaps men ought to be, but they are not in fact, convinced by the whole array of theological argument.

Some such scepticism is implied in that historical method which, in one shape or other, is the great innovating instrument of modern thinkers. Mill's weak side is, perhaps, his inadequate appreciation of its efficacy and applicability. The school, on the other

hand, of which Newman is the chief leader owes what philosophical interest it possesses chiefly to its sense of the continuity of history, and consequently of the importance of an historical mode of approaching religious and other problems. Doctrines of evolution, development, and so on, from which the historical method is a corollary, imply that further light is to be sought by a more systematic interrogation of a wider experience, and, consequently, fall in with the belief that the attempts to settle the plan of the universe by direct inspection of ideas existing ready-made in our own minds are doomed to inevitable failure. It is needless to speak of the potency of the new method, which has for the first time rendered possible an approach to a scientific treatment of religious, ethical, and political problems. Perhaps it is more to the purpose to note briefly that it is a natural but mischievous illusion to infer that such methods can dispense with philosophy. The logic of facts does not lie on the surface, to be picked up by the first observer who comes by, but requires a collateral process of preparing and testing and corresponding logical apparatus. Newman's writings seem to afford many curious illustrations of the consequences of this erroneous application of a sound method, and the fallacies into which the subtlest thinker may fall when his mind is not carefully guarded against the prepossessions which make historical arguments illusory.

Certain significant tendencies reveal themselves in

his earlier writings. Virtually ignoring infidelity, he recognises his chief adversary in popular Protestantism. 'This great and deadly foe,' he says, speaking of his former allies after his own conversion, 'their scorn and their laughing-stock, was that imbecile, inconsistent thing called Protestantism.'[1] The special ground of this scorn may be gathered from the 'Lectures on Justification.' They are, indeed, by no means easy reading, for every page indicates the nature of the author's intellectual food. Extinct controversies are resuscitated; we plod through weary scholastic distinctions and refinements derived from our outworn metaphysical systems; and when reason, perplexed by these subtleties, fails to discriminate the blended elements of grace and nature, we are ordered to prostrate ourselves before long chains of texts, where criticism would be profanity. We are expressly warned, indeed,[2] against 'philosophising,' or trying to reach 'general views,' instead of entering the 'strait and lowly gate of the Holy Jerusalem' with bowed heads and eyes bent to the earth. Had Newman never emerged from this region of theological special pleading, the eloquence which occasionally animates the logic would not have saved his works from the moths.

The essence, however, of his criticism is clear and to the purpose. He argues that the Protestant doctrine of faith is an unfounded theory, and that hence

[1] *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 120. [2] *Justification* (1838), p. 323.

the whole theology reared upon it is 'shadowy and unreal'; [1] whilst the creed is a dry heap of technical jargon, the practical tendency is to reduce religion to a mere sentiment. As the Lutheran leaven spread, he says elsewhere,[2] faith became severed from truth and knowledge, and religion degenerated into a sentimental pietism. Luther tried (that is the summary of his historical view in the lectures on Justification)[3] to save men from the bondage to works and observances by his doctrine of faith; but he left them in bondage to their feelings. He introduced a more subtle shape of self-reliance, by dispensing with the ordinances of the Church in favour of certain personal emotions.

Whatever the force of this criticism as against Luther or modern Protestants, it simply ignores the philosophical difficulty. Luther's attack upon 'works and observances' had logical consequences which he did not contemplate. The assertion that man can have no merit as towards his Creator fits into a philosophy which is radically destructive, not only of the abuses of an ecclesiastical system, but of the very groundwork of all such systems. It is blasphemous, says the Protestant, to suppose that the performance of an outward rite can alter the position of a man in the eyes of God, and that dipping a child in water can affect its spiritual condition. Man must be judged by his intrinsic nature, not by the accidents of his

[1] *Justification*, p. 300. [2] *Idea of a University* (fourth edit.), p. 28.
[3] *Justification*, p. 389.

position. But, if so, his works can be valuable only as the fruit of his nature ; and since he did not make his own nature, he cannot be responsible for it. Reciprocal claims between the pots and the potter are radically absurd. Thus, attacking the supernatural claim of the Church, you are inevitably gliding into pantheism ; for you are, in fact, substituting the philosophical conception of a first cause for the anthropomorphic conception implied in the whole ecclesiastical system.

The tendency of their own logic was concealed from Protestants by their use of the old phraseology. Such doctrines as that of imputed merit really meant the denial of all real merit, along with the affectation of preserving it as a mere legal fiction. The Protestants of later times preserved the mask whilst they lost the living force beneath. Their serious arguments fell to the rationalists, whilst they clung to the set of phrases under which the meaning had been covered. And thus Newman, ignoring throughout the philosophical objection, has a cheap victory over the feeble deposit of barren technicality which had been left behind. He can tear to pieces, with leonine vigour, the mere suits of clothes, when the man has stepped out of them. Protestantism, in fact, was an unstable compound of elements which refused to enter into permanent combination. The rationalism and the inherited superstition had decomposed, giving rise in the process to all manner of heterogeneous

products, each containing in itself a principle of antagonism and decay.

Here, then, we have the implicit application of a course of criticism which became, as we shall see, the leading principle of Newman's method. Any student of his controversial writings, such as the 'Prophetical Office of the Church' and the 'Essay on Development,' which mark successive stages of his opinions, must be struck by one remark. Newman, he will say, is an Anglican, or has become a Catholic. Why does he not defend himself by proving his creed to be true? Let him apply an *à priori* or an *à posteriori* test, as he pleases; exhibit its philosophical foundation, or accept any straightforward mode of confronting it with facts. But, instead of this apparently most natural method, we are involved in a laborious indirect process. Instead of examining, with an earlier school of apologists, the evidence external or internal of the position, our attention is invited at length to apparently superficial analogies, such as the relation between Anglicans and semi-Arians, or to the question of the internal consistency of the creed, instead of its correspondence to facts. A false theory, it is obvious to remark, may within its own limits be as consistent as a true one: the Ptolemaic as the Copernican astronomy; and we test their merits by seeking for facts compatible with one alone of the rival doctrines. Why not apply the same method to theological controversy?

The answer has been already virtually suggested. Some such method is necessary when approaching the problem from the historical side. The historical scepticism assumes that direct methods of proof are practically inconclusive in such matters. History seems to show, on a first inspection, that all philosophies have been defended with equal plausibility, and generate endless and internecine controversy. But it suggests at the same time another kind of test. For questions as to the logical validity, we may substitute questions as to the practical vitality of creeds. If we assume that creeds live in proportion to the amount of truth which they contain, the plainest facts written on the very surface of history will tell us which are the truest. Newman's theory of development has a real analogy to the scientific theories which use the same name. The development of a system of belief may be compared to the development of a species under natural selection. Amongst the varieties of belief which are constantly generated, some have and some have not the vital force necessary to secure their permanence. Some creeds, again, survive for a period, though their principle of life is rather artificial than natural. They are analogous to the breeds of animals which are maintained by cultivation, that is, by being kept by external force under a special set of conditions. They live in our gardens, but would perish or revert to the original type if transplanted to the woods. As

the gardener manages to preserve a hybrid plant in his hot-houses, the statesman preserves the artificial equilibrium of a body which, left to itself, would split into its natural elements. There could not be a better commentary upon this theory than in the opening lectures upon Anglican Difficulties. There are, he says, various kinds of life. 'The life of a plant is not the same as the life of an animated being: and the life of the body is not the same as the life of the intellect; nor is the life of the intellect the same in kind as the life of grace; nor is the life of the Church the same as the life of the State.' And he proceeds to argue, with admirable vigour, that the life of the Church of England is something quite different from the life of the Catholic Church. The difference is, briefly, that the Church of England is analogous to an artificial rather than a natural product. It is Erastian in principle; it is held together by Acts of Parliament, and is an engine created of statesmen in aid of the policeman. It is not the incarnation of a system of thought, possessing an independent vitality, and moulding the society which it animates.

So soon as Newman had fairly grasped his method, such a conclusion was so obvious that one rather wonders that he should not have reached it sooner. The 'Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church' represent the most coherent phase of his Anglican teaching. He still inclines to the view

that Rome is Antichrist, but assigns as a main reason of this theory that very fact of the extreme plausibility, soon to become the conclusive logical force, of its pretensions. The book, thrice rewritten, and the product of three years' labour,[1] shows by its tentative and hesitating tone, and even by the eagerness with which some Romanist dogmas are assailed, the uncertainty of its author's position. The ground under his feet has a hollow sound. The method is significant of the principles already indicated. Protestantism, he says in the introduction, has shown by its history that it tends to infidelity.[2] And the reason is clear. Controversies with Protestants are 'easy to handle, but interminable, being disputes about opinions: but those with Romanists arduous, but instructive, as relating rather to matters of fact.'[3] In other words, philosophising tends to hopeless scepticism; and the remedy is the appeal to history. Private judgment, as he argues at length,[4] is liable to so many illusions that it cannot lead to agreement. We must, therefore, turn to the old Catholic test of Vincentius, and try to discover what is that doctrine which has been held 'always, everywhere, and by all.' To apply this test is to show historically that the Church of England may be legitimately affiliated to that primitive Church whose unity was a visible and palpable phenomenon, not a matter of careful in-

[1] *Apologia*, p. 140.
[2] *Prophetical Office* (1837), p. 25.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 50.
[4] *Ibid. Lect.* V.

ference and accommodation. The difficulties of such a task are candidly admitted in the introduction, and are obvious in the very structure of the book. For, in the first place, we are led to so complex a theory as to the mode of combining the authority of Scripture, antiquity, and Catholicity, and confining within due limits the exercise of private judgment, that we are evidently in presence of an artificial, and therefore easily destructible, theory.[1] And, in the next place, whatever may be said for the *via media* which results from this eclectic method, and however clearly it may be traced to the great English divines of the seventeenth century, it is open to the conclusive objection that it has 'never existed except on paper.'[2] Newman candidly puts this difficulty in its full force, and admits that its advocates may seem to be 'mere antiquarians and pedants, amusing themselves with illusions or learned subtleties, and unable to grapple with things as they are. We tender no proofs to show that our view is not self-contradictory, and, if set in motion, would not fall to pieces, or start off in different directions at once.' Admitting that there is force in these objections, he still thinks the experiment of forming such a creed worth trying, and urges some historical considerations to show that Anglicanism has really enjoyed some independent vitality. It is not, however, by a doctrine thus hesitatingly announced, criticised so freely by its

[1] *Prophetical Office*, p. 160. [2] *Ibid.* p. 20.

teacher, and openly admitted to be in some sense an experiment, that serious thinkers are to be attracted, or the creeds of the mass moulded and dominated. The vital inconsistency which underlies the whole could not be expressed more vigorously than by its author at a later period. Turning unsparingly upon those who had stopped at the point from which he advanced, he asks them some unanswerable questions. Their religion, he says, is eclectic and original, and yet they claim the authority of Catholic prescription. 'Say you go by any authority whatever, and I shall know where to find you. . . . But do not come to me with the latest phase of opinion which the world has seen, and protest to me that it is the oldest.' The Anglo-Catholic admits that he has begun by doubting the authority of some creed in which he was bred. Then he read the Fathers, and determined which of their works were genuine; 'which of them apply to all times, and which are occasional; what opinions are private, what authoritative; what they only seem to hold, what they ought to hold; what are fundamental, what ornamental. Having thus measured, and cut, and put together my creed by my own proper intellect, by my own lucubrations, and differing from the whole world in my results, I distinctly bid you, I solemnly warn you, not to do as I have done, but to take what I have found, to revere it, to use it, to believe it, for it is the teaching of the old Fathers, and of your mother, the Church of

England.'[1] The end of such a creed holds, it is clear, no proportion with the beginning. You claim for a mere arbitrary patchwork the authority due to an organic system of ideas which can prove its vitality by the 'active unity and integrating virtue'[2] of the Church of which it has been the animating principle.

Newman, then, had been on a false scent. He had been really in search of a creed which might claim to have been the soul of a flourishing and vigorous organism. He had found only a creed which, if it had ever been a working force, might have justified the claim of the Church which held it to be the most legitimate offshoot of such an organism. To recognise the fact that he had been put off with vacant chaff in place of grain, and taken a mechanism for a vital growth, was with him to become a Catholic; and the essay on Development shows the form in which the final solution presented itself to his mind.

The years following the composition of the 'Prophetical Office' were devoted to various works, historical and speculative, which had more or less bearing upon the *via media* theory. That theory suddenly and totally collapsed, and the blow came from a remarkable quarter. The first doubt was suggested by the history of the Monophysite controversy. The final catastrophe was brought about

[1] *Anglican Difficulties*, p. 134. [2] *Ibid.* p. 258.

by the affair of the Jerusalem bishopric.[1] Newman himself has a quiet smile at the apparent oddity of a conversion occasioned by the study of that *delirus senex* 'old Eutyches,' and by so futile a project as the Jerusalem scheme. One may remark in passing, that whilst Newman was thus occupied with ecclesiastical history, Mill was working into shape his theory of induction. The same years saw the incubation of the system of Logic and the theory of Development. The importance attached by Newman to apparently trifling points is a natural consequence of his point of view. The great discoveries of science may depend upon the careful examination of some insignificant phenomenon. And if we contemplate Catholicism, in a similar way, as one of the greatest facts in the world's history, we may find the most unequivocal manifestation of its laws of growth in some apparently trifling series of events. Renouncing the attempt to judge of its doctrine by direct tests, we have to consider how the organism behaves itself under given conditions. It is not the magnitude of the event, but its fitness to test the assumed principle, which is important in this relation. The history of the Monophysite controversy served as the record of an experiment judiciously devised to lay bare certain principles whose bearing might afterwards be verified on a larger scale.

The purpose of the theory of Development is to

[1] *Apologia*, pp. 209, 245.

exhibit by historical facts what he elsewhere calls the 'active unity and integrating virtue of the see of Peter.' It records the process by which Newman convinced himself that the Catholic faith differs from the doctrine of Anglicanism as a living organism from a dead mechanism. The method, once more, implies the old scepticism. Newman does not say that there are no 'eternal truths . . . . which all acknowledge in private,' but that there are none sufficiently commanding to be the basis of public union and action. The only general persuasive in matters of conduct is authority; that is, when truth is in question, a judgment which we consider superior to our own.[1] We must not, therefore, prove the doctrine, but discover the authority, for authority is, in a sense, self-evidencing. Its historical manifestation, its demonstrable unity, efficacy, and persistency will establish its claims upon our allegiance. Newman's method is, therefore, to trace these attributes in the history of the Church. In his language, this is to prove that Catholic theology is a legitimate development, instead of a corruption, of the primitive faith. The tests which he applies, though they do not affect to be discriminated with logical accuracy, indicate the result sufficiently.

The first test of a true development is the obvious one of the preservation of the type. A corruption destroys, as a development preserves, the essential

[1] *Development* (1845), p. 128.

idea of a system. The second, is the continuity of principles. Doctrines expand according to the peculiarities of the receiving mind and society; but, so long as they are true to their law, they have a certain character or genius, which can be felt when it cannot be explained. In fact, a breach of continuity would be marked by a discord corresponding to some hidden inconsistency in the theory. Thirdly, as in the physical world life implies growth, so doctrines, like organisms, must have a power of assimilation; and the more vigorous the growth the greater the power. Fourthly, a true development implies anticipations, for we shall often detect the rudimentary germs of the principles which are afterwards fully incorporated. Fifthly, true development implies logical sequence. Ideas grow in the mind of a man or of society by a spontaneous and silent process, not by direct conscious reasoning. But when they have thus grown, they are, if legitimate, capable of being analysed and methodised by the logical faculty. The process is not carried on systematically, but the logical character of the result reached by spontaneous co-operation of many minds is a test that it has been 'a true development, not a perversion or corruption, from its evident naturalness.'[1] Their growth has been moulded, one may say, by an implicit logic, which comes to light when the whole is complete. Sixthly, a true development implies that the added doctrines are preservative

[1] *Development*, p. 82.

of the original creed. They corroborate and illustrate, instead of contradicting or arresting. And, seventhly, we have the test of chronic continuance. A heresy includes a principle of inconsistency, and therefore dies out in a comparatively short period. It has not the true vital principle, but is an unstable amalgam of truth with error.

Supposing that Newman is accurate in the application of his tests, the cogency of the argument is undeniable. The only complaint, indeed, is that it is not pushed far enough. He has called attention to a most important method ; and though he is naturally anxious to disclaim originality, it may be presumed that the principle had at least never been stated with any approach to the same fulness and vigour. The historical test, thus understood, supplies us with a stringent method for philosophical investigations. The facts that a creed will 'work,' that a certain intellectual harmony exists amongst its adherents which enables them unconsciously to arrive at logically coherent results, that it can assimilate beneficial and eject hurtful materials, that it can be regarded as a whole in such a sense that we can trace the rise of component doctrines from their earliest germs to their fullest expression, that it has a vitality denied to its occasional offshoots, prove undoubtedly that it is a real creed, and not a mere sham and mechanical contrivance. Everyone who feels the utter impossibility of attaining to a true philosophy by his own unaided

exertions, who realises the extent to which the individual must depend upon the race for his doctrines as well as his material wants, must feel that the only alternative to complete scepticism is, as Newman urges, the affiliation of his own beliefs to some such system of belief. Truth can only be definitively established when it has been exposed to, and fully answered, the application of such tests in the widest possible sense. Verification by an individual is not comparable to verification by ages or generations. The voice of mankind must override the opinion of the acutest solitary thinker. And, further, the argument as against Anglicanism and *via media* contrivances might well appear conclusive. If truth, and the whole truth, is to be found in either system, it must certainly be in the living system, and not in the accidental aggregate of dogmas put together by statesmen and eclectic reasoners.

Newman naturally contemplated nothing wider than this contrast. Protestantism he rejected because he held—and surely with justice—that history proved it to be the half-way house to infidelity. The choice thus lay between Anglicanism and Catholicism. But suppose that we do not shrink from the rationalist solution, the argument loses its cogency. For, in the first place, it is obvious to remark that the harmony and vitality of Catholicism implies a relative, not an absolute, value. It shows that the creed was consistent, not that it was true; that it was fitted for a

certain stage of development, not that it represents the final stage. In fact, it is clear that a similar harmony may be obtained from Fetichist, or Polytheist, or Pantheist points of view. It shows that certain fundamental conceptions underlie every application of the theory, and produce harmonious results, not that those conceptions are incapable of modification or destruction. The creed flourishes so long as they are alive. But are they immortal? The logical superiority challenged for Catholicism over Protestantism exists in this sense, that Catholicism is a consistent development of ideas natural and universal at certain stages of thought, whereas Protestantism combines ideas characteristic of different stages. Hence, the Protestant is constantly re-opening questions which the Catholic begs once for all. His creed is less coherent, but it does not even tend to follow that the part of it which he derives from the Catholic is the solid part. If atheism and Catholicism are both logically coherent, and if, we may add, the same may be said for every form of religion which has satisfied Newman's test of vitality, we are evidently only at the threshold of our inquiry. We have lessened the number of candidates; we have reduced possible religions to a certain number of types; but we have still to choose between them.

And, secondly, it is obvious that, in seeking to defend Catholicism, Newman has really explained it. He has incidentally observed (in a passage just

quoted), that a development is legitimate *because* natural. That is precisely the point of the whole. The imposing unity of the Catholic Church is the ground upon which its advocates have always relied; and their ordinary arguments tend to imply that such consistency implies supernatural guidance. That is, of course, Newman's own view. But what he has really proved, by exhibiting and analysing so skilfully the sense in which such consistency can be predicated of the Church, is precisely this: that it is the work of natural laws. The consistency is the result of the spontaneous co-operation of many minds, guided by that implicit and unconscious logic which results from a unity of fundamental conceptions. The logic has been felt before it has been proved. This comes out curiously in various passages. Thus, for example, he illustrates the development of Jewish policy by asking, 'Can any history wear a more human appearance than that of the rise and growth of the Chosen People?'[1] That which had been predetermined in the Divine counsels is 'afterwards represented as the growth of an idea under successive emergences.' Unbelievers hold, as he says, that the Messianic idea was gradually developed in the minds of the Jews,[2] and grew to full proportions by 'a mere human process'; and his theory partly confirms this doctrine. It is significant, again, that he fairly admits that analogy tells 'in one point of view' against all revelation, and therefore

[1] *Development*, p. 108. [2] *Ibid.* p. 103.

against the continued existence of an external authority.[1] And his answer appears to be simply that, if we admit any revelation, we may admit a permanent and infallible guide. But for that guidance we should fall into permanent scepticism. From the infidel point of view it is, indeed, clear that an historical argument cannot be fairly applied to the support of an authority which, by its very nature, contradicts all the necessary causes of historical inquiry. The existence of a Church such as he postulates becomes part of the explanation of the phenomenon. The advantages of a vast and highly-organised religious society are so obvious as to explain why it arose, and how it helped to give consistency and permanence to the creed which it embodied. Every proof of its utility is an explanation of its origin; and history, fairly treated, would prove that the Church, like its creed, owes its power to the completeness with which it satisfied the needs of a certain stage of social development. The more he demonstrates its utility, the greater the presumption that it was strictly a natural growth.

And here comes in the final difficulty. The creed and the Church are to be tested by their working power. This is the meaning of that phrase which so profoundly affected him—*securus judicat orbis terrarum*.[2] The ultimate test of a belief is its vitality—it proves its right by exercising its power. That is

[1] *Development*, p. 122. [2] *Apologia*, p. 211.

true which will work. By all means. But then, how do you come to translate *orbis terrarum* by that small part of the world which has for a certain period accepted the Catholic creed? Why exclude the countless religions which have dominated different ages and races? Newman tells us elsewhere,[1] briefly, that the superior continuity and perfection of the civilisation of the races of Western Europe entitle them to be called by this imposing name, *orbis terrarum*. Then apply your test fairly. The Catholic religion is the true one because it approved itself to those civilised races. If it approved itself more as they became more civilised the argument would be a powerful one. But the obvious and, indeed, loudly-proclaimed fact, is that a large part, and that the more civilised part of this very *orbis terrarum*, has rejected Catholicism avowedly or virtually. It has ceased to dominate men in proportion as they had become more civilised. If, then, their acceptance of the creed is the proof of its truth, their rejection must surely be a proof of its error. Doubtless it contained truth, or it could not have flourished. It must have contained error, or it would not have pined.

This is, indeed, the conclusive and culminating proof with many and most serious minds. They have judged Catholicism by its fruits, and reject it, not on particular arguments, but because the whole course of history proves it to be incompatible with in-

[1] *Idea of a University*, p. 250.

tellectual and social progress beyond a certain stage. It no longer satisfies Newman's tests ; it has lost its power of assimilation and of growth, and is fast becoming a dead system of extinct formulæ. That is the contention. How does Newman meet it? By rejecting, as we have seen, the testimony of civilisation ; by asserting that modern philosophy implies a deadening of the conscience ; by declaring that even superstition is better than modern illumination, and setting the testimony of the savage against the testimony of the philosopher. If his reasoning be sound, it is yet, in any case, an abandonment of his test. In fact, he is retreating from the historical method precisely because, as a theologian, he can only half accept a doctrine of development whilst retaining a belief in the arbitrary intervention of supernatural forces. His method is a corollary from the doctrine of evolution ; but, logically followed out, that method would destroy his conclusions. He escapes, therefore, by denying the truth of the doctrine which gives to his own teaching all its plausibility.

Newman, however, is too good a logician not to feel the need of some further logical bases. To confront the world and modern thought he must have a less ambiguous standing-ground. He must show cause for rejecting the testimony which apparently makes against him. And we shall see that he has in fact worked out an elaborate theory calculated to justify his method. In its less coherent shape, it

occurs in many of his earlier writings, but is first fully elaborated in the 'Grammar of Assent,' and I shall therefore proceed to discuss it on the basis of that most remarkable book.

The historical method, as understood by Newman, would test the value of a creed by its fruitfulness, coherence, persistence, and power of assimilating congenial and rejecting alien matter, or, in a word, by its vitality. Such a method has two remarkable consequences. In the first place, it tends to set aside the direct and obvious tests of the old-fashioned apologists. We need not ask, with the philosophers, whether the creed gives a worthy or intelligible conception of the universe; for such inquiries only lead into the endless labyrinth of metaphysical argumentations. We need not inquire, with the critics, into the evidence for particular historical statements; for the facts are intelligible only as part of a vast and complex evolution, which must be appreciated as a whole before it can be understood in detail. And, in the second place, the method lays particular stress upon the process by which ideas 'percolate' (as Newman somewhere says) by other than directly logical means. The dogmas of the creed are not revealed in full scholastic precision and nicety of definition. They are not reasoned out, like mathematical propositions, by direct demonstration. The germs are planted by revelation; they grow spontaneously in the minds of believers, obeying

a law which is not consciously apprehended, but which may be afterwards elicited, and which becomes more manifest as the process is developed. Once seized, it may be stated as a logical formula; but during the earlier period it is in the state of implicit logic—an informing and animating principle, not a recognised and avowed law of belief.

Some kind of logical organon is required, as I have already tried to point out, in order to extract from this theory an available logical test. The truth of a theory must be the ultimate reason for believing it; and the question is, briefly, How from the vitality of a creed are we to infer its truth? An answer is attempted in the 'Grammar of Assent'; and the theory expounded in that book harmonises throughout with that which is implied in the doctrine of development. The method of classification adopted is the same in both cases. Creeds, according to the historical theory, are measurable according to their degrees of vitality; and so the 'Grammar of Assent' opens with an elaborate scale of assents or beliefs, varying from the faintest to the most vivid, and from the most abstract to the most concrete. Beliefs, that is, are classified by their fitness to form part of a vigorous creed. The faculty whose existence is postulated in the doctrine of development, that by which the mind draws remote inferences without a conscious syllogistic process, is now carefully analysed, and receives the name of the Illative Sense. And, finally,

we are again struck by the absence of the direct logical method. A Grammar of Assent, one would say, ought to correspond to a treatise on logic. We ought to assent to true propositions, and therefore should begin by inquiring what is the test of truth. But the very name of the treatise seems designedly calculated to set aside such inquiries, and contemplates at least the possibility of a divorce between the faculty of believing and the faculty of perceiving the truth. The method, as we shall see, is calculated —whether designedly or not—to evade the purely logical question. Indeed, Newman lays it down as a principle that 'in no class of concrete reasonings . . . . is there any ultimate test of truth and error in our reasonings besides the trustworthiness of the illative sense that gives them its sanction.'[1] Our duty is to cultivate that faculty, and then trust implicitly to its decisions.

The meaning of this will appear as we proceed; but it is important to notice at once the precise nature of Newman's problem. He is investigating, one may say, the physiology of belief in the individual, as he before considered the physiology of religious faith in a society. He looks upon belief from outside as a phenomenon which is to be examined, and whose laws are to be discovered by observation. The problem is, in truth, this—What are the general conditions of belief? How do men, as a fact, reach the

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 352.

state of mind called 'certitude'? If an exhaustive answer could be given, we should know the laws of belief. But it must be distinctly observed that 'law' is here used in its scientific, not in its narrower and more proper sense. The code investigated is not that imposed by logic, but that which is necessarily and always obeyed by the working of the human mind. We are seeking the laws of all belief, not the laws of right belief; and our theory would explain the growth of error just as much as the growth of sound knowledge. Every opinion, true or false, must necessarily obey the laws of thought, when the phrase is used in this sense; and it is a further and different question which of the opinions generated are true, or, in other words, correspond to the facts. Logic may be regarded from this point of view as a particular province of the wider science of belief in general, and it is with that wider science that Newman is primarily concerned. It will require a distinct step to reach the purely logical problem. Before that step is made, his conclusions may be useful in discriminating between real and sham beliefs, but do not touch the distinction between true and false beliefs. He may help us to tell in what cases a man actually does believe, or, in his language, gives a full assent to a dogma; but he has, so far, nothing to do with the logical value of the assent.

The two questions, it is true, are closely connected, and may be even said ultimately to coincide. If, in

fact, we should discover that certain beliefs are necessary—that is, that every rational being is forced to accept them under all circumstances—the theory of belief would give a basis for the narrower theory of logic. A strictly necessary belief would, indeed, be implied in erroneous as well as in sound reasoning, and could not supply a test for discriminating truth from error. But a belief may be of such a character that we admit it when once presented to us, though we have previously not thought about it; or, whilst admitting it, we may not have evolved its remoter consequences. The general theory of belief may be useful as revealing and defining such necessary beliefs. Their existence would be proved by one theory, and taken as a touchstone of all reasoning in the other. Such, of course, whether we call them necessary or not, are the beliefs expressed in Euclid's axioms or the doctrine of the uniformity of Nature. The logician must accept the belief as an ultimate fact, whilst he leaves the problem of its origin to the psychologist.

For the present it is enough to note the obvious difference between the two provinces of inquiry, and the danger of confounding them. If every condition which in fact determines belief were taken to be therefore a condition of logical belief, we should sanction every possible error. If, on the other hand, logical conditions were regarded as the sole causes which in fact determine belief, we should certainly have, as Newman conclusively shows, a most inadequate view

of the way in which belief, and even sound belief, is in fact originated and propagated. Meanwhile, as Newman is primarily concerned with the wider theory of belief in general, he produces a Grammar of Assent instead of a logic; a theory of the methods by which men are convinced, not of the methods by which doctrines are proved; and an account of the assumptions upon which creeds in fact rest, rather than an account of the marks by which we may recognise the verified assumptions entitled to be regarded as established truths.

So long as Newman remains within the limits thus prescribed his theory appears to be as unassailable as it is admirably expounded. The propriety of the phraseology may be disputed; but the name 'illative sense' undoubtedly corresponds to a real faculty or combination of faculties, and his use of it enables him to give an accurate analysis of a most important set of mental phenomena. It is true, as he says, that 'formal logical sequence is not, in fact, the method by which we are enabled to become certain of what is concrete.' The real method is 'the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible. As a man's portrait differs from a sketch of him in having

not merely a continuous outline, but all its details filled in, and shades and colours laid on and harmonised together; such is the multiform and intricate process of ratiocination necessary for our reaching him as a concrete fact, compared with the rude operation of syllogistic treatment.'[1] Nothing could be better said, or more substantially true. Formal logic is rather a negative and a verifying than a positive and discovering process, and represents only a very small part of the actual operation by which we are guided, and necessarily guided, in all practical judgments. When I form an estimate of a man's character, of the wisdom of a policy, of the truth of a creed, my mind is, in fact, determined by countless considerations, of which only a small part can be distinctly tabulated and drawn out into articulate logical order. But, undeniable as this may be, the logical formulæ may yet have a paramount importance. They do not constitute the whole line of defence, but they may give the key of the position.

The point may require elucidation. Newman illustrates his position by a criticism of the authenticity of a passage in Shakespeare,[2] and shows with great felicity how short a cut we make to the decision of a question which involves almost countless considerations, when drawn out into full logical shape. I will venture to extend the illustration a little

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 281. [2] *Ibid.* p. 264.

further. One of the relevant arguments in discussing the authenticity of a Shakespearian passage is the character of the versification. A critic with a fine ear pronounces unhesitatingly that Wolsey's speech in 'Henry VIII.' resembles Fletcher more than Shakespeare. A member of the New Shakespeare Society confirms this judgment by the application of a metrical test. He counts, for example, the proportion of stopped and unstopped lines, and decides that it corresponds to the proportion always found in Fletcher's known writings, and never in Shakespeare's. The counter of stops and syllables is able to put his argument into syllogistic shape; the critic can only say that he has judged by his ear.

Now, it is plain that both observers have been determined in part by the same consideration. The critic may have been guided by innumerable likenesses, which are too delicate to be put into words, and of which he is not even distinctly conscious. But he has also been guided, though unconsciously, by the characteristic which his humble colleague has measured. He has felt the peculiarity, though he has not discovered its cause. A critic is a good one in proportion as he is sensitive to the most refined and delicate differences; he is scientific in proportion as he can give an accurate and verifiable analysis of the nature of those differences; and, of course, the two powers are distinct, and differently developed. One man may be quickest at recognising the fact of

a likeness, and another ablest to assign the causes of such likeness as he recognises.

When we compare the higher critic and his humble rival, it is clear that the intensity of conviction may be the same to the observer himself. A man with an exquisite intellectual taste can recognise the flavour of Shakespeare as distinctly as the epicure recognises a special vintage, and may be as absolutely peremptory in his conclusions. Moreover, he can form a judgment upon matters where the humbler word-counter is hopelessly at a loss. His sphere of reasoning envelops and transcends that of his rival. But his inference cannot be regarded as conclusively proved for anyone else. We all know that critics are often peremptory in proportion to their ignorance. The counter of syllables, on the other hand, has proved beyond all doubt the fact which he asserts. There is undeniably such a likeness as he maintains, and in such a definite degree. The statement can be tested by every human being who possesses the faculty of counting, and there is, therefore, no risk of a 'personal error.' It is convincing, as far as it goes, not only to himself, but to the whole world of rational beings, and may take its place as a definite objective truth.

The relation of the two is admirably illustrated by Sancho Panza. Two of his uncles sat in judgment on a cask of wine. One said that it had a smack of leather, and the other that it smacked of iron. The

bystanders laughed; but the uncles had the laugh on their side when the cask was drunk out, and an old key with a leather thong revealed at the bottom. The uncles were the fine critics who could recognise a truth as proved for them. It was not proved for the world till the unmistakable test came to light. They might, in fact, have been deceived by some personal error. But, as all men can judge of iron and leather when they see and touch it, error became impossible. Then the private conviction passed into a universal objective truth. But unhesitating conviction previously would have been unreasonable, except so far as there were independent reasons for admitting the infallibility of Sancho's uncles.

In all cases, from the simplest and most definite to the most complex and vague inferences, the ultimate ground of all inductive argument is the same, namely, the perception of likeness or unlikeness. The difference is, that in some cases the characteristic is capable of strict measurement, in which all minds agree, whilst in others it is recognisable only by the acuter observers, and therefore with varying distinctness. In some cases we can only reach qualitative, whilst in others we can attain to quantitative analysis. Accordingly, the whole mass of human belief may be regarded as a chaotic nebula surrounding a solid nucleus of definitively-established truth. The core of permanent knowledge consists partly in those beliefs which can be expressed with mathematical

precision and exposed to definite tests, and partly in those vaguer and less tangible beliefs which may, nevertheless, be confirmed by such an overwhelming body of evidence from the concurrent testimony of innumerable observers that doubt is practically impossible. Outside this core we have multitudinous beliefs of all degrees of authority, down to the vaguest conjecture. But there is no definite separation between the inner and the outer sphere. A process of integration is continually taking place. New beliefs are constantly crystallising round the solid core and becoming definitely established, whilst others are dissipated or transformed by the progress of inquiry.

Meanwhile it is an obvious fact that conviction follows a different law from proof. In many cases it outruns proof. A man may be as firmly convinced of the truth of an uncertain or a false proposition as of a demonstrable mathematical formula. He may be right, if he has evidence open to no one else, whether by virtue of finer perceptions or of fuller knowledge. Or, on the other hand, conviction may fall short of proof. A man may disbelieve an established proposition, either because he is ignorant of its evidence, or incapable of estimating the evidence, or too indolent or prejudiced to estimate it fairly. The question, therefore, as to whether a doctrine is proved is distinct from the question as to whether it produces conviction on a given mind. One

problem is a logical one, and the other belongs to the theory of belief in general.

If, indeed, we apply with Newman the purely empirical test, we may say that the ultimate criterion is the same. That is a true proposition in matters of fact (for we are not speaking of the so-called necessary, or *à priori* truths) which men actually believe when it is presented to their minds. We cannot get beyond the test of experience. Our beliefs in the general doctrine of the uniformity of Nature, which underlies all empirical reasoning, still more in all specific truths as to the world of realities, are ultimately based upon or express the fact that all men do in fact accept them when distinctly set before them. Therefore, it may be urged, whenever men differ as to such truths, we must either hold ourselves in suspense or be convinced without sufficient evidence. This, it may be further argued, is the case in regard to all religious opinions ; and therefore we must choose between permanent scepticism and a dogmatic belief which dispenses with tangible proof by the help of the 'illative sense.' Scepticism—an absolute suspense of judgment—is in such matters impossible, and we must therefore allow our beliefs to outrun our logic. This is specially true in such cases as are illustrated by the Shakespearian criticism, where the grounds of conviction are too complex and delicate to be expressible in syllogistic form. In this whole sphere of opinion, including as one class all our religious

beliefs, we can only judge by the testimony of the illative sense. I perceive, by a process analogous to the use of the external senses, that this or that belief is on the whole congruous to my other established beliefs. Therefore it is true. I can go no further; for all inference really comes to this in the last resort; and the perception summed up in these words is too complex for analysis or verification. It may happen that whilst you perceive the belief to be congruous, I perceive it to be incongruous. Therefore, it seems, what is true for you is false for me; or there is no objective certainty, though there is subjective conviction. Newman partly accepts this conclusion. 'A proof,' he says, 'except in abstract demonstration, has always in it, more or less, an element of the personal,'[1] because the degree of conviction depends to some degree upon that kind of knowledge which entitles a man to be called an expert, and which varies from one man to another.

Once more, if this be understood as part of the theory of belief, it is, I think, undoubtedly true. Conviction as to all matters of fact, nay, even as to mathematical propositions, does, I doubt not, vary most materially from man to man. Evidence of all kinds strikes people with very different force, according to their prepossessions, their power of reasoning, and so on; and the evidence accessible to different people, even in support of the commonest facts, may

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 310.

vary almost indefinitely. It is a truism, indeed, to say that, as things are, divergence of belief is inevitable; that an ordinary man cannot help being a Catholic at Rome and a Mussulman at Mecca; or that Newman became a Roman Catholic as naturally as Comte became a Positivist. And from this fact it is usual and proper to infer the duty of toleration and the absurdity, not of conviction, but of dogmatism. I cannot help believing, but I have no right to make my belief, simply as my belief, a ground for demanding your belief. But, asserting all this as emphatically as possible, it is entirely irrelevant to the logical problem. Error is inevitable, but it is not therefore truth. When a man's mind is constituted in a certain way, and certain evidence is brought before him, it will inevitably produce a certain opinion. That is as true as that any action whatever is a function of the organism and the medium. But it has no bearing upon the other question, whether the man's mind is rational, or whether he deals with the evidence in accordance with logical rules. Those rules simply express the conditions which secure a conformity between opinion and fact. They are not, as I have said, 'laws of thought' in the scientific sense of law, for they are constantly broken. They simply state the conditions, a neglect of which leads a man into error. And the fullest agreement that, as men are constituted, error is unavoidable does not prevent us from inquiring

which opinions have been reached by a logical and which by an illogical process. If, indeed, the difference between men's minds were such that no two people could hold the same opinion, the pursuit of a truth independent of personal variation would be chimerical. But as the same conclusion may be reached by many different processes, we may hope to approximate by degrees to a general agreement, or, in other words, to a coincidence between proof and conviction. Nor, again, does the difficulty of summing up and (so to speak) packing into a single formula the whole pith and essence of so complex an assent as that to the truth of a religion diminish in the slightest degree the importance of applying logical tests other than that of the direct testimony of the 'illative sense.' That difficulty undoubtedly makes the pursuit of truth a slow and complex operation. It proves that the co-operation of many minds and of many generations must be necessary for the elimination of personal error—indeed, of more minds and more generations than have existed or perhaps ever will exist in the world. But though we cannot devise any direct crucial experiment upon which to stake our conclusions, we can lay down rules, the observance of which will secure an approximation to truth. A religious system, for example, may involve historical statements which can be compared with established facts ; unless we are prepared to deny that there are any established facts in history. It contains, again,

innumerable philosophic or scientific statements and implications capable of being tested by the ordinary methods which obtain certainty elsewhere. As the core of fixed knowledge grows by slow accretion, we obtain a larger basis for our inquiries and a more distinct perception of its tendency to combine with or destroy the religious dogmas.

Such tests are, necessarily, of gradual application. The individual can only endeavour to conform his own reasoning methods to the general rules of sound inquiry. Though he cannot bring all the various threads of his explicit and implicit reasoning to a single point, he can do something to detect the presence of inconsistent elements, of unfounded assumptions, or of extra-logical arguments. He can, in particular, form some opinion as to his own impartiality. If he is impressed by some special characteristic, he can say whether this impression is due to some accidental bias ; and if he is a lover of truth, he can in that case resist it. In other words, he can endeavour to base his conclusions upon reason instead of arbitrary prejudice.

This seems to be the plain meaning of a canon laid down by Locke. 'There is one unerring mark,' says that most candid of thinkers, 'by which a man may know whether he is a lover of truth in earnest' ; viz. '*the not entertaining any proposition with greater assurance than the proofs it is built on will warrant.*'[1]

[1] Quoted in *Grammar of Assent*, p. 155.

Newman attacks this canon at considerable length; and I therefore presume that he regards it as in some way incompatible with his own doctrine. To me I confess that it sounds almost like a truism—only necessary to be asserted because so scandalously neglected. It amounts simply to saying that we should form our opinions in accordance with logic; that is, in accordance with the rules which secure truth. It is not easy to see how this can be denied by anyone who admits (as, of course, Newman most fully admits) that the sole end of reasoning is the attainment of truth.

The main argument which Newman opposes to Locke is the simple statement of fact. 'We do,' he says, 'believe certain propositions which rest upon probability alone as peremptorily as if they rested upon demonstrative evidence.' Such, for example, are the beliefs of the mortality of man and the insularity of Great Britain. In such cases Newman holds that there exists what Locke calls a 'surplusage' of belief over proof.[1] Various answers might be made. If it were in truth not proved or provable that men would die, or that Great Britain was an island, I, for one, would decline to believe it. If whilst denying the proof, I were yet forced to retain the belief, I should have to believe in intuitions of a character never yet admitted by philosophers, namely, intuitions as to particular matters of fact. But I should prefer

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 293.

to reply that the propositions in question are in fact proved. And I am not sure that Newman would differ from me in substance. He would only say that they are proved by the 'illative sense' instead of the syllogistic process. The truth is that all such propositions imply a belief in the validity of inductive methods, and, therefore, in the invariable, and at least general, uniformity of Nature. Without such an assumption, however founded, we could simply not reason at all. With it, the proof of a matter of fact may approximate indefinitely to demonstration. It never actually reaches it, as the asymptote never actually reaches the curve. But the approximation is so close that human faculties will not enable us to distinguish the difference. The proof, that is, that two and two make four differs from the proof that men are mortal by so infinitesimal an amount as to be indistinguishable to the most sensitive mental vision. A slight correction may be necessary to Locke's statement to justify our neglect of these infinitesimal quantities; but its validity is not sensibly affected. The proof of human mortality rests on the immense variety of conditions under which the experiment of living has been tried, none of which sensibly affect the result. We are justified in the inference that no conditions, the occurrence of which can be anticipated, will affect any particular life. And, as we understand more clearly the nature of the process called life, we are able to affiliate this truth to other

still more general laws of Nature. So, again, the proof that Great Britain is an island rests, for most of us, upon the impossibility of the belief of its insularity being so widely spread, and assumed at every step by so many people in a position to verify the statement, if it be, in fact, erroneous. So far Newman's difference from Locke seems to be almost verbal. Newman fully admits and admirably illustrates the force of an argument existing upon innumerable converging probabilities; but he does not call it 'proof,' because it is not expressible in syllogisms, nor is a denial of its force reducible to a contradiction in terms. Locke, on the other hand, equally admits the force of the argument, but regards it as strictly logical. Mill and the purely empirical school would have called it the only logical method. In any case, the man who admits its force cannot allow that in accepting such arguments he is allowing belief to be 'more than the proofs will warrant.'

The tendency, however, of Newman's argument comes out in another direction. Undoubtedly many people believe the truths in question upon insufficient evidence. Children believe in mortality because they have been told that they are mortal, and, on precisely the same grounds, they may believe in witches or in the flatness of the world. A foreigner may believe that Great Britain is an island because a notorious liar, who had a strong interest in the statement, has told him that it is an island. The pro-

verbial old woman refused to believe in flying-fish, and did believe in mountains of sugar and lakes of rum. If she had been more credulous, she would have accepted the truth and the error with equal confidence. The fact that a man may hold a true opinion on insufficient evidence is no proof, though it is, strangely, urged as a proof, that he is right in receiving insufficient evidence. The often-quoted Eastern prince who believed in ice on authority was accidentally right: but, if he had accepted all that was told him on the same authority, he would have fallen into errors as great as that of the old lady of the flying-fish.

Yet facts of this kind are often alleged as if they proved that we *ought* to believe—as they certainly prove that we *do* believe—upon insufficient proof. The point is put in a nutshell by Newman himself. He says, most truly, that 'life is not long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning if we determine to begin with proof. Life is for action. If we insist on proof for everything, we shall never come to action; to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith.'[1] That sums up his theory. Assumption is faith. Now, undoubtedly, the proposition states a truth, and a most important truth, in the theory of belief. Assumptions are necessary, and for the reason given by Newman. The whole

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 92. The passage is quoted by Newman from an earlier letter of his own. He apparently endorses the assertion; but in any case the illustration is equally good.

history of human belief is a history of the growth and decay of such assumptions. The creed of the savage is of necessity a series of postulates, some of which are verified, whilst others disappear. Not only so, but we are all forced at every moment to make innumerable assumptions. We could not live or act without them. And, further, such assumptions tend to become beliefs. We act on the hypothesis that a creed is true. We come to believe that it is certainly true. And, further, the process may be perfectly legitimate. To assume the doctrine may be the best or only way of testing its truth. And, in fact, that is the way in which doctrines have been established or destroyed.

But whilst this is perfectly true of belief, it is not true of right belief. On the contrary, the need of making unverified assumptions, and the tendency to cling to them after their falsity has been exposed, is precisely the reason why error is so common and so persistent. The logician is a man, and must therefore act, and act upon countless unverified assumptions. But he ought to be a lover of truth, and must therefore carefully guard his mind against a process which is, as Newman says, perfectly natural, but most undoubtedly illogical. The first lesson he has to learn is just this—that assumption, though not proof, has a pernicious tendency to pass for proof. In insisting upon this process, Newman fully explains the genealogy of faith, but the explanation is often the very contrary of a justification. It states the cause

but not the reason of faith, and, unluckily, the cause is often most unreasonable. To assign the conditions of a belief is often to prove its error. If we show that belief in a criminal's fault is associated with dislike of his person, the verdict of a jury loses its force. If we find that a superstition exists, not only where it might be, but also where it could not possibly be, verified, we show that it must be founded, not on observation, but on fancy. And thus an examination of the laws of belief will show us that many most real beliefs are entirely illogical, and consequently that it is a grievous error to take a test of the reality of a belief as a test of its truth.

The application of this to religious beliefs is obvious. Newman gives a pathetic passage from 'North and South,' in which the poor factory-girl ends by saying, 'If this life is the end, and there is no God to wipe away all tears from all eyes, I could go mad.' 'Here,' says Newman, 'is an argument for the immortality of the soul. As to its force, be it great or small, will it make a figure in a logical discussion carried on *secundum artem*? Can any scientific common measure compel the intellects of a Dives and Lazarus to take the same measure of it? Is there any test of its validity better than the *ipse dixit* of private judgment—that is, the judgment of those who have a right to judge, and next, agreement of many private judgments in one and the same view of

it?'[1] If we are asking what will be the actual effect of the argument upon people's minds, Newman's implied statements are undeniable. Dives and Lazarus, the wise and the simple, the cynic and the sentimentalist, will each be affected after his kind. And if there were no difference between rhetoric and logic, between the actual persuasive force and the true logical force of an argument, we should have to admit that we could get no further than a purely sceptical result. One man will think one thing, another will think another, and if a good many think the same, so much the better.

But all this is purely irrelevant in logic. It still remains undeniably clear that there is a difference between the weight which the argument actually bears, and that which it ought to bear. The logical and the rhetorical influence are separable, at any rate in theory. The divergence between people's opinions is due in part to the fact that the argument may strike their 'illative sense' differently; and partly also to the fact that argument fails to strike some people in any way. Few men think, yet all will have opinions, as Berkeley says; and therefore some opinions have no authority. The agreement of private judgments is valuable only so far as those judgments are in some sense the product of reasoning. If any man's belief is caused by blind contagion, by submission to arbitrary authority, or by the mere

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 305.

pleasantness of the belief, his judgment is logically worthless.

Newman would, of course, agree to a statement which in fact merely comes to saying that logic represents a real science. There is some inference which ought to be drawn from any given statement, if only we could discover it. Newman, indeed, shows admirably why it is that obedience to logical rules cannot secure right conclusions. Logic may make our reason correct in form, but it cannot supply the matter. No art of syllogising will adequately represent the whole reasoning process. Logic, therefore, can in such matters be no self-acting machine, like Professor Jevons's, into which we can insert our premisses and grind out correct conclusions. But it may still be an organising principle; a practical rule which helps us to unravel confusion and repel inconsistent elements in our mental operations, to exhibit their nature, and perceive their tendency. Even in the most complex cases, where the 'illative sense' is hopelessly unable to give a distinct analysis of its operation, the attempt to be logical gives a value to the conclusions of the reasoner. Dives and Lazarus cannot find a measure which will of itself gauge the worth of their inferences, but if Dives attends to logical rules, and Lazarus neglects them, the opinion of Dives will be so far the more valuable. And though in such cases superior logic may give a very trifling advantage, yet the converging opinion of

a number of logicians may have an enormous advantage. Lazarus is as likely to be wrong as to be right; Dives has one more chance out of a hundred in his favour. The difference, according to a familiar principle, may be decisive in the long run; and, therefore, little as logic can do, it is our duty to be as logical as we can.

The argument in question supplies an excellent illustration of the truth. An opponent would ask Newman, What is the major of your factory-girl's enthymeme? She asserts that a belief is intensely painful. She infers that it is false. Does she, then, hold implicitly that all intensely painful beliefs are false? If so, why? If not, is she reasoning at all, or only refusing to reason? To be logical is to ask such questions, and thereby to clear the issues, though not to produce instantaneous agreement. It is only to introduce a principle which will secure a slow gravitation towards agreement; and the advantage is clear. Though Dives cannot see things just as Lazarus sees them, and therefore cannot appreciate his inducement to believe, he can judge as well, or, if an abler logician, he can judge better, of the truth of the general proposition, 'Painful beliefs are false.' Logic does not give the answer ready-made, but it reveals the true nature of the process. To reject it because inadequate to produce instant agreement, is to throw away a compass because it is not a divining-rod.

In this case I venture to think that it would prove the so-called argument to be no argument at all. It is simply a forcible illustration of the importance of Locke's canon. It is a flagrant instance of allowing a conclusion to be formed by motives with which logic has no concern, and therefore believing more than the evidence will warrant. But whether this be so or not, another result is striking and obvious. It is undeniable that the pleasantness of a belief is an adequate explanation of the survival of the belief, independently of argument. What Newman offers as a logical process is really an analysis of the conditions of conviction, which proves that one condition is illogical, and he therefore, so far, destroys the authority of the conviction. He has clearly shown why people entertain a belief in the absence of any reason for maintaining it.

The result of Newman's method is up to this point purely sceptical. The laws of belief are responsible for every false opinion that ever was formed; and therefore, if the bare fact of belief is a testimony to its validity, we have equal testimony to all opinions. Each man must follow his own 'illative sense'; but no common measure of the value of different influences is attainable. Because logic cannot supply us with a decisive test, applicable at once, its use as an organising and unifying principle is virtually denied. From this difficulty there is one mode of escape. We are invited to measure beliefs by their intensity and

fertility. If, then, it is possible to assign a class of beliefs, the validity of which may be recognised by an internal mark, we can arrive at certainty. In such a case we should not only know, but know that we know; and the problem becomes an inquiry into the conditions of such beliefs, or, as Newman would call them, 'certitudes.' If there are such beliefs, they ought to have two marks. They must be permanent when reached, because truth is independent of time, and universal, because it is the same for all men. We cannot know that we know unless we know that our opinion will not change; and if we are certain of a truth, we are certain that it must be true for everybody. Newman inquires, therefore, whether certitude, the highest degree of belief attainable, is 'indefectible.' He comes to the conclusion that certitude is generally indefectible, though he candidly admits that there are exceptions to the principle, and can only extenuate their number and importance by hypothetical interpretations. People seldom change their minds—as is pretty obvious—after reaching a high degree of conviction; but they do at times change. And, moreover, the test is practically useless, for we cannot know beforehand which are the indefectible beliefs. The other test is still more palpably hopeless. There is a conflict of certitudes. Mahomedans, and Catholics, and Positivists are all equally peremptory in asserting the most opposite beliefs. Where, then, are we to turn for certainty?

This is, of course, a new shape of a very old difficulty. Newman has discussed it elsewhere, and given a solution substantially identical with that more elaborately set forth in the 'Grammar of Assent.' Since the first inference from history is obviously sceptical, inasmuch as every opinion has been held as an historical fact, we can only produce an appearance of consent by disqualifying certain classes. Newman accordingly sets aside a large number of thinkers whose opinions are described in a rhetorical and, therefore, unintentionally unfair passage.[1] They are the 'opinions,' he says, which 'characterise a civilised age.' He cannot argue with men who will not admit his first principles, and it is needless to argue with them, because the system of opinions in question 'contradicts the primary teachings of Nature in the human race wherever a religion is found and its workings can be ascertained.' The 'system of opinion' which thus disqualifies a reasoner is that which is variously called utilitarian, materialistic, atheistical, and so forth; and the primary teaching of human nature which contradicts it is the teaching of the conscience. Newman, as we must remember, distinguishes the conscience from the moral sense, the conscience being the sense of sin as an affront to the Almighty—the 'trembling of a guilty thing surprised' in presence of its Maker. It is in conscience thus defined that he, like his master,

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 411.

Butler, finds the voice of God, and upon its intimations rests substantially the whole fabric of his theology.

This exclusion of the witnesses on one side is generally justified by the analogy of the blind and the seeing. It would be useless, it is said, to argue with a blind man about colours, or with a dull conscience about sin. The analogy breaks down in one important point. No seeing man ever had a difficulty in convincing a blind man of his blindness. The blind man cannot know what sight is, but he cannot help knowing that others possess some faculty of which he is deprived. No such process is applicable to the infidel. He is bold enough to maintain that he, too, has a conscience—that is, that he is as sensitive as the believer to the emotions described by that name. He only denies the interpretation put upon it by the theologian. He cannot be confuted, like the blind man, by any summary appeal to facts; for the facts to which the theologian appeals are beyond all verification by experience. Thus we see at once that from the outset all hopes of an objective test of religious truth must be abandoned. You can prove to a blind man that you see things at a distance. You cannot prove to the infidel that you see a transcendental world.

In the next place, conscience is, according to Newman, the root of all superstition. Every real religious belief is an interpretation of its voice. Therefore an argument from conscience would be

equally applicable in defence of all religions, both of the true and of the false superstitions; for superstition only differs from religion by the falsity of the alleged facts. Hence Newman has to defend religion as against superstition by an appeal to specific evidence. There must, he admits, be a conclusive argument to justify our belief; but the argument can only be valid or intelligible to those who, in the first place, have a conscience—who, in the second place, accept his interpretation of its teaching—and who, in the third place, are impressed by the special facts which he is able to adduce in favour of the one true Church. Thus, in the last resort, he relies upon private judgment—upon his own private belief, that is, that he can convince people in a certain state of mind on being presented with a certain set of evidence. He cannot say that, as a matter of fact, all qualified people are convinced, in which case there would be a show of some objective test; for many unbelievers assert that they possess a conscience, and even found their unbelief partly upon the testimony of their conscience. Many, too, who accept his theory of the conscience remain unconvinced by the facts in favour of his special conclusions. The only ground for denying their qualification would be the fact of their unbelief; and Newman is too good a logician to indulge in the circular argument that a religion is true because the qualified are convinced, and that they are qualified because convinced.

We have, therefore, an apology for Christianity which runs in the main upon the old lines. One part of it is enough for my purpose. So reverent a disciple of Butler naturally lays a stress upon the analogy between natural and revealed religion. 'The belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural.'[1] Amongst the most remarkable of natural beliefs is the belief in the efficacy of sacrifice. Men are not only sensible of sin, so long as their conscience is allowed to speak, but believe that guilt may be purged by offerings and by vicarious suffering. This belief, universal in all superstitions, is taken up, purified, and then sanctioned by the supernatural authority of revelation. Civilisation unfortunately destroys the belief, because it tends to encourage Materialism and to deaden the conscience. And thus we come back to the difficulty already noticed in the theory of development. 'Civilisation' pronounces against Newman: why is civilisation wrong? The answer involves some remarkable assumptions.

Civilisation is wrong because it contradicts the primary teaching of Nature. The proof is, that savages recognise the efficacy of sacrifice, whilst civilised men lose it. We all agree that savages believe that they have offended an unseen power, and that they can pacify him by presents. Civilised men do not. The inference is that savages have, and civilised men have not, 'a conscience,' that is, a sense of

[1] *Grammar of Assent*, p. 408.

remorse for evil-doing. But the opposite inference is more natural, namely, that a belief in the efficacy of sacrifice does not imply a conscience. A sacrifice doubtless implies a belief that an unseen being can be pacified, but it does not in the least tend to imply that his anger is caused by sin. The argument proves too much. We find sacrifice amongst races who appear to be not only deficient in a conscience, but totally devoid of a moral sense. The King of Dahomey makes a blood-bath—not, surely, as an expiation for drinking too much rum, but to bribe an unseen power to help him to kill enemies and get more blood. When a god becomes moral, and therefore hates sin, the old mode of pacifying an immoral deity is applied to pacify the guardian of morality. But the more people reason, the less they believe in sacrifice. The most enlightened amongst the Jews denounced the belief as superstitious in words familiar to us all, not because their consciences were less sensitive, but because the remedy appeared unworthy. The Christian religion spiritualised the doctrine—that is, rendered it less coarse and material. Protestants and rationalists have abandoned it more decisively, and (if they are to be believed) for precisely the opposite reason to that assigned by Newman. The higher the conception of a deity, the less possible the belief that he could be pacified by the blood of bulls and goats, or even by the blood of an innocent and divine sufferer. What are we to think of a theory which

makes Spinoza a type of the man without, and the King of Dahomey a type of the man with, a conscience? Only this, I imagine, that we arrive at a mere caricature of true historical method so long as we persist in looking at history through the old arbitrary prejudices.

And now it may be observed that, if we confine ourselves to a statement of facts, Newman is entirely at one with the ordinary infidel. Both say that sacrifice is a survival of superstitions found in their grossest form amongst barbarous races: both say that the power of the Church is chiefly founded upon its mode of pacifying the sense of remorse by an elaborate system of absolution: both say that, as the intellect is enlightened, as men become more refined, more gentle, more rational, more free from the old brutal instincts, the belief tends to disappear. Newman infers that these phenomena imply the deadening of conscience; the infidel, that they imply the gradual development of a loftier conception of the universe. And if Newman is asked why he accepts his own solution, he can only reply that, as a matter of fact, it convinces his 'illative sense,' and that he believes that it would convince the illative sense of other people, provided that they have a conscience, that they interpret it in the way that he does, and that the arguments are fairly set before them. To which one can only say that, undoubtedly, if any man is precisely in Newman's state of mind,

and has precisely the same arguments put before him, he will come to precisely the same conclusion. But any attempt at a common measure of truth as an 'objective test' is explicitly pronounced impossible; and thus we are once more landed in complete scepticism. A. or B. may be convinced, but nothing can be proved. In short, here for the last time Newman has substituted an explanation of the vitality of a creed for a justification of its claims. His writings show most admirably what are, in fact, the methods by which Catholicism has thriven and survives; but, so far from showing those methods to be reasonable, he really shows conclusively that they involve the operation of distinctly illogical inducements to belief. Such is the natural result of confounding a theory of belief with an *organon* of proof. If the ultimate test of truth is the power of creed to convince men's minds by whatever process, we are inevitably led to the conclusion that all existing beliefs are equally justified. Some are more vigorous than others; but in a logical sense, if objective tests are set aside, they are all on a footing of equality.

And now we may briefly define the general outcome of Newman's teaching. It is, in two words, a genuine theory of development in the scientific sense, omitting the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. The evolutionist holds that, in the struggle for existence, the truest opinion tends to survive; and thus, that whilst no generation is in possession of the

whole truth, the history of belief is that of a slow gravitation towards truth. Some doctrines which have survived all changes, and strengthened under all conditions, may be regarded as definitely established, or at least as indefinitely close approximations to truth. Others are disappearing, or requiring transformation. By studying the history of opinion from this point of view we may obtain, not a self-subsisting and independent system of philosophy, but an indispensable guide towards further approximations. We can use history without being under the tyranny of the past. We can value the postulates upon which men have acted without investing them with supernatural authority. Newman, ignoring this test, and retaining enough of the old arbitrary assumptions to reject all progress as a baseless dream, sees nothing but a huge welter of struggling creeds, differing only in degrees of vitality or permanence. Having no trust in independent reason, he has virtually to take that creed which happens to be most congenial to his feelings, and justifies himself by the incongruous intervention of a supernatural authority. He can thus comfortably appeal to history so long as it testifies to the life of a creed, and contemptuously reject its testimony when it exhibits the creed as ossifying or decaying. As soon as his tests give unpleasant results, he can discard them as irrelevant. Though the adoption of such a method does not justify Kingsley's absurd imputation that Newman preached

that truth was not a virtue, it certainly sanctions a method of playing fast and loose with facts which makes the apparent appeal to history a mere illusion. The whole pith of the 'Grammar of Assent,' so far as it is original, is in the assertion that belief is a personal product in such a sense that no common measure between different minds is attainable. Therefore agreement can only be produced by supernatural intervention; or, in other words, rational agreement is impossible.

If, then, it is asked how we are to escape from such scepticism as Newman's, whilst appealing, as we admit that we must appeal, to experience as the ultimate test of truth, the answer is plain. We must take Newman's own criterion, not narrowed by his prejudices, nor perverted by his introduction of arbitrary assumptions. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum*; but *orbis terrarum* must not mean that part of the earth's surface which is overlooked by the spire of St. Mary's, or even that wider region whose inhabitants look with reverence to the dome of St. Peter's. The *depositum* of faith which we must accept is not that which is guarded by any single Church, however august in its history and imposing in its pretensions. It is that body of scientific truth which is the slow growth of human experience through countless ages, and which develops by the labour of truth-loving men, and under the remorseless pressure of hard facts. We cannot accept as proved the rash solutions of the

eternal riddle which have commended themselves to savages, or to philosophers, or to any arbitrary selection of men who happen to agree with us, or to any organisation which has enabled men to find a common mouthpiece for the utterance of their emotions. Dreams, however gorgeous, however richly they embody the thoughts of old poets and sages, and generations of the noblest men on earth, cannot pass muster. We can take nothing as proved but that which has stood the hard test of verification by multitudinous experience. The authority, we must admit, of any individual is infinitesimal; his chances of error innumerable. No man can say, This is true because I think it; nor can any man hold that he has grasped the full and ultimate truth upon any subject. But, if the race is to progress, men must not be content to bow to the first authority at hand, even if it shows signs of strong and prolonged vitality. We must venture something to win anything. Our principle must be to place ourselves in that direction which is shown to have the greatest promise by the general set of opinions of qualified thinkers. Those opinions have the most authority which are most rational; and the safest test of rationality is that they have commended themselves to independent inquirers, who themselves acknowledged no law but reason, and have not been propagated by ignorance, blind submission to arbitrary rules, and reluctance to believe unpleasant truths. There is no infallible guide and no complete and

definitive system of universal truth; but by such means we can attain enough truth to secure the welfare and progress of the race and a continual approximation towards a fuller and more definite body of definitive truth. If we deny that there is any such progress, we may pick up a creed at random. If we admit it, we can, by careful observation and the use of all available logical canons and accumulated knowledge, throw some light upon the great problem, What is the conception of the universe to which the previous history of inquiry shows that men's minds are gradually conforming themselves as they become more rational?

TOLERATION

I.—Restraint of Beliefs

Mr. Froude, in his 'Life of Carlyle,' incidentally sets forth a theory of toleration. Cromwell, he tells us, held Romanism to be 'morally poisonous'; therefore Cromwell did not tolerate. We have decided that it is no longer poisonous; therefore we do tolerate. Cromwell's intolerance implied an intense 'hatred of evil in its concrete form'; our tolerance need not imply any deficiency in that respect, but merely a difference of opinion as to facts. Upon this showing, then, we are justified in extirpating, by fire and sword, any doctrine, if only we are sincerely convinced that it is 'morally poisonous.' I do not take this as a full account either of Carlyle's theory or of Mr. Froude's. I quote it merely as a pointed statement of a doctrine which in some ways would appear to follow more directly from the utilitarianism which Carlyle detested. The argument is simple. A 'poisonous opinion' is one which causes a balance of evil. The existence of such opinions is admitted. Nor, again, is it denied that under certain conditions an opinion may be suppressed by persecution. The persecution,

then, of a poisonous opinion must do some good, and must produce a balance of good if the evil effects of the opinion suppressed exceed the various evils due to the persecution. But that which causes a balance of good is right according to utilitarians; and therefore persecution may sometimes be right. If you have to suppress a trifling error at the cost of much suffering, you are acting wrongly, as it would be wrong to cure a scratch by cutting off a finger. But it may be right to suppress a poisonous opinion when the evil of the opinion is measured by the corruption of a whole social order, and the evil of the persecution by the death, say, of twelve apostles. In such a case it is expedient, and therefore right, that one man or a dozen should perish for the good of the people.

Mill attacked the applicability, though not the first principle, of this reasoning in the most forcible part of his 'Liberty.' He argues in substance that the collateral evils due to persecution are always, or almost always, excessive. He could not, as a utilitarian, deduce toleration from some absolute *à priori* principle. But by pointing out evil consequences generally overlooked, he could strengthen the general presumption against its utility in any particular case. His utilitarian opponents may still dispute the sufficiency of his reasoning. They urge, in substance, that the presumption is not strong enough to justify an absolute rule. Granting that there is a presump-

tion against persecution generally, and that all the evils pointed out by Mill should be taken into account, yet, they say, it is still a question of expediency. We must be guided in each particular case by a careful balance of the good and evil, and must admit this general presumption only for what it is worth ; that is, as a guiding rule in doubtful cases, or where we do not know enough to balance consequences satisfactorily, but not as possessing sufficient authority to override a clear conclusion in the opposite sense. Practically, we may assume, the difference comes to very little. Mill's opponents might often be as tolerant as himself. He says, indeed, that toleration is the universal rule ; yet even he might admit that, as in other moral problems, a casuist might devise circumstances under which it would cease to be an absolute rule. On the other hand, his opponents, though holding in theory that each case has to be judged on its merits, would, in fact, agree that no case ever occurs at the present time in which the balance is not in favour of toleration. The discussion, therefore, has less practical application than one might at first sight suppose. One man says, 'Toleration is always right, but at times this, like other moral rules, may be suspended.' The other, 'It is not a question of right or wrong, but of expediency ; but, on the other hand, in almost every conceivable case, toleration is clearly expedient.' It is only, therefore, as illustrating an interesting ethical problem—interesting, that is, to people capable

of feeling an interest in such gratuitous logic-chopping —that I would consider the problem.

I remark, therefore, in the first place, that one argument of considerable importance scarcely receives sufficient emphasis from Mill. The objection taken by the ordinary common-sense of mankind to persecution is, very often, that the doctrines enforced are false. Toleration, beyond all doubt, has been advanced by scepticism. It is clearly both inexpedient and wrong to burn people for not holding erroneous beliefs. Mill extends the argument to cases where power and truth are on the same side; but he scarcely brings out what may be called the specifically moral objection. I may hold that Romanism is false and even 'poisonous.' I may still admit that a sincere Romanist is not only justified in believing—for, so far as his belief appears to him to be reasonable, he cannot help believing—but also that he is morally bound to avow his belief. He is in the position of a man who is sincerely convinced that a food which I hold to be poisonous is wholesome, or, rather, is an indispensable medicine. If he thinks so, it is clearly his duty to let his opinion be known. A man holds that prussic acid will cure, when it really kills. He is mistaken, but surely he is bound to impart so important a truth to his fellows. So long, indeed, as men held that it was not only foolish, but wicked, to hold other religious opinions than their own, this argument did not apply. But I need not argue that sincere errors are in them-

selves innocent. The most virtuous of men will be a Calvinist in Scotland, a Catholic in Spain, and a Mohammedan in Turkey. And so far as this possibility is admitted, and as the contrary conviction spreads—namely, that the leaders of heresies are generally virtuous, because it requires virtue to uphold an unpopular opinion—the dilemma becomes pressing. The persecutor, as a rule, is punishing the virtuous for virtuous conduct, and, moreover, for conduct which he admits to be virtuous. For this is not one of those cases with which casuists sometimes puzzle themselves. The fact that a man thinks himself acting rightly, or is wicked on principle, is not a sufficient defence against legal punishment. If a man is a Thug, the Government is not the less bound to hang him because he thinks murder right. A thief must be punished, though he objects to property in general; and a man who deserts his wife, though he disapproves of marriage. A man is in such cases punished for an action which the ruler holds to be immoral. But the persecutor has to punish a man precisely for discharging a duty admitted by the persecutor himself to be a duty, and a duty of the highest obligation. If the duty of truthfulness be admitted, I am bound not to express belief in a creed which I hold to be false. If benevolence be a duty, I am bound to tell my neighbour how he can avoid hell-fire. The dilemma thus brought about—the necessity of crushing conscience by law—will be admitted to

be an evil, though it may be an inevitable evil. The scandal so caused is one main cause of the abhorrence felt for the persecutor, and the sympathy for his victims. The ordinary statement of the impolicy of making men martyrs testifies to the general force of the impression. And it must, in fact, be taken into account upon any method of calculation, in so far, at least, as the revulsion of feeling excited by persecution tells against the efficacy of the method adopted. The persecutor, that is, must clearly remember that by burning a man for his honesty he is inevitably exciting the disgust of all who care for honesty, even though they do not prize it more than orthodoxy. It must be in all cases a great, even if a necessary, evil, that the law should outrage the conscience of its subjects. And whatever conclusion may be reached, it is desirable to consider how far and on what principles the acceptance of this dilemma can be regarded as unavoidable.

The utilitarian can, of course, give a consistent reply. The ultimate criterion, he says, of virtue is utility. Sincerity is a virtue because it is obviously useful to mankind. That men should be able to trust each other is a first condition of the mutual assistance upon which happiness depends. But here is a case in which we—that is, the rulers—are convinced that sincerity does harm. We shall be illogical if we allow the general rule derived from particular cases to govern us in the case where it plainly does not

apply. We admit all the evils alleged : the suffering of a sincere man because of his sincerity, the encouragement to hypocrisy, the demoralisation of those whose lips are closed ; but, after admitting all this, we still see so clearly the mischief which will follow from the spread of the opinions in question, that we pronounce it to exceed all the other admitted mischief, and are therefore still bound to persecute. Turn it and twist it as you will, the question still comes to this : Which way does the balance of happiness incline ? Is it better that virtuous Romanists should go to the stake and Romanism be so stamped out, or that so poisonous an opinion be allowed to spread ? We fully admit all the evils which you have noted, and willingly put them in the balance ; but we must weigh them against the evils which will follow from the toleration, and our action must be determined by a final comparison.

Undoubtedly the argument has great apparent strength. It fixes the issues which are generally taken ; and when helped by the assumption that belief in a creed may determine a man's happiness for all eternity, and that men or some body of men may possess infallibility, it makes a very imposing show. Nor do I wish to dispute the fundamental principle ; that is, the principle that utility is in some sense to be the final criterion of morality. I think, however, that here, as in other cases, a thoroughgoing application of that criterion will lead us to a different

conclusion from that which results from a first inspection. And, in order to show this, I must try to point out certain tacit assumptions made in the application of this principle to the facts. Granting that we must test persecution by its effects upon human happiness, I must add that we cannot fairly measure these effects without looking a little more closely into the conditions under which they are necessarily applied. The argument starts from the generalisation of something like a truism. The alleged fact is simply this: that pain, threatened or inflicted, will stop a man's mouth. It can hardly convert him, but it will prevent him from converting others. I do not dispute the statement; few of us will undertake to say that there is any creed which we would not avow or renounce rather than be burnt alive. We might possibly prefer distant damnation to immediate martyrdom. Many men, happily for the race, have been more heroic; but burning stopped even their mouths, and so far suppressed their influence. We have, however, to modify this statement before we can apply it to any serious purpose. We have to show, that is, that we not only suppress the individual, but eradicate the opinion from society; and this raises two questions. There is a difficulty in catching the opinion which is to be suppressed, and there is a difficulty about arranging the machinery through which the necessary force is to be supplied. When we examine the conditions of

success in the enterprise, it may turn out that it is impossible in many cases, and possible in any case only at the cost of evils which would more than counterbalance any possible benefit. Only by such an investigation can we really measure the total effect of persecution, and it will, I think, appear to be still more far-reaching and disastrous than is implied even by Mill's cogent reasoning.

Mill, in fact, conducts the argument as though he made an assumption (for I will not say that he actually made it) which appears to me, at least, to be curiously unreal. His reasoning would be sometimes more to the purpose if we could suppose an opinion to be a sort of definite object, a tangible thing like the cholera bacillus, existing in a particular mind, as the germ in a particular body, and therefore capable of being laid hold of and suppressed by burning the person to whom it belongs, as the germ is suppressed by being dipped in boiling water. This corresponds to what one may call the 'happy thought' doctrine of scientific discovery. Popular writers used sometimes to tell the story of Newton's great discovery as though Newton one day saw an apple fall, and exclaimed, 'Ah! an apple is a kind of moon!' This remark had occurred to no one else, and might never have struck anybody again. If, therefore, you had caught Newton on the spot and stamped him out, the discovery of gravitation might have been permanently suppressed. Mill would, of course, have

perceived the absurdity of such a statement as clearly as anyone; yet he seems to make a very similar assumption in his 'Liberty.' It is, he is arguing, a 'piece of idle sentimentality' that truth has any intrinsic power of prevailing against persecution. 'The real advantage which truth has consists in this—that when an opinion is true it may be extinguished once, twice, or many times, but in the course of ages there will generally be found persons to rediscover it'; and when, he adds, it is rediscovered in a propitious age, it may 'make such head' as to resist later attempts at suppression. Surely this is a most inadequate account of the strength of truth. The advantage dependent upon a chance of rediscovery is equally possessed by error. Old superstitions are just as much given to reappearance as old truths. Everyone who has examined stupid lads knows very well that the blunders which they make are just as uniform as the truths which they perceive. Given minds at a certain stage, and exposed to certain external conditions, we can predict the illusions which will be generated. So, to take the familiar instances, the mass of mankind still believes that the sun goes round the earth, and is convinced that a moving body will stop of itself, independently of external resistance. The advantage of truth is surely dependent upon the other fact that it can, as Mill says, 'make head.' It gathers strength by existing; it gathers strength, that is, because it can be verified and tested, and

every fresh test confirms the belief; and it gathers strength, again, in so far as it becomes part of a general system of truths, each of which confirms, elucidates, and corroborates the others, and which together form the organised mass of accepted knowledge which we call science. So far as we are possessed of anything that can be called scientific knowledge, we have not to deal with a list of separate assertions, each of which has to be judged upon its own merits, and each of which may stand or fall independently of all the others; but with a system of interdependent truths, some of which are supported by irresistible weight of evidence, whilst others are so inextricably intertwined with the central core of truth that they cannot be separately rejected. To talk, therefore, of suppressing an opinion as if it were not part of a single growth, but a separable item in a chaotic aggregate of distinguishable theories, is to overlook the most essential condition of bringing any influence to bear upon opinion generally.

Consider, first, the case of any scientific theory. Newton's great achievement was supposed to lead to questionable theological inferences; as, indeed, whatever may be the logical inferences, there can be no doubt that it was fatal to the mythological imagery in which the earth appeared as the centre of the universe. Suppose, then, that it had been decided that the opinion was poisonous, and that anybody who maintained that the earth went round the sun

should be burnt. Had such a system been carried out, what must have happened? If we suppose it to be compatible with the continued progress of astronomical and physical inquiries, this particular conclusion might still be ostensibly avoided. Kepler's discoveries, and all the astronomical observations assumed by Newton, might have been allowed to be promulgated, as affording convenient means of calculation, and Newton's physical theories might have been let pass as interesting surmises in speculation, or admitted as applicable to other cases. It might still be asserted that, so far as the solar system was concerned, the doctrines possessed no 'objective truth.' Something of the kind was, I believe, actually attempted. It needs, however, no argument to show that such a persecution would be childish, and would be virtually giving over the key of the position to the antagonist, with some feeble, ostensible stipulation that he should not openly occupy one dependent outwork. The truth would not have been suppressed, but the open avowal of the truth. The only other alternative would have been to suppress physical theories and astronomical observation altogether, in order to avoid the deduction of the offensive corollary. In such a case, then, the only choice, by the very nature of the case, is not between permitting or suppressing 'an opinion,' but between permitting or suppressing scientific inquiry in general. There are, no doubt, bigots and stupid people enough to be ready to suppress

speculation at large, but they would find it hard to induce people to suppress things of obvious utility ; they cannot suppress the study of astronomy for purposes of navigation, and yet, when the truth has been acquired for this end, its application to others follows by a spontaneous and irresistible process. The victory is won, and the only question is, whether the conqueror shall march in openly or in a mask.

This familiar example may illustrate the extreme difficulty of catching, isolating, and suppressing so subtle an essence as an opinion. Stop all thought, and of course you can annihilate the particular doctrine which it generates. But the price to pay is a heavy one, and clearly not to be measured by the particular sets of consequences which result from the specified dogma. The same principle is everywhere operative. The greatest shock lately received by the conservative theologians has been due to the spread of Darwinian theories. How, granting that rulers and priests had at their disposal any amount of persecuting power, would they have proposed to suppress those theories ? They object to the belief that men have grown out of monkeys. Would they, then, allow men to hold that the horse and ass have a common ancestor ; or to question the permanency of genera and species of plants ? Would they prohibit Darwin's investigations into the various breeds of pigeons, or object to his exposition of the way in which a multiplication of cats might be unfavourable

to the fertilisation of clover? The principle shows itself in the most trifling cases; once established there, it spreads by inevitable contagion to others; the conclusion is obvious to all men, whether tacitly insinuated or openly drawn. To suppress it you must get rid of the primitive germ. When once it has begun to spread, no political nets or traps can catch so subtle an element. It would be as idle to attempt to guard against it as to say that small-pox may rage as it pleases everywhere else, but you will keep it out of Pall Mall by a cordon of policemen to stop people with an actual eruption. The philosophy of a people is the central core of thought, which is affected by every change taking place on the remotest confines of the organism. It is sensitive to every change in every department of inquiry. Every new principle discovered anywhere has to find its place in the central truths; and unless you are prepared to superintend, and therefore to stifle, thought in general, you may as well let it alone altogether. Superintendence means stifling. That is not the less true, even if the doctrine suppressed be erroneous. Assuming that Darwinianism is wrong, or as far as you please from being absolutely true, yet its spread proves conclusively that it represents a necessary stage of progress. We may have to pass beyond it; but in any case we have to pass through it. It represents that attitude of mind and method of combining observations which is required under existing conditions

It may enable us to rise to a point from which we shall see its inadequacy. But even its antagonists admit the necessity of working provisionally, at least, from this assumption, and seeing what can be made of it; and would admit, therefore, that a forcible suppression, if so wild an hypothesis can be entertained, would be equivalent to the suppression, not of this or that theory, but of all mental activity.

The conclusion is, briefly, that, so far as scientific opinion is concerned, you have to choose between tolerating error and suppressing all intellectual activity. If this be admitted in the case of what we call 'scientific' knowledge, the dilemma presents itself everywhere. We are becoming daily more fully aware of the unity of knowledge; of the impossibility of preserving, isolating, and impounding particular bits of truth, or protecting orthodoxy by the most elaborate quarantine. It is idle to speak of a separation between the spheres of science and theology, as though the contents of the two were entirely separate. There is, doubtless, much misconception as to the nature of the relation; false inferences are frequently made by hasty thinkers; but the difference, whatever it may be, is not such as divides two independent series of observations, but such that every important change in one region has a necessary and immediate reaction on the other. If we accept the principle of evolution—whether we take the Darwinian version or any other as our guide—as applied to the history of

human belief, we more and more realise the undeniable facts that the history must be considered as a whole; that the evolution, however it takes place, has to follow certain lines defined by the successive stages of intellectual development; that it consists of a series of gradual approximations, each involving positive errors, or at least provisional assumptions accepted for the moment as definitive truths; and that every widely-spread belief, whether accurate or erroneous, has its place in the process, as representing at least the illusions which necessarily present themselves to minds at a given point of the ascending scale. The whole process may be, and, of course, frequently has been, arrested. But, if it is to take place at all, it is impossible to proscribe particular conclusions beforehand. The conclusions forbidden may, of course, be such as would never have been reached, even if not forbidden. In that case the persecution would be useless. But if they are such as would commend themselves to masses of men but for the prohibition, it follows that they are necessary 'moments' in the evolution of thought, and therefore can only be suppressed by suppressing that evolution.

The vagueness of the argument stated in these general terms is no bar to its value in considering more special cases. It suggests, in the first place, an extension of one of Mill's arguments, which has been most frequently criticised. He tries to prove

this advantage of persecution by a rather exaggerated estimate of the value of contradiction. 'Even admitted truths,' he says, 'are apt to lose their interest for us unless stimulated by collision with the contradictory error.' It is, of course, obvious to reply that we believe in Euclid or in the ordinary principles of conduct, though nobody ever denies that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third, or doubts that murder is objectionable. An opinion, I should say, gains vividness rather from constant application to conduct than from habitual opposition. But, so far as Mill's argument has to do with toleration, it seems to be cogent, and to derive its strength from the principle I am defending. Many opinions, if left alone, would doubtless die out by inherent weakness. It would be idle to punish men for maintaining that two and two make five, because the opinion would never survive a practical application. The prohibition of a palpably absurd theory would be a waste of force, and might possibly suggest to a few eccentric people that there must, after all, be something to say for the absurdity, and therefore, if for no other reason, it is undesirable. But it was, of course, not of such opinions that Mill was thinking. The only opinions which anyone would seriously desire to suppress are plausible opinions--opinions, that is, which would flourish but for persecution ; and every persecutor justifies himself by showing, to his own satisfaction, that his intervention is needed. He

rejects the argument by which Gamaliel defended the first plea for toleration. He holds that opinions, though coming from God, require human defence. He thinks that even the devil's creed would flourish were it not for the stake. That is to say, persecution is always defended, and can only be defended, on the ground that the persecuted opinion is highly plausible, and the same plausibility of an opinion is a strong presumption that it is an essential part of the whole evolution. Even if it be wrong, it must represent the way in which a large number of people will think, if they think at all. It corresponds to one aspect, though an incomplete or illusory aspect, of the facts. If erroneous, there must be some general cause of the error; a cause which, in the supposed case, must be the prevalence of some erroneous or imperfect belief in the minds of many people. The predisposing cause will presumably remain, even if this expression of opinion be silenced. And, in all such cases, the effect of suppression will be prejudicial to the vigour even of the true belief. The causes, whatever they be, which obstruct its acceptance will operate in a covert form. Real examination becomes impossible when the side which is not convicted is not allowed to have its reasons for doubt tested; and we reach the dilemma just stated. That is to say, if thought is not suppressed, the error will find its way to the surface through some subterranean channels; whilst, if thought is suppressed, the truth and all speculative

truth ,will of course be enfeebled with the general enfeeblement of the intellect. To remedy a morbid growth you have applied a ligature which can only succeed by arresting circulation and bringing on the mortification of the limb. To treat intellectual error in this fashion must always be to fall into the practice of quackery, and suppress a symptom instead of attacking the source of the evil.

The assertion is, apparently, at least, opposed to another doctrine in which Mill agrees with some of his antagonists. He says, as we have seen, that a belief in the natural prevalence of truth is a piece of idle sentimentality; it is a 'pleasant falsehood' to say that truth always triumphs; 'history teems with instances of successful persecution'; and he confirms this by such cases as the failure of the Reformers in Spain, Italy, and Flanders, and of the various attempts which preceded Luther's successful revolt. Arguments beginning 'all history shows' are always sophistical. The most superficial knowledge is sufficient to show that, in this case at least, the conclusion is not demonstrated. To prove that persecution 'succeeded' in suppressing truth, you must prove that without persecution truth would have prevailed. The argument from the Reformation must surely in Mill be an *argumentum ad hominem*. He did not hold that Luther, or Knox, or the Lollards preached the whole truth; hardly, even, that they were nearer the truth than Ignatius Loyola or St. Bernard. And the point is

important. For when it is said that the Reformation was suppressed in Italy and Spain by persecution, we ask at once whether there is the slightest reason to suppose that, if those countries had been as free as England at the present day, they would have become Protestant? Protestantism had its day of vitality, and in some places it is still vigorous; but with all the liberty of conscience of modern Italy, the most enthusiastic Protestant scarcely expects its conversion before the millennium. If, when there is a fair field and no favour, Protestantism stands still, why should we suppose that it would have advanced if it had always been free? Many writers have insisted upon the singular arrest of the Protestant impulse. The boundaries between Protestantism and Catholicism are still drawn upon the lines fixed by the first great convulsion. It is at least as plausible to attribute this to the internal decay of Protestantism as to the external barriers raised by persecution. In the seventeenth century philosophical intellects had already passed beyond the temporary compromise which satisfied Luther and his contemporaries. Protestantism, so far as it meant a speculative movement, was not the name of a single principle or a coherent system of opinion, but of a mass of inconsistent theories approximating more or less consciously to pure deism or 'naturalism.' Victories over Romanism were not really won by the creed of Calvin and Knox, but by the doctrines of Hobbes and

Spinoza. Otherwise we may well believe the Protestant creed would have spread more rapidly, instead of ceasing to spread at all precisely when persecution became less vigorous. When we look more closely at the facts, the assumption really made shows its true nature. Persecution might strike down any nascent Protestantism in Spain; but it can hardly be said that it created the very zeal which it manifested. If no persecution had been possible, the enthusiasm of Loyola and his successors might (even if I may not say would) have burnt all the more brightly. And if the orthodox had been forbidden to strike a foul blow, they might have been equally successful when confined to legitimate methods. The reasoning, in fact, is simple. Protestantism died out when persecution flourished. But persecution flourished when zeal was intense. The assumption that the extinction of heresy was due to the persecution is not required to account for the fact that it did not spread in the regions where faith was strongest. In any case, if we assume, as we must assume, that the old faith was congenial to a vast number of minds, we might be sure that it would triumph where it had the most numerous and zealous followers. Under the conditions of the times, that triumph of course implied persecution; but it is an inversion of logic to put this collateral effect as the cause of the very state of mind which alone could make it possible. So, again, Protestantism died out in France (which Mill does

not mention) and survived in England; and in England, says Mill, the death of Elizabeth or the life of Mary would 'most likely' have caused its extirpation. Possibly, for it is difficult to argue 'might have beens.' But it is equally possible that the English indifference which made the country pliable in the hands of its rulers would have prevented any effective persecution, and the ineffectual persecution have led only to a more thoroughgoing revolution when the Puritan party had accumulated a greater stock of grievances. If, again, Protestantism had been really congenial to the French people, is it not at least probable that it would have gathered sufficient strength in the seventeenth century —whatever the disadvantages under which it actually laboured—to make a subsequent revival of vigorous persecution impossible? One ultimate condition of success lay, partly, at any rate, in the complex conditions, other than the direct action of rulers, which predisposed one society to the Catholic and others to the Protestant doctrine; and if we are not entitled to assume that this was the sole ultimate and determining condition of the final division, we are certainly not entitled to seek for it in the persecution which is in any land a product of a spiritual force capable of acting in countless other ways.

Once more we come across that 'happy thought' doctrine which was natural to the old method of writing history. Catholics were once content to trace the English Reformation to the wickeness of

Henry VIII. or Elizabeth ; Protestants, to the sudden inspiration of this or that Reformer. Without attempting to argue the general question of the importance of great religious leaders, this at least is evident: that the appropriate medium is as necessary as the immediate stimulus. There were bad men before Henry VIII., and daring thinkers and Reformers before Luther. The Church could resist plunder or reform whilst it possessed sufficient vital force ; and the ultimate condition of that force was that its creeds and its worship satisfied the strongest religious aspirations of mankind. Luther at an earlier period would have been a St. Bernard. Its weakness and the success of assailants, good or bad, were due, as no one will now deny, to the morbid condition into which it had fallen, from causes which could only be fully set forth by the profoundest and most painstaking investigation. If this be granted, it follows that Protestantism, whether a wholesome or a pernicious movement, meant the operation of certain widely-spread and deeply-seated causes rendering some catastrophe inevitable. To apply an effective remedy it would have been necessary to remove the causes, to restore the old institutions in working order, and to renew the vitality of the faiths upon which its vigour essentially depended. So far as the opponents of reform relied upon persecution, they were driving the disease inwards instead of applying an effectual remedy. Such observations—too commonplace to be

worth more than a brief indication— must be indicated in order to justify the obvious limitations to Mill's estimate of the efficacy of persecution. In the first place, it is not proved that it was properly 'efficacious' at all; that is, that the limits of the creeds would not have been approximately the same had no persecution been allowed. Secondly, if efficacious, it was efficacious at a cost at which the immediate suffering of the martyrs is an absurdly inadequate measure. In Spain, Protestantism was stamped out, when it might have died a natural death, at the price of general intellectual atrophy. Had the persecutors known that the system from which persecution resulted was also a system under which their country would decline from the highest to the most insignificant position, their zeal might have been cooled. In France, again, if Protestantism was ultimately suppressed by the State, Catholics of to-day may reckon the cost. Thought, being (upon that hypothesis) forced into a different mode of expressing dissent, has not only brought about the triumph of unbelief, but the production of a type of infidelity not only speculatively hostile to Catholicism, but animated by a bitter hatred which even the most anti-Catholic of reasoners may regret. I am unable to decide the problem whether it is worth while to save a few souls at the moment with the result of ultimately driving a whole nation to perdition; but it is one which even those who rely upon the hell-fire argu-

ment may consider worth notice. And if in England we have escaped some of these mischiefs, we may ask how much good we have done by an ineffectual persecution of Catholics in Ireland—a point upon which it is needless to insist, because everyone admits the folly of ineffectual persecution.

The facts, so considered, seem to fit best with the doctrine which I am advocating. Persecution may be effective at the cost of strangling all intellectual advance; it may be successful for a time in enforcing hypocrisy, or, in other words, taking the surest means of producing a dry-rot of the system defended; or, finally, it may be ineffectual in securing its avowed object, but singularly efficacious in producing bitter antipathy and accumulating undying ill-will between hostile sections of society. When, therefore, the argument is stated as though all the evils to be put in the balance against persecution were the pain of the immediate sufferers and the terror of sympathisers, I should say that the merest outside of the case has really been touched. One other consideration is enough for this part of the question. Persecution may discourage unbelief, but it cannot be maintained that it has the least direct tendency to increase belief. Positively it must fail, whatever it may do negatively. The decay of a religion means a decline of 'vital faith'—of a vivid realisation of the formulæ verbally accepted. That is the true danger in the eyes of believers; and, if it be widely spread, no burning of

heretics can tend to diminish it. People do not believe more vigorously because believers in a different creed are burnt. They only become more cowardly in all their opinions; and some other remedy of a totally different nature can alone be efficacious. You can prevent people from worshipping another God, but you cannot make them more zealous about their own. And perhaps a lukewarm believer is more likely to be damned, certainly he is not less likely to be mischievous, than a vigorous heretic.

To complete the argument, however, or rather the outline of the argument, it would be necessary to follow out another set of considerations. Granting that you can suppress your heresy by persecution enough, we have to ask how you can get persecution enough. Persecution which does not suppress is a folly as well as a crime. To irritate without injuring is mischievous upon all hypotheses. In that case, if not in others, even cynics allow that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. The danger of advertising your opponent is pretty well understood by this time, and popular riots suppressed by the police are the very thing desirable for the Salvation Army. It is agreed, then, that the weapon is one to be used solely on condition that it is applied with sufficient stringency. Now, if we ask further how this is to be obtained, and especially if we ask that question in the light of the preceding inquiry, we

shall arrive at a conclusion difficult to state in adequate terms. It may be possible to stamp out what we may call a particular opinion. The experiment, at least, has often been tried, though I do not know that it has often succeeded. When it was criminal to speak of a king's vices, the opinion entertained about particular kings was hardly more flattering—though flatterers alone could speak openly—than it is now. But to suppress so vague and penetrating a thing as a new religious opinion is a very different and a very serious matter. The change may not be the less efficacious because it is not overt. Nothing, for example, could be easier than to advocate the most infidel opinions in the language of perfect orthodoxy. The belief in God is generally taken to be a cardinal article of faith. But the words may be made to cover any state of mind. Spinoza and Hobbes both professed to believe in a God who, to their opponents, was no God at all. The quaint identification of 'deist' with 'atheist,' by orthodox writers, is an illustration of the possible divergence of meaning under unity of phrase. One set of theologians hold to the conception of a Being who will help a pious leader to win a battle if a proper request be made. Another set, equally sincere and devout, regard any such doctrine as presumptuous and profane. Briefly, what is common to all who use the word, is a substance known only by attributes which are susceptible of indefinite variation. And

what is true of this is true of all articles of faith. I will be a believer in any theological dogma to-morrow, if you will agree that I shall define the words precisely as I please; nor do I think that I should often have to strain them beyond very respectable precedents in order to cover downright positivism. How is this difficulty to be met? How is a nominal belief in Christianity to be guarded from melting away without any change of phraseology into some vague pantheism or agnosticism, or, in the other direction, to a degrading anthropomorphism? A mere chain of words is too easily borne to be cared for by anybody. You may crush a downright Tom Paine; but how are you to restrain your wily latitudinarian, who will swallow any formula as if he liked it? Obviously, the only reply can be that you must give discretionary powers to your Inquisition. It must be empowered to judge of tendencies as well as of definite opinions; to cross-examine the freethinker, and bring his heresy to open light; to fashion new tests when the old ones break down, and to resist the very first approaches of the insidious enemy who would rationalise and extenuate. And, further, as I have said, the same authority must lay his grasp, not only on theologians and philosophers, but upon every department of thought by which they are influenced; that is to say, upon speculation in general. Without this, the substance may all slip away, and leave you with nothing but an empty shell of merely formal assertion. The task is

of course, practicable in proportion to the rarity of intellectual activity. In ages when speculation was only possible for a rare philosopher here and there, it might be easy to make the place too hot to hold him, even if he escaped open collision with authority. But in any social state approaching at all to the present, the magnitude of the task is obvious beyond all need of explanation.

This suggests a final conclusion. No serious politician assumes offhand that a law will execute itself. It may be true that drunkenness and heresy would expire together if every drunkard and heretic could be hanged. But before proposing a law founded upon that opinion, the legislator has to ask, not only whether it would be effective if applied, but whether it could be applied. What are the conditions of efficiency of law itself? Opponents of toleration seem to pass over this as irrelevant. If heretics were always burnt, heresy would die out. Suppose that granted, how does it apply? The question as to the possibility of carrying out a law is as important as any other question about it. The Legislature is omnipotent in the sense that whatever it declares to be a law is a law, for that is the meaning of a law; but it is as far as possible from omnipotence in the sense of being able to impose any rule in practice. For anything to be effective persecution you require your Inquisition—a body endowed with such authority as to be able not merely to proscribe a given dogma,

but all the various disguises which it may assume; and to suppress the very germs of the doctrines by which the whole of a creed may be sapped without ostensible assaults upon its specific statements; to silence, not only the conscious heretic, but the more dangerous reasoner who is unintentionally furthering heretical opinions; to extend its dominion over the whole field of intellectual activity, and so stamp out, not this or that objectionable statement, but those changes in the very constituent principles of reasoning, which, if they occur, bring with them the necessity of correlative changes in particular opinions, and which can only be hindered from occurring by arresting the development of thought itself. When faith in the supernatural is decaying, it is idle to enforce internal homage to this or that idol. The special symptom is the result of a constitutional change which such measures have no tendency to remedy. How, then, is an administrative machinery equal to such purposes to be contrived, or the necessary force supplied for its effective working? Obviously it implies such an all-embracing and penetrating despotism as can hardly be paralleled in history; a blind spirit of loyalty which will accept and carry out the decisions of the political rulers, and that in the face of the various influences which, by the hypothesis, are bringing about an intellectual change, and presumably affecting the rulers as well as their subjects. And even so much can only be

reached by limiting or asphyxiating the intellectual progress, with all which it implies. The argument, it must be added, applies to the case of erroneous, as well as of sound, opinions. That is to say, it is in all cases idle to attack the error unless you can remove the predisposing cause. I may hold, as in fact I do hold, that what is called the religious reaction of recent times involves the growth of many fallacies, and that it is far more superficial than is generally asserted. But, whatever its origin, it has its causes. So far as they are not to be found in the purely intellectual sphere, they must be sought in social conditions, or in the existence of certain emotional needs not yet provided for by the newer philosophy. To try to suppress such movements forcibly—if any such enterprise could be seriously proposed—would be idiotic. However strong our conviction of intellectual error, we must be content to have error as long as we have fools. For folly, education in the widest sense is the sole, though singularly imperfect, remedy ; and education in that sense means the stimulation of all kinds of intellectual energy. The other causes can only be removed by thorough social reforms, and the fuller elaboration of a satisfactory philosophy. Persecution, were such a thing really conceivable, could at most drive the mischief to take other forms, and would remove one of the most potent stimulants to the more satisfactory variety of regenerating activity.

My reply, then, to the question, Why do you not extirpate poisonous opinions by force? is, briefly, the old one—Because I object to quack remedies: to remedies, in this case, which can at most secure a negative result at the cost of arresting the patient's growth. When I come to the strictly ethical problem, Is persecution wicked? and, if so, why? I must answer rather more fully. All that I have said is a simple expansion of familiar and obvious arguments. Not only must Mill, whom I have criticised in particular points, have recognised all the alleged evils in a general way, but I am certain that others less favourable to toleration would admit them in any given case. If, that is, a systematic attack upon any opinion, or upon general freedom of thought, were proposed, everyone would admit the futility of a partial persecution, and the impossibility of an effectual one. It is only the form into which the general argument is cast that perplexes the general theory. It is so plain that a special utterance may be stopped by a sufficient penalty; and, again, it seems so easy to assume that a dogma is a kind of entity with a particular and definable set of consequences adhering to it, that reasoners overlook the unreality which intrudes in the course of their generalisations. They neglect what, according to me, is an essential part of the case—all the secondary implications, that is, of an effectual persecution; the necessity of arresting a mental phase as well as a particular error, and of altering the whole

political and social organisation in order to provide an effectual censorship. If these necessities are more or less recognised, they are thrust out of the argument by a simple device. The impossibility of organising an effectual persecution now is admitted; but then it is said that this is a proof of modern effeminacy—sentimentalism, or anarchy, or some other objectionable peculiarity. This is virtually to say that, though toleration must be admitted as a transitional phase, it implies a weakness, not strength, and, in brief, that the advocate of persecution would prefer a totally different social state—namely, such a one as combines all the requisites for an adequate regulation of opinion. Persecution is wrong, here and now, for you and me, because our teeth are drawn, and we can only mumble without biting; but we will hope that our teeth may grow again. The admission, in whatever terms it may be made, is perhaps enough for us. Virtually it is an admission that persecution cannot be justified unless certain conditions are realised which are not now realisable; and this admission is not less important because made in terms calculated to extenuate the importance and the permanence of these conditions. From my point of view, on the other hand, the circumstances thus treated as removable and trifling accidents are really of the very essence of the case, and it is only by taking them into account that we can give a satisfactory theory of toleration. Toleration presupposes a certain

stage of development, moral and intellectual. In the ruder social order, toleration is out of the question for familiar reasons. The rudimentary Church and State are so identified that the kingly power has the spiritual sanctity, and the priest can wield the secular arm. Heresy is a kind of rebellion, and the gods cannot be renounced without an attack upon political authority. Intellectual activity is confined to a small class, and opinions change by an imperceptible and unconscious process. Wherever such a condition is actually in existence, controversy can only be carried on by the sword. A change of faith is not caused by argument, but is part of the process by which a more powerful race conquers or extirpates its neighbours. The higher belief has a better chance, perhaps, so far as it is characteristic of a superior race, but owes little to its logical or philosophical merits. And, in such a state of things, toleration is hardly to be called a virtue, because it is an impossibility. If the equilibrium between sects, as between races, depends upon the sword, the propagator or the defender of the faith must use the sword as the essential condition of his success. If individuals perceive that toleration is desirable, they perceive also that it can only be achieved through an elevation of the whole race to a higher social condition. It remains as an unattainable ideal, dimly foreshadowed in some higher minds.

In the more advanced stage, with which we have to do, the state of things is altered. Church and

State are no longer identified; a society has a political apparatus discharging one set of functions, and an ecclesiastical apparatus (or more than one) which discharges another set. Some such distinction exists as a plain matter of fact. There remains, indeed, the perplexed controversy as to its ultimate nature, and the degree in which it can be maintained. The priest is a different person from the ruler, and each individual is governed in part of his conduct by a reference to the political order, and in other parts by a reference to the spiritual order. On the other hand, it is urged, and, indeed, it is undeniable, that the distinction is not a complete separation. Every spiritual rule has its secular aspect, and every secular rule its spiritual. Each power has an influence over the whole sphere of conduct, and it is idle to draw a line between theory and practice, inasmuch as all theory affects practice, and all practice is based upon theory. How are the conflicting claims of two powers to be reconciled, when each affects the whole sphere of thought and conduct, without making one absolutely dependent upon the other?

This opens a wide field of controversy, upon which I must touch only so far as the doctrine of toleration is concerned. How are we to reconcile any such doctrine with the admission that the State must enforce certain kinds of conduct, that it must decide (unless it is to be absolutely dependent upon the Church, or, in other words, unless the Church is itself

a State) what kinds of conduct it will enforce; and, therefore, that it may have to forbid practices commended by the Church, or to punish men, indirectly at least, for religious opinions—that is, to persecute? We may argue about the expediency in particular cases; but how can we lay down a general principle?

The existence of any society whatever clearly presupposes an agreement to obey certain elementary rules, and therefore the existence of a certain desire for order and respect for constituted authority. Every society also contains anti-social elements, and must impose penalties upon anti-social conduct. It can, of course, deal with a small part only of such conduct. It can punish murder, but not ill-will. And, further, though it cannot punish all immorality, it may punish no conduct which is not immoral. The criminal law covers only a part of the field of the moral law, but may nowhere extend beyond it. The efficacy, again, of all State action depends upon the existence of the organic instincts which have been evolved in its growth. Churches, like all other forms of association, depend upon the existence of similar instincts or sentiments, some of which are identical with those upon which the State is also founded, whilst others are not directly related to any particular form of political organisation. Many different Churches may arise, corresponding to differences of belief upon questions of the highest importance, of which the members may yet be capable of uniting for

political purposes, and of membership of the same State. Agnostics, Protestants, and Catholics may agree to hang murderers and enforce contracts, though they go to different Churches, and some of them to no Church at all; or hold the most contradictory opinions about the universe at large. The possibility, within some undefined limits, is proved by experience; but can we define the limits or deny the contrary possibility? May not a Church be so constituted that membership is inconsistent with membership of the State? If a creed says 'Steal,' must not its adherents go to prison? If so, and if the State be the sole judge on such points, do we not come back to persecution?

I reply, first, that the difficulty is in one way exaggerated, and in a way which greatly affects the argument. Respect, for example, for human life or for property represents different manifestations of that essential instinct which is essential to all social development. Unless murderers and thieves were condemned and punished, there could be no society, but only a barbarous chaos. These are fundamental points which are and must be settled before the problem of toleration can even be raised. The ethical sentiment which condemns such crimes must exist in order that priests and policemen may exist. It is not a product, but a precedent condition, of their activity. The remark is needed because it is opposed to a common set of theories and phrases. Theologians of

one class are given to assert that morality is the creation of a certain set of dogmas which have somehow dropped out of the skies. The prejudice against theft, for example, is due to the belief, itself due to revelation—that is, to a communication from without —that thieves will have their portion in the lake of fire. So long as this theory, or one derived from it, holds its ground, we are liable to the assumption that all morality is dependent upon specific beliefs about facts of which we may or may not be ignorant, and has, therefore, something essentially arbitrary about it. It is a natural consequence that religion may change in such a way as to involve a reversal of the moral law, and therefore a total incompatibility between the demands of the religion and the most essential conditions of social life. I hold that this represents a complete inversion of cause and effect; that morality springs simply from the felt need of human beings living in society; that religious beliefs spring from and reflect the prevalent moral sentiment instead of producing it as an independent cause; that a belief that murderers will be damned is the effect, and not the cause, of our objection to murder. There is, doubtless, an intimate connection between the two beliefs. In the intellectual stage at which hell seems a reasonable hypothesis, we cannot express our objection to murder without speaking in terms of hell-fire. But the hell is created by that objection when present to minds at a certain stage; and not a doctrine com-

municated from without and generating the objection. From this it follows that the religious belief which springs from the moral sentiments (amongst other conditions) cannot, as a rule, be in conflict with them, or with the corollaries deduced from them by the legislator. In other words, agreement between the State and the Church as to a very wide sphere of conduct must be the rule, because the sentiment upon which their vitality depends springs from a common root, and depends upon general conditions, independent of speical beliefs and forms of government. In spite of these considerations, the difficulty may undoubtedly occur. A religion may command criminal practices, and even practices inconsistent with the very existence of the society. Nihilists and Communists may order men to steal or slay. Are they to be permitted to attack the State because they attack it in the name of religion? The answer, of course, is plain. Criminals must be punished, whatever their principle. The fact that a god commands an action does not make it moral. There are very immoral gods going about, whose followers must be punished for obeying their orders. Belief in his gods is no excuse for the criminal. It only shows that his moral ideas are confused. If the god has no better principles than a receiver of stolen goods, his authority gives no better justification for the act. The punishment does not violate the principle that none but immoral acts should be punished, unless we

regard morality as a mere name for actions commanded by invisible beings. Nor, leaving this for the moment, is this properly a case of persecution. Toleration implies that a man is to be allowed to profess and maintain any principles that he pleases; not that he should be allowed in all cases to act upon his principles, especially to act upon them to the injury of others. No limitation whatever need be put upon this principle in the case supposed. I, for one, am fully prepared to listen to any arguments for the propriety of theft or murder, or, if it be possible, of immorality in the abstract. No doctrine, however well established, should be protected from discussion. The reasons have been already assigned. If, as a matter of fact, any appreciable number of persons is inclined to advocate murder on principle, I should wish them to state their opinions openly and fearlessly, because I should think that the shortest way of exploding the principle and of ascertaining the true causes of such a perversion of moral sentiment. Such a state of things implies the existence of evils which cannot be really cured till their cause is known, and the shortest way to discover the cause is to give a hearing to the alleged reasons. Of course, this may lead to very difficult points of casuistry. We cannot always draw the line between theory and practice. An attack upon the evils of landed property delivered in a certain place and time may mean—shoot this particular landlord. In all such cases, it

can only be said that the issue is one of fact. It is most desirable that the principles upon which property in land can be defended should be thoroughly discussed. It is most undesirable that any landlord should be assassinated. Whether a particular speech is really a part of the general discussion, or an act in furtherance of a murderous conspiracy, is a question to be decided by the evidence in the case. Sometimes it may be almost impossible to draw the line; I only urge that it should be drawn in conformity with the general rule. The propriety of every law should be arguable; but whilst it is the law, it must be enforced.

This brings us to a further difficulty. Who, it is asked, is to decide these cases? The State is to punish acts which are inconsistent with its existence or immoral. But if the State is to decide, its decision is ultimate; and it may decide, for example, as Cromwell decided, that the Mass was an immoral ceremony, and therefore as much to be suppressed as an act of theft. Simply to traverse the statement of fact would be insufficient. If we merely deny the immorality of the Mass, we say that Cromwell was mistaken in his facts, not that his conduct was immoral in itself. He was mistaken, as he would have been mistaken had he supposed that the congregation was collected to begin a political rising, when it simply came together for a religious ceremonial. The objection (if we may fairly judge

Cromwell by a modern standard, which need not be here considered) is obviously different. It assumes that the suppression of the Mass was an act done in restraint of opinion. Nobody alleged that the Mass had any other ill-consequences than its tendency to encourage the spread of a religion. A simple act of idolatry is not of itself injurious to my neighbour. I am not injured because you, being a fool, do an act of folly which is nothing but an open avowal of your folly. The intention of the persecutor was to restrain the spread of an opinion by terror ; and just so far as that was the intention it was an act of intolerance. It is easy to put different cases. If, for example, a creed commanded human sacrifices, it might be right to suppress an anti-social practice. The murder would not be justified because of the invisible accomplice, though he were called a god. The action should therefore be punished, though we ought not to punish the promulgation of an argument in favour of the practice, nor to punish other harmless practices dictated by the same creed. But in the case of the Mass the conduct would be admittedly harmless in every other respect than in its supposed effect upon opinion. The bare act of eating a wafer with certain ceremonies only became punishable because the actor attached to it, and encouraged others to attach to it, a particular religious significance. Restraint of opinion, or of its free utterance, by terror is the essence of persecution, and all conduct intended to achieve that

purpose is immoral. The principle is entirely consistent with the admission that a legislator must decide for himself whether or not that is the real tendency of his legislation. There is no appeal from the Legislature, and therefore it must decide in the last resort. But it does not follow that a court from which there is no appeal follows no rules in fact, nor that all its decisions are morally right. In laying down such a principle, or any other first principle, we are not proposing a rule which can be enforced by any external authority. It belongs to a sphere which is antecedent to all legislation. We say simply that a legislator will accept it so far as he legislates upon sound principles. Nor is it asserted that the principle is always free from ambiguity in its applications. Granting that persecution is wrong, it may still be a fair question whether this or that law implies persecution. There may be irreconcilable differences of opinion. The legislator may declare that a particular kind of conduct is immoral, or, in other words, that the practice is irreconcilable with the essential conditions of social welfare. The priest may assert that it is commanded by his deity, and, moreover, that it is really moral in the same sense in which the legislator declares it to be immoral. Who is to decide? The principle of toleration does not of itself answer that question. It only lays down certain conditions for conducting the argument. It decides that the immorality must consist in something else than the

evil tendency of any general doctrine. A man must not be punished for openly avowing any principles whatever. Any defence of the proposed rule is irrelevant unless it contains an allegation that the punishment is inflicted for something else than a defence of opinion. And, further, if agreement be still impossible, the principle does not say who is to give the decision; it only lays down a condition as to the mode of obtaining the decision. In the last resort, we may say, the question must be fought out, but it must be fought out with fair weapons. The statesman, so long as he is seriously convinced, must uphold the law, but he must allow its policy and justice to be freely discussed. No statement can be made as to the result. The statesman appeals directly to one class of motives; the priest to others, not identical, though not disparate. The ultimate success of one or the other will depend upon the constitution of the society, and the strength of all the various forces by which authority is supported and balanced. Toleration only orders fair play, and implies the existence of conditions necessary for securing a possibility of ultimate agreement. The relevant issues are defined, though the question of fact remains for discussion. Even where brute force has the most unrestricted play, and rule is most decidedly based upon sheer terror, all power ultimately rests upon the beliefs and sentiments of the society. The advantage of toleration is to exclude that kind of coercion which

tries to restrain opinion by sheer terror, and therefore by considerations plainly irrelevant to the truth of the opinions.

II.—Growth of Beliefs

I have thus argued that all legal restraint of opinion is wrong; and wrong because it tends to enervate the vital principle of intellectual development. In doing so, I have partly indicated the method in which I should attempt to approach a more general problem: How, in point of fact, are opinions constructed? When we try to form a clear conception of social dynamics, we are naturally led to ask what is the true theory of the intellectual factor. We possess philosophies of history and religion in abundance; and I think that it is generally impossible to read them without a strange sense of unreality. They may show infinite ingenuity and great plausibility, but they become unsatisfactory when we try to translate them into facts, and bring them face to face with history. When we try to give a theory of history, we are naturally tempted to convert history into a theory; and, therefore, to represent it as a purely logical process. The successive stages correspond to deductions from first principles; and the whole process becomes an 'evolution' in the purely logical, as distinguished from the empirical, sense; the explication of a dogma, not the

elaboration of an institution. The race, we suppose, lays down a major premiss in one century, supplies the minor in a second, and in a third draws the inference. This conception is the natural heir to the theological doctrine of a revelation. The history of a religion traces back all later developments to certain first principles which were introduced into the world from without. A Divine Being presented us with a set of axioms and definitions, and we, still, perhaps, under Divine guidance, have drawn from them a series of propositions and corollaries which constitute the orthodox system of dogma, as the deductions of Euclid constitute a system of geometry. On this showing, the revelation of the axioms, whether they announce themselves as 'innate ideas' or are injected by some miraculous process, is the starting-point of the religion. We must, of course, recur to empirical observation in order to describe the actual process of their acceptance, diffusion, and development. But we never get further back than the promulgation of the primary truths. By faith, that is, by assimilating these truths, men accept the religion, and the religion shapes all their lives, thoughts, and actions. On this showing, then, the purely intellectual factor is, if not the sole, the sole original and independent force. A history of religion is a history of the development of the primitive beliefs, or of the errors by which they have been obscured; but those beliefs themselves are an ultimate cause, and, as such, incapable of further

explanation. We have traced the river to its source, or to its first emergence in the world of fact. Even disbelievers in a particular religion often continue to make this assumption. The founder of the new creed is regarded as its ultimate creator. We trace Mahomedanism back to Mahomet, and no further. Had Mahomet died before he had written the Koran, the whole history of the world, in the accepted phrase, would have been different. To the true believer, he was the channel through which came a revelation from the outside ; to outsiders, he is still the ultimate source of the new doctrine, and of all the effects attributed to it. Without discussing these assumptions in the abstract, I will say something of the facts which, to me, seem to necessitate a reconstruction of the theory.

We have lately been led to look back to the primitive ages for the explanation of all institutions. A savage has a certain system of 'beliefs' and customs. He does not distinguish between his philosophical, his religious, his political, and his ethical beliefs ; they exist in him, so far as they exist, only in germ, and they take the form of an acceptance of certain concrete facts. He believes in the god of his tribe as he believes in the chief whom he follows, or in the enemy whom he fights. He adheres to certain customs by instinct, and it would be as idle to ask him why he observes them, as to ask him why he eats or drinks, or to ask a bird why it builds nests. An

instinct—even the instinct of an animal—is of course 'reasonable' in the sense that we can ascertain the rules according to which it acts, and explain them by the conditions of its existence. It only becomes reason, in the full sense, when reflection makes the agent himself conscious of the rule already implicitly given, and of the place which it holds in his constitution and in his system of life. But until reflection is possible, and is, to some extent, systematised, the instinct is an ultimate fact for the agent; no explanation or justification is demanded, or even conceived as possible. Such development, then, as takes place must take place, not by any conscious reasoning, but, as I have said, by natural selection. A superior creed must generally accompany higher intelligence and a better organisation of society. The religion is an indistinguishable part of the instincts which hold a tribe together and determine its efficiency. The savage does not argue with his enemy, but knocks him on the head. But the tribe which has the best brains and the most appropriate instincts will generally exterminate its antagonists. Whatever the precise relation between the primitive creed and the instincts in which it is embedded, the creed which conduces to, or which is generated by, supreme qualities will tend to prevail. The men of the flint weapons were not converted by the worshippers of Odin, but their creed, whatever it may have been, was effectually suppressed. Again, if one

savage creed contains more truth than another, we may suppose that it is so far the better. There must to every period be a certain conformity between the beliefs of a race and the facts asserted, or the race would disappear. Science, even in its germ, must approximately state facts. The lowest savage must believe that fire burns and water drowns. But this test of truthfulness is not so easily applied to the beliefs in which we find the germ of later ethics, or which animate the collective action of the tribe. The power of united action, the primitive public spirit of a tribe, must be of primary importance. But this is recognised in the savage dialect by help of grotesque hypotheses. A group of savages believes that it is descended from a mythical animal, or that the ghost of its great-grandfather looks after its common interests. The theory, taken as a statement of fact, is absurd; but, in its name, the tribe may destroy the less intelligent savages who are not drilled, even by a ghost. Such a belief indicates qualities of the highest utility; but is, one must suppose, a symptom, not a cause, of the useful qualities. It corresponds to the only way in which a truth could be dimly apprehended by the savage. It is the projection upon the imaginary world of a sentiment, not of a perception of fact. 'Union among kinsmen is useful' would be the ultimate formula, which could only present itself by the fancy: 'you and I must not kill each other, because we are connected by an imaginary Totem.'

In other words, social relations of the highest utility give rise to mythological fancies, which, as reflection awakens, are put forward as the reasons or 'sanctions' of the practices. The practice prevailed because it was useful, not because it was seen to be useful; that is, because the race which had that instinct was successful in the struggle for existence; although the perception of its utility was not even dimly present to the savage mind; and, when a justification was required, the embodiment in symbols of the belief was given as the cause of the belief itself.

How far is the case altered when we advance to comparatively civilised races? Do we ever reach a stage in which reason is substituted for instinct? In what sense is reason specifically distinct from instinct? A germ of reason is already present in instinct, and to become rational is never to suppress, but to rationalise, instinct. We still start from beliefs which are also instincts, but they are instincts which have been verified by observation. The reasoned belief is still propagated by identical methods. If the doctrine of the 'survival of the fittest' be true nowhere else, it seems certainly to be true of intellectual development. The world of thought grows by the development of countless hypotheses, among which those which are useless die out, and those which are useful, because they correspond to fruitful combinations of thought, become fixed, and serve as the nucleus of more complex constructions. We call men reasonable

so far as their beliefs are formed by some conscious logical process ; by a deliberate attempt to frame and to verify general rules as to phenomena of all kinds, and which can, therefore, be propagated by argument or persuasion as well as by the more roundabout method which depends upon the survival of the most intelligent races. When people have sat at the feet of philosophers and filled libraries with argumentative treatises pure reasoning has some influence. And yet it is still only a part, and a subordinate part, of the process by which creeds are elaborated. For, in the first place, the intellect of the millions is altogether indifferent to the logic of the dogmatists, and ignorant of the data to which the logic is applied. It must take its beliefs for granted, and is so far from asking how they are proved that it does not see that proof is required. There are two or three hundred millions of human beings in our Indian Empire, and perhaps not as many hundreds who could, in the old phrase, give a reason for their belief, except the fact that their fathers believed. There are six hundred and seventy members of Parliament, of whom we may certainly doubt whether the odd seventy have ever reasoned, or could really reason, about the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. If, again, we take the few who have some sort of reasoned persuasion, we know as a fact that a man generally accepts Catholicism or Protestantism much as he accepts the shape of his hat, from the conditions under which he has been brought

up ; that even if he reasons, he generally seeks for reasons to support his creed, instead of finding a creed to suit his reason ; and that, in any case, he necessarily starts with an established set of opinions, which he may gradually modify, but which, even in the keenest and most candid minds, are still traceable as transformed, rather than replaced, in his latest convictions. And then, finally, it is clear that in any case his reason is but one factor in his total system of beliefs. His opinions are necessarily influenced by his whole character, his emotional and active, as well as by his intellectual, nature, and, moreover, by his social position. As holding a religion, he belongs to a Church. A Church is a social organisation which supposes a certain corporate spirit no more to be fully expressed by its dogmas than the patriotism of an Englishman by the beliefs which he holds about the characteristics of his nation or the peculiarities of its political constitution. The Church is invested with historical associations ; it has provided channels for our thoughts, activities, and emotions ; it supplies the intellect with ready-made beliefs, tacitly instilled in infancy ; it has established forms of worship which fascinate the imagination and provide utterance for the emotions ; it presents an ideal of life ; it has in its system of discipline a powerful machinery for regulating the passions ; and it is more or less elaborately organised with a view to discharging a variety of important social functions. The vast

majority of its members take its beliefs on trust, and, of those who examine, a large proportion only examine in order to be convinced. We may, therefore, safely assume that, although a religion supposes certain beliefs in its adherents, we have gone but a little way to explain the whole complex phenomenon when we have formulated the beliefs and stated the reasons upon which they are founded. They are, for the enormous majority, mere expressions of belief still in the stage of instinct; and so far as they imply genuine reasoning, they correspond to a modification of a previously-existing creed, slowly developed, and worked into conformity with philosophical doctrines by a gradual and often imperceptible process. A genuine historian of religion would, therefore, still have to regard the whole record as an enlarged process of natural selection. The Church and the creed thrive by reason of their adaptation to the whole of human nature and the needs of the society in which they are planted; and the purely intellectual process is merely one factor, which we may, indeed, consider apart, but which is in reality a subordinate factor in the concrete history. It must, of course, be a source of weakness if a religion includes incredible statements, or its theories represent deficient moral and social ideals. That is, the intellectual state has an influence upon the vitality of the religion, but it is through that influence, and not by an explicit reasoning process, that it really acts. We still have to deal

with a survival of the fittest, and the 'fitness' includes much besides logic.

Indeed, it is only necessary to lay stress upon this because the obvious facts seem to have been so often ignored by theories not yet quite obsolete. The Protestant writers upon the 'evidences,' for example, very properly held that they were bound to prove the propositions which they asked others to believe. But their method of reasoning showed that they not only supposed themselves capable of giving a proof, but thought that everybody else had followed the same method. They held that the Evangelists were not merely recording the beliefs of their day, but giving evidence like witnesses in a court of justice. They imagined that St. Paul had convinced himself of the truth of the Resurrection by a method of inquiry which would have passed muster in an English criminal trial. They held, therefore, that a statement of a miracle proved the fact, instead of proving the credulity of the witness. They could see the fallacy of such an argument when applied, say, to the deification of the Virgin Mary; but when the traditional view had been put in writing a little earlier, it became a 'proof' of the divinity of Christ. Therefore the whole proof of their religion and, as they often held, the proof of facts upon which even morality was dependent, came to be the truth of certain statements which really prove only the mental condition of the writers. Such a conception of a rational religion is a

curious proof of the unreality of the whole way of regarding the question. The pyramid is balanced upon its apex. The truth of Christianity, with all that it is supposed to involve, including all genuine morality, was made to rest upon the possibility of proving that certain events took place two thousand years ago. The position was indefensible, but scarcely more grotesque than the implied conception that a religion is, in fact, propagated after this fashion: that apostles go about proving things by 'evidence'; that miracles are the cause, and not the consequence, of a vast moral and social crisis; and, in brief, that any religion which wants facts to support it will have the slightest difficulty in making any evidence that is desirable for the purpose. Yet it is hardly more impossible to suppose that a religion is a product of 'evidence' in the technical, juristic sense than to suppose that it is a product of conscious philosophy. The grave humorists, indeed, who call themselves historians of philosophy seem to be at times under the impression that the development of the world has been affected by the last new feat of some great man in the art of logical hair-splitting. They imagine that the true impulse to the greatest changes of thought and character is to be sought in the metaphysical lectures which supply new puzzles for half a dozen eccentric recluses. To me, though I cannot argue the point, it seems clear that what a philosopher does—and it is quite enough—is not to

govern speculation, but to codify and bring into clearer light the principles already involved in the speculations of the more concrete sciences. But, in any case, the problem occurs how the promulgation of a philosophical doctrine, especially if it is of an intuitive or self-evident truth, comes to produce the gigantic influence attributed to a new religion. We must surely consider, not simply the doctrine, true or false, but the moral state of the recipients. Even in such a case as pure mathematics, where the progress is a simple question of reasoning, we can only account for the historical phenomenon, for the development of mathematical knowledge at certain periods, and for its absolutely stationary condition at others, by assigning the conditions which lead to a study of mathematics. But in the case of a philosophical theory this necessity is more obvious. If the truth of monotheism be self-evident, and if upon any theory it is a doctrine dependent on the simplest grounds, and resting upon arguments familiar to the earliest speculator, why should its enunciation at a particular period suddenly transform the world? A syllogism, or a 'self-evident truth,' is not a thing walking about on two legs, which suddenly catches hold of people and converts them. The more evident the truth, the more difficult to understand its efficacy at a particular conjuncture. The truth was always there, and the secret must lie in the variable, not in the constant, factor. It is a favourite view of many people

that the essence of the Christian revelation consisted in the promulgation of its ethical teaching. I, of course, have no doubt that the moral ideal implied in the Christian teaching played a great part in the growth of the new religion. But I do not think, nor would it, I suppose, be even the orthodox view, that the secret lay in the propounding of a new (so far as it was a new) thesis in ethical philosophy. On this showing, the sudden revelation of the truth that a man should love his neighbour as himself brought about the revolution. Why should people who did not love their neighbours already be so much attracted ? or, if they loved them already, why should they be startled as by a novelty ? The morality of the Sermon on the Mount has been universally admired, but it is so far from having been generally accepted, that to take it literally even now would be to adopt a position of eccentric originality ; and it may be doubted whether the whole progress of the race has not depended upon the limitation of this by other moral principles, and whether its full acceptance would not have meant a destruction of social order and welfare. But, in any case, it was not as a simple proposition in ethics, but as part of a system of teaching, that it really impressed the imagination of the new Church. The morality was one aspect of an ideal of life which, for some reason, became widely spread at that period, and has had a wide influence ever since.

What, then, was the reason ? The answer which,

I suppose, everyone would now admit in some form or other, would be, in the first place, that it was not the proof of miracles, nor the enunciation of new dogmas, but the development of that spirit which has been called the 'enthusiasm of humanity,' the widely-spread and powerful desire for a reconstruction of society and a regeneration of the individual. To the believer in supernatural interferences, this presents itself as the sudden infusion of a new spiritual force; and so far as he argues against the inadequacy of the doctrines invented by evidence writers and abstract philosophers, I should think that he has a strong case. But the conditions of such a development must, even by him, be sought in the 'environment' as well as in the new creed. We can only explain the spread of the organism by showing how and why the soil was congenial. The Christian doctrine obviously spread, as every doctrine spreads, just so far as it was adapted to men at a given stage. If, therefore, it spread through a certain section of the human race, and never spread further, the circumstances of that section must be relevant to the explanation. Nor can there be any doubt of the direction in which explanation must be sought, though there is ample room for the most elaborate researches before we can put any explanation into a definitive shape. The explanation, in fact, must include nothing less than an analysis of the vast religious, social, and political changes which were fermenting throughout the Roman Empire.

The destruction of the old national systems of government, and of the creeds with which they were bound up, the mixture and transfusion of various races and institutions, the growth of a vast population which could not find satisfaction within the old social framework, form, of course, essential data for any comprehension of the greatest revolution which ever transformed the world. Amidst the struggle for existence of various modes of thought, the Christian doctrine formed in some sense the centre round which the chaotic elements ultimately crystallised into a certain unity. No one, I presume, would undertake to say confidently how much was due in the final result to the personal character of the founders of the creed, and how much to the countless multitudes who found in it what they wanted. We cannot try experiments on such points, nor say what would have been the prevalent form of religion, had St. Paul, for example, been killed before he was converted. The tendency of scientific thinkers, I take it, will be to attribute less to the single voice which uttered the appropriate solution, and more to the millions who were ready for a solution, and were certain ultimately to find one to suit them. When the passions are roused, the man will come who sets them to a tune. Given the ferment, a crystallisation upon some point is a practical certainty. We may infer what was required for success from what ultimately succeeded. The demand was for a Kingdom of Heaven—that is, for a

new society, apart from all the rotting fabrics which had served their time; cosmopolitan instead of national, with hopes fixed upon another world, since this world appeared to be hopeless, with the assertion of a brotherhood of the suffering poor throughout the nations, and with a prophecy of a good time for the saints when their tyrants would be cast into the lake of fire. How that society was formed and grew, and was in time fused with the order against which it protested, is the greatest of themes for a philosophical historian. The scarcity of facts will give him an ample field for imaginative construction. But we, at least, are in a position, at the present time, to appreciate the general nature of the position. Looking on, daily, hopefully or doubtfully, at the growth of a new social creed, which is rejecting the outworn and assimilating the living elements of the old, we can surely not be amazed at the parallel phenomenon of the development of a new society, though at a time when possibilities of aspirations were very unlike those now existing, and the dialect which men had to use involved a very different terminology. Certainly we can be at no loss to understand why the new creed had to include an element representative of ignorance and superstition. What, then, was the influence of the purely intellectual factor in this complex revolution? We see a vast struggle of philosophies and religions, and a confused hubbub of controversy, dead long ago, and buried in the stately mausoleums of

official dogma. How did it come to pass, we ask with wonder, that men grew so heated over the famous diphthong? Even Gibbon is moved by the personal greatness of Athanasius; but the greater the man, the greater is the wonder of the historian that he should have laboured so zealously in such a cause. The orthodox may be tolerably sure that, whatever false opinions may arise, there will be no heresies in future about the relations of the Persons of the Trinity. No one will grudge them the possession of dogmas which refer to the mere exuviæ of long-extinct speculation. Yet no rational historian can now doubt that there once was really fire under all the smoke. Even the early Fathers must have meant something; and we must do them the bare justice to suppose that the subtleties in which they spent their brains were symbols of a profound and important underlying principle. Whatever the full explanation of this principle, one point seems to be sufficiently clear for our purpose.

The great theological controversies are the conflict of rival solutions of one great problem: how to reconcile philosophy to superstition. A vigorous creed has to appeal to the populace, and yet to be acceptable to the higher intellects. Stoicism might satisfy a Marcus Aurelius, but the mass required a concrete duty; not a philosophical theory of the universe, but a historical, if invisible being, capable of being definitely presented to the average imagination. There must

be an official monotheism, and yet some substitute must be found for the old polytheistic fancies. Christianity had to embody philosophical doctrines of a first cause, and yet to frame a pantheon with a hierarchy of angels, saints, and devils, which was, in fact, a simple survival of the old pagan mode of thought. It had in its own phrase to provide a God-man; to bring together into some sort of unity two conceptions so heterogeneous as that of the ground of all existence and that of a particular peasant in Galilee. One use of language is to conceal, not thought, but flat contradictions of thought. Since the conception of God corresponds to a historical development from the tribal deity to the inconceivable and infinite Being whose attributes can only be expressed by negatives, the use of the same phrase could bridge the apparently infinite distance, and bring together, verbally at least, the most contradictory opinions. If the traditional element of the creed raised difficulties, they could be evaded by the help of 'spiritualisation' and allegory; and if the philosophical element led to contradictions, they had only to be called mysteries. If, in fact, the creed covered absolutely heterogeneous philosophies, that was, for the time, its strength, and not its weakness. The religious society could thrive precisely because its formulæ represented a *modus vivendi* acceptable both to the people and their teachers. The religion was to be cosmopolitan, but not universal. It required one God for Jew and Gentile, but he was

still to be the God of a historical creed. He had to be identified historically with the national ruler of a tribe, and on the other hand with the First Principle of the universe. Monotheism may mean either belief in one particular deity, or belief in the essential unity which is independent of all particular events. The unity may be accidental or essential. That the two conceptions are logically irreconcilable matters little. People did not look so close as to care for contradictions. They must have both elements, the superstitious and the philosophical, however superficial the logical connection. A rationalism which could really trust to abstract reasoning alone, and which could really set aside all tradition, was in danger of being sublimated into a shifting phantasmagoria of mystical metaphysics. The unqualified deification of the historical Christ was therefore necessary in order to suppress the drift of philosophers into hopeless cosmogonical speculations. The Church must have for its head a conceivable Deity. The essential practical object was to set up a concrete theology which would satisfy the needs of the popular imagination. As much philosophy might be introduced as was consistent with the traditional creed; but in any case there must be a creed which would work, and any dangerous incursions into speculation must be rigidly suppressed. It is for the learned critic to tell us precisely how this was accomplished. We need not doubt for a moment that the great men who worked out the problem, starting

from the ethical side, and regarding the practical requirements of the time, were perfectly sincere in subordinating the philosophical requirements. They believed that it was not only morally right, but theoretically reasonable, to start from the traditional belief, and work in the philosophy as far as it would go. When people have learnt to distinguish between an esoteric and exoteric creed, when they hold that philosophy teaches scepticism, while morality requires dogmatism, they come face to face with an unpleasant problem, and sometimes escape from it by something disagreeably like lying. That issue was probably not so distinctly presented to the framers of the early creed. But it is no the less true that, in point of fact, reason was put in chains: forced to grind in the theological mill, and bring out the orthodox dogma, and therefore that the claims of truth were subordinated to the immediate practical necessities. Difficulties were seen—some difficulties are too palpable not to have been seen by every serious thinker; but they were judiciously skimmed over by convenient formulæ. The real deity had to be the anthropomorphic deity; and was only identified with the philosophical deity when it was convenient to confute heretics. God was the head of the celestial hierarchy; and the Devil was his adversary. Practically, the Devil ruled this lower world, and human beings had fallen under his power. Such a scheme would suit a polytheistic creed. But as God was also the God of philosophers, it was

equally declared that the evil was a mere negation or nonentity, and that the Devil, unpleasantly active as he was for the present, would be suppressed in time, and that his existence was therefore compatible with universal benevolence. It was hard to bring together the finite and the infinite, or to combine a tradition with an abstract theory. But anything can be done by words. All good impulses, it was said, come from God; press the doctrine, and we have predestination and arbitrary grace as the sole basis of morality. But man must be allowed the mysterious attribute of free-will. Since God is reason, and will help all men impartially, it would seem on this showing that one determining factor of the result depends absolutely upon ourselves. We are in presence of two really contradictory theories, but they can be forced into one by the help of judicious verbal distinctions. The whole history of theological controversies is a history of such devices, by which awkward questions could be suppressed or relegated to the time when reason would insist upon its rights. 'For God's sake, hold your tongue!' is the plain answer to impertinent inquirers.

Whether from conscious reflection or unconscious instinct, the true problem was to hit off that mixture of philosophy and superstition which was best adapted to secure the efficiency and authority of the Church. While the ecclesiastical system acquired unity and vigour, the philosophical doctrine only covered pro-

found incoherencies by a judicious manipulation of official dogma. The reasoning faculty was strictly subordinated to the needs of the evolution of the organism. The result is especially obvious in that part of the system which applies to the theory of toleration. The relations of God to the world at large, or to the soul of the individual, the theories of creation and of grace, present difficulties enough when we have to combine tradition with philosophy, the anthropomorphic with the philosophical conception of the deity. But there is also the problem of the relations of God to the Church—the great organisation whose needs determined the whole process of evolution. Does the Church mean the saints, or does it mean the visible hierarchy, which includes a good many people who are not saints? The question received different answers, and underlay some critical controversies. In the early period the two could be identified; to become a member of the Kingdom of Heaven was the same thing as to be saved, and the rite of baptism was the mark of adhesion. But when the Church became a vast institution, including men of all sorts; when a man joined it as an infant by hereditary right; when it came into relations, hostile or friendly, with the political institutions, the question became more complex. The Church retained the old claim appropriate to the early conception. To be a Christian was still to have a certain spiritual status; all outsiders were still without the privilege which admitted

to heaven, and as membership of the Church implied acceptance of certain doctrines, there grew up the theory of salvation by dogma. To be a Christian gave a certain right, without which none could be saved, but which, of course, required to be supplemented by compliance with other conditions. The subjects of the new kingdom must be obedient to its regulations. But though the Church includes both sinners and fallible men, the divine character still adhered to the Church in its corporate capacity. It could be infallible in matters of doctrine and the sole dispenser of the means of grace, that is, of the means of keeping out of hell. From the philosophical point of view, the only difference between the relations of men to a Supreme Being must depend upon their intrinsic quality. But if you believe in an anthropomorphic being, he may have special relations to a favoured race or a favoured society; he may confer a monopoly upon a particular corporation; and prescribe compliance with a special set of external regulations as a condition of his favour. From the preservation, therefore, of this anthropomorphic element there follows logically the whole system of priestly magic, and of the transcendent value of external rites and observances. The God in whom you believe is far above the god of savages; but he has to be conceived as the legislator of a particular historical system, and his authority must be represented by its regulations. It was consistent still to believe that the whole heathen

world—that is, the vast majority of the race—would be damned for not obeying rules of which they had never heard; that their virtues, since they did not come from the grace of God, which flows only in its prescribed channels, were 'splendid vices'; and that a baby born when a certain charm has been said will be saved eternally, and its brother, who has accidentally been overlooked, be eternally damned. No doubt, as Butler suggested, babies are lost or rescued in cases of physical illness by the action of their parents, and the God of Revelation may be expected to act in the same way as the God of Nature. The vital question is, what we mean by God. The word covered two opposite senses, and the difficulties which arise when the same word is applied to contradictory meanings were latent in the results. The elaborate theory of sacraments, of their nature, effects, conditions of efficacy, mode of administering, and so forth, is all perfectly intelligible and coherent if the sacraments are regarded as the regulations of a human society, intended to secure order and discipline within the corporation, and to stimulate an interest by appropriate observances. It is, on this understanding, simply a case of legislation worked out by minds imbued with theories of jurisprudence, as was natural to members of a vast organisation with an elaborate constitution. But when they are regarded as regulations emanating from a divinity, we must necessarily suppose a thoroughly anthropomorphic being, capable, like human legis-

lators, of applying only external tests, though he chooses to communicate supernatural influences by means of them ; and when their being is identified with the First Cause, or even with the ruler of all men, as well as of the members of his special society, the doctrine is in danger of becoming blasphemous. The system of legislation was no doubt intended, like the English or any other system of law, in the interests of morality. Some such system was inevitable when men were at a certain stage of development, and in the hands of well-meaning people it may still be worked, especially with the help of judicious explanations and reticences, so as to promote good habits and avoid gross shocks to a healthy conscience. Still, a God who is represented by a particular human corporation, however august, will suffer in his character. He will have, like a human legislator, to look at the outside action instead of the inmost consciousness, to be responsible for all the slips and irregularities inevitable in a human system of regulation, and to extend his favour to a class or a race on the most arbitrary and immoral principles.

To look at the problem historically is, therefore, to recognise the weakness, though not to diminish the importance, of the purely reasoning faculty. The love of abstract truth is the feeblest of all human passions. There is no passion, according to Bacon, which will not overpower the fear of death. Certainly there is none which will not suppress the love of

logical consistency. A Spinoza—a man in whom the passion for logical harmony is really dominant—is the rarest of all human types. Even the most vigorous of thinkers have found their stimulus in some practical need, and reasoning has been only the instrument for securing some end prescribed by the emotions. They have seen that the achievement of a social reform involved the refutation of some error: but if the reasoning process did not lead them to the desired end, it has generally been the logic, and not the desired conclusion, which was finally sacrificed. To the great mass of mankind a sacrifice of consistency or of rigid proof is, of course, no sacrifice at all. There is nothing, as every schoolmaster knows, which the average mind resents so much as the demand for reasons. It will gladly accept any rule, provided that it has not to answer the troublesome question, Why? Tell me how to answer: but, for heaven's sake! don't explain the reasons of the answer. We are sometimes told that men of science have to encounter the natural desire of mankind to extend the limits of knowledge. That seems to me to be an inversion of the truth. What a man naturally desires is to put a fixed stop to inquiry. To-day, says the man of science, must be explained by yesterday; and the same process must be repeated for every period to which we can push our researches. The popular instinct stops this indefinite regress by a summary hypothesis. This planet is the universe; never mind the stars. The world was created

6,000 years ago, and there is an end of it. Ask no more. The ' explanation ' turns out to be that an inconceivable being performed an inconceivable process ; but, if accepted verbally, it supplies an excuse for dropping a troublesome operation, which fatigues the imagination, though it is still demanded by the reason. We want a world limited in every direction ; we desire to lay down definite bounds to the labour of investigation ; and we make our limits by an arbitrary hypothesis. The inertness of the average mind, not its desire for knowledge, is the real obstacle ; and if it nominally asks for an infinite and the absolute, that means that it wants to put a final stop to the restless activity of the genuine inquirer.

This, of course, is pre-eminently true of that part of religious beliefs which corresponds, not to a statement of fact, but to the promulgation of laws. You must do so and so ; you must obey this or that rule of the society to which you belong. To ask why is to be not only impertinent but profane. Society depends upon the observation of certain primary rules ; and the question why they should be obeyed is, in fact, the question why they are essential to the welfare of the society, or what is the value of society itself to its members. Obviously, these are questions inconvenient in the highest degree to the society which embodies the working of the laws. The dumb sense of their necessity has embodied itself in a set of imaginary sanctions ; and the imagination has attributed them

to the supernatural agents whose existence is assumed as the ultimate groundwork of all authority; that is, as belonging to the region about which it is wicked to ask questions. The authority must be taken for granted in practice, and therefore in theory. A government cannot be carried on if the subjects are entitled to go behind the Constitution. That is a practical necessity. It is now thought almost as wicked to ask why a majority should be obeyed, as it would have been to ask why a king should be obeyed, and to ask that was once to ask why a god should be obeyed. If obedience to the moral law is interpreted as obedience to the will of a god, his authority must not be questioned in practice; for to 'question' there means to dispute; and it must not be questioned in theory, so long as no answer can possibly be given. It is taken to be part of the primary data, assumed in all social action, and therefore to be enforced by society. Nothing can be more simple, though it involves the assumption that to inquire is the same thing as to deny. It is only when we have reached the conclusion that free inquiry can be constitutive as well as destructive that we can give full play to the activity of reason, even in those sacred regions where assumptions are necessary in the sphere of conduct, and where, therefore, assumptions are made into ultimate or unquestionable truths in the sphere of speculation.

The normal attitude of the religious mind is therefore conservative. Even the founders of a new

religion profess to be restoring an ancient creed, or in some way base their authority upon the creed which already exists. They are at most getting rid of accretions, not introducing novelties. They advance from the old base. A religion, on its practical side, is a system of rules of conduct, and therefore involves an appeal to some authority which must not be disputed, even in argument. In the earlier period, it is an indistinguishable part of the political creed. It does not persecute because it only extirpates. The rival tribe has as good a claim to its god as to its chief, and its conversion can be only an incident of its conquests, or of the subjection of its deities to the hostile deities. When the creed has both philosophical and 'empirical,' or historical, elements, persecution becomes logical. The faith of a foreigner is not merely different, but wrong; his god is not another god, but a devil; for my creed, as philosophical, should be universal. But, in so far as it includes historical elements, a recognition of the sanctity of beings only known to me, and of facts of which you have never heard, I can enforce your allegiance only by the universally intelligible argument of the sword. You are a Turk, whom, perhaps, I should like to conquer for other reasons, and it must be right to prevent forcibly your allegiance to a devil. The same argument applies within the ecclesiastical society, so long as the creed includes elements which are not demonstrable by reason. If the central core depends upon mysteries, which rest

upon authority in this sense, that the individual must take them without asking questions, a recalcitrant individual can only be suppressed by force. The Church is the embodiment of the Divine element in human affairs ; its decisions must belong to the region in which all question is profane : and every attempt to go ' behind the record ' must be suppressed by every applicable means. The inquirer has shown by the very act of inquiring that, in his case, reason is not an efficient weapon, and we must therefore try what can be done by the stake.

The reason, then, is a faculty which, by the nature of the case, has to intrude itself tacitly and gradually, and under disguises. It may slowly disintegrate old opinions under cover of ambiguities and the gradual infiltration of new meanings into old words. The determining factors are evident when we consider a Church as a great society, intended to meet certain practical requirements, and not as a system of philosophy developed by abstract thinkers. It has to rule by obeying ; to adapt itself to the state of mind of the believers, to incorporate old superstitions, to make use of the imaginative construction embodied in the previous half-instinctive conceptions of the universe, to sanction whatever appeals to the crude masses of mankind, and only to consider the requirements of the more thoughtful so far as is necessary to secure their co-operation. If they will accept the official formulæ, they may be allowed, within limits, to

introduce elements really inconsistent, so long as the inconsistency is carefully hidden away. A vigorous religion is a superstition which has enslaved a philosophy. Slowly, and by soft degrees, indeed, the new leaven of thought may produce a vast revolution. If the philosopher is tolerated on condition of proving the orthodox conclusions, the admission that a proof is desirable leads to a recognition that it will not always work in the desired direction. But the reason is still bound by inexorable necessity to present itself as a development instead of a contradiction. Its successes are won only when it can point to some conclusion comprehensible by the majority. The abstract arguments against the authority of the Church will be regarded with indifference until abuses have grown up which supply a palpable *reductio ad absurdum*. The theory of indulgences might be illogical, but no one cared till they were obviously used for commercial purposes. Persecution may be wrong, but the abstract arguments were of little efficacy till the persecuted were able to fight. When, as a matter of fact, men of different creeds had to live in the same country, and to deal with each other in ordinary affairs, they came to see that the differences were not so vast as to imply that one creed came from God and the other from the Devil. The way to teach toleration is to force Protestants and Catholics to live together on terms of equality. The ordinary mind still needs some kind of picture-writing, a con-

crete instance, not a general principle. A theory confutes itself by some logical application which revolts even the instinct out of which it originally sprang. Then, and not before, it becomes evident that there must be something wrong—somewhere. When we have learnt by experience that freethinkers may be decent people, we cannot make up our minds to burn them. By degrees the moral instincts have broken through the dogmatic bondage, and forced the most dogged theologians to find means of importing liberal theories even into the heart of their formulæ. Persecution has been discredited, till even the most dogmatic disavow indignantly the principles of which they once boasted. All that remains is a survival of certain claims carefully divorced from their practical application. Although the dogmatic system renounces the aid of the secular arm, it is forced to claim the same spiritual position. It still represents the one body of truth upon which the salvation of men hereafter, and their morality and welfare in this world, are essentially dependent. Its antagonists are still instruments, though not the conscious instruments, of the Devil. So long as it claims to be a supernatural revelation, it must invert the true order of thought, and represent itself, not as one stage in a slow development, one step in an approximation, but as whole, pure, and perfect, and differing from all other doctrine, not in degree, but in kind.

Persecution clearly implies authority. Does

authority necessarily imply persecution? That question can only be answered when the vague phrase is made specific. All men have to take most of their opinions upon authority—that is, to believe because others believe; and the reason is often a very good one. In the doctrines, again, which form the substance of a religious creed, the great bulk of mankind inevitably depends upon authority—that is, they must accept the beliefs of the few who can reason. In that sense I take my astronomy and nearly all my mathematics upon authority, as well as my belief in Rome or in Julius Cæsar. I have not personally investigated the arguments in one case, or the evidence for facts in the other. Again, men's religious beliefs are, as a fact, chiefly determined by the society into which they are born, and the true history of a religion must be sought, not in an examination of the logical relations of its official creed, but in the development of the organised society which we call a Church. And, therefore again, it is sufficiently obvious that the religious belief is a development of traditions, and is impressed upon the individual by the more or less organised action of the society. The other side of the same fact is that the Church can only thrive by embodying the beliefs and satisfying the instincts of its members. It is not an arbitrary form imposed from without but simply a development and co-ordination of the various elements of the popular creed by means of the social organ. The fact, therefore, that most

people believe on authority is the explanation of the fact that most people believe so much nonsense: that every creed hitherto established includes survival of superstitions, and inadequate solutions of difficulties, and unstable combinations of heterogeneous elements of thought. A belief in the fact of authority is, therefore, really incompatible with a belief in the fact of infallible authority. When we see how creeds are formed, we see why they must be full of error and inconsistency.

But, again, the Church is developed by its practical utility: its power of satisfying certain human aspirations and imaginations. The utility of a doctrine is only indirectly related to its truth; or rather, before we can say what is the element of truth or falsehood, we have to consider the doctrine from outside: to ask, as we have done in the case of the savage tribe, whether the value of a belief in a certain deity lies in the fact that such a deity exists, or in the fact that a certain useful instinct is connected in the savage mind with the existence of the deity. Is the real pith and meaning of the belief in the direct meaning of the words, or in the utility which it indirectly ascribes to certain modes of conduct? The meaning of dogmas in a semi-civilised race is that a certain organisation is invested with sanctity, and can, therefore, secure obedience and co-operation. The Church may have been a highly useful organisation, as a counterpoise to the more brutal system of a

military aristocracy. But it does not follow that the utility depended upon the superstitious attributes, a belief in which may, in a historical sense, have been necessary to its efficiency. They may have been the mere trappings, the ceremonial outside, which could be advantageously abolished when men became more reasonable. We can be loyal to a king now without believing that kingship involves any mysterious or supernatural attributes, and we may believe that a Church was useful though the magical powers attributed to it were a mere appendage to its utility.

The authority of the Church, when the Church is regarded as a social organisation, is simply a translation into ecclesiastical of the loyal doctrine of sovereignty. The lawyer shows that every political Constitution implies the existence of a sovereign somewhere. That is to say, simply, that the condition of unity of action is the existence of some ultimate body for deciding upon the action of the whole. There must be some ultimate court of appeal, or disputes cannot be decided, as the corporate body cannot act as a unit. The unity of the Church implies an ecclesiastical, as the unity of the State implies a political, sovereign, whether the sovereign be the Pope or any other body, constituted according to certain rules. Authority, in this sense, is the antithesis of authority in the philosophical sense. The authority of a number of people, considered politically, varies with their mutual dependence. They can act more ener-

getically as each individual is subordinated to the rest. The authority, in a philosophical sense, varies as the independence. If two qualified people come to the same conclusion, its value is doubled or more than doubled. If one accepts the opinion of the other, the authority is only the authority of the first. If every member of the Royal Society told me that he had reached a scientific truth independently, I should probably believe it to be established. If each told me he accepted it because the President of the Society had declared it to be true, I should have only the authority of one man. Therefore, the closer the political union, the less the real philosophical authority. While, however, we believe in the supernatural character of a Church, and are prepared to accept miracles, we can, of course, believe in its uniting authorities of both kinds. The fact of the unity, of the antecedent resolution to agree, which is really fatal to the philosophical authority, because it proves that the unity is the result of other than philosophical considerations, may induce me to accept the creed, so long as I consider faith to be a matter of obedience instead of conviction. As politicians used to consider a Constitution to be the cause of all the supposed political virtues of a country, instead of seeing in it a product of the political qualities, so the organisation of a miraculous Church which could reveal the truth and bestow the means of salvation because it could suppress dissent and enforce conformity, was supposed

to be the source of all the instincts to which it really owed its origin.

Where such a confusion exists between the two kinds of 'authority,' the power to suppress and the capacity to know, persecution cannot be inconsistent. If I know that a certain body is the manifestation of God upon earth, and that its regulations are parts of the divine law, they may be enforced by either branch of 'authority.' And so long as the creed includes 'empirical,' or purely historical elements, persecution must be necessary. If the divine power is identified with an institution existing only within certain limits of time and place, the theory must include an arbitrary element: and such a theory cannot be propagated by pure reason. A scientific doctrine gives general, not particular, laws; a science of mechanics is true wherever there is existing and moving matter; and a science of psychology, wherever there are human beings. Doctrines of such a nature can be, therefore, taught independently of particular conditions. The scientific doctrine, as such, has not to deal with this or that bit of matter—with St. Paul's Church in London, or the Observatory at Greenwich—but with all matter; not with Paul or Cæsar, but with human beings. Therefore the arguments are as applicable at the Antipodes as in England. So the arguments for theology, so long as they are philosophical, are equally good in London or China, now or 10,000 years ago. But if your theology asserts

that a particular person who appeared at a given time and place was also God Almighty, it includes an element of which the vast majority of the race have been necessarily ignorant, and which is irrelevant to pure philosophy. In such a case, authority is at least highly convenient. You have got to believe simply because I tell you to believe; and, as belief is essential to your eternal happiness, I shall make you believe. My 'telling' shall have the force of an order, not simply of a bit of useful information. So long as such an empirical element remains, the door is open for some fragment of persecution. So long as the religion supposes a belief in facts which are not capable of establishment by reason, it has a natural affinity to support by 'authority' in the sense of coercion. The duty is allied to a particular set of institutions and events. Though persecution, in the grosser sense, has gone out of fashion, and, we may hope, for ever, the spirit is still left wherever this element remains. For if the creed is divine, its opponents are diabolical. The heretical view is taken to be —not part of the imperfect process of clumsy dialectics by which the human mind gradually works out a trustworthy creed—but an absolute denial of the truth. We are learning, in political questions, that a revolution in some sense justifies itself. It proves that the old order was defective, though it does not prove that the innovation gives the final solution. So the growth of materialism, and atheism, and agnosticism,

and other wicked doctrines, should be recognised as proving, at least, that the system of thought, which has broken down in practice, was defective in theory. But so long as opinions are regarded, not as moments in a great intellectual development, but as things injected from without, suggested by the Devil or revealed by a deity; so long, therefore, as there is something essentially arbitrary in the whole process; so long as a particular creed or Church can be regarded as monopolising the whole divine element, and only the anti-divine can be left to its opponents, there is a natural leaning to coercion of some kind, whether the bigotry can use appropriate instruments or must relieve itself by simply anathematising its opponents. The final and adequate solution can only be reached when 'authority' in matters of opinion means simply that kind of authority which is in principle also demonstration; the authority of the coincidence of independent thinkers, not of the agreement of a body to put down all dissent. In that case the superstitious, arbitrary, and temporary element might disappear, and philosophy be the ally instead of the slave of religion. But it is difficult to say how much of the old creed will have to be sacrificed before such a consummation comes within a distance measurable by the imagination.

THE RELIGION OF ALL SENSIBLE MEN

There is, we know, a religion common to all men of sense; though men of sense never say what that religion may be. There may be more reasons than one for their reticence. A man of sense is well aware that he can say what he pleases without shocking the most delicate orthodoxy. He requires no cryptographic art to hide his meaning, for plain letters are ciphers to all who are not men of sense. The average reader is frightened by the use of certain counters, not by the ideas which they symbolise for the understanding. Refrain from dotting your *i*'s and crossing your *t*'s, and your utterance will be for him an insoluble mystery. He would be shocked if you said in plain terms 'there is no God'; but it is easy to give quite an orthodox and edifying turn to the sentiment. We have all read defences of Agnosticism, which pass for assaults upon the wicked 'deist,' and elaborate expositions of downright materialism intended to support Christianity. Men of sense, I fancy, often wish to avoid scandal rather than to conceal their sentiments from their peers. They trust to a freemasonry which

exists among themselves, and presents an impenetrable barrier to the sagacity of fools. One may guess that the esoteric creed drops some articles of the orthodox faith; but the man of sense, while he has a contemptuous smile for anyone who (as M. Renan says of St. Paul) 'believes heavily,' or takes all creeds seriously, has a hearty dislike for the man who too openly discards the established tenets. Why drop a veil so easily worn? Religion is, after all, useful; and we are even bound—for the sensible man can take a high moral tone when he pleases—to invent the God who does not exist.

But how are we to be guided in these troublesome days, when rash persons have insisted upon revealing the open secret, and the esoteric creed of the sensible man has been proclaimed so that they who run may read? On the whole, the sensible man would reply: You had better hold your tongue. We, at least, who have no new gospel to preach, will not set up for prophets. Let us look on as calmly as may be at the huge turmoil of conflicting controversy; smile with equal calmness at the bigots who would damn people for losing their way in the dark; at the pompous dogmatists who would face it out that they can see as clearly as in broad daylight; at the feather-headed enthusiasts who take the first will-o'-the-wisp for a safe guide, and patch up a new religion out of scraps and tatters of half-understood science; and at the simple-minded philosophers who fancy in all seriousness that

men are about to become reasoning animals. Vanity Fair is a queer place at best; and, amid all the confused outcries that rise ceaselessly from its noisy inhabitants, the screams and curses of rival religious quacks are surely the fittest to provoke a bitter smile. We may pity the poor pilgrim groaning in Doubting Castle, and despise the impotent fury of Giant Pope in his ancient den; but the empty brag of charlatans and humbugs in the Fair itself, though they are masquerading in the most imposing of robes, is best met with silent contempt. Let us trust that, somehow or other, the mad bustle will subside in time; that the great world will blunder in its own clumsy fashion into some tolerable order, and some scum of effete superstition be worked off in the chaotic fermentation. Meanwhile, let us cultivate our little area of garden, knowing well that, long before a brighter day dawns, we too shall have been swept off into the great darkness, and our little crotchets and nostrums have become as ludicrous as those of our forefathers. Let us possess our souls in peace, and acknowledge that Swift has pretty well summed up the fittest epilogue for Jove to pronounce upon the farce of the world, '*I* damn such fools!'

Truth may be hidden in a sneer, and the language of the satirist may be translated into most amiable phraseology. Substitute the sentimental for the scornful tone, and many tender and generous natures will echo the conclusion. Intellectual indolence,

which shrinks from the painful effort of rearranging first principles, and a real scrupulosity as to hurting the feelings of babes and sucklings, may be combined in the sensible man's remonstrance against stirring the waters needlessly. The judgment of common-sense is not final, but it always has a certain presumption in its favour. We must at least show why it is so plausible. It is easy enough to retort by calling names, by accusing your sensible adversary of cynicism, falsehood, and want of faith in the power of truth. But, when one descends from mere generalities, one feels that a view which commends itself not only to the wary, to the prudent, and the worldly-wise, but to many generous and lofty natures, deserves a more distinct answer. It should be met, so far as it can be met, point by point, and any element of truth which it contains should be fairly and frankly acknowledged. And any answer should begin by admitting the really strong part of the opponent's case. There can, I think, be no doubt as to where the strength lies.

It is plain that the appeal for reticence would be thrown away upon anyone who seriously believed himself able to answer the great question, What is to be the religion of the future? If I have a gospel, I am bound to proclaim it. But, so long as that question remains unanswered and unanswerable, there is a practical difficulty which, however frequently overlooked or denied, recurs in one form or other with provoking persistency. You may cut the knot by a simple

declaration that truth is above everything; but you do not clear away the honest scruples of your antagonist: he still shrinks from the duty, even if he acknowledges it, and replies by awkward cases of conscience. It is very easy, and at the present time very safe, to tilt against the established creeds. I should be the last to dispute that the men who assail them are animated by the purest love of truth. And yet, when all is said and done, we are often tempted to think that the creeds might be left to decay of themselves, and expire by the method of explanation.

Let us, however, look at the question a little more distinctly. And, in the first place, let us admit fully and frankly that the problem about the religion of the future is simply insoluble. Inspired prophecy is out of date; and though we talk about scientific prediction in such matters, the phrase is little better than a mockery. To predict history is to make a guess with an indefinite chance of error. Perhaps we may say pretty confidently that the dead will not come to life, nor two and two be proved to make five; but to give any precise form to our vague anticipations of the future is simply to court the ridicule of posterity—if posterity is silly enough to study our guesses. There is, indeed, a royal road to prophecy in this particular case, which is taken often enough. My opinion, says each man, is true; moreover, the truth will prevail; and hence it follows that my opinion, whatever it may be, represents the future faith of the world. However

satisfactory to the individual mind, there are difficulties about using this argument in controversy. Doubtless to believe an opinion is to believe that it is true, and to doubt that truth will ultimately prevail is to suppose that the development of thought is nothing but a vague fluctuation hither and thither of endless and contradictory blundering. And yet the man who can believe that his own conception is definitive and complete, and that truth is to be fully reached the day after to-morrow, shows that he possesses the sanguine temper and dogmatic self-confidence which are, indeed, necessary conditions of the successful propagation of a creed, but which are very far from being sufficient conditions. Too many philosophers and preachers have announced themselves to be in possession of the truth to leave us much confidence in such predictions. M. Comte was very confident of the future of his Church; but it has not yet covered the civilised world. Every new Church aims at being universal and eternal; but the one thing certain is, that all creeds have perished. Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal, passes for a good syllogism. May we not say, with an equal show of a sound inductive basis, Positivism is a religion, therefore positivism will die?

I hold, after a fashion, the pleasant old doctrine that truth has a tendency to prevail. I believe that we may discern in the past history of mankind a slow approximation toward truth—a gradual substitution of more comprehensive and accurate views of the

world for the narrower and less verifiable and I need not expound the familiar arguments for that doctrine. It follows, too, that in believing any doctrine we believe also that it will slowly force its way to a wider recognition in the clash and conflict of rival creeds. We believe it to be part of that solid core of truth which is gradually freeing itself from superincumbent masses of error and assumption. But we have still to ask how far this doctrine can be applied to any given contingency. May we infer, for example, from the triumph of Christianity that it included more truth than the beliefs which it ousted ; or, from the assumed truth of any new creed of our own, that it will triumph over the adverse force of existing orthodoxy ?

Here we have at once to confront a fact which lies on the very surface of history. The doctrine of a continuous and uniform progress of opinion is simply untenable. Historians of philosophy manage occasionally to twist the records of past thought into a confirmation of some such view. But, to gain even a show of continuity, they have to limit their view to a few scattered men of exceptional eminence. They make one bound from the ancient to the modern world, or, if they admit a few stepping-stones in the interval, they at least assume periods of many centuries when thought was stagnant or retrograde, and when countless millions remained in placid ignorance, plunged in errors long detected

by the few. The torch is not really passed from hand to hand by the masses. Solitary watchers upon rare eminences catch a glimpse of distant lights across profound valleys, or rather vast breadths of continent, steeped in supine indifference. Religious thought is as little continuous as philosophical. If you are a disbeliever in Christian theology, you can hardly deny that ancient philosophers had reached truths destined to long ages of oblivion, and opened paths which had fallen into complete disuse till again opened by inquirers in the last few generations. If you are a Christian, you hold implicitly that truths once recognised by the strongest minds have become obscure or been openly rejected as modern society has become more enlightened, but, upon your hypothesis, more corrupt. It may be possible to detect a slow evolution in certain profound conceptions which underlie all methods of thought; but it is impossible to deny that the evolution is extremely slow, often imperceptible, and consistent with the rise and decay of various forms of religious belief, and therefore, presumably, with the growth of new error or the loss of ancient truth. If there has been a slow accumulation of treasure in the long run, yet the race has rejected much that it once thought valuable, and probably lost for long periods much which had intrinsic worth.

The rationalist may well feel that on many points

he would sympathise more closely with Marcus Aurelius than with St. Paul. The Stoical view of the world and life may appear to him worthier, freer from antiquated mythology, and more congenial to modern thought than that of the great Apostle. And yet the Christian triumphed; and why? For reasons which the Christian apologist never tires of enforcing, and of which I am quite content to assume the substantial accuracy. It triumphed, doubtless, because it was better suited to human nature, that is, the nature of average men of the time; because philosophy flew above their heads, while religion grasped their imagination, provided an utterance for their emotions, and presented an ideal character which they could love and understand. The *primâ facie* inference, indeed, is not that which the apologist wishes to draw. A creed may thrive because it falls in with the weakness as well as with the strength of its adherents; because it is easily assimilated at once with the current superstitions and the current philosophy; because it gives that half-truth which is for the time the most congenial to the popular mind. There is something in Charles II.'s explanation of the preacher's success—that 'his nonsense suited their nonsense'; and, in short, there is a presumption that a religion fitted to the actual stage of mental development must be, so far, unfitted for the most advanced minds. The apologist is therefore anxious to point out that, though the creed exactly meets the

wants of the time, its purity and perfection prove that it could not be the product of the time. We can understand its success when once originated; we can not understand its originating, except from some superhuman intelligence. And here, again, omitting the illegitimate leap to the supernatural, we can fully admit the general force of the argument. To discover a creed capable of clothing the vague emotions of that and so many succeeding generations was clearly a work requiring genius of the rarest and highest order, or, more probably, the concentrated activity of many men of genius combined in unconscious co-operation by the collective sentiment of their age. The phenomenon is of the same kind which it is a commonplace to notice in a sphere only one degree less exalted. Given your man of genius—your Shakespeare or Dante—we can dimly see how he was created by the conditions of the time. He is great in virtue of his capacity for gathering into one focus and uttering in articulate language the thoughts and emotions indistinctly fermenting in the minds of innumerable contemporaries. Yet no one can predict the appearance of a man of genius, or show deductively that a Shakespeare must have arisen under Elizabeth. The founder of a religion belongs to an order still more exalted than that of poets, philosophers, or statesmen. When he has solved the problem, the answer is simple enough. Till he has solved it, we are still blindly groping in the dark,

conscious of a want, but totally unable to give it distinct utterance, or to predict what will satisfy it. It may be true—let us hope it to be true—that the hour will always bring the man; that we have Shakespeares by the dozen ready to burst into song whenever spring-time comes; that society, like the air, is everywhere full of germs of genius requiring only the occurrence of the particular degree of temperature necessary to give them life and vigour. Yet we are still as unable as ever to say what are the conditions productive of those flowering times in art or literature which have made a few great epochs remarkable to all future ages; no advance of social science brings us perceptibly nearer to a power of prediction; and, as no human being can foretell the advent of the next world-poet, still less foretell what his poem will be like, it would be even more futile to guess at the date or the contents of the next great religious message.

If a religion were simply a philosophy, we should have some specious basis for speculation. Comte, for example, traces the gradual ebb of theological modes of conception, which banishes the supernatural from one sphere of knowledge after another, and liberates the direct vision from the distorting haze of superstition. When the stars no longer require the guidance of gods, we get a rational astronomy; and by a similar process we shall reach a really scientific system of sociology and ethics, resting on demonstration instead of assumption, and free from the element

of mystery. But, as Comte again maintained, we should still no more have a religion than we have an architecture when we understand the laws of mechanics, or a music when we understand the laws of sound. Of Comte's attempt to take the next step I need say nothing. His religion has been ridiculed, I think, more than enough; but I cannot doubt that it has the fatal flaw of every attempt to construct by rule and line what can only be done, if it can be done at all, by the genial energy of a creative imagination. The strange thing is that, recognising so clearly the nature of the task, he should not have recognised his own incapacity for succeeding in it. A religion is the synthesis of a philosophy and a poetry. It is the product of a theory of the universe working in the imagination of a people until it projects itself into vivid concrete symbolism. It must have a double aspect, corresponding on one side to the conceptions which men have actually framed of the constitution of the world in which they live, and, on the other, embodying those conceptions in a shape capable of being grasped by the imagination and of serving as a framework to the profound but indistinct emotions which it suggests. The ordinary theological antithesis between faith and reason corresponds to the distinction. A creed must appeal to men's direct and intuitive perceptions as well as to their logical faculties. It must be capable of being presented dogmatically as well as proved by chains of syllogisms.

Most men, of course, do not reason at all, and accept their religion as they accept their science—at second-hand. The man of science believes the truths of astronomy, because they are proved; and the non-scientific man, because he believes that they are provable, and has had them directly presented to him by vivid and intelligible pictures. The ideal religion would be suited, in the same way, both to the philosophic and the popular mind. Only in this case the condition is incomparably more difficult of fulfilment. Even in physical science, direct vision lags behind analysis and demonstration; and it often requires the highest imaginative power to see the results of a mathematical proof, though each step of proof may be fully understood. But to convert a philosophy into a religion, to give to abstract speculation the form and colouring which alone can bring it within reach of the ordinary understanding, is a task requiring the loftiest genius under the most congenial influences.

It is this double aspect of any vigorous religion which baffles, not only our powers of prediction, but even of conjecture, as to the future of faith. What form of belief will satisfy at once the philosophic thought and the popular impulses of the time? How is it to attract at once the thinkers, whose sole aim is the extension of our narrow circle of intellectual daylight, and the poor and ignorant, who are moved only by the direct power of the creed to grasp their imaginations and stimulate their emotions? If it

alienates one class, it can only render more chaotic the chaotic mass of struggling superstition; if it alienates the other, it cannot spread beyond a professor's lecture-room. Even if we have a decided opinion as to the philosophical doctrines which are ultimately to prevail, we shall still be only at the threshold of the problem. How can they be made acceptable to the struggling masses of society? If not made acceptable, how can we be sure that they will not be crushed? *If* thought is to advance, we say, this must be its final stage. But how do we know that the final stage is at hand? May not philosophers once more find that they are losing their hold upon their hearers; that they have gone too fast and too far; and that, being in a small minority, they are likely to get the worst of it? There may be a retrograde movement in the tidal wave which has often advanced so fitfully and irregularly. We have reached the edge of the promised land, but who can tell that the race may not be turned back to wander for forty years or forty centuries in the wilderness? The philosophical movement destroys the old forms of emotional utterance; and, till new forms have been elaborated, the emotions remain as a disturbing force. How will men satisfy the needs hitherto met by the various forms of worship? What will be the heaven and hell of the future? Will men pray at all, and, if so, to whom? How will they express what have been

called the supernatural dictates of the conscience? What will be the precise meaning given to such words as holy, spiritual, and divine, which have hitherto expressed some of the profoundest moods of which we are conscious? Or, is it possible that we shall simply shut up our churches and keep our museums and theatres; and that all the emotions which have hitherto been the moving forces of the greatest organisations will flow in other channels without producing any social catastrophe?

Theologians ask such questions to pronounce the answer impossible. They cannot conceive any answer but their own; and calmly assume that the destruction or radical transformation of the old symbols is equivalent to the destruction of the things symbolised, and the alteration of the human nature which created them. For my part, I cannot even understand the doctrine that the conscience, for example, was created by a belief in hell, and will perish when hell ceases to be credible. It seems to me clear that the conscience created the old hell, and will presumably create a new one, sufficient for practical purposes, whenever the ancient mythology decays. But if it is asked, What will be the precise form which is to supersede the old? I can only reply, that is the question to be solved by the coming generations and the coming men of genius. Nor can I, or anyone, tell how far the solution of the immediate future will be a compromise, including many ancient elements or a

definitive acceptance of the soundest philosophical principles. The problem is not one of abstract reasoning, but of practice. We have to inquire how an artistic form is to be given to the ancient chorus of lamentation and aspiration which has been steaming up for so many ages from the race of men, not how we are to formulate with scientific accuracy the accumulating body of ascertained truth. We are not simply looking forward to the next stage in the evolution of a theory, but guessing what will be the resultant of a confused struggle of conflicting impulses, whose success is only affected indirectly by the truth of the doctrines which they embody.

The rashness of any attempt to unravel the mystery of the future might be abundantly confirmed, if confirmation be necessary, from past experience. We should perhaps find the best guidance in any attempt at prophesying the future of religion, from studying the history of the last great revolution of faith. The analogy between the present age and that which witnessed the introduction of Christianity is too striking to have been missed by very many observers. The most superficial acquaintance with the general facts shows how close a parallel might be drawn by a competent historian. There are none of the striking manifestations of the present day to which it would not be easy to produce an analogy, though in some respects on a smaller scale. Now, as then, we can find mystical philosophers trying to

evolve a satisfactory creed by some process of logical legerdemain out of theosophical moonshine; and amiable and intelligent persons labouring hard to prove that the old mythology could be forced to accept a rationalistic interpretation—whether in regard to the inspection of entrails or prayers for fine weather; and philosophers framing systems of morality entirely apart from the ancient creeds, and sufficiently satisfactory to themselves, while hopelessly incapable of impressing the popular mind; and politicians, conscious that the basis of social order was being sapped by the decay of the faith in which it had arisen, and therefore attempting the impossible task of galvanising dead creeds into some semblance of vitality; and strange superstitions creeping out of their lurking-places, and gaining influence in a luxurious society whose intelligence was an ineffectual safeguard against the most grovelling errors; and a dogged adherence of formalists and conservatives to ancient ways, and much empty profession of barren orthodoxy; and, beneath all, a vague disquiet, a breaking-up of ancient social and natural bonds, and a blind groping toward some more cosmopolitan creed and some deeper satisfaction for the emotional needs of mankind. Yet there is one thing which we do not see, and at which we cannot guess: What sect is analogous to the ancient Christians? Who are the Christians of the present day? Which, in all the huddle of conflicting creeds, is the one which is

destined to emerge in triumph? Will it triumph because its theory contains most truth, or because it contains that mixture of truth and error which is most congenial to the circumstances of the time? If we could have asked an ancient philosopher for his forecast of the future during the first century of the propagation of Christianity, he would, we know, have treated that *exitiabilis superstitio* with contempt, and pointed out, to his own satisfaction, the miserable gullibility of its professors and the inherent absurdity of the tenets which they professed. And yet the creed triumphed. Why should not some creed which to us —whether Christians or infidels—seems equally absurd have in it the seeds of victory? Nothing could have seemed more revolting to the philosopher than the doctrine of the atonement and of the crucified God. We are beginning to admit that, in a certain sense, both the philosopher and the object of his contempt might be right. The dogma is quite as incredible to a modern thinker as to the ancient philosopher. Yet he may think that it contained the assertion of a principle—distorted and perverted as much as you please—which the philosopher had left out of account; and supplied a want which he could not satisfy, because he did not feel it. May there not be doctrines, apparently too absurd for discussion, which are spreading in obscure regions far below the surface of conscious and articulate thought, and destined to have their day?

If it is not an idle optimism to assume that superstition is henceforth impossible, I should at least be glad to know distinctly upon what grounds our security rests. Is it that we individually are so much wiser than our forefathers? I do not wish to underrate modern progress, but surely there is something grotesque in the hypothesis that the average shopkeeper or artisan of the present day is too clever to believe in the creeds of his forefathers. I fancy that no one has yet ascertained that the brain of to-day is more capacious than the brains of the contemporaries of Cæsar or St. Paul. Or, if I fancy for a moment that minds trained by modern schools are above the reach of sophistry, the doctrine becomes very untenable when I take a journey, say, in the Metropolitan Railway from Kensington to Blackfriars. Take a cursory glance on such an occasion at any of your companions: look at that respectable grocer studying the 'Daily Telegraph'; or the intelligent citizen absorbed in the records of the great Mr. Peace, prince of burglars and murderers. Can you pierce his armour of solid indifference by arguments about the principle of evolution and the survival of the fittest? Will the teaching of Comte, or Mr. Herbert Spencer, or Hegel, be as savoury to him as the rhetoric of his dissenting oracle? Is he likely to see through fallacies which imposed upon Augustine or Aquinas? Macaulay prophesied that the Catholic Church would endure for ever, on the ground that, if Sir Thomas More

could believe in the nonsense of transubstantiation, men might always believe in it. If some modern intellects are in advance of More, the great bulk are still far behind him. To found any hopes of an emancipation from superstition upon a belief in the elevation of the average intellectual standard is, indeed, to build upon a flimsy foundation. I am quite unable to see that the cultivation of the masses has reached a point at which—I will not say Catholicism, but—paganism is made impossible by the intelligence of mankind. If even witchcraft has become obsolete, it is not because its absurdity has been demonstrated, but because men's imagination has been directed elsewhere. Indeed, the phenomenon of a survival of superstition in the upper classes is too common to excite astonishment. A mind which can be edified by the tricks of a 'medium' is saved, not by intrinsic ability, but by the accidents of time and place, from sharing the grossest superstitions of Zulus or Esquimaux.

Nor, indeed, if we inquire into the average state of mind, even of people who profess to discuss philosophical problems, is the result much more encouraging. Discussions of the first principles of religious belief have lately become common in popular magazines. People argue about materialism or idealism, about the existence of God and a soul, and another world, with a freedom which is a remarkable symptom in many ways, and to which I certainly

have no objection. I do not think for one moment that such inquiries should be restricted to a class of specialists, or that anybody should be discouraged from frank revelations of his state of mind: they are often very interesting. But neither is it possible to doubt, when reading such discussions, that most people think it an ample qualification for the most difficult problems to be tolerably familiar with a few technical words. The result is, that most disputants go into a modern line of battle armed with antiquated bows and arrows. They placidly confute positions which were abandoned by their adversaries two or three centuries ago. They argue about free-will, for example, or materialism—I will not say, as if they had never read the latest discussions upon those ancient controversies, but as if they had been predecessors of Jonathan Edwards and Berkeley. Or, in a rather different direction, it would be almost amusing, if it were not rather irritating, to note the impossibility of impressing upon the ordinary disputant the fact that a man may disbelieve in hell without disbelieving in the value of all morality. He can see no difference between a denial that murderers will be tormented for ever and an assertion that murder is unobjectionable. The most amiable and candid critics will inform you that to deny the supernatural character of morality is to deny its existence; and that, in denying the existence of supernatural sanctions, you are not only unconsciously removing a useful safeguard

of morality, but consciously and explicitly denying that there is any difference between right and wrong.

But I need not gather illustrations of a fact which no serious thinker will deny, that much argumentation on such matters rests on simple misunderstanding; and it is inevitable that it should be so: for religious development is a complex process, of which the logical aspect is only one, and, it may be, a subordinate factor. The question of its importance in determining the whole must depend upon the relation between the select few who are accessible to reason and the vast majority who are profoundly indifferent to truths not immediately applicable to practical purposes. What hold do the thinkers possess upon the masses? How does a change of scientific or philosophical conceptions become operative upon popular religious beliefs? The philosophers may be compared to the brain of the so-called social organism; but then the organism is one of a very low type. It has innumerable nervous centres, possessed of a certain subordinate activity, and only indirectly stimulated and co-ordinated by the central organ. Impulses may continue to be propagated upon which the brain has little influence; though it may be that there is sufficient unity to make the co-operation of the brain necessary to continuous and energetic vitality.

Philosophers may condemn the old creed as effete; men of sense may simply shrug their shoulders when a serious attempt is made to apply its teaching to

contravene their palpable interests; but they are equally contemptuous, and not without some *primâ facie* justification, when the attempt is made to supplant it by more satisfactory doctrine. They feel instinctively that philosophy has not found the necessary leverage to move the world. It has not the power to put any real stress upon the ordinary mass of mankind. No creed can be said to have a genuine vitality which is not one of the forces to be taken into account in the actual, everyday conduct of life, which cannot make itself heard, if not actually obeyed, in the blind struggles of passion which stir the vast bulk of the social organism. The man of sense can give reasons enough for doubting whether the thinking part of his fellows represents any such genuine force. There is no want of ominous symptoms of profound movements slowly evolving themselves in the subterranean strata of society—to which scarcely a gleam penetrates from the polite upper world of civilisation and plausible philosophy. We may listen, if we will, to stifled rumblings significant of inarticulate discontent, gradually accumulating like explosive gases in confined caverns, till some sudden convulsion may rend the whole existing fabric into chaotic fragments. Society sometimes seems to resemble Milton's 'small night-foundering skiff' moored to the scaly rind of Leviathan. If the huge dumb monster fairly rouses himself, can we hope to put the hook of philosophy in his nostrils, or send

him to sleep with judicious opiates of sociology and political economy, and demonstrations of the general fitness of things? I have lately read lamentations over the supposed incompatibility between democracy and Free-trade principles. Scientific expositions of the mischief done by Protection are likely to be thrown away, it is urged, upon the illiterate rulers of the future. It sounds probable enough; and to me the only surprising thing seems to be the agreeable opinion that people were ever really persuaded by the arguments of Adam Smith. Free-Trade, I imagine, triumphed in England mainly because the people who wanted bread cheap were stronger than the people who wanted it dear. The twaddle so often talked about the great 'law of supply and demand' is enough to show the hopeless illogicality of even pretentious advocates of economical orthodoxy. Toleration, again, has become a popular name in politics; and I sincerely hope that it is being slowly drilled into people's minds. Yet it would be hard to prove that it really rests upon any stronger basis than that of general indifference. We don't burn people for not believing what we don't believe ourselves, and so far we are right; but is it quite plain that, if the world were again agreed in believing anything, it would refrain from enforcing it by the old physical arguments? When struggles between rival classes are developed, involving deeper issues than those of tariffs —when Lazarus and Dives come, if they ever do come,

to a downright tussle—I cannot feel certain that philosophers will be allowed to arbitrate. They may give a watchword here and there ; they may influence some of the commanding intellects, and so indirectly affect the contest ; but I fear that their best arguments may be as ineffectual as the trumpet-blast of modern times to the destruction of a city wall.

The improbability that ancient creeds should simply revive must, therefore, depend upon other conditions than the increase of the average intelligence. It seems, it is true, to be a law that there can be no resurrection of decaying mythologies. They cease, after a time, to stimulate the imagination, and are no longer the spontaneous growth of the intellectual and social forces of the day. No conscious process of rehabilitation can, then, give them real vitality. The more elaborate the attempt to revive, the more painfully dead and mechanical is the result. The new impulses can no more be forced into the old channels than made to conform to the cut-and-dried theories of innovators. In one case, it is attempted to make a river flow in its old bed when the whole configuration of a continent is altered ; in the other, to force it into a neat rectangular canal defined by mathematical rule and measure. To explain fully how and why creeds perish and are renewed would be to give a complete answer to the most perplexing problems of social science. Yet we may admit the negative conclusion that it is rarely a

process of simple and continuous advance. It is not a case in which the greater minds can form their own conclusions, and impose them directly upon the vulgar. The so-called leader is as much a follower, and guides by sharing the popular impulse. But neither could the mass advance at all without its leaders. The man of genius cannot simply dictate, but he may insinuate some element of advanced thought. There is a reciprocity, a continual give and take, in which the conquering creed is to some extent permeated and coloured by the higher elements of thought, though it undergoes some transformation in the process.

It is natural that men who realise this difficulty should attempt to soften the transition by some dexterous process of conciliation, which may allow the old to melt gradually into the new, and give on one side free play to the expansion of philosophical thought, while on the other it leaves the mass in possession of their ancient symbols. Why should not the new thoughts leaven the ancient mass without setting up any convulsive action? To avoid revolution is the great aim of sensible men, for they see how vast is the cost and how doubtful the gain, and if danger can be avoided by a judicious reticence on the part of philosophers, by allowing speculation to filtrate gradually through the pores of the old creed, is it not folly to attempt to force upon the average mass doctrines which they can never understand, and which will only cause odium to their expounders?

You cannot impose your new creed upon mankind, even if you had a definite creed. Why not encourage them to glide into it quietly and unconsciously? I will not here insist upon the difficulty that the proposal covers simple insincerity, and that what would be very convenient, if it were a spontaneous or unconscious process, involves an uncomfortable approach to deliberate lying and equivocation when it is deliberately adopted from motives of policy. But the truth seems to be that the whole process is inappropriate to the conditions of the time. It amounts to proposing that we should try to annihilate a danger by ignoring it. As a matter of fact, an ancient creed ends by working itself so thoroughly into alliance with the conservative forces of society that it is no longer possible to separate the two interests. Its influence is rigorously dependent upon the strong conviction of the governing classes that the old creed is bound up with the old order. The supported creed, which is popular with all the old women in the world, certainly a most estimable and venerable class, is also bound to support their prejudices. Their great desire—natural to their age and sex—is to keep things as they are. The old belief is valuable in their eyes because (though not solely because) it is the symbol of all opposition to the subversive and revolutionary forces. If you could prove that Christianity really meant to aid, not denounce Communism, the effect might be to destroy the faith of this class

of adherents. The alliance between the various conservative forces of the world is far too intimate and close, and the hostility between conservatives and revolutionists far too bitter and deadly, to allow of any conciliation by dexterous manipulation of dogmas. If there is no great social struggle underlying the religious movement, it may no doubt be easier than people suppose to reconcile the purely intellectual differences, and to make the old dogmas mean anything, or nothing. But if the revolt against the doctrine is chiefly a symptom of a more profound and internecine struggle beneath the surface, the proposal to cover the divergence by terms capable of being used by both parties is doomed to inevitable failure. The proposal to take the wind out of the sails of agitators—to prove that the Christian is the true socialist and the true reformer—is very plausible, and may succeed so long as the agitation is superficial; but, when passions are really inflamed and the contest has become bitter, each party feels that it is a juggle. The hatred does not depend upon mere questions of speculative thought, and, so far from welcoming any mode of softening the differences of creed, they would be glad to accentuate them, and to provide fresh modes of insulting each other's feelings. In such a case the philosophic warfare is but the superficial symptom of a deeper social struggle, and the fate of the creed is bound up with the fate of the organisation by which it is defended. Nor can we

suppose that the alliance is merely accidental. The objections to a creed which weigh with a philosopher are not those, as I have suggested, which weigh with or perversely affect the masses. A creed is not destroyed immediately by attacks of a philosophical kind, though they may give a fatal blow to its vitality. There has long been plenty of latent scepticism; it is only when whole classes come into existence, ready for revolt upon other than speculative grounds, that the spark could produce an explosion. The prevalence of disbelief among the masses must be accounted for by the various causes which have undermined the whole of European society with the raw materials of revolutionary movement. But we may also assume that, unable as the masses may be to appreciate the more purely intellectual grounds of dissatisfaction, they have a dumb instinct which makes them more or less prepared to accept the conclusions of the abstract reasoner. Christianity itself was doubtless the product of an analogous spirit of social discontent. But in its origin it proposed a remedy no longer appropriate to modern wants; and greatly as it has been developed, and radically as its modern supporters may differ from its original apostles, it has not been developed in the required direction. The old doctrine, for example, makes poverty sacred and inevitable, instead of regarding it as an evil to be extirpated; it places all our hopes in a world differing from

this in all its conditions, and to be reached only through a supernatural catastrophe, instead of hoping everything from gradual development, and a recognition that the world can only be conquered by accepting its conditions as unalterable. This is but one aspect of a divergence between two modes of thought, which is too deeply impressed in their very structure to be overlooked or surmounted, and which corresponds, not merely to a speculative difference, but to a new direction impressed upon human aspirations, and upon a change of fundamental conceptions which has been thoroughly worked into the emotions as well as the beliefs of mankind. Though people may not think more clearly than of old, they have slowly assimilated certain results of the progressive development of thought, and society has acquired a different structure, which makes the ancient teaching inapplicable.

To state these obvious considerations in the briefest terms is enough to show the complexity of the problem, and to raise a strong presumption against any hasty solution. To develop them completely would require a knowledge of the actual conditions of modern society such as no one, perhaps, possesses in the necessary degree, and a power of impartial judgment upon the most exciting questions which is as rare as the requisite intellectual grasp. To infer from them with any confidence what will be the outlines of the creed of the future would require

the insight of the rarest genius to be superadded to the other qualifications of a competent observer. To my mind, therefore, it is simply absurd for any man to answer with the slightest confidence the challenge of the hasty inquirer, What is to be the religion of the future? I have not the slightest idea. I at least am perfectly certain of my own ignorance, and I have a strong impression that almost everyone else is equally ignorant. I can see, as everyone else can see, that a vast social and intellectual transformation is taking place—and taking place, probably, with more rapidity now than at almost any historical period. I can dimly guess at some of the main characteristics of the process. I can discover some conditions, both of the social and the speculative kind, which will probably influence the result. I cannot doubt that some ancient doctrines have lost their vitality, and that some new beliefs must be recognised by one who would influence the minds of the coming generations. I cannot believe in the simple resurrection of effete religious ideas; nor, on the other hand, do I believe that the ideas which still have life have as yet been effectually embodied in any system which professes to take the place of the old. In saying this, I take myself to be simply expressing the conviction of most men who think upon such topics at all; though it is, for obvious reasons, natural for many writers to affect to themselves and others more confidence than they feel at the bottom of their hearts, both in the complete-

ness and in the approaching victory of their own creed. It is as well to get rid of that as of other affectations, and to admit frankly that the future is shrouded in impenetrable darkness. I cannot say what will be the outcome of this vast and chaotic fermentation of thought. Doubtless all the elements which it contains will be somehow represented in the next crystallisation of opinion; but I envy, or rather I do not envy, the confidence of any man who takes upon himself to define its precise character.

The argument of the more hopeful would be that, after all, modern science is what people call a 'great fact.' The existence of a vast body of definitively established truths, forming an organised and coherent system, giving proofs of its vitality by continuous growth, and of its ability by innumerable applications to our daily wants, is not only an important element in the question, but it is the most conspicuous point of difference between the purely intellectual conditions of the contemporary evolution and that which resulted in the triumph of Christianity. Here is the fixed fulcrum, an unassailable nucleus of definite belief, round which all other beliefs must crystallise. It supplies a ground, intelligible in some relations to the ordinary mind, upon which the philosopher may base his claims to respect. Whatever system would really prevail must be capable of assimilating modern scientific theories; for a direct assault is hopeless, and to ignore science is impossible. The enormous

apologetic literature destined to reconcile faith and reason is a sufficient proof that the reconciliation is a necessity for the old faith—and that it is an impossibility. The ablest thinkers are always taking up the impossible problem afresh ; and the emptiest charlatan tries to surround himself with some halo of scientific twaddle. Science, moreover, touches men's interests at so many points that it has the key of the position. The common-sense of mankind, as well as their lower passions, would crush any open attack upon the tangible material results of modern scientific progress. Science means steam-engines, telegraphy, and machinery, and, whether the reflection be consolatory or the reverse, we may be fully confident that all the power of all the priests and all the philosophers in the world would be as idle wind if directed against these palpable daily conveniences. And, undoubtedly, this consideration is enough to imply that scientific thought is a force to be taken into account. There are directions in which the incompatibility between its results and those of the old creeds is felt by ordinary minds. We still pray for a fine harvest ; but we really consult the barometer, and believe more in the prophecies of the meteorologist than in an answer to our prayers ; *Te Deums* for victories excite more ridicule than sympathy ; and we encounter the cholera by improved systems of drainage, without attributing much value to fasting and processions. In other words, the old belief in the supernatural is

so far extinct that it could not be restored without encountering some of the most vigorous beliefs of the time. Science need, so far, fear no direct antagonism. But it is easy for the theologian to withdraw ostensibly from the positions which are obviously untenable. A believer in transubstantiation has no more scruples than his neighbour in using the telegraph, and the most orthodox doctrines about the Trinity imply no physiological heresy. No one can doubt that Newton's discoveries have greatly modified the old conception of the universe implied in Christian mythology; and yet, after a time, they have been accepted and are enforced in all sincerity by the most orthodox theologians. We see, indeed, ingenious mathematicians at the present day trying to force the latest discoveries in physics into the service of old-fashioned theology; and the operation is performed so skilfully as to pass for a genuine argument with the intelligent public.

The danger is, not that scientific results will be attacked, but it is conceivable, at least, that the scientific spirit may be emasculated. You may destroy a limb as certainly, though not as quickly, by a ligature as by an amputation. The line of argument is ready at hand. You have only to object to the abuse instead of the use of the scientific spirit; to allow people to invent as many telegraphs as they please, so long as they don't draw unpleasant conclusions from scientific discoveries. You may de-

nounce specialists who insist upon using physiological facts as weapons against theology, whereas nobody has a right to mix theology and science except in support of arguments from final causes. The positivist warns us against the indulgence of an idle curiosity, and proposes to discourage all researches which have no definite aim of immediate utility. The sentimentalist appeals from the head to the heart, and pronounces a love of truth to be immoral whenever it hurts his feelings. The Catholic, of course, attacks the all-corroding energy of the intellect, and tries to enslave Darwinism as his precursors enslaved Aristotle. Though the common-sense of mankind may regret such assaults when they come into contact with useful results, it may not be so clear about the methods to which the results are owing. The boundless curiosity of the scientific mind, its resolution to test every dogma—whatever the authority on which it reposes—to sift and re-sift all established beliefs, are undoubtedly troublesome and inconvenient to the indolent, that is, to the vast majority. It can scarcely be regarded as certain that some form of creed may not become popular which would tend to stifle thought and sap the sources of its energy. A political empire may be ruined from internal weakness as well as by external assaults; and the empire of science is of such a nature that, unless it extends, it must decline. It is not impossible, perhaps, though I certainly do not think it to be probable, that the creed of the

future may flatter the natural weakness of mankind by gradually diminishing the interest in scientific inquiry. Popular writers are fond of describing Utopias in which man's power over Nature has indefinitely increased, and machinery been applied to hitherto unimaginable results. An imaginative writer might, I fancy, employ himself to equally good purpose in describing a state of things in which some mechanical discoveries should remain, but serve only as a memorial of a distant past, their principles forgotten, their use only known by tradition; in which the power of discovery should have perished, and a steam-engine be the object of superstitious reverence—like a gun in the hands of a savage—as a mysterious survival from the days of the ancient demi-gods. To bring about such a result, it would only be necessary so far to emasculate the intellect that men should be reluctant to encounter the labour necessary for extending the borders of science. There are abundant precedents for decay as well as for progress, and regions enough in which authority has succeeded in shifting the impulse to active thought. Why should we regard such an eclipse of intellectual energy as henceforth impossible?

I need go no further. When we think of such things—of the vast complexity of the processes by which new religions evolve themselves, of the small influence of purely intellectual considerations with the vast bulk of mankind, of the enormous improba-

bility of any speedy extirpation of error, of the difficulty of impressing men's imaginations, even when you have convinced their reasons—we can hardly doubt, it seems to me, that the sensible man has a very strong case indeed. Why should we be so impatient of error? The enormous majority of the race has, on any hypothesis, been plunged in superstitions of various kinds, and, on the whole, it has found that it could thrive and be decently happy and contented in its ignorance. Science declines to accept catastrophes; and no catastrophe would be more startling than a sudden dispersal of the mists that have obscured the human intelligence for so many ages. If they grow a little thinner in our time, we may well be content; but is it not childish to be impatient about the rate of development of these vast secular processes? Why be in such a hurry to 'change the errors of the Church of Rome for those of the Church of the Future'? The generations come and go, and the external form of their creeds changes rapidly enough; but the substance changes little. Philosophers wrangle over the old doubts, and even old pagan superstitions survive in but slight modifications in the midst of Christian populations. The study of 'sociology' shows at least—if it shows nothing else—that even the most trifling customs survive vast periods of apparently revolutionary change. Why should we expect to transform in a

day or in a century the fundamental beliefs of mankind?

It is certainly well to moderate our anticipations. I feel, indeed, the heartiest respect for the enthusiasts who show the hopefulness of boyhood in proclaiming truth in season and out of season, and accept the reproaches of the world as gratifying testimony of their fidelity to truth. Undoubtedly they may frequently err—the man must be fortunate, indeed, who has never to reproach himself for such errors—by forgetting the duty of courtesy and tenderness for the weak and the stupid. Reformers are often too anxious to tell fools of their folly, and to reproach unduly those who are behind the times. It is difficult to draw the line accurately between a justifiable reticence and a mean equivocation; it is easy to confound the obvious duty of telling no lies with the more questionable practice of proclaiming, at all hazards, every conclusion as soon as you have reached it. But it is needless to insist upon a point involving some difficult casuistry. The orthodox may be safely trusted to give all the necessary emphasis to that aspect of the question which is least favourable to full utterance of thought. That class, in particular, which is accustomed to argue by a sneer is most emphatic upon the wickedness of their opponents in using the same weapons. I simply take note of the fact, which all will admit, that the employment of such poisoned arrows should be forbidden on all sides;

but I confess that, to me, the most serious danger does not appear to be that an excessive love of truth and plainness of speech will ever become unduly prevalent.

Buoyancy of spirit and confidence in the approaching decease of the devil are, indeed, only too likely to be checked by the considerations to which I have referred. I cannot, for my part, understand how the frame of mind which is eager for proselytes should survive very early youth. I would not conceal my own views, but neither could I feel anxious to thrust them upon others; and that for the very simple reason that conversion appears to me to be an absurdity. You cannot change a man's thoughts about things as you can change the books in his library. The mind is not a box which can have opinions inserted and extracted at pleasure. No belief is good for anything which is not part of an organic growth and the natural product of a man's mental development under the various conditions in which he is placed. To promote his intellectual activity, to encourage him to think, and to put him in the way of thinking rightly, is a plain duty; but to try to insert ready-made opinions into his mind by dint of authority is to contradict the fundamental principles of free inquiry. Persons who believe in miraculous intervention, and the magical efficacy of special beliefs, may consistently compass sea and land to make one proselyte; they may scatter tracts, hoping that the

sight of a text will upset the convictions of a lifetime, or, as some fanatics are said to do, baptize the dying infants of the heathen to give them a passport to heaven. But the man who counts upon no supernatural assistance can only endeavour to help his fellow-creature by stimulating any faint spark of intellectual activity—a task which is generally difficult enough for any human power. Nor, again, is it possible to overlook or deny the fact that there is simply no answer to the question which will determine, however illogically, the choice of many most amiable and excellent people. If a man will not abandon a religion till he has another to put in its place, we must confess that his demand cannot be met. The creed of the future, whatever it may be, exists only in germ. You cannot give to a believer anything in place of his cult, of the sacred symbols which reflect his emotions, of the whole system of disciplined and organised modes of worship, of prayers, of communion with his fellows, which to him are the great attraction of his religion. You cannot even tell him what system is likely to replace them hereafter, or whether human nature is so constituted that it will be able simply to drop the old without replacing it by anything directly analogous. And, therefore, you must admit that for the present a man who would abandon the old doctrines is compelled to stand alone. He must find sufficient comfort in the consciousness that he is dealing honestly with his

intellect; he must be able to dispense with the old consolations of heaven and hell; he must be content to admit explicitly that the ancient secret has not been revealed, and to hold that people will be able to get on somehow or other, even if the most ignorant and stupid cease to consider it a solemn duty to dogmatise with the utmost confidence upon matters of which the wisest know absolutely nothing, and never expect to know anything. Undoubtedly, this is to accept a position from which many people will shrink; and it is pleasanter to the ordinary mind to reject it summarily as untenable, or to run up some temporary refuge of fine phrases, and try to believe in its permanence. I only say that I do not see how an honest dissenter from the orthodox opinions can act otherwise.

How we are to act in regard to individuals is a problem which may admit of discussion, and in regard to which I can only express the belief that such problems generally solve themselves pretty easily for people who are true to themselves and gentle to their neighbours. The duty of those who take any part in forming what is called public opinion is less complex. It resolves itself into a simple acceptance of the undeniable facts. It is impossible to overlook the distinction between philosophical speculation and the propagation of a new creed. If a man is not a St. Paul, or even a St. John the Baptist, he should not take the tone of an apostle or a prophet.

He may fully believe in the soundness of the doctrines which he preaches, and believe in their ultimate victory; but he may equally realise the undeniable fact that he is at most only contributing to lay the philosophical basis of a religion, not propagating a fully-developed religion. The part is strictly subordinate, though it may be essential. The utmost that he can do is to help to clear the air from effete superstitions, to extricate moral truths from the misleading associations with which they have been entangled, and to encourage, as far as in him lies, the spread of truths which may find embodiment in any fresh developments of thought. The vast and enormously complex processes which are taking place cannot be governed and regulated by any single mind. A man who fancies that he can dictate a complete system to the world only shows that he is arrogant to the verge of insanity. Some little may be done by any honest thinker—by anyone who really aims at advancing inquiry, instead of trying to throw dust in people's eyes. He may help, according to the measure of his powers, to stimulate the impulses which are on the side of free thought, and which are the best guarantee for a healthy instead of a morbid development. It is not merely the right but the duty of everyone competent to the task to do what in him lies to strengthen the fitful and uncertain influence of a sound intellect upon the vast and intricate jumble of conflicting opinions in the world at

large. The man of sense will probably condemn him, if good-sense is taken to mean an enlightened regard for our own private interest; for certainly such advocacy is often very unwelcome to the world. But if good-sense means chiefly a sound estimate of a man's real position and talents, and a judicious application of his talents to honourable ends, a sensible man will surely approve of every vigorous exposition—not given in an irritating and insulting spirit—of the truths which must be the groundwork of a satisfactory religion; for the degree in which that mysterious creed of the future is founded upon tenable and verifiable philosophy must be the measure of its success in laying down permanent principles for the regulation of human conduct. Modest expectations and calm estimates of a man's real value to the world are not productive of any high degree of enthusiasm; but, perhaps, in the long run, they are useful qualities.

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