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CHRISTIANITY.

SECOND PART.

THE

INFLUENCE OF THE "FATHERS" ON THE FURTHER
DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIANITY.

BEING

A Lecture

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DR. G. G. ZERFFI, F.R.S.L., F.R.Hist.S.

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SYLLABUS.

Some of the most influential Fathers of the First Century.

Objections of the Jews and Heathens to Christianity.

Celsus, Lucian, Porphyrius, and Julian.

The Apologists: Athenagoras, Tatian and his Disciples.

Clemens of Alexandria.

Falsification of History.

Origen, his character and great talent.

Eusebius and Basil, Cyril and Hypatia.

Tertullian and Ambrose.

Augustine. He studies Aristotle and Plato. His influence on the Theology of our own times. His Confessions. Pride in prayer. "In the beginning."

The Trinity. "The City of God."

The "Original Sin." A Chinese Mandarin.

Augustine and Rousseau compared.

Heathen customs and principles mixed with Christianity.

Effects of the Controversialists and Casuists on the simplicity of Christ's teachings.

The Third Lecture to treat on Monasticism and Scholasticism.

Conclusion.

CHRISTIANITY.

II.

The Influence of the "Fathers" on the Further Development of Christianity.

THE ancient world, with its plurality of gods, ceremonies, oracles, festivities, political and social organisation, its moral laws and philosophy did not die very quickly. During the first Century of our era, the Christians were merely a small sect of reformed Jews, called "Nazarenes," who met secretly, often in the dead of night, in burial places and catacombs. The few existing records were written only in Hebrew or Syriac.

The first change brought about in the new faith, was the more exclusive use of the Greek language, not in its classical purity, but in a colloquial form, in order to make the teachings of the converted Hebrews more popular. The next step was the abolition of some of the most striking social arrangements of the new sect with regard to possessing "*all things in common.*"

The Indian and Egyptian priests, the Pythagoreans, Essenês, and Buddhistic monks, had long before possessed a similar organisation. They were compelled to give up their private property and to divide it amongst the members of the community which they joined. Notwithstanding all attempts to deny, distort, or falsify them, the records of the Evangelists, and the acts clearly prove that the germs of "Communism" and "Socialism" may be traced to the primitive constitution of the oldest Christian Sects. BARNABAS, one of the earliest Fathers, whose real name was Joses, a rich Levite, sold all he possessed, and gave everything to the Apostles. He wrote a Gospel, but this was declared apocryphal. HERMAS, another of the Fathers of the first Century, also a rich Jew, who lived at Rome, gave up his property, followed St. Paul, and represented Christ as an angelic shepherd preaching doctrines of love and equality. The sudden and miraculous deaths of Ananias and his wife Sapphira for concealing, and not giving up their own goods to the community, prove conclusively that "Communism" was the basis of the first Hebrew-Christian Sect. Another fundamental creed of primitive Christianity, that concerning the return

of the Son in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to bring peace on earth, which was to happen during the lifetime of those to whom the promise had been made, was reluctantly given up as hopeless. The belief in this promise goes far to prove that the first Christians must have looked upon Christ as a powerful hero who would vanquish his enemies, and bestow worldly grandeur on his followers.

Doubt and controversy very early pervaded the assertions of the fathers.

IGNATIUS was assumed to have been the "little child" held up by Christ to the people at Capernaum, but CHRYSOSTOM, another Father, says that Ignatius never beheld Christ. The writings of Ignatius were looked upon as forgeries, as they are saturated with dogmas of a later period, and could not have been written before the 5th or 6th Century.

The same must be said of the writings of DIONYSIUS, of Athens, who was a well educated man, a member of the highest tribunal, the Areopagus, and therefore called the "Areopagite"; he was made an overseer by St. Paul, and works "On the Order of the Heavenly Spirits," "On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy" (which was not then in existence), "On God's Name," "On Mystic Theology," &c., were attributed to him. The very title of the last work, however, proves that it could not possibly have been written in the first Century, as mystic theology was certainly wholly unknown at that period. The works are full of theological and dialectical controversies not then thought of; they refer to dogmas and ceremonies, the introduction of which was of a far later date; the very word "Monakos," which occurs in them, and which only came into use about the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century, convincingly proves that these writings, like so many others, were pious forgeries.

During the first centuries terrible accusations were hurled against Christianity by both Jews and Heathens. The Jews were more violent than the Gentiles. They saw in Christ a faithless deserter from their own ranks. They accused him of having taught Atheism; of having destroyed the unity of the Godhead; of having without any right proclaimed himself the Messiah. They complained that he had propounded utterly *impracticable* laws, commanding men "to give to him that asketh;" "not to hate, but to pray for our enemies,"—that he had asserted that the Father in Heaven "maketh the Sun to rise on the evil and on the

good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" and that it would be "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven!" If Christ's teachings were true, they would do away with the rich, and make the poor masters of the world! What would become of trade and commerce, of barter and exchange, of all the glorious promises of plenty on earth, if the poor had any right to such exaltation? Humanity would sink into barbarism, and the whole covenant with the chosen people be cancelled. The Mosaic law would be abolished if men were no longer to be allowed "to take an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" or forced to hold out their left cheek when smitten on the right. Christ had forbidden man to go to law, for he had enacted, "if any take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also!" All this the Jews thought shocking, horrible, and impossible! What was to become of the law and lawyers, of the learned in the Scripture, and of the expounders, and teachers of *true* morals? Were men no longer to be allowed to hate fervently, to despise cordially, to persecute, to flog, to stone, and to crucify? They recoiled from such a prospect, and asserted that this Jeshua had been a dreamer, a blasphemer, nay, they even doubted the fact of his very existence, and looked upon everything that had been reported of his life, miracles, and resurrection, as mere inventions. They attempted to show that he had never taught anything new, and that everything practical and moral, he said, was contained in the Old Testament, which he had despised by breaking the Sabbath, and blaspheming God, whilst pretending to be God himself.

It is a historical fact that the Jews could never comprehend a faith based on love and mutual forbearance, and unfortunately more than eighteen hundred years have been required to teach Christians to understand Christ's most valuable enactments, which were to be taken in the spirit, and not to the letter.

The Heathens objected to Christianity because it was a social and political revolution. It declared all men equal, and denied the ancient gods that had ruled for thousands of years. The Christians were accused of despising emperors, consuls, pro-consuls, high priests, and philosophers, whilst they worshipped and paid divine honours to a crucified rebel. They were called deceiving "Sibylists"; dealers in mysteries, pretending to perform miracles which they had learned from Indian and Egyptian mountebanks, and impostors. They were taunted with objecting to the gods in

human form, whilst they themselves were "anthropolatræ" (idolatrous worshippers of a man). It was said that whilst they were opposed to the eating of certain parts of the flesh of the sacrifices, they were themselves "Theophagi" (god-eaters)—eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their own God. The Old and New Testaments were said to be full of incredible stories, contradictions, and fables, teeming with ignorance, and contrary to common sense and reason. The Christians were accused of asserting that all the laws of Nature had been suspended and acted against by the eternal gods for the glorification of One who had not been able to save himself from the most ignominious death. The Christians were accused to hate humanity, to blaspheme God, and to court death. They were charged with the grossest immorality, with eating their own children, and with committing incest; they were called conspirators, assassins, perjurers, infidels, communists, and atheists! They were also contemptuously designated Nazarenes, Galileans, Men of the Magical Superstition, Plautinians, Cornelians, Synedrians, Cyrillians, Apostatics, Nestorians, Arians, Eustathians, Cataphrygians, and Homousians. These different appellations prove that from the earliest times Christianity must have been divided into many antagonistic sects.

The attacks on both sides became fiercer, the more plainly the Jews and Pagans perceived that their dominion was at an end, and that humanity was adopting entirely new principles upon which to build up an altogether different political and social organisation.

One of the most determined opponents of Christianity (about 150 A.D.) was CELSUS, who could not see the necessity of mysticism and secrecy in a work of general redemption. LUCIAN wrote "Three Dialogues" against Christianity, characterising it as a dreamy superstition, based on falsehoods. PORPHYRIUS (Malchus of Tyre) was said to have been a Christian, but returned to Paganism. He wrote fifteen books "On Christianity," which have been entirely destroyed, with the exception of a few fragments selected by Eusebius for the purpose of refutation.

HIEROKLES of Nikomedia, a philosopher under Diocletian, was one of the principal instigators of the persecution of the Christians by this emperor, as he described them as dangerous fanatics and reckless conspirators. He endeavoured to prove that Christ had in fact been Apollonius Tyannæus, who could see distant occurrences, and who gave an account of the murder of Domitian in the open market place at Ephesus, at the very moment when

the terrible deed was done at Rome. Apollonius was said to have had interviews with spirits, to have revived a dead young woman, and to have died at the age of one hundred years. The Pagans often confounded this contemporary of Jesus with Christ himself, and the deeds of the one were attributed to the other.

The last but not least formidable antagonist of Christianity was JULIAN the Apostate, so called because he returned to Paganism after his conversion. He wrote seven books "On Christianity," which are entirely lost, with the exception of a few quotations in the ten controversial books against him by Cyril of Alexandria. The works of Julian may be divided into four principal groups:—

- (a.) Treatises which he himself calls, Discourses of a more or less sophistical character.
- (b.) Satires, written in the style of Lucian, concerning his contemporaries, and his relations to science.
- (c.) Letters, partly official, which he had written when regent, and partly unofficial, addressed to friends and mere acquaintances.
- (d.) His diatribes against Christianity.

Julian was one of the most important and cultivated men of his time; he possessed a determined character, was an industrious and clever administrator, promoted education, and reveals to us more clearly than any other writer the entirely changed condition of the world. He endeavoured to transform the religion of the ancients into a mystic-symbolic system, to satisfy the wants of the people, and to oppose the subversive tendencies of Christianity, which already began to revel in gloomy superstitions, and to discard the simplicity and lofty grandeur of Christ's teachings.

The violent attacks on Christianity produced an entirely new science, cultivated to the detriment of real truth up to our own times, that of "Apologetics."

There are two modes of becoming an Apologist. The one is to *ignore* your opponent altogether; this is the *passive* method. Never mention his works; destroy every vestige of his writings, and silence him to death. This passive mode of controversy is exceedingly efficacious, and the least troublesome; it requires no great effort, and after all is capable of upholding errors, prejudices, and superstitions. The other method is *active*; you must try to refute your opponents. You must state first what they say and be careful to quote only what you are able to refute; or quote so as to turn your opponent's statements into the grossest absurd-

ities. To illustrate this method with an example from our own times I need only refer to a mighty genius who has devoted himself to the minute study of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, who saw everywhere connecting links and analogous laws, and has built on these the striking theory of evolution. Do not read Darwin's book, but simply say:—"Bah! He proves that we are all monkeys; that we are descended from monkeys, and that there is nothing higher than a monkey!" By this means you at once horrify the immense majority of monkeys, who dread nothing so much as self-knowledge, and you may hope to cause your antagonist's theories to remain for ages a dead letter. By this calumniating method you may most efficaciously obstruct progress on whatever field of inquiry.

The primitive Christian Apologists made it a point, by fair or any other means, to defend Christianity, and to silence their antagonists. They were, above all, firmly convinced of the superiority of their religion, which required no study, no particular training, no philosophy, but simply faith—nothing but faith; faith was to move mountains; faith was to serve as the panacea for every evil to which our flesh and spirit was heir. As long as this faith was only demanded for the levelling enactments of Christ proclaiming the universal brotherhood of men, it worked miracles. When, at a later period, the Fathers called in the aid of Pagan philosophy and dialectics, when they endeavoured to prove, in order to gain as many votaries as possible, that Christianity contained all the dogmas of the most influential ruling religious systems, their task became gigantic, and we must honestly confess that many of the Apologists showed an undoubted superiority over their enervated adversaries. The Apologists inaugurated through their writings a struggle between faith or religion, and reason or science, which was the principal and vital cause of the uninterrupted progressive development of Christianity. The mystic dogmas and incredible assertions made with the smooth plausibility of a Greek sophist, or the trenchant dialectics of a Roman casuist pleading before some court of justice, provoked contradiction, self-thought, inquiry, and argumentation. This fact explains the fierce intellectual thunderstorm of controversy which swept over the world, silencing all contradiction in time.

When ATHENAGORAS (177 A.D.) proclaimed Plato and Christ to be in perfect harmony, he united Pagan philosophy with the Christian faith. He endeavoured to bring about a balance between

the intellectual and moral faculties of men. But he was emotional, and explained with assumptions and assertions what he did not know. That his writings were altered in passing through the hands of ignorant copyists or interested church dignitaries, may be fairly assumed; for we find side by side with passages written under the distinct influence of the Neo-Platonic school, others that are altogether opposed to their mode of thinking. Some other passages, again, are full of Hebraism in contradiction to his Hellenism. He earnestly protested against the re-marriage of widows, and propounded wild and fantastic speculations on the "fallen angels," dividing them into two categories, such as were lost to all sense of justice, and such as had still something good left in them; that is, bad and good evil-spirits.

TATIAN, who was born in Syria, devoted himself to the gloomy study of Gnosticism. He looked upon matter as the fountain of all evil, recommended the mortification of the body, and introduced Indian, Persian, and, above all, Buddhistic ideas into Christianity. His disciples abjured all the comforts and enjoyments of life, and abstained from wine with such rigorous obstinacy, that at the Lord's Supper they used nothing but water, holding that God's will would transform water into blood, as it had formerly transformed it into wine. Tatian constantly referred to a Universal Soul or Spirit pervading the universe in contradistinction to the Creator of all things. He borrowed this idea from Plato, who took it from the Egyptians, who had inherited it from the Indian Pantheists.

There can be no doubt that the ancient classics with their dry formalism no longer sufficed to satisfy man's restless emotional nature, craving for a deeper knowledge of the supernatural. The theological spirit of mysticism borrowed from the East was drawn into the mighty vortex of man's speculative activity, and opened new fields to the moral and intellectual forces working in Humanity. The union between God and man, *formally* accomplished by the classical world, was now to be *spiritually* completed. The divine Power which had assumed *form* in the unsurpassed artistic, poetical, and philosophical works of antiquity, was with CLEMENS OF ALEXANDRIA to become flesh, vivified by the Spirit of the East, and newly moulded as one mystic, incomprehensible, and supernatural whole, by Christianity. The mythological conceptions of the Greeks, the theosophies of the Hebrews, and the mysteries of the Egyptians, were to be blended with the simple, yet sublime,

teachings of Christ. As the prophets, Moses, Aaron, and Elijah, had devoted themselves to the Lord; as kings had sacrificed their heirs on the walls of their besieged towns to force the enemy to abandon their assaults; as Jephthah had been ready to sacrifice his daughter—so Christ had been a sacrifice to the Most High for humanity. The Apologists, however, ignored the fact that the same had been said of Rama and Krishna by the Indians, of Osiris by the Egyptians, of the Kentaur, Cheiron, of Apollo, as Adonai or Adonis by the Hellens, and of Curtius by the Romans. The descendants of those who had believed in these self-sacrifices were easily persuaded that the founder of their religion had offered himself as the most precious sacrifice to appease the wrath of an angry father.

Clemens introduced Hebraism most prominently into Christianity. He held that there was no truth except in the Books of Moses and the Prophets, and that the writings known as the Old Testament were the only reliable, the only true books, and older than any of the writings of any other nation, and that whatever had been asserted by whomsoever had been taken, copied, or transcribed from these writings. This monstrous historical falsification obstructed the progress of humanity for more than 1,400 years. His misstatements were turned into articles of faith, repeated year by year, hour by hour, in the principal Christian schools, and thus were transformed into brain-crystallizations and petrifications in the believing, but not reasoning and inquiring minds of the people. A systematic falsification of history was thus established, fostered, and kept up by a well organised hierarchy, supported at a later period by the wealth and power of states, which left the whole machinery of national, collegiate, and university education in clerical hands, and imposed upon the masses by means of penal laws, fire and sword, the gallows and the stake, certain historical statements, chronological assertions, astronomical errors, and geological impossibilities, as so many indisputable facts.

If we have reason to complain of the primitive apologists of Christianity, who showed at least a certain candour and probity, we have still stronger grounds to be dissatisfied with those who used sophistry and pious frauds. The Fathers, generally, appear to have been destitute of penetration, learning, system, application, and talent. They used arguments to dazzle the fancy, and not to enlighten or convince the mind. They assumed the antiquity of a

doctrine to be evidence of its truth. But all these facts must not blind us to acknowledge the great ability, and even genius of some of them, who, notwithstanding certain brain-petrifications really endeavoured to promote truth, although truth had unfortunately been already settled for them as such, by the terrible power of credulity and undisputed authority.

These petrifications became in time whole ranges of granite blocks of superstition. Many a tiny barque of inquiry on the vast ocean of free-thought, sailing with a fair wind of common sense, guided by the compass of reason, has been dashed to pieces and sunk by these terrible, apparently immovable rocks! But after all the stable rock with its resistance excited the activity of the dashing sea-farers.

To the honour of the human intellect it must be confessed that the credulous, who wished to persuade themselves and others that they were right in their belief of the incredible, contributed much to the possibility of the dissolution of their own superstitions.

Foremost in the rank of the free-thinking fathers stood ORIGEN. The historical development of Christianity must remain for ever an unintelligible riddle without a thorough acquaintance with the writings of Origen. This father endeavoured to look on the Scriptures from a *rational* point of view, and shook "Bibliolatry" to its very foundation. He cast aside the literal interpretation, finding the mere letter often unintelligible and contradictory, sought for hidden meanings, and asserted that the Scriptures ought to be read by the light of reason. He had a higher conception of the Deity, believed in the pre-existence of pure angelic souls and their fall into mortal bodies, and in a "final restoration of all intelligent beings to order and happiness." This was equivalent to denying eternal hell-fire, and was too much for the loving hearts of his contemporary Christians, so that he was, therefore, condemned as a heretic. It is most satisfactory to find that in our own times several Divines, and among them Canon Farrar, have dared, in the spirit of Origen, to shake the deluding and maddening hell-fire petrification in the brains of some believers, and to free the Deity from the reproach of being an irreconcilable and wrathful Avenger without mercy or pity.

Origen was followed by EUSEBIUS, the Father of Christian Historiography. He worked out a chronology which, in spite of geology, Egyptian monuments, Assyrian inscriptions, Indian philology, and Chinese records, serves some of our bigoted

historians as a basis for their historical distortions. Eusebius collected most of the raw historical material of ancient times, and of his own age. He wrote with one aim, to prove the superiority of Christian morals, and in doing so would not admit that there could have been anything good in other far more ancient religious systems. He had to sift facts and to record only such as served his one-sided and special assumption, and this mode of writing history is still the most cherished method of historical sectarians of whatever denomination or tribal division.

To strike the principal death-blow at pure Christianity was reserved to ATHANASIUS, who borrowed his mystic, "Three in one," from the Egyptians. To this incomprehensible "idol," once petrified, thousands and thousands of human beings were sacrificed.

The Council of Nice, which, in 325 A.D., determined the Duality of God as "Father and Son," (the Trinitarian dogma having passed only in 381 A.D.), selected also the four gospels as the only canonical books from a quantity of other gospels then existing. The proceedings on that memorable occasion were the following according to Pappus in his Synodicon to the council.

"The fathers, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, placed promiscuously under a communion table, in front of which the Council was assembled, all the Gospels which were known at that time. They then prayed devoutly to God beseeching him 'that the *inspired* writings might get upon the table, whilst the spurious ones remained underneath.' After the prayer a miracle took place. The gospels which Gelasius ought to burn remained under the table, and the four inspired ones got upon it, and were declared to be canonical."

A still greater miracle happened. "It was agreed that in order to make the Council valid, all the fathers should sign the records. Two bishops, however, Musonius and Chrisantes, died during the Council without having signed them. The difficulty was great, for the Council was invalid without their signatures, but the fathers caused guards to be placed round the tombs of the bishops, and placed in them the Acts of the Council, which, as is well known, were divided into sections. The fathers passed the night in prayer, and the next day they found that the deceased bishops had fortunately signed the records of the Council." (See "On Mankind their Origin and Destiny." By an M.A. of Baliol College, Oxford. London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1872., pp. 166 and 167.)

BASIL AND GREGORY OF NAZIANZEN were the founders of the Eastern, whilst TERTULLIAN and AUGUSTINE must be considered as the bulwarks of the Western Church. They all became so many crystallized authorities in Theology. They established obstinacy and blind faith as the most Christian virtues, and supported their theory with the most involved intricacies of dialectics. The phenomenon that astonishes us is, that the learned world, until very recently, should have applied their two-edged dialectical weapons for one purpose—to *prove* what they assumed to be necessary for the salvation of Humanity. All doubt in that which they asserted to be an incontestable fact, they punished with stoning, crucifixion, hanging, or burning. The intellectual, reasoning, thinking, and inquiring faculty—in a word, the *dynamic* force, with which Humanity is endowed, was to be exclusively directed to supernatural matters and authoritative enactments settled beforehand. At this period, the greatest calumny against God, the Creator, and Man, His creature was brought into a systematic form. All was temptation, sinfulness, and horrible wickedness. Nature was to be expelled from nature. Man was to see in every other man an offspring of hell, sent into this world to do wrong. Hatred and contempt, trembling and fear, were thus made the chemical elements of which man's moral and social condition was to be composed, and a strange mixture they produced! We need not be astonished that the false Christians, once come to power, should have fostered an unrelenting hatred against anything stepping into their obstructive path. CYRIL had nothing but death for the beautiful HYPATIA, who dared to think, to reason, and to inquire, when thinking was already considered a deadly sin, reasoning a crime, and inquiry a blasphemy! Tertullian went so far as to state in his "De Idolatria" that all astronomers, sculptors, mythologists, and merchants were idolaters and servants of the "Evil One." Man was so afflicted by the general reaction which took place in consequence of the over-strained action of the ancient classic times, that he lost all self-reliance, self-thought, self-respect, and entered upon a life which in reality was no life, or at all events no intellectual life.

That the dynamic force in Humanity cannot be stifled may be best studied in the writings of TERTULLIAN who exhibits in his works a mingling of virtues and defects, of learning and ignorance, of piety and worldliness, which makes him appear on one page as the most profound scholar, whilst on another, he evinces the most hopeless superstition and credulity. Through this his *double* nature

he exercised great influence on the Scholastics of the Mediæval period.

Far greater in character and genius than the works of Tertullian are the six books "On the Creation," by AMBROSE, Bishop of Milan. In his obstinacy, and in his firm convictions, he was the very model of an ecclesiastical prince. He was no Sophist or orator in the pulpit, but a kind-hearted administrator, stern and active, who said what he meant, and was firmly convinced that whatever he said or wrote, was intended for the good of Humanity. In his works we may study the transition of primitive Christianity into a complicated system of hierarchical *feudalism*. *Passive* submission, faith and self-abnegation were established in contradiction to the ancient philosophers who enjoined *active* energy, self-conscious conviction, and honest virtue. Ambrose insisted, above all, on "Faith." He, however, attempted to distinguish between the strictly doctrinal, and the less reliable historical parts of the Old and New Testaments. Origen and Ambrose were the principal founders of a broader treatment of the Bible, which led on the uninterrupted path of progressive continuity to our most modern theological criticism. Ambrose looked upon the emotional in Humanity as the only force to be developed and cultivated, to be restrained and regulated. Poetry, painting, sculpture, and music, were to strengthen this force, and we owe to him the introduction of a higher culture of the Arts in the Western Christian Churches.

More important than any of the other Fathers was AUGUSTINE (Aurelius Augustinus), who in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D., gave Christianity an entirely new dialectical and theological shape, widely differing from that simplicity and universal humanism which we find in Christ's teachings. He was born 354 A.D., at Tagestê, in Numidia. His father, Patricius, was a Pagan, and his mother, Monica, a Christian—Paganism and Christianity being thus blended into one in him through his parents. In his youth at Carthage he led a wild, reckless, and immoral life; but he was suddenly reformed through the study of "Hortensius" by Cicero, a book unfortunately lost, and a diligent reading of the works of Aristotle. He joined the sect of the Manichæans, went to Rome to teach rhetorics—(philosophy and elocution)—and thence proceeded to Milan, where he taught with great success. He there made the acquaintance of Ambrose, who instructed him in the tenets of the then already to a great degree crystallized orthodox Christianity. Augustine renounced Manichæism, and at once

denounced it, with the fervour usual in converts, as the most pernicious heresy. He now devoted himself to the exclusive study of Plato, with the aid of whose ideal philosophical assumptions he succeeded in constructing an abstruse metaphysical system of Christian theology.

The influence of his works on the culture and further dogmatic development of Christianity was unbounded. His ideas inspired the dissertations and controversies between Abelard and Bernhard. His subtle and dialectical theories may be traced in the dissensions between Calvinists and Lutherans, Churchmen and Ritualists, Baptists and Methodists. The struggle between the Jansenists and Jesuits was principally called forth by his ideas on abstruse subjects. The influence of Augustine may be traced in the following utterly meaningless utterances of one of our noble Lords, who said a week or two ago, "that no law was needed to sanction or proclaim that the Sabbath was of divine origin. The profound wisdom inducing it, and the absolute necessity of such a day, must be apparent to all, whilst no human mind could have evolved such a scheme of Sunday observance;" and immediately after he complains that the observance which needed no law was being jeopardised by the lawgivers of England, who intended to abolish the law with reference to the keeping of the Sabbath; and thus an institution, which no human mind could have evolved, would vanish for ever. The ignorance of the noble Lord is stupendous; he apparently does not know that he is really defending an institution which took its origin in the worship of the heathenish God, "Sab," which the nomadic Jews carried about in an ark, and which they deposited every seventh day in a "bath" (tent) called Sabbath, the "tent of Sab," and not "tabernacle;" and he seems to be equally unaware of the fact that the Phœnicians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans possessed similar movable "sun-oracles." Such senseless utterances have occupied, and still occupy, more than seven-eighths of Christianity. The first great dialectical wars which Augustine waged were directed against the Manichæans, Donatists, and, above all, the Pelagians, the followers of Pelagius, a British Monk, who dared to teach that death had not been introduced into the world by Adam, but that, on the contrary, man was necessarily, and by nature mortal, so that even had Adam not sinned, he would nevertheless have died; and that further, the consequences of Adam's sin were confined to himself, and did not affect his posterity. From these premises, Pelagius drew certain

important conclusions—which necessarily went against the inherited sin theory, the necessity of an atonement, and the numberless calumnies against our miserable, wretched, wicked, sinful, abominable, and horrible nature. Pelagius shook the very foundation of the theological structure, which in its details and dogmas began to be far more Pagan than Christian. Augustine was in arms against these blasphemies; and historians can trace in this quarrel between the wild and passionate Monk, and the cool and rational British Priest, a more developed germ of the Reformation, the seed of which had been sown long before by the not very edifying quarrels between St. Paul and St. Peter, as representatives of Hellenism and Hebraism.

A Synod held at Diopolis acquitted Pelagius of heresy. Pope Innocent I. condemned him. The next Pope, Zosimus, declared the opinions of Pelagius perfectly orthodox, but in spite of this, Augustine craftily obtained a decree from the Emperor, declaring Pelagius a heretic, condemning him and his adherents to exile and confiscating all their worldly goods.

To obtain an insight into the arguing practised and taught by Augustine, it will be well to consider a few passages from the 11th, 12th, and 13th books of his "Confessions."

He of course begins by praying "that God will give him to understand the Scriptures, and will open their meaning to him," and declares at once "that in them there is nothing superfluous, but that the words have a manifold meaning." The apparent humility of this prayer really conceals the most inordinate pride. First he prayed, then comes the terrible assumption that God must have heard his prayer—and then all his utterances and writings become embodiments of God's spirit, and the most unscientific, confused and incoherent loquacity is taken as spoken or written under God's holy inspiration.

Having invoked the help of God, Augustine begins to argue and apparently to contradict Scripture; but as he contradicts with the purpose of refuting his own contradictions, the doubts which he raises are so childish, that it does not require much ingenuity to dispose of them. This is the method generally followed by theologically trained minds, a method calculated to deceive ignorant men and emotional women.

With pomp and vanity Augustine says:—

"The face of creation testifies that there has been a Creator; but at once arises the question, How and when did He make

heaven and earth? They could not have been made *in* heaven and earth; the world could not have been made *in* the world, nor could they have been made when there was nothing to make them of."

The solution Augustine finds is extremely simple:—

"Thou spakest, and they were made!" he exclaims, but does not tell us *where* the Deity spoke; *in* or *beyond* the world.

The speaking of the Deity involves him in new perplexities, for he says:—

"The syllables thus uttered by God came forth in succession, and there must have been some created thing to express the words. This created thing must therefore have existed before heaven and earth, and yet there could have been no corporeal thing before heaven and earth. It must have been a creature because the words passed away and came to an end; but we know that the word of the Lord endureth for ever! Moreover, it is plain that the words thus spoken could not have been spoken successively, but simultaneously, else there would have been time and change; succession in its nature implying time, whereas there was then nothing but eternity and immortality. God knows and says eternally what takes place in time."

There is time and yet there is no time, there is eternity but that is not time. There is an *eternally* speaking Deity, but the words this Deity speaks could not have been spoken successively, but must have been spoken simultaneously and eternally. A superficial analysis of these and similar phrases amply suffices to show their utter hollowness and senselessness.

The next difficulty Augustine finds in the mystic words: "In the beginning."

What was there before the Beginning began? He suddenly saves himself from the terrible aspect of a beginning Beginning, and exclaims:—

"How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord! in wisdom hast Thou made them all. This wisdom is the beginning, and in that Beginning the Lord created heaven and earth. But," he adds, "some one may ask: 'What was God doing before He made the heaven and earth?' for, if at any particular moment He began to employ Himself, that means time, not eternity. In eternity nothing transpires; the whole is present."

He at once answers the indirect question with one of those direct assertions, insinuating that, though he did not intend to say

anything, yet that he was well acquainted with the doings of the Deity :—

“I will not answer this question by saying that He was preparing Hell for pryers into his mysteries. I say that before God made heaven and earth He did not make anything; for no creature could be made before any creature was made. Time itself is a creature, and hence it could not possibly exist before creation. What then is time? The past is not, the future is not, the present—who can tell what it is, unless it be that which has no duration between two nonentities? There is no such thing as ‘a long time,’ or ‘a short time,’ for there are no such things as the past and the future. They have no existence, except in the soul.”

Such incoherent, rhapsodical assertions as these have been looked upon as learned disquisitions on sacred and scientific subjects for more than fourteen hundred years. We might quote the whole of Augustine’s works, line by line, to prove that they are nothing but inflated and arrogant conversations between the writer and his assumed God. These utterances may be looked upon as those of an individual suffering from religious hallucination, which have become to a high degree methodical; and we may well exclaim with Polonius: “Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.”

And such mystic madness stimulated men’s thinking faculties into action, and in time produced a Bacon, a Newton, a Leibnitz, a Des Cartes, and a Kant.

Another passage from the twelfth book is still more characteristic in its originality, but less methodical :—

“This, then, is what I conceive, O, my God,” when I hear the Scripture saying, ‘In the beginning God made heaven and earth; and the earth was invisible and without form, and darkness was upon the deep,’ and not mentioning what day thou createdst them; this is what I conceive, that because of the heaven of heavens—that intellectual heaven whose intelligence knows all at once, not in part, not darkly, not through a glass, but as a whole, in manifestation, face to face; not this thing now, and that thing anon; but (as I said) know all at once, without any succession of times; and because of the earth, invisible and without form, without any succession of times, which succession presents this thing now, that thing anon, because where there is no form there is no distinction of things; it is, then, on account of these two, a primitive formed, and a primitive formless; the one heaven, but the heaven of

heavens; the other, earth, but the earth moveable and without form; because of these two, do I conceive did the Scripture say, without mention of days, 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' For, forthwith it subjoined what earth it spake of, and also in that firmament is recorded to be created the second day, and called heaven, it conveys to us of which heaven He before spake without mention of days. Wondrous depth of Thy words! Whose surface, behold! is before us, inviting to little ones; yet are they a wondrous depth, O, my God—a wondrous depth! It is awful to look therein; an awfulness of honour, and a trembling of love. The enemies, therefore, I hate vehemently; O that Thou wouldst slay them with Thy two-edged sword, that they might no longer be enemies to it; for so do I love to have them slain unto themselves, that they may live unto Thee!"

Greek philosophy was turned by this passionate African fanatic into rambling sophistry, and the teachings of Christ, full of love and forgiveness, into a system of bloodthirsty persecution. Science was scorned, and continually abused, but barefaced stupidity, heartless pride, and insolent arrogance were used to destroy and degrade pure Christianity, to transform it into a code of implacable hatred, and to foster persecution and wholesale murder.

In the thirteenth Book of his "Confessions," Augustine touches the grand Mystery of Mysteries, the "Trinity," and proves it to be contained in the teachings of the immortal Jewish lawgiver, Moses.

In great excitement, he says:—

"Lo, now the Trinity appears unto me in a glass darkly, which is Thou, my God, because Thou, O Father, in Him who is the beginning of our wisdom, which is Thy wisdom, born of Thyself, equal unto Thee, and co-eternal, that is, in Thy Son, createdst heaven and earth. Much now have we said of the heaven of the heavens, and of the earth, invisible and without form, and of the darksome deep, in reference to the wandering instability of its spiritual deformity, unless it had been converted unto Him, from whom it had its then degree of life, and by His enlightening became a beauteous life, and the heaven of that heaven, which was afterwards set between water and water. And under the name of God I now beheld the Father, who made these things; and under the name of the beginning, the Son in whom He made these things; and believing as I did, my God as the Trinity; I searched further in His holy words, and lo! Thy Spirit moved upon the waters.

Behold the Trinity, my God! Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator of all Creation!"

As a contrast to this let us turn to a passage from the Indian Ramâyâna, a poem written by Valmîkis, in 24,000 double verses (about 1200 B.C., according to the great bibliographer, Dr. Græsse).

In the Ramâyâna, no conceited monk discusses the Deity; indirectly threatening all who may dare to pry into His mysteries with hell-fire, whilst he thinks himself authorised to commit precisely the same indiscretion; but the gods are assembled in heaven, and one of them addresses the incomprehensible first Cause in the following lofty and sublime strain:—

“O Thou, whom *threefold* might and splendour veil,
Maker, Preserver, and Transformer, hail!
 Thy gaze surveys this world from clime to clime,
 Thyself immeasurable in space and time:
 To no corrupt desires, no passions prone:
 Unconquered conqueror, infinite, unknown;
 Though in one form Thou veil'st Thy might divine,
 Still, at Thy pleasure, every form is Thine.
 Pure crystals thus prismatic hues assume
 As varying light and varying tints illumine;
 Men think Thee absent; Thou art ever near,
 Pitying those sorrows, which Thou ne'er canst fear.
 Unsordid penance Thou alone canst pay;
 Unchanged, unchanging—old without decay:
 Thou knowest all things—who Thy praise can state?
 Createdst all things—Thyself uncreate!”

What a difference in language, purity and grandeur of conception! The *three* in *one* is the Universe pervaded by a Divine Force, manifesting itself in the tri-une phenomena of Creation, Preservation, and Transformation in space and time throughout eternity.

In imitation of Plato's "State" and Pliny's "History of Nature," Augustine wrote a work entitled "De civitate Dei, Libri XXII." (The City of God, in twenty-two books). He here divides humanity into two groups:

1. Such as have mere carnal ideas, and are damned. And—
2. Such as live in the spirit, and must be saved.

Augustine thus assumed two States, of which one would perish in the general conflagration on the day of judgment. Of this perishable State the Devil was supreme ruler; it was based on Egotism and a contempt of God. The other he asserted to be a heavenly State, in which God is King: the State itself being based

on Love to God, and contempt of ourselves. The phenomenal or visible world was with Augustine a realm of sin, wickedness, misery, crime and wretchedness, in opposition to an ideal world of faith and blissfulness, of purity and eternal salvation.

Reality was with him corrupt, and he left reality to the lay power, which by degrees began to feel its strength: and the struggle between Pope and Emperor, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the Devil commenced. This struggle was foreshadowed in Augustine's writings; it lasted for more than a thousand years, and ended in our century with the abolition of the temporal power of the Pope.

Augustine, in his "City of God," condemns all worldly endeavour or activity as sinful; he assumes a spiritual government over all earthly matters, and settles all moral, dogmatic and scientific subjects from a theological point of view.

Augustine worked out the hypotheses of "Predestination," "Special Grace," and "Free Will;" confusing assumptions with an utterly false moral foundation. If "Predestination" were made the ruling force of humanity, what would become of our *self-conscious moral responsibility*? If we were to admit a higher, more powerful, independent force not *within*, but *without* or *above* us, which directly or even indirectly regulated the destinies of individuals, nations, and humanity—individuals, nations, and humanity would be released from all moral responsibility, and could not become masters of their fate; their actions having been predisposed, pre-arranged, and providentially predestined, by "Special Grace," or any other arbitrary grant over which the individual had no control, could not come under the influence of order and law.

The hypotheses of "Predestination" and "Special Grace" transformed man into a mere puppet, with a mighty divine wire-puller behind him; and history enacted by such puppets could be nothing but an incoherent pantomime, in which the scientific men were the clowns, and the theologians the managers, directing both, their self-constituted wire-pulling Deity and the besotted puppets, and continually preparing "the last transformation scene," illumined with the lurid glare of hell-fire.

Augustine and his theological disciples looked upon the phenomena of nature, and of man's higher moral and intellectual activity, as mere chance effects of the working of some supernatural power.

Contrary to Confucius, mediæval Christianity on the principles laid down by Augustine did not follow out the axiom—"The wise man seeks the cause of his defects in *himself*; but the fool, avoiding himself, seeks it in all others beside himself." The bigoted and uneducated under theological training look for redress in proud humbleness and blind faith, from any force or power *without*, and not *within* themselves, and by this means fall an easy prey to their ecclesiastical or political task-masters. It is either "despotism," pure and simple, assuming the incompetence of the masses to govern themselves, that plays at "Providence," "Predestination," "Special Grace by the Will of God;" or it is "Clericalism" in a thousand different forms, which, in accordance with Augustine, builds up, arranges, furnishes, decorates, and adorns "a higher state" of spiritual blissfulness in unapproachable regions, where archangels, angels, saints, confessors, martyrs, deacons, sextons, ringers, and beadles, rule supreme in opposition to this world, in which the masses are misled by devils, demons, infidels, unbelievers, agnostics, pantheists, and, worst of all, scientific inquirers, who dare to pry into the "wonderful" and "awful" mysteries of God.

Rousseau, like Augustine, wrote "Confessions"—the one from a political, and the other from a purely theological point of view. Both were fanatics, and both strove to improve the fate of humanity.

Augustine, like Rousseau, gives us a precise history of his own *inner* life, which he finishes by adopting the Christian religion: the other, who began as a pious Christian child, abjured Christianity, became an atheist, and tells us the causes which induced him to change his opinions on matters divine and human.

Augustine looks upon history as something utterly indifferent, and far beneath the dignity of his consideration. He is convinced that in all historical matters God and Predestination are doing what is right, and that no amount of study and knowledge can change what has been ordained by God to happen, whether in politics or in every man's private life. This ruling conviction still excludes the study of General History on a scientific basis from nearly all our educational establishments, and may serve to explain the unanimity with which the University of Oxford hailed the introduction of the study of Scandinavian languages and antiquities, and the delight which one of our most liberal papers expressed on this occasion, finding it perfectly clear that there could be no taint of heresy, or of radicalism, in Scandinavian studies. The

study of General History by reason of its drawing of analogies and comparisons, rectifying of dates, and analysing of different religious systems, is thought to be tainted with the horrible poison of heresy, and the bigoted fear, lest we might learn from history that man at all times, and in all places, had very analogous notions with reference to the means by which his higher *moral* progress was to be effected.

Rousseau on the other hand, like Vico, Guicciardini, Bolingbroke, Herder and Lessing before him, clearly saw the necessity of the study of history, and assigned to it the greatest importance. But whilst Rousseau often misunderstood history, we are compelled to admit that Augustine thoroughly grasped the wants of superstitious and ignorant humanity. Scepticism and mere negation are even more bleak and despairing than the most childish "emotionalism," leading through fear of punishment, and hope for reward to a certain kind of practical morals. Rousseau saw only chance, misery, and wretchedness in the progressive development of civilisation, and wanted to lead us back to the bosom of mother nature. Augustine traced all the miseries besetting humanity, not to a misunderstanding of the laws of nature, but to a Father who mercifully punished his children for a sin committed by Adam in Paradise—which was called "the original sin," and he advised humanity to rely on this Father with childlike submission, to eat, to drink, to sleep, but above all to pray, to sing, to believe, and not to inquire, as we had only one destiny on earth, to atone for the terrible inheritance left us by Adam, "THE ORIGINAL SIN."

Augustine heard in the first cry of a new-born child a heart-rending lament over the sinfulness of this world, which had been created by a benevolent first Cause.

The degrading theory of an original sin cannot possibly exercise any elevating influence on our moral development. In connection with this it may be instructive to consider the impression this preposterous and impious assumption made on the mind of a cultivated Chinese Mandarin, who had been brought up in the moral principles of Confucius. He met a missionary and hearing of the superiority of the Christian religion, was ready patiently to listen, and to allow himself to be instructed. The creation of the world by a God was admitted; then came the special creation of man, and the "inherited Sin"—and the assertion that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The Mandarin

rose in wrath, clutched a bamboo, and asked the following questions: Who created the world? "God," was the answer. And who created man? "God," was the next answer. And who made man sin, and created him mortal? The missionary hesitated, and the Mandarin thereupon gave him a sound thrashing, and exclaimed, "I will teach you to have a higher notion of the Deity, and to have a loftier conception of his most perfect and wonderful creature—man, with all his exalted virtues of family love, knowledge, industry, arts and sciences. Go, and annoy me no longer with your blasphemous assumptions for which you have not a word in the teachings of Christ."

The fundamental theory upon which a degrading system of morals had been constructed was, in Augustine's time, already opposed by great divines and was altogether discarded by Rousseau who, in his sceptic atheism, was more pious in assuming that nature could not have done any wrong. Whilst Augustine insisted upon faith, prayer and contemplation, as the only means of conquering our sunken, sinful nature, and thus poisoned the pure moral atmosphere of man,—Rousseau demanded practical sciences, technical skill—anything that would strengthen the inventive and reasoning faculty.

Both agree that the young ought to be made acquainted with *truth*; but, unhappily, this word has many relative significations, and cannot be grasped by finite beings in its absolute sense. They both wished intellect to be cultivated; the one that it might see the glories of the heavens, and the other, to improve man's earthly happiness. Both were equally blind to the fact that only in a perfectly harmonious culture of imagination and reason, of heart and head, of morals and intellect, could an approximate solution of our destiny be found.

Augustine should be read side by side with Rousseau; but we must be careful not to take the opinions of either for dogmatic truths or mathematical rules of life. Many of their guesses at the causes of the evils rampant among us are correct; but they are mere suggestions thrown out, according to the spirit of the time in which both lived. Augustine is the *alpha* of a theologico-philosophical system that swayed humanity to its detriment for more than fourteen hundred years, and Rousseau is the politico-social *omega* produced by the same wild and fantastic theological system. Both—in preaching faith and common sense, hope and practical reason, charity, freedom, and equality—produced blood-

shed, hatred, despair, despotism, and political and religious persecution.

The forces working in Humanity were disturbed by both, because they started with preconceived ideas; the one with "a concrete original sin," the other with "an abstract purity of nature;" both powerfully impressed those whom they addressed, and both failed to readjust the balance between morals and intellect in a truly Christian sense.

There was, however, something wonderfully beneficial in the blending of heathen notions and principles with Christianity; the thread of continuity was kept up, isolation avoided, and humanity appears to the assiduous student of true history as one great whole, swayed by immutable laws.

By placing religion and science in a conflicting and antagonistic relation the Fathers aroused a spirit of inquiry, and controversialists and theological casuists who sought to lead us away from the first simple teachings of Christ were in reality instrumental in bringing us back to them.

In Church and State an apparently *retrograde* movement to the benefit of humanity at large is fortunately perceptible. The State gives up more and more an assumed fantastic *prestige* of national honour, diplomatic niceties and double dealings—the stronger a State is, the more it can afford to be equitable and just. In religion we endeavour to turn back to the primitive sources of Christianity which, like all streams, was far purer, more lucid and refreshing at its source than in its continually broadening course, when it became mixed with the quicksands of sophistry, the shoals of dogmatic rubbish, and coloured red by the torrents of blood shed by the fanatics of all sects.

The Fathers benefited humanity, for they tried—

- (a.) To be scientific, though they opposed science.
- (b.) They used the Greek philosophical and historical writers, though they declared them profane and heretical.
- (c.) They wrote in Latin, and thus kept up the knowledge of the language of Cicero, Cæsar, Tacitus, Pliny, and Seneca.
- (d.) They cursed and abused nature, prohibited its study as a prying into the awful mysteries of God, and by degrees, on the principle "*nitimur in vetitum*" (we crave for the forbidden), promoted a systematic study of nature.
- (e.) They used the Hebrew Scriptures, and blended the Oriental and Hellenic mode of thinking into one.

- (f.) They fostered mysticism, and called forth the study of man and nature, of astronomy, chemistry, physiology and psychology; abounding in far greater and more intelligible mysteries than any of the Fathers ever dreamt of.
- (g.) They preached love, humility, and forbearance, and yet openly practised hatred, pride, and persecution, by which means they kept man's moral and intellectual powers in a continuous motion of action and reaction.
- (h.) They introduced a controversial spirit into theology, which stimulated and disciplined man's mental activity, and led Humanity through the dark cloisters of monasteries into the broad daylight of inventions and discoveries, that put an end to all the distorted theological conceptions of the Deity.

Thus Man began to be studied in his slow and gradual historical development, not on false and imaginary principles, but on the foundation of his own human nature. The calumnious assertion that man, from the moment he entered into this world, had been destined for evil is dying out; and the assumption that the whole of his earthly pilgrimage is to be simply a dim attempt to answer the inane question: "Is life worth living?" is contemptuously looked upon as the utterance of attitudinizing Pessimists, who think that we have only one task to fulfil—to sigh and to crouch in everlasting terror of a *curse* which Humanity is said to have been *blessed* with by the merciful Creator of all things visible and invisible.

