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THE  
RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PARENTS

IN REGARD TO  
THEIR CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUS EDUCATION  
AND BELIEFS.

A Lecture

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SUNDAY LECTURE SOCIETY,

ON

SUNDAY AFTERNOON, 14th NOVEMBER, 1875.

BY

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## S Y L L A B U S.

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NOTICE of the first Sunday Lectures at the Philosophical Institute, Beaumont-square, Mile-end, in 1842.

The question in this Lecture is distinctly social, though necessarily involving some consideration of theological propositions—particularly Eternal Punishment.

That is an open question, even in the Church of England, by the Privy Council's decision in the case of the Rev. H. B. Wilson, one of the writers of 'Essays and Reviews.'

Parental claims to rights over their children's religious beliefs divided into—

- 1.—Their having caused their children's existence.
- 2.—Their maintaining and educating them.
- 3.—Their love and devotion to their offspring.
- 4.—The conviction that want of a correct belief involves loss of eternal happiness and entails eternal damnation.

The difference between knowledge and belief.

Tradition.

Difficulty of proving authorship of any writings.

'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua.'

Belief in marvellous stories by all nations.

Propagandism of beliefs.

Eternal punishment or torment. Its immoral tendency exemplified by the preaching of the late Dr. Wilberforce, when Bishop of Oxford.

Inutility of arguing with those who make a merit of belief though irreconcilable with reason.

Allowance should be made for 'Probable Error,' as in science.

The ground taken by the not strictly orthodox for teaching a theological belief, considered.

The theologian stands alone in his endeavour to prejudice the young.

The Act of 9th Wm. 3rd., cap. 32, rendering liable to outlawry and imprisonment all who have been *educated* as Christians and who assert 'that there are more Gods than one; deny the Christian Religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority.'

How far this Act affects modern free-thinkers.

The rights of the two parents when they differ in their creed.

Children in one family brought up in different creeds.

Protestant bigotry, Sunday observance, &c

A really religious education. What is it?

THE  
RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF PARENTS  
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I AM undertaking a difficult and delicate theme; but if I fail to do justice to it, the failure will not be through want of care, for the subject has occupied my thoughts for a long period.

Should I succeed in arousing your attention, and give you some new points for earnest consideration, I shall have done as much as the Lectures which our Society undertakes to give are, as a general rule, intended for. These were in the outset proposed, not as exhaustive—not as embracing closely scientific lessons, to be given, as it were, before students in a class-room; but rather to encourage the search after desirable knowledge.

I may notice, in passing, that the idea of lectures on general knowledge on the Sunday did not even originate with the 'Sunday Evenings for the People,' so successfully inaugurated in 1866 by the National Sunday League, though temporarily stopped the same year by the equally conscientious, though, as we believe, much mistaken Lord's Day Observance Society. The opening lecture at St. Martin's Hall, Sunday, January, 1866, was by Dr. Huxley, 'On the Advisableness of Improving Natural Knowledge.'

I have a lecture before me, dated in 1842, by Mr. Philip Harwood, explaining the object of the Sunday Lectures at

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the Philosophical Institute, Beaumont-square, Mile-end, a liberal institution, founded by the late Mr. Barber Beaumont, but afterwards closed by others who held different views. I name some of the Lectures, that you may see they were much on a footing with those of our Society:—

Two Lectures 'On Falsehood, as generated and upheld by Social Usages and Insititutions.'

One 'On the Love and Pursuit of Truth.'

Two 'On Cheerfulness.'

Our 'Sunday Lecture Society,' distinguished from the 'Sunday Evenings for the People' by its being confined strictly to the delivery of Lectures on Science—Physical, Intellectual, and Moral—History, Literature, and Art; especially in their bearing upon the improvement and social well-being of mankind, was, as many of you will recollect, formed at a public meeting held at the Freemason's Tavern, at which Dr. Huxley presided, on the 25th of November, 1869. Our first Lecture was delivered in this hall by Dr. W. B. Carpenter, on the 16th of January, 1870, on 'The Deep Sea; its Physical Conditions and its Animal Life,' to an audience of nearly 800 persons,—a signal success for a new institution.

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The question I am bringing before you is a distinctly social one; one at the very root of family government, of family ties. It is, therefore, strictly within the subjects for discussion contemplated by our Society. I cannot, however, avoid considerable reference to the popular theology of the day, and particularly to that one dogma which is so repulsive to many of us—probably the most extraordinary of all dogmas it has ever entered into man's imagination to invent—Eternal Punishment in Hell Fire! In touching upon this dogma, I gladly remind you that even the Church of England, by the decision of the Privy Council in the case of *Fendal v. Wilson* (decided the 8th February, 1864, and reported in *Jurist*, vol. 10, p. 406,) is obliged to

treat it as an open question. That judgment lays down with most *naïve* caution, but still in distinct language, that they are NOT required 'to condemn as penal the expression of hope by a clergyman that even the ultimate pardon of the wicked who are condemned in the day of Judgment may be consistent with the will of Almighty God.'

It is a dogma nowhere touched upon in the Thirty-nine Articles of our Church, nor in the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. It is only to be found in the Athanasian Creed, and it is there confined to those who do not believe in the Trinity. It depends only upon a few isolated texts scattered through the four Gospels.

However, you will bear in mind that my lecture to-day does not rest upon the truth of any dogma. It may be absolutely true, for instance, that a God was born of a Virgin Mary. It may be equally true that the twin demigods, Castor and Pollux, were the children of Leda. I shall have little or nothing to say as to the actual truth or falsehood of theological propositions of any kind. The question is, Whether parents (orthodox or unorthodox) have a right to instil any creed whatever into their children. At the conclusion of the Lecture I shall briefly touch upon the question what a religious education ought to be.

It would seem that, as in still earlier times the head of the family looked upon his slaves or servants as his absolute property, so, to this day, a sort of absolute right is tacitly assumed by parents over their children, invariably up to a certain age, and oftentimes comparatively late on in life; and not merely a right to obedience to the laws and regulations of the household, similar to what the civil government of a country requires of its citizens for maintenance of peace and order, and a right to the profits of their children's labour (without which it would be often impossible for the poorer parents to clothe and maintain them); but a right of far greater moment, namely, to control and regulate, may I not say appropriate, their MINDS, so that, in future years, these children shall not, except with great

difficulty, and often after the most painful mental struggle, emancipate themselves from this early training, this mental bondage—break a chain, in fact, which all the subtle skill of a priesthood has carefully welded, and which ecclesiastical tyranny has been employed for centuries to rivet!

I have to consider, with you, the justice or injustice of this assumed right. Whether or no the comparison between slaves and children is a true one? and that, having abolished ordinary slavery, we are not bound to abolish one as great, perhaps still greater, in our own homes?

The subject has to be considered in relation, firstly, to the joint right of the two parents; and, secondly, to the separate right of each parent.

Now upon what are their claims founded?

1st. Is the claim that the parents have, in a secondary way, caused the child's existence, a valid one?

2nd. Is the claim that the parents have of necessity, during longer years than in the case of the lower animals, maintained and educated their child until it is able to gain its own livelihood, a valid one?

3rd. Is the claim based on the parents' intense love and unwearied devotion a valid one?

4th. Finally, and especially, is the claim based on the parents' unfeigned belief that, in seeking to mould the child's opinions by their own, they are doing the one thing necessary for that child's perfect happiness—salvation as it is called—in a life supposed to commence after this one has terminated, and then to last for all eternity, is even this claim a valid one?

*Firstly.*—Can mere parentage, the exercise of functions common to nearly the whole animal and vegetal creation, can the mere fact of the parents being in a limited measure the cause of a child's existence give them such extraordinary power over its future life as that which we are here considering?

The child may surely maintain the same argument that



many of us are disposed to use with reference to eternal punishment. Even for this life, he might say, he has possibly little to thank for; his chance of happiness being not so much greater than his chance of misery. While, if the doctrine of eternal punishment is believed in by the parent and by the child as it grows up, would a sensible child do otherwise than say, "I do not want to speculate! I am no gambler! According to the marvellous tenets about God which you have taught me when a helpless child, it is clear my chance of a happy life hereafter, whatever it may be here, is infinitely small in comparison with my chance of hell torment for eternity! I would far sooner never have been born! What right had you, my parents, to connive at bringing me into existence? Talk of my owing you gratitude and obedience! No! You have for your own selfish gratification committed a gross wrong in probably adding one more victim for the devil and his angels!"

I maintain that the child has not, from the one fact of its being born, any duties towards its parents, and the parents whatever their other duties may be, cannot have gained an arbitrary right to take possession of a child's mind and mould it to their own narrow theological belief. A child's gratitude for mere birth is on a par with that which the young of the lower animals owe to their parents.

*Secondly.*—The lower animals nurture their offspring but for a very short time, and their duties in this respect are soon over. The young of man require this care for a longer period and in a higher degree. Still this increase in quantity and quality cannot affect the relative duties between parents and child? It seems sufficient on this head to say that the parents having brought the child into the world are, in keeping it alive by proper food and clothing, and by educating and putting it in the way of gaining its own livelihood, or by otherwise providing for its future sustenance and comfort, only continuing the work they have voluntarily taken upon themselves and which they have no right to abandon.

*Thirdly.*—It will be said, granted that the parents are

not entitled to any right over their child's mind by reason of the ordinary care necessary for supporting a healthy existence, they must be entitled to some in respect of their intense love and their unwearied devotion and self-abnegation in the interest of their child.

On the other hand, there is often a long account of mismanagement, foolish indulgence, ignorant departure from Nature's requirements and laws, gross neglect in teaching the child even in a cursory way the mere rudiments of those very laws on which its health, its happiness, its existence depend—to say nothing of grosser faults on the parents' part. But passing this over, and assuming that all these higher duties are performed to the full, it will at most but give the parents a right to a return in kind.

And is not this—to the credit of humanity with few exceptions—duly rendered and often rendered in abundance and with interest? Filial love and veneration, accompanied by pecuniary support if necessary,—by the sacrifice, particularly in the case of young women, of the best days of their lives, their prospect of a home and family of their own, and by the tender care bestowed on their parents through years of failing health, peevishness, and infirmity!

Care such as this—willing suppression of self—these are the returns constantly required and willingly rendered for affection and tender care bestowed by the parents in the years of infancy and youth! But where do we find a ground for saying that this previous care and devotion on their part has given the parents the least right over the child's intellectual independence? I fail to detect any, and I cannot be far wrong in saying the burden of proof lies on the parents, and that none can be shown.

*Fourthly.*—We come to the claim, which, in the present state of popular theology, requires special consideration;—the duty which many parents assume to be most highly incumbent upon them, of giving a peculiar theological bias to the child's mind, so that it may escape a frightful damnation in a life to come.

I must here make some observations as to the basis of all religious beliefs. Let us be clear upon one point—Religious *Knowledge* is a misnomer. There can be no such thing. To prove this assertion, consider what real *Knowledge* is, as distinguished from *belief*.

It will be sufficient if I here allude to two of the kinds into which knowledge has been divided, *demonstrative* and *sensitive*.

Mathematical truths of which the mind has taken in the proofs afford instances of *demonstrative* knowledge. Astronomers at the present day possess such knowledge and prove it by fortelling correctly the motions of planetary bodies through space. They are true prophets. Thus you will find stated in the 'Nautical Almanac' the exact position of the Moon at a given time three years hence, besides other information of the same kind.

When, through the agency of our senses, we obtain a perception of the existence of external objects, our knowledge is said to be *sensitive*. Here, however, the door soon opens for belief instead of knowledge. Nothing but the greatest nicety of observation, the most perfect memory, the most disciplined habit of accurate thought, and a sound judgment, will prevent errors arising in the search after knowledge through the senses. How little is there of this! What constant errors of perception do we meet with! Many believe in tables rising or levitating to the ceiling, because their eyes have seen the occurrence. A cautious observer, if a table thus seemed to him to move upwards would not trust to his sense of sight alone. He would go to where the table stood, and you may rely upon it, the table, as he approached, would appear to descend again, and by his sense of touch he would satisfy himself of his illusion. But, even the use of two or more senses by no means insures an accurate conclusion. The brain and all the faculties must be in a normal, healthy state. But time will not permit me to say more.

Now as to beliefs. Although on some matters our perceptions or the evidence furnished may lead to a strong

conviction or belief, it is not accurate to speak of this as 'knowledge.' A child will say he knows his own mother. Not so! A mother may know her own child, though not always, as occasional histories of changelings will show. A child's actual knowledge is this: that from the earliest time in his memory he has been nurtured by one who has called him her child and whom every one around has called his mother, while another has been called his father. He has, moreover, learnt to distinguish truth from falsehood, and has found (I wish it were universally so) that those called his parents have, so far as he can judge, always spoken the truth, that they have never wilfully misled him, and consequently he has every reason to believe he is their child. Such is usually the goodness of the evidence that he is almost entitled to say he knows the fact. Still, this is belief, not knowledge.

You will see that there must be various degrees of belief. These may be classified thus:—

*Firstly.*—Beliefs based on accurate observations, and on proper deductions from those observations.

*Secondly.*—Beliefs on matters coming within the scope of our human faculties, and supported by the direct and unbiassed testimony of capable persons.

*Thirdly.*—Beliefs incapable of verification—traditions, dreams, and wild fancies—opinions formed at random or accepted simply because some one in the present day has so said, or some one ages ago is reported to have so said or written.

Under the first and second heads will be found much of what is called scientific discovery and scientific truth. Under the third head you will perceive that all the religions of the world must come. And while giving to the holders of these beliefs full credit for honesty and singleness of purpose, for lives of admirable purity, for devotion to what they believe the will of God, it is still of the greatest importance to keep in mind the difference here pointed out.

'Is it not written?' is the ultimate, may I not almost

say the only, argument of the theologian. 'Is it not written in the Book of Jasher' has made whole nations believe in the most extraordinary of all the curious stories to be found in the Books of Joshua and Judges. 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. *Is it not written in the Book of Jasher?* So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before or after it that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.' (Joshua x. 12-14.) [Note A.]

A 'Thus saith the Lord' (an expression, by the way, which a man of science might now use in expounding any laws of the universe) has been sufficient to convince millions upon millions of our fellow mortals that the several varying editions of the ten commandments [compare Ex. xx. with Deut. v.] as well as the other laws and rules of conduct propounded in the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy—the result of human thought and wisdom—(some of which we at the present day accept, others we reject as incorrect), were all written by the very finger or at the immediate instance of God!

What is true as to the child's want of knowledge of who are his parents applies with greater force as to his grandparents and more remote ancestors. The child believes four human beings are his grandparents. Why? Because he accepts his parents' *belief* as his own; but this is not to him so good evidence as when they can tell him of their own knowledge that he is their child. And the evidence increases in weakness as we go back each generation.

How uncertain, then, must be the exact accuracy of every fact and statement in history, even of times comparatively recent; how far more those of remote ages! All we can venture to say is, we think it possible or probable such and such events may have happened

thousands of years ago, when all we actually know is, that there are certain books or parchments still in existence—old MSS. often in a dead language—most of which there is good reason to suppose are only copies of copies of writings, and all of which (by whomsoever written and whether originals or copies) were written very long ago. As to actual authorship, why you would find it difficult to prove this lecture I am reading to you is my own composition. I tell you it is, and you may believe my statement, but this is not knowledge on your part. Imagine, then, the futility of an attempt to prove the actual authorship of a work supposed to have been written ages ago. Now, I do not, in saying this, wish to decry the work of a noble Bishop of the Church of England, one whose name, here at least, has only to be mentioned to be received with a fitting tribute of respect—Dr. Colenso, Bishop of Natal! Applause is due to the Bishop, not for his particular views, but for his honesty and manliness in expressing them in the face of bitter fanatical abuse and calumny heaped upon him by his brother clerics. His six stout volumes on the supposed authorship of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua were necessitated by the immense hold that a superstitious belief in the peculiar divine origin of these writings has upon the Christian world, the infatuation of early-instilled belief that every word in the Bible is of direct inspiration from God! [Note B.]

This attempt by a Bishop of the National Church to ascertain if the Pentateuch was written by its supposed author, Moses, was hailed by such a torrent of abuse from the Christian public—more particularly from his episcopal brethren—as to be perfectly astounding. Let me recall to you some of the epithets applied to the Bishop of Natal. One instance will suffice. In a single short letter of a brother Bishop, forbidding him to minister in this particular Bishop's diocese, the following expressions occur, applied either to him or to his work:—'unfounded,' 'false,' 'childish,' 'heretical,' 'blasphemous,' 'abominable,' 'unhappy,' 'blind,' 'daring,' 'ignorant self-sufficiency,'

'instrument of Satan,' 'poor Bishop Colenso' (Bishop Colenso's 'Pentateuch,' Part III., Preface, page 15). We may hope for the day when even the hierarchy will regret such language as this, but the time certainly is not yet. And this reception of his work is to me one of the strongest proofs of—worse than inutility—the immorality of filling the minds of children with beliefs instead of knowledge.

For every separate contribution to the Bible we have belief founded upon most insufficient evidence as ground for its date, or for attributing the authorship to one particular man. We may have fair grounds for believing that a man called Saul or Paul wrote certain of the letters which are usually known as the Epistles of St. Paul. We may have fair grounds for believing that another book called the Gospel of St. John could not have been written by any one contemporary with the writer of those epistles; but it is impossible to say we *know* who were the writers of a single sentence in any of these works. All is *belief*. To us, however, the name of the author of any book, ancient or modern, is quite of secondary importance. What is of importance is, can we learn anything from the book? If it contains instruction that assists us in our course through life, if it hands down to us any experiences in nature which we can verify as true, calls attention or leads us on to the discovery of facts, to the comprehension of any phenomena of this universe, or if we can merely gather from it the thoughts and ways of life of the former inhabitants of this earth, then we may feel thankful to the author of it, whether we have his name correctly or not, and though we fail even approximately to guess the date at which he lived. What, for instance, does it signify to us who wrote the book of Job? That ancient work is still a most interesting record of the clear thoughts of some man who probably lived several thousand years ago.

When, however, ancient books tell us stories of other worlds, and of supposed beings living out of this world, in a firmament just over our heads; when they tell us

that these extra-mundane beings visit us ; talk to us, advise and do battle for us with each other, or against our enemies ; answer us in oracles or through inspection of the entrails of sacrificed animals or the flight of birds ; that they come and eat meat and drink wine with us ; tempt us to sacrifice or murder our children ; wrestle with us in the darkness and put our limbs out of joint ; that some have actually become the half-parents of human beings ; and that men have been carried away alive from this earth to dwell with these extra-mundane beings ; and when, moreover, we are told that these beings, some of them, at least, are not only all-powerful, but, with one breath, that they are all-wise, all-good and benevolent, and, with another breath, that they are jealous, angry, and unforgiving, and endowed with other bad human passions, we have to place ourselves in the position of the Zulu of whom we have all heard [Note C.] ; and, bewildered, ask why are we to believe, still more why are we to force our children to believe all this, because it has been written and believed in in ancient times, times in which we have every ground for considering the dwellers on this earth were extremely ignorant ; ignorant of very much that we now know, and were perhaps in some respects more superstitious than the average of the present race of human beings !

Still more may we pause, on finding, by comparing the old writings of different peoples, that one nation has vied with another nation in the marvellousness of their mythologies ; that one set of religious stories is quite inconsistent with another set, and that all that they agree in is, in detailing events generally which our experience tells us do not happen in our day, and which are indeed violations of the established order of Nature, as science proves it to have existed for ages.

A minor peculiarity to be observed with regard to these ancient writings, is the anxiety with which one race strives to compel another to give up its beliefs, and, in exchange, to accept the beliefs derived from the ancient writings of the former ! Why should they ? The stories and myths



of one race are just as marvellous, and are supported by just the same kind of belief or faith as those of another, and the records of one are possibly quite as ancient as the records of the other, even if antiquity could be brought forward as a proof of veracity!

Let us now turn to the dogma of Eternal Punishment, or as it may be more fittingly styled, Eternal Torment.

When this dogma is propounded in all its abhorrent repulsiveness, it means that an all-good, an all-wise God has brought us into this life *without our consent*, and has decreed that for certain errors, and more particularly for certain errors of intellect, we should, after a few years of a possibly miserable existence here, suffer perpetual torment; that he has doomed us to everlasting fire where there shall be 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' without end.

It is to be remarked that the passages relied upon for proving this dogma of eternal damnation are only to be found in the New Testament; in the books that promulgate the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, a religion, the professors of which delight in calling one of peace and good will! On the contrary, this dogma, it would seem, has a most demoralising effect on the believers in it, making even otherwise good men gloat over an abomination, all for the greater glory of their God. Pagans of old were satisfied with bodily torment in their Hell. It remained for the clergy of a Christian Church to invent the perfect refinement of cruelty—*mental torture!* The late Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Samuel Wilberforce), when Bishop of Oxford, preaching in the parish church of Banbury, on the 24th of February, 1850 (I quote from 'Eternal Punishment,' by Presbyter Anglicanus, a pamphlet in Mr. Thomas Scott's series, published in 1864), mark the fact, *specially to school children*, dramatised the day of judgment. After describing the death of the impenitent of all classes and their coming up to the judgment seat, to be doomed to the lake of fire for ever; 'What,' asked the Bishop, 'will it be for the scholar to hear this, the man of refined and

elegant mind, who nauseates everything coarse, mean, and vulgar, who has kept aloof from everything that may annoy and vex him, and hated everything that was distasteful. Now his lot is cast with all that is utterly execrable. The most degraded wretch on earth has still something human left about him ; but now *he* must dwell for ever with beings on whose horrible passions no check or restraint shall ever be placed.' But more terrible still, and as being addressed to children, coming home to the subject we have now under discussion, was the picture of a school girl cut off at the age of thirteen or fourteen. In her short life on earth she had not seldom played truant from school, had told some lies, had been obstinate and disobedient. Now she had (for these paltry errors, *crimes* if you will) to bid farewell to heaven, to hope, to her parents, her brothers and sisters, and then followed her parting words to each. What was her agony of grief that she should never again look on their kind and gentle faces, hear their well-known voices ! All their acts of love return to her again ; all the old familiar scenes remembered with a regret which no words can describe, with a gnawing sorrow which no imagination can realise. She must leave for ever that which she now knew so well how to value, and be for ever without the love, for which she had now so unutterable a yearning. She must dwell for ever amongst beings on whom there is no check or restraint, and her senses must be assailed with all that is utterly abominable. The worst of *men* are there with every spark of human feeling extinguished, without any *law* to moderate the fury of their desperate rage!!!

I pause in amazement at this language by a Christian Bishop. An Almighty so foredooming the children of his creation, would not be a god of goodness, but a fiend and devil!

Let one Bishop, however, reprove another. Let us hear and apply the words which Bishop Watson, a century ago, applied to the monstrous doctrine propounded by the Holy Father Fulgentius, that children unbaptised (even those

dying in their mother's womb) would suffer the endless torments of hell:—'Parent of universal good,' says Bishop Watson, 'Merciful Father of the human race! How hath the benignity of Thy nature been misrepresented—how hath the gospel of thy Son been misinterpreted, by the burning zeal of presumptuous man!' (Quoted from Colenso's 'Natal Sermons,' Trübner and Co., 1867.) [Note D.]

The Buddhist and the Roman Catholic have their Purgatory; but the Puritan and the Protestant have discarded even this slender hope, and now at this very moment a Bishop of our National Church forbids to a mourning son the small consolation of a humble epitaph, 'Requiescat in Pace,' because it savours of prayer for a departed soul. With this terrible dogma before him, we may well understand any believer in the efficacy of prayer, hoping perhaps against hope, and in his agony praying for the dead. [Note E.]

Can it be the absolute duty of parents, can it be their right, while constantly neglecting to teach a child useful knowledge for this world, to teach it with the utmost diligence and pertinacity, traditional beliefs, such as the eternal damnation of sinners and the unbaptised,—and the general scheme of Christian redemption and salvation—the sacrifice, namely, of the innocent for the guilty? The existence of an immense variety of theological beliefs gives one answer in the negative. How can anyone dare to assert that his own view must be correct and all others wrong, and consequently that he is bound to impress it on the plastic mind of his child? Admit a God of universal power and beneficence, how can we couple such attributes with his making the fate of each individual depend on the sprinkling of a few drops of water on the baby, and the pronouncing of a few cabalistic words over it in baptism by a priest,—or on a correct understanding of a few Greek texts,—and with his leaving struggling humanity in such confusion that no nation thinks as another nation does—

that scarcely two individuals exactly agree in all the doctrines of their faith; while few, with real understanding, accept even its broader doctrines in the same sense that their neighbours do,—and then, that for no belief or for half a belief, or for a mistaken belief, he awards absolute damnation for eternity!

I confess it is nearly hopeless to argue with those who are fully possessed with the belief that hell fire awaits all who, whether from want of knowledge of the so-called glorious gospel of *good tidings*, or as we may be told, from a perverse use of their reasoning faculties, do not accept the scheme of redemption, through Jesus of Nazareth, laid down for them by the holy Fathers and Divines of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. When belief actually strengthens itself on the ground that it is unreasonable or beyond reason, then all argument ceases. It is useless to point out to them:—God, as you represent him, must delight in pain; for in his omnipotence he could either have prevented unbelievers being born, or could have so ‘inclined the heart’ of every child as to have made unbelief impossible. What shelves-full of patristic argument, what volumes of casuistry and theological nonsense, what mis-spent energy in needless prayer, might have been saved from the commencement of the Christian era! How well the world might have got on without the whole army of martyrs,—preachers and divines! [Note F.]

Again, these earnest over-confident believers, these orthodox parents, might bear in mind that, if their doctrine of hell torment is true, and some part of their belief as to the nature of God false, they may be preparing for their children the very damnation they hope to save them from, by this early inculcation of beliefs. They might give some heed to one modest axiom of the scientific thinker,—allow, as Mr. Moulton, in his lecture last year explained to us, a small margin for ‘*Probable Error*’ on their, the parents, part. But no! They will go their way perfectly convinced that they and they alone are in the right, that they have had a call, that they know all about God and His ways,

without the least possibility of error—erring, sinful mortals, ‘miserable offenders,’ as they will, in the Church Prayers, declare themselves to be. Admitting, in the words of St. Paul, that now they ‘see thro’ a glass darkly’ (1 Cor. xii. 13), and actually praying that God will grant them ‘in this world knowledge of His truth’—a mere lip service—they will rise from their knees and be again ready to declare the absolute truth of their doctrines—claiming thus infallibility in their own persons!

Many, however, who do not believe in the dogma of eternal torment, or who do not entirely believe in the general scheme of Christian redemption, are under the vague impression that it is well to impose upon their children some sort of theological, or, as they would call it, religious faith. Why?

The reason usually given by priests and clergy of all denominations, and by other people, for trying to seize hold of the minds of the young is this, ‘If we do not train their minds early to a belief in the true religion’ (that is, their own particular creed) ‘they will grow up infidels, atheists, &c. We shall lose them altogether.’ If this be so, can a more conclusive argument against such special teaching be found? What a sickly kind of theology must that be which cannot satisfy the doubts and criticisms of an unsophisticated, well-developed intellect!

In no other case would a teacher venture to argue thus. The man of science prefers pupils coming to him with awakened faculties and with unprejudiced minds. The Spiritualists, even, do not care to convert children to their beliefs, nor to press into each private house—spiritualistic manual in hand—and preach to parents the obligation they are under to prepare their children for ‘Spirit Belief.’ They do not molest passengers in the street each Sunday, pressing on them their leaflets or texts, their little tracts. Yet they would have as much right as the theologian to do so.

The theologians, in truth, stand alone in the world as

desiring to prejudice the tender mind of a child before it has gained fair power of judgment; though even they are quite ready to parade the conversion of a grown-up person—be he in the vigour of health, or on a death-bed—to the true faith, and to lay more value upon one such than on ninety-and-nine believers according to parental and priestly injunction.

If the marvellous doctrines to which I refer are true, it must be unnecessary to impress them upon children in the nursery; and, if they are not true, what an abomination must it be for parents to take a mean advantage of their innocent, confiding children in forcing their doctrines upon them. Nothing can more show the want of faith in the power of truth, nay, in the goodness of the God they profess to worship, than the assertion of these well-meaning people that, by omission of the earliest training of the young in theological beliefs, their souls will be imperilled for eternity.

In considering the duty of parents, I must say a few words on the wisdom of our ancestors as exemplified by an old, but still only partially repealed, Act of Parliament. In the ninth year of King William the Third, therefore nearly two hundred years ago, our legislature thought fit to enact that 'If any person or persons, *having been educated*, in or at any time having made profession of the Christian religion within this realm, shall by writing, printing, teaching, or advisedly speaking, [deny any one of the persons of the Trinity to be God]' (this sentence was repealed in 1813), 'or shall assert or maintain there are more Gods than one, or shall deny the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament to be of divine authority,' and shall be lawfully convicted on the oath of two or more witnesses, he shall, for the first offence, 'be adjudged incapable and disabled to have or enjoy any office or employment ecclesiastical, civil, or military;' and, on a second conviction, 'he shall be disabled to sue, prosecute, or plead, in any action or information, in any Court of Law or Equity, or be guardian of any child,

or executor or administrator of any person, or capable of any legacy or deed of gift, or to bear any office, civil or military, or benefice ecclesiastical for ever within this realm, and shall also suffer imprisonment for three years without bail.' This is outlawry in the sharpest terms!

This Act is not only not obsolete, but, by being included in the revised statutes, has practically been re-enacted within the last few years.

You will observe it applies to those who are '*educated*' in the Christian religion. Here, therefore, I find another distinct ground for saying we ought *not* to educate our children in the popular, any more than in any other, faith. For what right can we have, on a mere belief of our own, to expose them to outlawry, if in after-life they conscientiously give up their inherited religion, and find it in their duty openly and advisedly to say so!

It is curious to note how little this Act affects modern free-thought. No earnest free-thinker would for a moment deny that there may be 'one God' or that God may be a compound of any number of persons, or assert that there are two or more Gods. The most he would presume to say is, 'I do not think it is given to human beings to prove the existence of a God, let there be one or ever so many.' A crazy man might assert that an omnipotent God or Devil lives in the planet Jupiter. A sensible man would not deny this. He would say, 'You cannot prove it; I decline to argue the matter with you.'

With regard to the existence of more Gods than one, it would be interesting, but is unnecessary here, to consider whether among orthodox believers in a God and a personal Devil there are not many who do, in effect, assert that there are *two* Gods. The belief in a Devil affords many of the orthodox the greatest comfort, while the peculiar powers attributed to him are little short of omnipotence, even if they do not occasionally exalt him above their very God! It was but the other day the Archbishop of Canterbury, through the Judge of the Arches Court, declared that a Mr. Jenkins, of Clifton, was rightly deprived of the privilege of

partaking the Holy Communion—in other words, was excommunicated—for not believing in the personality of Satan. [See the *Times* newspaper of 17th July, 1875, for report of *Jenkins v. Rev. Flavel Cook*].

Again, a cautious free-thinker would not deny the truth of the Christian or any other religion. He might say, 'I do not know, in the conflict of sects, what is and what is not the Christian religion. There are many laws accepted by Christians which I heartily accept; but there are also dogmas, by some of you considered as essential, which I think unimportant or absurd; but I hold them to be nearly all beyond man's power to decide upon, and, therefore, keep my opinions in suspense.'

Further, the free-thinker may have no objection to the term 'Holy' as applied to the books constituting the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, nor may he care to dispute that they may be of divine authority; for the Act does not exclude his maintaining that other ancient writings are *holy*. He looks upon every truth as divine, and considers the writings of every reasoning being in a certain measure inspired—produced through the divine faculty of reason. The author of the Book of Job may have been a finer, more inspired poet than our Milton; the author of the Book of Proverbs may have been more clear-sighted than our Locke, and may have written a book more instructive, more inspired, than his on the 'Human Understanding;' and the Song of Solomon may have been finer than any that have been written by our Byron. Nevertheless, there may be inspiration in all. The Church of England, it is to be noted, does not require a belief, even by the clergy, in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. [Note G.]

I will now consider the rights and duties of parents between themselves.

If I am correct in stating that the parents are jointly bound to abstain from taking advantage of their child's feebleness and mental inability to resist the imposition of a creed (just as the poor little North American Indian



cannot resist having its skull flattened by its parents applying constant pressure with boards), so still less ought it to be permitted to one single parent to educate the child according to his or her individual tenets. The law of England gives this absolute power to a father in preference to a mother. This may be declaimed against as an injustice towards the latter. But, admitting that we have a right over our children's creed, the law clearly can give that right but to one parent; and, while sympathising with women in their efforts to obtain a more equal social position, I incline to think the power in question, so long as parents continue to exercise it at all, is better legally given to the male parent. I would ask, however, all, and particularly those who advocate women's rights, to ascertain where the injustice lies; whether it is not an injustice altogether towards the child, and consequently not one to the mother.

I use this very difficulty between two parents as a strong argument to show the impropriety of the present system. If, as is not unfrequent, the parents differ between themselves, the actual arrangement must be a compromise. But the idea of a compromise on such a subject ought to be odious to any serious, religious person. Where one parent gives up the assumed right to the other, must there not be a constant sense of a duty neglected in not impressing on the child the faith of that parent in preference to the faith of the other? Still the claims of both are distinctly equal. Law, or compromise, or the nurse, must settle the child's creed. Probably in most cases it is the latter individual who fills the mind of the child with hobgoblin tales,—with foolish superstitions of every kind, and leads the way to, if she does not actually inculcate, that belief or superstition which, under the vague term of his religion, eventually takes possession of the child.

Let me quote the words of our poet Dryden:—

'By education most have been misled,  
So they believe because they were so bred;  
The Priest continues what the Nurse began,  
And so the child imposes on the man.'

Now, even in mixed marriages, all will be clear sailing, if both parents concur in and see to the strict carrying out of the 'no creed' system of education, both in the nursery and elsewhere; while all may be discomfort and irritation, dispute and anger between the parents where they differ, and both think it a duty to impress their own views and convictions on the child. But why is even the unanimity of the parents to give a right which they can neither of them individually claim? I fail to see it.

This consideration of mixed marriages—marriages of parents of different faiths—is of sufficient importance in my general argument for me to dwell upon it more fully. Consider cases of the kind. The Roman Catholic priest and Church interfere where they can. They require, when a Catholic lady is about to marry any one of a different religion, that the girls, at least, shall be educated in the true faith, and they choose wisely, for they well know who in the household have the power of instilling into the infant mind any amount of fear, fables, and narrow beliefs, and that if they only get the girls of one generation educated in the Catholic faith, they are preparing so many more mothers of the next generation to carry on their system; let alone the almost certainty that some of the boys will be affected in the nursery or school-room by the peculiar atmosphere that will hang about them.

When the bargain is between a Roman Catholic mother and a High Churchman, it may be said, and with bitter truth now-a-days, that there is no essential difference between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant (a name which by-the-way the High Churchman is quite right in repudiating); but the father may be, for our argument, a Unitarian, a Rationalist, a Mahomedan.

We may in any case have a family strangely divided. The boys, if following their father's creed, will have little sympathy with the feelings and sentiments of their sisters, even if they have the good manners not to indulge in ridiculing them for their narrow-mindedness and bigotry.

The girls will be brought up to pray in Church that God shall have mercy upon their brothers, the 'Turks, infidels, and heretics' [Good Friday collect], and if they are of the Church of England, on the thirteen occasions when the Athanasian Creed is read, they will piously doom these very brothers to eternal torment for their want of a correct belief; and further, by the 18th Article of that Church, will declare a curse upon all who presume to say, as I am glad many in the present day most heartily do, 'that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of Nature.'

How, by the way, can a Church with the least consistency bear the name of a National Church when it deals out so liberally curses and anathemas upon half the nation?

Nothing can be more baneful than this division of a family. Think, too, what a mother's agony ought to be, at every moment firmly convinced that her sons are growing up with a belief that shall ensure for them eternal damnation.

With the impossibility of any honest compromise, the conviction stares us in the face that this is a case in which neither parent can have any right of control.

To educate and train a child in the best way to fit him as he grows in years to form his own judgment must surely be the duty of a Protestant. If our forefathers were right in breaking from the Roman Catholic Church, with a declaration that every person is responsible for his own opinions, how miserably did they, how miserably do the present generation, fail to bring their principles into action. How can any one judge freely for himself in the matter of religious belief if, while still of tender years, his whole mind, his thoughts by day and by night are warped by those who profess to be his guardians, whose sole object is (with praiseworthy motive, I admit) to fill every corner of his existence with their own belief? Look

to the houses of any of these good people. Round the rooms pictures of holy saints or Bible subjects, texts of Scripture over the very beds of the little innocents; crosses, if not crucifixes, hung round the room and round their bodies, crosses on their books; prayer the first moment of waking, the last moment before the night's rest; the volume containing a singularly miscellaneous collection of writings (embracing, besides many wise and ennobling thoughts, stories more marvellous [Note A.] than those of Jack the Giant Killer or Aladdin's Lamp, and a love song, and erotic stories such as the Song of Solomon and Susanna and the Elders), this volume in every room in the house with such a halo of sanctity thrown around it! So much for the week days, while for the Sunday additional theological atmosphere is introduced, with attendance at Church once, twice, or thrice. Not a game allowed, no cheerful dance, not a song nor a note of music except such as shall intensify the theological aspect of the day. The child's Sunday story-book (a modern invention to prevent actual nursery rebellion), and the Noah's Ark (a tradition wholly inconsistent with our present knowledge) judiciously brought forward to instil into the mind, as it were, at every pore, the belief of one if not both of the parents. What a farce to tell a child after this that he has been and is free to choose his own religious belief.

Few consider what they are doing in teaching their children our Church Catechism. We were ourselves made to learn it without understanding, and we hand down the practice to the next generation without a thought. I will here but refer to one point. Children of tender years are asked if they do not think they are bound to believe all 'the Articles of the Christian Faith,' and are compelled to answer, 'Yes, verily, and by God's help so I will.' A pledge, therefore, a vow, of present and of future belief in Christian dogmas and mysteries is thus exacted from them at an age when the asking for ANY answer is, I maintain, a mockery and irreverence!

I am not sanguine of seeing the views here expressed speedily accepted. Still we do progress rather more rapidly than formerly in shaking ourselves out of preconceived theological opinions. It has taken some centuries [Note F.] to emancipate geology from the trammels of the Mosaic Cosmogony and Deluge; it has taken some centuries to shake off a belief in the divine institution of slavery. Four centuries ago, the action of the Pope with reference to the Jewish child Mortara, stolen not long since from his parents and educated as a Christian against their will, would have been accepted by the Christian public as morally right. Thousands still consider it so. Coming to our times, it has taken half a century to convince the clergy and the orthodox laity of the justice of a 'conscience clause' in our schools of primary education. The crowning fact in this direction took place but five years ago, when the Legislature enacted (33 Vic. cap. 75) that 'no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination' should be taught in our new parish schools. One venerable Archdeacon, at least, and thousands of our Christian public, still look upon this as most ungodly! I am here only advocating the extension of the same principle from the elementary school to the family circle. There is no more ground for the exercise of parental, than there was in the Mortara case for the exercise of Papal, authority. But more than one generation will pass away before this will be generally accepted as a truism.

Reviewing the whole subject, there seem to be but two consistent positions. Parents must either declare themselves to be infallible Popes and claim an absolute right of dictating to their children the sole belief they are to entertain; or the children should be carefully guarded, from the earliest period of their existence, against the tyranny of any prejudiced belief, be it in a fairy tale, or ghosts, in portents, or in any one of the numerous and complicated theological propositions with which humanity is oppressed. [Note H.]

That this latter position is possible we have an example in one whom we have but so recently lost, John Stuart Mill! Though trained in no Creed,—no one, however much opposed to him in politics and even on social questions will deny him the tribute of a well-spent life, a life of devotion to the cause of humanity, and it will not be too much to prophecy that before long he will be quoted (very awkwardly indeed) as a defender of orthodoxy!

No barrier was placed in his way to accepting, when he grew up, any one of the religions of the world. He was free to study and did study these various religions from a purely philosophical standpoint. He, among very few indeed of our countrymen, had the good fortune to be in this unfettered position; but it is one that I unhesitatingly claim for every human being.

Of what value is a religious belief that cannot be accepted by a matured mind, educated wholly without prejudice in favour of any particular form of belief or worship? Let us bear in mind, too, that not only may creeds imposed upon the young be hurtful; forms and ceremonies, also, in religion are noxious. The forms and ceremonies of every church, their vestments, and other fantasies, may be compared to the ivy which grows around the oak, killing the young and enfeebling the mature. 'You want a form,' says Lessing; 'but it so happens that a form does not simply subsist alongside of the essential; it enfeebles, tends to weaken and supersede the essential.'

While, therefore, ceasing to keep our children in mental swaddling clothes, let us strive to educate them in what I will call religious principles, or, adopting Professor Clifford's expression in his lecture ('On Right and Wrong') on Sunday last,—in 'Piety;' namely, give them *knowledge*, not *beliefs*. With reference to belief teach them to proportionate it to the evidence they may find to support it; and when they see (I quote John Stuart Mill—Inaugural Address to the University

of St. Andrew's), 'that the specially instructed are so divided that almost any opinion can boast of some high authority and no opinion whatever can claim all—teach them to keep their minds open and not on such momentous matters to barter away their freedom of thought ;' train their powers of observation and reasoning ; teach them from their earliest years to distinguish good from bad conduct—right from wrong—teach them to speak openly what is to them the truth, regardless of a mean consideration of consequences ; teach them a noble selfishness or self-love, that of seeking their own good in doing good to others as well as themselves,—impress upon them for their own sake and the sake of those near and dear to them as also of every human being, that a strict obedience to the unvarying laws of nature, those laws both physical and moral which we study and gradually discover, leads more and more to the happiness of the individual and the community in general, while the contrary conduct leads to discord, wretchedness, and misery. If we so teach them, and further, if instead of pressing on them a compulsory belief in one particular religion,—be it Christian or Mormon, Jewish or Polytheistic, Mahomedan or Buddhist, Confucian or Zoroastrian,—we make them study the leading features—the moral elements—in all religions, we may fairly say we have done our duty and not exceeded it !



## APPENDIX.



NOTE A.—Pages 13 and 28.

### *Curious Stories in the Old Testament.*

A reference here may be convenient to some of the other marvellous stories to be found in the Pentateuch and Books of Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, which the clergy still expect, not only children, but grown-up men and women to accept as absolute inspired truths, because they happen to be found in ancient records of a peculiar people.

The frequent narratives to be found in the earlier of these books of appearances of God ('and they saw the God of Israel,' Exodus xxiv. 10, besides other passages) and of familiar personal intercourse between God and Moses and Aaron, extending in one case (Exodus xxxiii. 23) to God showing his back parts to Moses, are in singular and significant contrast with the more philosophic notions which must have prevailed in the later days of the writer of St. John's Gospel. 'No man hath SEEN God at any time,' John i. 18.



Exodus iv. 2-7.—'And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said a rod. And he said cast it on the ground, and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: *That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee!*'

And the Lord said further more unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom; and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow. And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and, behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

Exodus vii. 10-11.—The God of the Jews is again represented as turning Moses' rod into a serpent—a sort of Indian juggler's trick, which was immediately afterwards performed by the Egyptian magicians, 'for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods' Pharaoh, not very surprisingly, failed to be impressed by Moses' and Aaron's magic.

Exodus xvii. 6, and the similar passage from Numbers xx. 11.—'And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice, and the water came out abundantly, and the congre-



gation drank, and their beasts also.' A scene well fitted for an Ammergau play or a pantomime. 'Harlequin with his wand strikes the rock twice, and out rushes water.'

Exodus xvii. 11.—'And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed, and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy, and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon, and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side and the other on the other side, and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. . . . And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book.' What a singular story! Aaron and Hur assisting God to perform a miracle!

Numbers xvii. 5.—'The man's rod whom I (the Lord) shall choose shall blossom.' v. 8, 'And behold the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.' Rapid forcing!

Numbers xxi. 8.—'And the Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten when he looketh upon it shall live.'

Numbers xxii. 28.—'And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?'

Joshua iii. 16.—The waters 'stood and rose up upon an heap'—to let priests bear the Ark with dry feet across the Jordan.

Joshua vi. 20.—The walls of Jericho fall down flat at the blowing of trumpets of ram's horns by priests and shouting of the people of Israel.

Judges i. 19.—'And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.' In plain language, even God's favour to Judah is here represented as of no avail against the chariots of the valley!

Judges xiii. 20.—'When the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. . . . Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord.'

Judges xv. 19.—Sampson having slain one thousand!!! men with the jaw-bone of an ass, was naturally 'sore athirst' after such a feat. 'But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived.'

1 Samuel xxviii. 7.—'Behold there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.' v. 11.—'Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.' v. 12.—'And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice.'

v. 15.—‘ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?’ Why, indeed! No wonder believers in the inspiration of the Bible easily become Spiritualists. Nay! The question rather is how they can help joining in the ranks of these modern callers and bringers-up of spirits from the dead!

2 Kings ii. 11.—‘ And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.’

2 Kings iv. 32.—‘ And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead and laid upon his bed.’ v. 34.—‘ And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.’ v. 35.—‘ And the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.’

2 Kings vi. 5 and 6.—‘ But as one was felling a beam, the ax head fell into the water. And he cried and said, alas, master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place, and he cut down a stick and cast it thither; and the iron did swim.’

2 Kings xiii. 21.—‘ And it came to pass, as they were burying a man. . . they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.’

2 Kings xx. 9-11.—‘ And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that he hath spoken; shall the shadow [of the sun] go forward ten degrees or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. And Isaiah the Prophet cried unto the Lord, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.’ A modern astronomer, unlike Hezekiah, would have thought it not a ‘light thing’ for the sun to jump forward ten degrees any more than for it to jump backward.

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NOTE B.—Page 14.

*Verbal Inspiration of the Bible.*

The extent to which the claim is made in this very century for *verbal* inspiration of every part of the books now bound up in one volume as the Bible, will be shown by the following quotations:—

The Rev. J. W. Burgon, Vicar of St. Mary’s, Oxford—‘Inspiration and Interpretation’ (page 89.)—‘The Bible is none other than the Voice of Him that sitteth on the Throne! Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it, *every letter of it*, is the direct utterance

of the Most High! The Bible is none other than the Word of God—not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike, the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the Throne—absolute, faultless, unerring, and supreme.’

The Rev. Dr. J. T. Baylee, Principal of St. Aidan’s College, Birkenhead—‘A Manual on Verbal Inspiration:’—

‘The whole Bible, as a revelation, is a declaration of the Mind of God towards His creatures *on all the subjects* of which the Bible treats (page 6).

‘Modern science, with all its wonderful advances, has discovered not one single inaccurate (!!!) allusion to physical truth, in all the countless illustrations employed in the Bible (page 42).

‘The Bible cannot be less than verbally inspired. *Every word, every syllable, every letter*, is just what it would be, had God spoken from heaven without any human intervention (page 48).

‘Every scientific statement is infallibly accurate, all its history and narrations of every kind are without any inaccuracy’ (page 62).

Dr. Longley, late Archbishop of Canterbury. His Primary Charge, 1864 (page 42):—

‘All we would maintain under the title of plenary inspiration is the universal authority of every portion of it, as written under the Divine supervision, securing the writers from error and falsehood: *the exact* words being in some cases dictated as was the case with the delivery of the Decalogue.’

As a contrast to the above extraordinary utterances see the sensible and moderate language of the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council [below. Note G.] a judgment, by the way, in which Dr. Longley, as Archbishop, concurred!

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NOTE C.—Page 16.

*Bishop Colenso and the Intelligent Zulu.*

In the preface to Part I., page 7, of the Bishop of Natal’s work on the Pentateuch will be found the following:—‘Here, however, amidst my work in this land [Natal], I have been brought face to face with the very questions I then [when a parish clergyman in England] put by. While translating the story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded but intelligent native, one with the docility of a child, but the reasoning powers of mature age, look up and ask. ‘Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus—that all the beasts and birds and creeping things upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came there by pairs and entered into the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them *all*, for the beasts and birds of prey, as well as the rest?’ My heart answered in the words

of the Prophet, 'Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord?' (Zech. xiii. 3.) I dared not do so. My knowledge of some branches of science, of Geology in particular, had been much increased since I left England; and now I knew for certain, on geological grounds, a fact of which I had only had misgivings before, viz., that a *universal* Deluge such as the Bible manifestly speaks of could not possibly have taken place in the way described in the book of Genesis.'

The flippant way in which the Bishop of Natal's earnest argument and honest words, such as those quoted above were met, is, to some extent, illustrated by a passage written by the late Dr. Longley, when Archbishop of Canterbury, who, speaking of Dr. Colenso, said his objections 'are for the most part *puerile* and trite; so puerile that an intelligent youth who reads his Bible with care could draw the fitting answers from the Bible itself; so trite that they have been again and again refuted.'

And yet the Archbishop himself having alleged, in his Primary Charge (see Note B. above), that the plenary inspiration of the Bible had secured 'the writers from error and falsehood, *the exact words being in some cases dictated as was the case with the delivery of the Decalogue,*' failed to answer Mr. Voysey's plain question, Which of the two versions (compare particularly the extraordinary discrepancy between Exod. xx. 11 and Deut. v. 15) was referred to as having been written in the 'exact words' dictated by God!! (Letter from the Rev. Chas. Voysey to the Archbishop of Canterbury, dated November 15, 1864.)

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NOTE D.—Page 19.

*The Eternal Punishment of Unbaptised Infants.*

Quoted from Bishop Colenso's 'Natal Sermons' (Trübner, 1867). Fulgentius lived a century after St. Augustine, who was the great Father of the African Church, and is at the present day a great authority with a certain party in the Church of England.

St. Augustine proclaimed in the following passages the damnation of unbaptised infants:—'I do not say that infants dying without the baptism of Christ will be punished with *so great pain* as that it were better for them not to have been born.' Elsewhere he writes more fiercely:—'Our Lord will come to judge the quick and the dead; and he will make two sides, the right and the left. To those on the left hand he will say, *Depart into everlasting fire*; to those on the right, *Come receive the Kingdom*. He calls one the Kingdom—the other, condemnation with the Devil. THERE IS NO MIDDLE PLACE LEFT WHERE YOU CAN PUT INFANTS.'

And again:—‘Thus I have explained to you what is *the Kingdom*, and what everlasting fire, so that when you confess the infant will not be in *the Kingdom*, you must acknowledge he will be in *everlasting fire*.’

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NOTE E.—Page 19.  
*Prayer for the Dead.*

The following paragraph is copied from the *Times* of the 23rd October, 1875:—

‘A letter has been received from the Bishop of Ripon (Dr. Bickersteth) in reply to Mr. David Hoyle, of New York, U.S.A., who desired to have cut on the gravestone over the grave of his father in the churchyard of Marsden, near Huddersfield, the words *Requiescat in Pace*. The incumbent of Marsden, the Rev. T. Whitney, refused to allow the inscription, and on an appeal to the Bishop of Ripon, his Lordship has replied to Mr. Hoyle as follows:—“I am truly sorry to find myself unable to comply with your request. I cannot sanction on a tombstone *Requiescat in Pace*. I need not remind you that this is, in fact, a prayer for the dead. All true Protestants believe that the state of the departed is fixed the moment after death. The souls of the faithful are in joy and felicity, and do not need our prayers. Lost souls cannot be benefitted by them. The inscription which you refer to is constantly used by Roman Catholics, and is quite in harmony with Roman Catholic doctrine. It may be found in some Protestant churchyards, but this is rarely the case; and the fact that it is sometimes met with is no defence for adopting an expression which is both misleading and erroneous.”’

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NOTE F.—Page 20.

*Theological Beliefs, the Hindrance to Science.*

The obstruction caused by theological beliefs to the spread of knowledge is well pointed out in the following passages, extracted from the late Sir Charles Lyell’s ‘Principles of Geology,’ Vol. I., pp. 37 and 57, 11th Edition:—

‘The theologians who now (the latter half of the 17th century) entered the field in Italy, Germany, France, and England were innumerable, and henceforward they who refused to subscribe to the position, that all marine organic remains were proofs of the Mosaic deluge, were exposed to the imputation of disbelieving the whole of the sacred writings. Scarcely any step had been made in approximating to sound theories since the time of Fracastoro (about A.D. 1517), more than a hundred years having

been lost in writing down the dogma that organised fossils were mere sports of nature. An additional period of a century and a-half was now destined to be consumed in exploding the hypothesis, that organised fossils had all been buried in the solid strata by Noah's flood. Never did a theoretical fallacy in any branch of science interfere more seriously with accurate observation and the systematic classification of facts. . . . In short, a sketch of the progress of Geology from the close of the 17th to the end of the 18th century is the history of a constant and violent struggle of new opinions against doctrines sanctioned by the implicit faith of many generations and supposed to rest on Scriptural authority.'

The celebrated naturalist, Buffon (1751), was made by the Sorbonne, or Faculty of Theology in Paris, to recant some opinions on Geology. Sir Charles Lyell gives the words of his Declaration which he was compelled to publish in the next edition of his 'Theory of the Earth':—

'I declare that I had no intention to contradict the text of Scripture; that I believe most firmly all therein related about the Creation, both as to order of time and matter of fact; *I abandon everything in my book respecting the formation of the earth, and generally all which may be contrary to the narration of Moses.*'

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NOTE G.—Page 24.

*The Judicial Privy Council on the Verbal Inspiration  
of the Bible.*

Under the decision (8th February, 1864) of Her Majesty's Privy Council, in the case of the Bishop of Salisbury *v.* Rev. Rowland Williams (one of the Essayists and Reviewers), it is not an ecclesiastical offence, even for the clergy 'to dispute the dates and authorship of the several books of the Old and New Testament'; 'to deny the reality of any of the facts contained in the Holy Scriptures'; 'to reject parts of Scripture upon their own opinion that the narrative is inherently incredible'; 'to disregard precepts in Holy Writ because they think them evidently wrong,' so long as they keep clear of contradicting any doctrines laid down in the Articles or Formularies of the Church of England. This case is reported in the *Jurist*, Vol. 10, p. 406.

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NOTE H.—Page 29.

*Social and Every-day Superstitions and Presentiments.*

How degrading are the minor superstitions and presentiments still current even among well-educated persons! It will be said that it is absurd to object to fairy tales! Yet, thanks to such

and other nursery teaching, what may have been jokes and fancies originally become so interwoven into the child's mind as to constitute actual beliefs, or half beliefs nearly as bad in insensibly influencing conduct.

I would point to, among others, the passing under a ladder, the spilling of salt, sneezing (on the Continent of Europe looked upon as an omen of ill), the belief in lucky and unlucky days, and, possibly the most strange and prevalent of all, the unlucky number of thirteen at table, presaging the death of one within the year. The two latter probably have a distinctly Christian parentage. The belief in Friday as an unlucky day and Sunday as a lucky day, especially prevalent among sailors, is to be traced to the supposed days of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; the ill-luck of the thirteenth at table must have arisen in connection with Judas Iscariot, the thirteenth apostle.

It would be interesting in the next census to ascertain how many people in England, numerous even among the better educated, have a half-belief in gipsy fortune-telling, palmistry, second sight, or ghosts!

Every person who for one moment is made to feel uncomfortable by a superstition such as I here allude to is in a state of partial belief.

A most excellent Protestant lady is known to have seriously told her child that the black mark in the rough shape of a cross, which is seen on the backs of many donkeys, comes by descent from the Donkey that carried Jesus in triumph, and who was consequently thus honoured by a peculiar badge: 'See how the very asses bear testimony to Jesus!' But the folly of so-called Religious teaching is endless!

