

THERE IS A GOD.

"This Plea for Atheism," writes Mr. Bradlaugh in conclusion to the pamphlet bearing that title, "is put forth as a challenge to Theists to do battle for their cause."

The challenge we step forward to accept, but wish beforehand our intentions to be clearly understood, and our mode of warfare as well as our plan of battle, briefly explained.

If we accept, it is not with even the remotest fear as regards the strength of our cause, which is in no want of a champion, and has stood for ages by its own unassailable force. Nor do we dread that our adversary may succeed in imbuing the minds of his numerous hearers and readers with anything like the Atheism of which he professes to be so profoundly convinced. In so momentous a question, however, as that of the existence of God, were he to succeed only to raise the shadow of a doubt in the minds of his hearers, that shadow would, we feel certain, be attended with the most fatal results. There are moments when men, urged onwards by the torrent of their passions, would not—even though sure of eternal torments immediately following their act—hesitate to commit crime; and much more numerous still are the occasions on which they would act, if they could only imagine that they doubted of the existence of a Supreme Avenger of guilt. We do not here intend to affirm that Mr. Bradlaugh upholds a system of direct immorality; we only point out the reasons which make it worth our while to oppose him. The apparent doubt* he may too often raise

* We employ purposely the words, *apparent doubt*, to mean a *pretext for acting as if there were a real doubt*. Whether we admit or no that there can be a real doubt as to the existence of God, will appear in our answers to the objections.

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The minds of uninstructed men removes a check to crime which, however powerless it may be in the great convulsions of passion, is most certainly of continual use in the ordinary circumstances of life. So, in endeavouring to confute Mr. Bradlaugh, and prove the existence of God, we are actuated by the hope of destroying the mists he may have raised in some minds, of hindering them from being raised in others, and thus, of contributing indirectly to public morality and virtue, by defending the strongest of all checks to immorality and vice.

In this essay we shall oppose Mr. Bradlaugh's theories in one way, and in one way only, *i.e.*, by appealing to common sense. We are convinced that the common sense of a moderately intelligent and earnest man suffices amply to solve the problem,—and for a good reason too. If God's existence could be proved only by abstruse metaphysical demonstrations, the immense majority of mankind would never understand, and consequently would have a right to doubt them. But one cannot at the same time be a doubter and a believer; so in that case the immense majority of men would have a right to be practically Atheists. That, of course, is what we must necessarily deny; and our denial supposes that the fact of God's existence can be made clear, even to the uninstructed, by the only method of reasoning which they possess,—common sense.

We therefore, keeping as closely as possible to this plan of action all through,* except where the arguments of our adversary oblige us to follow him on to metaphysical ground, intend firstly to state the objections against Theism, which have led Mr. Bradlaugh to reject that doctrine, expounding his arguments, not of course at length and in his own terms, but with their full force of argument, and indeed trying rather to add strength to them than to

* We must make an exception for one of the proofs of God's existence, based upon the existence of eternal truth; but this proof is so beautiful and so conclusive to a reflecting mind that we could not leave it out. As for the others, if they are found too metaphysical, we can only say that we have done our best to make them plain, clear, and intelligible to all.

lessen their power. We shall then set forth the conclusions to which he has arrived, or, in other words, expound the Atheistic system set up by him. All this part of the discussion is required by the commonest sense of fair play and impartiality; and our side being the side of truth, we feel free to give the opposite party the first innings. We then, of course, proceed to point out the shortcomings of his system, and then to demonstrate the truth of our own.

After the demonstration, we might leave Mr. Bradlaugh's objections unanswered; when the truth of a proposition is proved, the arguments against it are evidently false. Still, it would hardly be just or polite to refuse answering such easily solvable objections; for we may inform Mr. Bradlaugh that there are other difficulties much more subtle, and much less easy to be answered, than those he brings forward. When he finds them out we shall be willing to try our hand at solving them as well as we can. In the meanwhile we shall endeavour to conclude this essay by answering satisfactorily to the objections which to our adversary appear so weighty and so important.

It will first be necessary to state them, *i.e.*, the principal ones. Mr. Bradlaugh has published two pamphlets on the question of Theism; the first entitled, "*Is there a God?*" and the second, "*A Plea for Atheism.*" In his debates he generally either attacks Theism connected with some peculiar religious system, or, when he brings out a direct argument against the existence of God, he only repeats what has already been written in the above-mentioned essays; so it becomes unnecessary to quote anything of his debates, except one or two seemingly new arguments against Mr. Cooper.

First of all, let us take some selections from the essay, "*Is there a God?*" Mr. Bradlaugh accepts Professor Flint's definition of God: *A supreme, self-existent, the one infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, unchangeable, righteous and benevolent, Personal Being, creator and preserver of nature, maker of heaven and earth, who is distinct from, and independent of, what He has created, who is a free, loving, supreme, moral intelligence, the governor of*

nations, the heavenly father and judge of man. This definition once set down, he proceeds to deny the existence of a being corresponding to the definition.

1.* According to Professor Flint, God is the Supreme Being. Now, (as Mr. Bradlaugh argues,) according to reason He cannot be supreme. But what is at once supreme and not supreme is absurd: therefore the idea of God involves an absurdity. That God is supreme, according to Professor Flint, is undoubtedly true. That, according to reason, He cannot be supreme is also evident; for the definition supposes Him to be infinite. Now, "supreme" is a superlative, and includes the idea of a comparison made between two or more individuals. But there are not, there cannot be, two infinite beings to compare together: therefore God cannot be called infinite by relation to any other such being. Neither can He be said to be supreme in relation to finite beings, for *between the Infinite and the finite there is no proportion*, and consequently all comparison is impossible. But even allowing comparison to be possible, God would not always have been supreme; for Professor Flint affirms Creation, and God would only have been supreme over finite beings since then; before, there could be no comparison, as there was nothing to compare; now, the idea of God having become supreme, after having been otherwise, gives us to conclude that His very definition has been changed, whereas Professor Flint says He is unchangeable.

2. Secondly, if God existed, He would be Creator and not Creator at one and the same time; which being absurd, it follows that God does not exist. Creator according to the definition itself, not Creator because of the impossibility of creation. Creation is the making of existence; now, if existence were *made*, before it was made nothing existed, for what could exist when existence itself had not been made yet? Now, it is impossible to admit that at any moment of the past there existed nothing at all; otherwise whence would that which now exists come from? So existence must have always existed, and cannot have been

* The numbers refer to the answers, *infra*.

made; therefore creation is impossible, and God is at once Creator and not Creator: which is absurd.

3. Thirdly, God would be at the same time infinitely benevolent and not infinitely benevolent,—a self-contradictory proposition. All the difficulty, admitting that Professor Flint proves Him satisfactorily to be benevolent, will now be to demonstrate that He is not so. As is generally admitted by Theists, God might have created a sinless world if such had been His will.* Why therefore has He not done so? All will allow that He might at least have made a less sinful one, if, for instance, He had given more grace to man, or created him with more strength of mind to rule his passions. “But, argue the Theists, God is not obliged to do that; the idea of duty is incompatible with that of the supreme and independent Being.” No answer could be more worthless. A benevolent man is not the man who does his duty, but one who does *more than his duty*. It follows therefore that a being *infinitely* benevolent should do *infinitely* more than his duty, and either create a sinless world, if that be possible; or, if not, create at least a world much less sinful than the one in which we live.

4. Fourthly, God would be personal and impersonal,—a doctrine which no one in his senses can admit. The idea of God, as stated by Professor Flint, proves Him to be personal, but the same idea will also prove His impersonality. A personal being is something limited; now, God is either infinite, *i.e.*, unlimited, or not God. Therefore, if He be infinite, He cannot be personal; but He must be so, since He is the intelligent Maker of heaven and earth. Therefore God is a personal impersonal being.

5. Fifthly, infinite and finite. Infinite, since there are no bounds to His perfection; finite, since He possesses one perfection which by itself supposes limitation,—intelligence. Intelligence is essentially clear, definite, precise,

* We here state the argument as brought to bear upon those whose convictions coincide with our own, for we do not admit, with Mr. Armstrong, that the conception of a sinless world is self-contradictory. Against those who share his opinions the argument can be framed otherwise, and, we believe, unanswerably.

and consequently limited: therefore all things intelligent are limited beings. But God is intelligent, therefore He must be finite; and yet we have already seen that He cannot be so.

The following objections are taken, in substance, from the "Plea for Atheism."

6. Theism checks man's efforts, it is therefore a doctrine not to be admitted. It teaches that all things depend absolutely upon the will of God. Such teaching is a check upon the activity of man; for in all things we may say: If this be contrary to God's will it will never take place, and if it be according to God's will it will take place, whether we exert ourselves or no.

7. God cannot be intelligent. Intelligence comprises perception, memory, and reasoning. Neither of these acts are possible to God. Perception results in the obtaining a new idea; God, being omniscient, has the same ideas eternally, and therefore cannot perceive. Memory recalls the past; for an unchangeable God there is no past, and consequently no memory. Reason implies a succession of acts; in God there is no succession, and so He is deprived of reason by His very immutability. If God can neither perceive, nor remember, nor reason, can He judge or think? To judge is to join two ideas together; but whatever is joined was not joined previously, and this is contrary to immutability. To think is to separate that which is thought from that which is not thought: that, too, implies change, and besides contradicts omniscience. If God knows everything unchangeably, He must ever be unchangeably thinking of everything. But if God can neither perceive, remember, reason, judge, nor think, He can by no means be said to be intelligent.

8. God is not all-wise. If He were so He would not have created beings, or parts of beings, without any use whatever. That such beings and parts of beings exist plentifully in nature is a well-known teaching of embryology, and indeed of all natural history. If therefore God be the author of nature, He must be said not to be all-wise.

9. God is not the Creator. For creation either added to the sum of being already existing, or it did not. If it

added anything, then the sum is greater than the part, and the universe with God better than God without the universe. He is therefore not infinitely good if something can be better than He. If it added nothing, then the universe is identically the same as God, which is contrary to Theism. If it took anything away from the sum of being already existing, God was not all-wise in creating; or, if He could not help creating, He was not all-powerful. Creation therefore neither adds anything to, nor adds nothing to, nor takes anything from, the sum of being. Creation therefore is absurd.

10. Some men are not convinced of God's existence. Now, if God existed, He could convince men of His existence, so as to leave in their minds no doubt about the matter. If He could not, it would be because He did not know how to, or had not enough power. Therefore He will not; but if so, He is not infinitely good, for by so doing He could spare men a very great deal of misery.

These are the most important arguments put forth by Mr. Bradlaugh in the two essays to which we have already alluded. We have been obliged to choose, for in many places there are as many as nine or ten arguments crowded together, with rare conciseness, in one page; nay, sometimes one argument is so worded that it may be taken in two very different senses. But we trust we have chosen the most important objections; and as for shortening them, our only excuse is that it is impossible to do otherwise without writing a commentary upon each of these essays, (which we should do with great pleasure,) pointing out one by one all the fallacies employed by our opponent.

11. In the debate with Mr. Cooper, there are also two arguments that can be mentioned, although they are but *variantes* of others already stated. The first runs pretty nearly as follows. Theism supposes a motionless cause which is the principle of the universe, *i.e.*, which acts to create the world. If so, they can explain how action without motion is possible. That, however, is inexplicable; therefore the hypothesis of Theism cannot be admitted.

12. Another is: Two beings cannot be in the same place at the same time. But God is everywhere; therefore, to

make room for the universe He must retire from "somewhere," and is no longer infinite; or else He must make the universe out of "everywhere," that is, *nowhere*. The first alternative contradicts the idea of God; the second is self-contradicted by facts. It follows that God has not created the world.

Such are the difficulties which have prevailed so far upon Mr. Bradlaugh, that he thinks himself justified in taking a position of defiance to nearly the whole human race, and building a system of which the denial of God's existence forms the principal point. This system we now wish to state as clearly as possible.

"I exist.* My existence is either self-existent or created. It is not created, consequently it is self-existent, and I am self-existent too. If that existence were created, it would have been so either by an existence the same as itself, or else by another existence. Neither can be allowed, and so it is not created. It cannot have been created by an existence the same as itself; for then it would have been only a continuation of the same existence. It cannot have been created by any existence different from it, for an existence different from it would have nothing in common with it, since what has nothing in common with another thing can have no relation with it. Now creation is really a relation,—the relation of cause and effect. Creation therefore being impossible, my existence is self-existent.

"But what has just been proved for my particular existence can be proved in exactly the same manner for all existence. And, as all things we see have mutual relations one with another, it follows that what seems to be different existences is only the same existence, differently conditioned, otherwise they would have nothing in common. There is therefore but one existence; the world, which means the same as 'matter,' or 'universe,' is a great uncaused being (debate with Dr. Baylee, p. 32), infinite and eternal. I am but a phenomenon of existence, and all that we hear, see, or feel, are only separate phenomena,

* Debate with Dr. Baylee, page 41; Plea for Atheism, appendix; Debate with Mr. Cooper, *passim*.

not separate beings ; different conditions of existence, and not different existences."

"These phenomena, conditions, or modes of existence are distinguished in thought by their qualities." Whether the modes are really distinct from each other, or only in thought, is not determined ; whether the qualities which form the distinction are *really* different qualities or no is not stated. "Qualities are characteristics by which in thought I distinguish that which I think," says Mr. Bradlaugh, and he says no more. But what if the same question be again asked, viz., whether those characteristics are really different from each other, or only rendered different by the process of thinking? Let us give an example of the two distinctions. We say that Mr. Bradlaugh is really distinct from any other man, because it seems that, independently of our thought, and whether we think about him or no, he is not the same as another man ; and we say that their characteristics are really different. We say that Mr. Bradlaugh the philosopher can be (in thought) distinguished from Mr. Bradlaugh the orator, and that the characteristics of both are only distinguished in thought. Now the question is, whether Mr. Bradlaugh admits real distinctions or no ; whether all things are, according to him, only distinguished in thought. To this question no answer is given in any of the debates and essays which we have had the occasion to see.

It is only now that our work begins seriously, by refuting Mr. Bradlaugh's system. Until this moment we have but stated his objections and theories, and though we promised to stand by the logic of common sense, we evidently did not intend meaning that such logic should extend to our opponent. As has already been seen, Mr. Bradlaugh brings forward some deeply metaphysical objections, and his system is built upon the most metaphysical of all ideas,—existence. We have, of course, to follow him wherever he goes, but even in the deepest and most entangled metaphysical problems we shall ever try to keep an eye upon common sense.

Waiving for the present a direct answer to the objections accumulated by the adversary of Theism, we think

proper first of all to examine his own system. Even if his objections were unanswerable, it would not follow that his system is certain. Of his objections, not a single one is completely new; some,—for instance, the one against creation,—dates as far back as Aristotle, a philosopher well known to be by no means an Atheist.* These objections therefore might, if unanswerable, prove the eternity of matter, a dual principle, positive pantheism, transcendentalism, or even Atheism of some sort; but they would not necessarily prove Mr. Bradlaugh's Atheism.

Mr. Bradlaugh argues that his own existence is not created; and, according to him, the same may be said of all existence. But why? Because creation is the action of one existence upon another, different from it,—which is absurd. If Mr. Bradlaugh sees very clearly the absurdity of one thing acting upon another, different from it, so much the better for him. For our part, we do believe,—and shall continue so to do until further notice,—that the hammer of the smith is different from the mass of red-hot iron drawn out of the forge, and that the difference in question does not hinder it from acting on the said mass of metal. We believe that two prize-fighters are not identically one and the same being, and yet they act upon one another very forcibly. In our humble opinion, confirmed by these facts and many others, two different beings can act upon each other.

Let us, however, examine the axioms brought forward to sustain the system. *What has nothing in common with another has no relation with it.* If you mean by "having in common," *to be identically the same*, we should think that nothing has anything in common with another by the very fact that it is something else. Two drops of dew, two blades of grass, suppose them as like as you will; or take, if you like better, two atoms of exactly the same size, form, and intensity and direction of movement. We have said, the *same* size, and we can say so in one point of view,

* We will, however, give Mr. Bradlaugh credit for having found these objections out "all by his own self." Otherwise, how could he not be aware that they have all been answered a thousand times, from the days of Tertullian to those of Leibnitz and of Clarke?

for in our mind the size is the same ; but the expression is no longer exact if we apply it to the reality that exists. Each has its own size ; that size happens exactly to resemble the size of the other ; but the quality, though perfectly alike, is not identically the same. If therefore you take things in that light, your axiom proves far too much. No two things have anything in common in that sense ; consequently, according to you, no two things can act upon each other, or have any relation with each other. Causes are no more, effects exist no longer, and all relations vanish away.

If, on the contrary, you take the word, "to have in common," to mean the possession of something that, although not really and identically the same in both, is exactly alike, owing to a fundamental similitude in both natures, then indeed we must admit the axiom. The hammer, were it not as solid as the iron, and more so, would not be able to act upon it ; its action therefore depends on the mutual solidity of both, one, however, being greater than the other. A lady could hardly act upon a prize fighter in the boxing way, because they have little in common to render a contest possible. If Mr. Bradlaugh takes it in this manner we admit the axiom.

But now let us see how it works. Is it true that one existence is either totally identical with another, or so distinct, so different, as to have nothing alike,* having either everything in common, or nothing in common, without a medium ? In the first signification of the word this might be true ; one existence is completely and totally different from another, for the very reason that it is another. Every particular and individual thing exists in a way that excludes participation with any other, whatever it may be. If A is A, and B is B, then A is by no means and in no wise B, and B is by no means and by no wise A. This is not metaphysics ; it is mere common sense. Ask the simplest-minded boor whether he be anything else but

* It is so in Mr. Bradlaugh's system, for by existence he understands whatever exists ; there can therefore be but one. But we are now attacking the *demonstration* of his system, to defend which he has no right to suppose the conclusion as already demonstrated.

himself: the answer would soon be made, and unhesitatingly. Yes, this is true; but in this sense the axiom, we have already seen, is false. Because I am not anybody else, it does not follow that I have no relation with anybody else.

It is only true in the second sense: things which have nothing in common, (*i.e.*, nothing alike in their nature,) can have no relation with each other. Well, precisely in this sense it is monstrously untrue to say that two existences have either everything in common or nothing in common. They can have, as everybody is aware, like qualities, and even like essences. All men possess intelligence to a certain degree, and by means of this intelligence they can act upon each other. Stones are not intelligent, and precisely from this point of view men cannot act upon stones, nor stones on men. But both have in common that they are solid bodies, capable of movement; as such they can and do act reciprocally. So we see that in the grand argument by which Mr. Bradlaugh proves his own existence to be uncaused and eternal, if we admit one part we must deny the other, unless, as we pass from the former to the latter, we change the sense of the words.

Now, by changing the sense of words we may prove a great many things as we go along, to the entire satisfaction of weak-minded people and idiots. For instance—

Puss is a cat;

A cat is a whip;

A whip is a member of parliament;

A member is a limb;

A limb is a part of the body;

Therefore Puss is a part of the body.

But, it will be said, this is manifest nonsense that anybody can see through, and if Mr. Bradlaugh's argument resembled this one you would not want to write against it.

We should certainly not want to write against it if everybody was as familiar with the two senses of the words "*in common*" as with the two senses of the words *cat*, *whip*, *member*. Unfortunately it is not so. Words are often employed without attention to their precise sense, and if there are two different senses, of which the difference

does not seem great, the difference is often overlooked. This may be allowed in ordinary conversation, not in philosophical debate. A few grains weight, more or less, matters little at the grocer's; at the druggist's the same difference in quantity may matter a good deal. And the drugs furnished by the latter, though sufficiently pure for medical purposes, may be rightly considered by the analytical chemist as miserably impure. Between Mr. Bradlaugh's argument and the ridiculous string of nonsense quoted above, the difference is in the matter only, not in the manner.

However, let us for the present say no more of the reasoning in question, and scrutinize with a little closer attention the system which it is intended to uphold. According to Mr. Bradlaugh, the words "matter," "universe," and "existence," are synonymous. The whole universe is one great uncaused being. Of that being, each phenomenon is but a separate condition. Every man, for instance, exists, *i.e.*, possesses existence, but existence is identically the same in all. Possessing existence, he is a being, and yet there is but one being,—the universe. To explain matters yet more clearly, a stone, a tree, a dog, and a man, are all the same being, but in a different way. Here you have the being existing stonily, there arborescently, further on doggedly, and humanly at last. It weighs in the stone, grows in the tree, barks in the dog, and thinks in the man. Stone, tree, dog, and man are all outward appearances, nothing more, somewhat in the same way (we imagine) that a single drop of dew or prism of crystal can be seen red, blue, yellow, or green at the same time by different spectators. Whether the theory be poetical or no we shall not attempt to decide; as our opinion is decidedly that "truth alone is beautiful,"

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai....."

we shall only examine whether it be true.

And firstly, let us remark the unpleasant fact that this theory sets Mr. Bradlaugh by the ears with nearly all mankind. We do not speak only of the more intelligent part of men, deeply read in science and in philosophy.

We do not even allude to the class of ordinary intelligence ; we take the very lowest class of all, and appeal to those whose uncultured stolidity brings them almost to the verge of idiocy itself. To them we would say : " A very intelligent gentleman is of opinion that whatever he, you, anybody, or anything else may be, we are not several beings, but only one ; that if you see any difference between yourselves and the clods of earth which surround you, it is a mistake to think there is any difference in reality, it only appears so. Whatever exists in you is *absolutely* the same as what exists in the clods of earth ; you seem to be different, and that is all." What would their answer be ? We need not anticipate it.

The system is not only contrary to the universal conviction, but also to the senses, *i.e.*, to those organs which set us in communication with the external world. Mr. Bradlaugh, having brought forward his one existence, or one being, must necessarily admit that nothing else exists besides it. Well then, what are the phenomena which we see going on before our eyes ? Are they beings ? No, of course. Are they one Being ? My senses tell me they are not. I see the balloon ascend and the stone fall. Can one and the same being receive at the same time two contrary movements ? Why, even a mathematical point cannot be imagined thus, much less a real being. Will you say that these phenomena, modes, conditions,—or whatever you may call them,—are not really distinct appearances of the Being, but only fictively so, only seemings of which all the difference proceeds from our own thought, and has no foundation in the world that is ? But it is impossible for us, when we feel cold or heat, to think that cold and heat have no foundation but in our thoughts. If your doctrine of Atheism denies the real difference of phenomena, we should, to follow it, have to make first of all a blind act of faith, not in the veracity, but in the absolute mendacity of our senses. All becomes a dream, and you cannot expect any reasonable man to admit that. If, on the contrary, you admit their real difference, your theory is doomed ; for when I see the balloon and the stone, and think that they are the same being possessed

with contrary movements, I think an absurdity. You might have escaped this result, if you had anywhere said that the phenomena in question, which we call substances, are *parts* of the same great being. But you nowhere employ that expression; and rightly, from your point of view; for to break up one existence into innumerable parts would be the ruin of your doctrine.

If we turn to the faculty of self-consciousness, we find other and perhaps greater difficulties still. "Doubt as I may,"* says Mr. Bradlaugh, "I cannot doubt of my own existence." But self-consciousness, by the very same act by which it reveals our existence to us, reveals it as something limited, individual, clearly distinct from all that is not *ourself*. In Mr. Bradlaugh's system our existence is not different from all existence, and is therefore infinite, universal, mingling confusedly both us and all other phenomena together in one great whole. Now the question is, whether conscience *lies*, in revealing our existence to ourselves as it does. If it does not lie, Mr. Bradlaugh's system is overthrown; for either conditioned existence is the same as existence in itself, or it is not. If it is the same, it cannot lose all the qualities of existence, merely by being conditioned. If it is not the same, we may begin to remark that *all* existence is conditioned, and that therefore the one existence, infinite, eternal, indistinctly the same in all and under all phenomena, is nothing else but a myth, a creature of imagination. But let us suppose that Mr. Bradlaugh prefers saying that self-consciousness is wrong; that existence is the same in all, but that it seems—only seems—to self-consciousness to be distinct from all. The reply comes immediately: "As the very same act gives you the knowledge of your existence, and of the manner of your existence, you cannot separate the one from the other; you cannot doubt of the manner in which you really exist, without doubting of your very existence. You cannot impugn a document that tells against you, without also attacking the favourable clauses it contains. You cannot take down the sail that carries you where you do not wish to go, without being abandoned to

* Discussion with Dr. Baylee, p. 41.

the mercy of the waves." Self-consciousness is the faculty that tells us what we feel, and in what way we feel it. If I deny that in doing so it expresses the truth, if I am not as I feel that I am, it might as well be that *I am not, although I feel that I am*. Mr. Bradlaugh has, we believe, no way of escape from these difficulties, unless indeed he should affirm that *his* self-consciousness tells him his existence is infinite, eternal, and universal; or, at least, that it gives him no information whatever about it. This would evidently close the discussion under that head.

Another fact at least as unpleasant is, that Mr. Bradlaugh's system is the negation of all arithmetic. We should have been less inclined to note this disagreement, if our adversary did not continually point out and exaggerate the contradictions he finds, (or thinks he finds,) between arithmetic and the different sorts of Theism. He even makes merry about them, and needs, though at the cost of spoiling his mirth, to be reminded that those who live in glass houses should be careful about throwing stones.

Addition is the foundation of all arithmetic, and Mr. Bradlaugh's system is contrary to addition. Every school-boy that knows how to read knows that one and one are two, and one are three, etc. Let us take any object, A for instance. A exists, or is, *i.e.*, *A is being* (according to logic). But *what* being is A? Is it *all* being, or only *some* being? If *all* being, then necessarily nothing can be added to it. But we can say the same of B, C, D, or any other object of thought of which *being* can be predicated in the same way. Then all together, instead of making up several beings, (though each is everything!) only make one, and there is an end of addition. If A is one, (by which unit we designate all being,) and B is one, then A added to B ought to make two; and they only make one. But let us fancy that the other alternative is taken; each is only *some* being. Then again, if A is distinct from B, A is some being, B is some other being, and both together, (each separately being one,) form two beings. But no, that cannot be; A is distinct from B, but neither is distinct from *being*; and as there is only one, the being A, added to the being B, cannot form more than one. You can add

up phenomena as much as you like, you will never come to more than an addition of phenomena. Jones exists, therefore Jones is a being; Smith exists, therefore Smith is a being; Brown exists, therefore Brown is a being. But are Smith, Brown, and Jones, taken together, three beings? Not in the least; they are only one being and three phenomena. Not having had the opportunity of putting these difficulties to Mr. Bradlaugh himself, we naturally try to find the most reasonable reply he could make. He might, it is true, avoid the difficulty to a certain extent, by saying that one can exist without being; that he can with perfect truth say at the same time, "I exist, and I am not a being." But this would only open the way to other and greater objections; besides, we should be sorry to load with unnecessary absurdities a system so heavily laden already.

By a process resembling that already followed, it might easily be shown that the system contradicts the rules of subtraction, multiplication, and division; but the proof is the same, and repetition would be tedious. Should Mr. Bradlaugh try to escape by saying that his system allows the counting up of phenomena, and operating upon them as if they were beings, the terrible question always returns, Are these phenomena really distinct from each other and among themselves, or are they but phantoms of the brain? If the distinction is real, then there is in them something real on which the real distinction is founded, and that *something*, distinct in each, exists separately from the one existence mentioned, which is contrary to monism.* If not, these phenomena are only a succession of seemings, all false, and to which no reality belongs. Four are not really

* For if one thing exists separately from another, there must be a sufficient reason for the separation; and as there is nothing in the "existing" which is not in "existence" (its intrinsic principle), we must seek the sufficient reason in "existence" itself. If, therefore, two phenomena are separate from each other, that quality, "separate" must be found in their existence also. Thus their existence is *separate* in each. But what is separate is not *one*, but many, in so far as it is separate; so, at least under one point of view, there would be many existences. This is so far contrary to monism; for it would be absurd to suppose that many existences could at the same time be only one, under the same point of view, i. e. as individuals.

more than two, but only appear so, like four quantities added together, all equal to zero. If there is nothing distinctly real in phenomena, a farthing and a million sterling only seem to be different, but are not so. A farthing is existence conditioned in a certain phenomenal way. A million sterling is the very same existence conditioned in the very same way, which way (not which existence) is repeated 960,000,000 times; but this way is only an appearance, and so its repetition makes no difference whatever on the total amount. We doubt, however, whether capitalists, (solvable ones at least,) would be willing to adopt this very original manner of considering money.

Finally, all science is destroyed by the system in question. Either the one existence is distinct from the phenomena, or no. If distinct, the phenomena exist apart, and there are more existences than one. If not, each phenomenon is existence itself, only modified by the mind: infinite in itself, rendered finite by our mind; eternal in its nature, but mentally circumscribed by time. All that our mind tells us of these phenomena, even with indubitable evidence, is false, totally false. All that we can learn of the sun, the stars, the earth, is absolutely untrue. History, geography, chemistry, physics, all give way, all are useless pursuits of knowledge. All that is, we know already; why should we strive to ascertain that which only seems?

We should much regret any unintentional unfairness to Mr. Bradlaugh as to the exact understanding of his system; but even if we had misunderstood him, it would not be our fault. Our opponent, in all his essays and debates, keeps to offensive warfare for the most part, and is much more occupied in attacking other systems than in stating his own. A few pages contain all that he says in its favour; he does not even appear to dream that anything can be said against it, and supposes that, with all its consequences, it will be taken for granted. That we feel some degree of hesitation in taking it thus will perhaps be understood, after the perusal of the defects we think we perceive therein. But Mr. Bradlaugh is very clever, and may be

able still to show us that all is right ; that existence and phenomena are identical, though different ; that the addition of several beings to each other only forms one, although they are many ; and that, while we cannot doubt of our existence, because we are aware of it, we can still doubt whether we exist in the manner of which we are aware. And yet, even though Mr. Bradlaugh should prove these wondrous things, we submit that it is hardly worth while to leave the mysteries of Theism for others darker still, whether or no there be a direct demonstration of the existence of a Deity.

Of such existence, however, there are demonstrations, and in great number, some of which we now desire to bring forward, after having made a few preliminary remarks concerning one of Mr. Bradlaugh's assertions.

He complains that the greatest difficulty in a discussion is to know what is meant by the word "God;" because, if we do not agree about the sense of the word, we shall not even know what we are disputing about ; and to prove that different meanings are given to the word, he shows that Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, Arians, Trinitarian Protestants, and Catholics, have different views of the *attributes* of God. To this it will be sufficient to reply that all have the same definition of the *word*, but a different one of the *Being* that the word is intended to name. The starting point is the same for all ; but, the directions taken being various, the goals at which they arrive are various too. But what can it matter about the goal, if the starting point is identical for all ? Wherever false systems or gross ignorance have come to wrong conclusions about anything, we have the same confusion as to consequent reasonings upon primitive ideas. Would it not be ridiculously absurd for anybody to pretend that we do not know what is meant by the word "Man" ? And yet we can say that Plato defines him to be "a two-legged animal without wings or feathers ;" that Aristotle calls him, "a reasonable animal ;" that de Bonald says he is "an intelligence served by organs ;" that the Christian philosophers of the middle ages affirm him to be "an immortal spirit, substantially united to a mortal body ;" that modern

naturalists give him the title of "a bimanous mammal;" and that the negroes of the Gabon coast confound him with the gorilla, whom they call "the stupid old *man*." Now, from all these expressions, representing widely different ideas, we might, by the same process of reasoning that Mr. Bradlaugh uses, gather that nobody really knows what is meant by the word *man*.

We therefore start from a mere verbal definition of the word "God," and afterwards prove that a Being answering to the sense of the definition really and positively exists. That is all we intend to do, and we wish it to be understood at the very outset. Were we to go farther our essay would become a theological treatise, which we do not wish it to be. At the bare fact of God's existence, once proved, we stop short, admitting of course implicitly all those of His attributes which may be by argument deduced from that fact, but not attempting to prove them. Should Mr. Bradlaugh therefore condescend to examine our demonstrations, let him take the definitions as we give them; for as we are to bring forward several demonstrations, so several definitions shall also be given.

The apparent difference of definitions by no means interferes with the sense of the word itself; only we shall admit that from some it is not possible to draw the idea of a God infinite in being; but that is of no consequence, if we can deduce the idea from other definitions. We shall therefore draw up two series: of adequate definitions and of inadequate ones. Mr. Bradlaugh will of course not fail to observe that such proofs as do not demonstrate a God infinite in being do not demonstrate what is required. We reply that they prove the existence of a being answering to the definition; if they do not demonstrate Him to be infinite, others do; it suffices that they do not prove Him to be finite. Should our adversary again take exception to our defining the sense of one word in two different ways, we can refer him to a well-known example in geometry. Euclid defines a line as "length without breadth," and Legendre calls it, "the intersection of two surfaces." Both define the same word *in the same sense* perfectly well, but from different points of view. Differ-

ently worded definitions do not therefore argue different significations, but different manners of expressing those significations.

We must also allow that none of our demonstrations prove immediately, and without the help of farther reasoning, the unity of God. But they prove that there is *at least One*. It is only afterwards that the impossibility of several Gods appears. This remark applies to some of Mr. Bradlaugh's complaints. He would wish for an argument that proved immediately the existence of one, infinite, eternal, omniscient, immeasurable, all-good Creator. If such a proof were possible, on its being brought forward he would doubtless complain again, and insist that it be given him in one single argument: and were it to be thus given, he would find it still too long. Let him carry this system of cavilling into the domains of other sciences, and ask, for instance, why chemical nomenclature and notation throw no light upon the phenomena of the viscous fermentation, or why the *Pons Asinorum* is unable to prove that a sphere is equal to the two-thirds of the circumscribed cylinder. The answer from both chemist and geometrician would be, "Have patience, my friend, we shall come to that in good time." If time is allowed to the geometrician and the chemist, should it be refused to the theologian?

Adequate Definitions.—I. By the word "God," I mean the principle of all existence. II. By that word I mean the principle of all possibility. III. By that word I mean a Being, (or beings, if there be more than one,) to whom there is none superior. IV. By that word I mean a Being answering to the idea we have of the Infinite, *i.e.*, perfection without end.

Inadequate Definitions.—I. The principle of all change and variation. II. The principle of all movement. III. The author of all moral obligation.

First Proof.—All existence must have an existing principle. Now, this principle I call God. (I. Def.) Therefore God exists.

All existence must have an existing principle. By "principle," I mean a sufficient reason for its existence. Now,

evidently nothing can exist without there being a sufficient reason for its existing.

Existing. If the principle were only ideal and imaginary, it could not be a *sufficient* reason for that which exists.

In this proof we have not demonstrated that God is separate from the universe; so, if this demonstration were taken apart, Mr. Bradlaugh might say that his views coincided with our own, that he admits existence to be its own principle, that therefore existence is God, or that all is God.

But we object to the demonstration being taken apart from the refutation of Mr. Bradlaugh's theory; having amply shown that the theory of *one* existence only is absurd, we cannot admit that Mr. Bradlaugh quite agrees with us. True, he might still plead that even if there be many existences, each of them may be self-existent, or containing in itself the principle of its being, and that there might thus be as many gods as there are atoms. We reply, firstly, that if that were the case, the strength of our argument would be in no wise diminished. If it pleases anybody to say that every atom is a God, he may do so (until proved to be absurd); but he has not the right to say there is none. We may also answer that the idea of an atom having in itself the principle of its existence is contrary to common sense. If it were self-existent, it would be necessary; if necessary, the supposition that it might not have existed is absurd; and yet who would have missed it? It is only a contingent, not a necessary part of the universe. Besides, the principle that gives existence, gives all perfection, since existence is the fountain of perfection. If our atom possessed that fountain in itself, it would be infinite in all things, for nothing could bound it except itself, and nothing can limit itself. Infinite therefore in all things, in *dimensions*, in activity, in beauty, and at the same time being only an atom, it would be in all a most elementary and imperfect being. Now, if anybody was to tell us that all the water of the ocean was contained in a dew-drop, we should very naturally ask, How is the dew-drop so little? And if we see a poor man who gets by his work only just enough to live, and no

more, and are told that he has an unlimited credit at the banker's, the question arises, Why is he not better off? only in the latter case the answer might be, Because he does not choose to be so; whereas a being that is *its own principle* can by no means change its nature, and choose to be otherwise. A man cannot by a wish become a stone: whatever is essential is necessary.

But this again is a digression. We do not mean to attack Polytheism now; we do not mean even to attack Pantheism. We prefer, if agreeable to all parties, doing one thing at a time: and, as Mr. Bradlaugh calls himself an Atheist because he denies all definitions of God, we defy him to deny this definition, or attack this demonstration.

Second Proof.—Whatever is possible must have an existing and intelligent principle. Now, that principle I call God. (II. Def.) Therefore God exists.

We must subjoin to this argument a few words of explanation. "Whatever is possible," means only whatever is not absurd, *i.e.*, whatever is simply and absolutely true without reference to time or place. Thus the multiplication table, though invented by Pythagoras, contains a series of truths which were only discovered by him, and which were true as independently of him as they are of the things to which they are applied. Were there not two calculable beings in the world, still two and two would make four. In the same manner they are independent of human reason, that *only* perceives, but does not make them. Were all mankind to go mad, and no longer to admit that two and two are four, it would be none the less true for their denial. What is there in that truth? A simple possibility, a mere intelligibility, expressed by a formula independent both of existence and of man.

Now we say that whatever is possible must have an existing principle, and to prove it we return to the definition of a *principle*, *i.e.*, a *sufficient reason*. Would a possible being be the sufficient reason of what is possible? No; for nothing would ever have been possible if nothing had existed. Possibility therefore depends on a certain existence; not mine, nor yours, nor any existence which we know to be subject to change and mutability. Now,

the something on which possibility depends is called its principle, and we call that principle God.

Nextly, we affirm that the principle in question must be intelligent; not as men are said to be intelligent, since we have seen that the intelligibility and consequent truth of things possible has nothing whatever to do with man, and is completely independent of him. But, knowing them to be intelligible since all eternity, we ask, Can anything be *eternally intelligible* without there being something *eternally intelligent*? Fancy for an instant that intelligence disappears totally from the universe; nothing is intelligible any longer. The difference between the absurd and the non-absurd,—consisting only in the contradiction of characteristics, which contradiction cannot subsist without intelligence,—ceases at once. Now, if Mr. Bradlaugh does not hesitate to affirm that there is no difference between what is absurd and what is not, we shall not trouble him any longer with our affirmation of an eternal intelligence; but until he shall make that declaration we are free to maintain that all eternal, immutable, and necessary truths depend (to be what they are) on an eternal, immutable, necessary, and intelligent existing principle; and this principle we call God.

As already stated, we do not by this argument intend to prove the unity of God, since that is quite out of the question for the present. Plato was, if we mistake not, the first who employed this manner of reasoning, and he argued thence the existence of ideal forms, unchangeable, necessary, and eternal. If by "ideal forms" he meant beings existing separately, these "forms" were so many gods, and his philosophy ended in Polytheism. However, though this conclusion might have been false, the argument, as we have stated it, is true, and the number of gods is, we repeat, only a secondary question. If Mr. Bradlaugh is struck by its efficacy, he is by no means likely to fall into the error of Plato; not being very partial to the idea of God, *one* God is probably the most he can admit, and if he does, we shall ask him no more.

Third Proof.—There exists at least one Being to

whom none is superior. Now, that Being to whom none is superior I call God. (Def. III.) Therefore God exists.

It is impossible for Mr. Bradlaugh to take exception, even in his system, to such an argument; as he admits only one being, no others can be superior to it, and therefore his one being is God. But we have already proved the absurdity of supposing that there is only one being in the world. There being therefore several, we proceed to prove our argument from this starting point.

We first of all take for granted, as a fact known by all who are in their senses, that there is a difference in the perfection of some beings. We think it not at all hard to be obliged to admit that Hamlet is superior to Caliban, that the elephant is something more than the oyster, and the palm-tree than the blade of grass.

If this be granted, common sense will at once see that in the series of all beings, some being above others, there must be some, (or, still more probably, one,) that are the highest of all, *i.e.*, to whom none is superior: for the number of existing beings cannot possibly be infinite, and therefore must be terminated at both ends if we range them by order of perfection. Anybody can see that no number can be infinite if he reflects that it would be the greatest of all numbers possible. Let us suppose that a hundred quintillions be called infinite; then what would be a hundred quintillions plus one? And how can any number be innumerable?

To those who prefer a more mathematical demonstration we can give one such. Let x represent the whole number of beings, ranged by order of perfection, and let us take at random any part of the more perfect beings: x^i will represent the more perfect part, x^{ii} the less perfect. But among the beings represented by x^i , are all equal in perfection or no? If all are equal, then we have already the *being (or beings) to whom none is superior*, and the problem is solved. If not, then by a similar process we find x^{iii} and x^{iv} ; x^{iii} representing the more perfect part of the beings represented by x^i . And as the number each time diminishes regularly by at least one unit, it is evident that we must in time solve the problem, simply by repeating

our mode of reasoning often enough. And whether we come at last to one being who is above all others, or to several equal to each other, and to which no others are equal, the question is henceforward, not between Atheism and Theism, not between Pantheism and the doctrine which it contradicts, but between Polytheism and Monotheism. With a Polytheist we should now be willing to open the debate; but Mr. Bradlaugh could hardly be considered as such, and so we avoid entering into useless details.

Fourth Proof.—An absolutely Infinite Being, taken as we conceive it in our minds, must be either absurd, or merely possible, or really existing. Now, it is neither absurd nor merely possible. Therefore it exists, and therefore (acc. to Def. IV.) God exists.*

We take for granted, first of all, that we possess the idea of an Infinite Being, *i.e.*, whose perfection is *absolutely* without limit in *every* way. Secondly, that this idea is a real idea, *i.e.*, an intellectual representation of an object. To these two postulata self-consciousness must bear testimony.

This being settled, we proceed to notice that the Infinite cannot be absurd if we have a real idea of it. Of a thing absurd we cannot properly have an idea; as, of a round square, we have two ideas, the idea of *round*, the idea of *square*; and, if we see that it is absurd, we have, besides, the idea of conflict between the two thus brought together. But not only we have not any idea of conflict when we say: *perfection without end, i.e., perfection without imperfection*, or (what comes to the same) *being without non-being*; not only we do not seize the conflict, but the two intelligible notes of the idea are blended together in *one*; that is, we have of the Infinite a true idea. We think that this fact will be evident to any one who takes the trouble to examine his thoughts as they occur to him in

* Many, we know, justly criticize the argument *a priori* for God's existence, in which one proves a fact from simple possibilities, and passes thus from the ideal to the real order of things. But our argument is only exteriorly like the one we allude to. It argues *from a fact to a fact*: from the fact of our having the idea of the Infinite, to the existence which this idea implicitly includes.

the mind's laboratory: and so, the Infinite cannot be absurd.

Still less can the Infinite be a merely possible being. Non-existence is a very great limitation, a very considerable non-entity, and, though not the strongest possible, yet still a strong negation of being. "A living dog is better than a dead lion," says the proverb; and there is no doubt that a merely possible man is incomparably less perfect than an existing grain of sand. Now we have already said that our idea of an Infinite Being, not absurd, supposes Him to have all imaginable perfections, *absolutely* without limit. Therefore, if the Infinite Being were merely possible He would be absolutely perfect and at the same time very imperfect, which is inadmissible. Therefore, in the idea we have of the Infinite, we must comprise that of real existence, much in the same way as in the word "I" we comprehend the idea of our own existence.

Therefore, God exists.

One objection to all the preceding demonstrations has been perhaps already made by the reader. Setting aside the possibility of Polytheism, and supposing each demonstration to prove the existence of a single being, it follows that we have:

- 1st. The Being who is the principle of all existence.
- 2nd. The Being who is the principle of all possibility.
- 3rd. The Being to whom none is superior.
- 4th. The Being whose perfection is infinite.

Assuming for an instant that these are different beings, each very great in his way, but not one and the same, which of them are we to call God? And, as long as it is not proved that they are one and the same, we have the right, as we please, either to call each of them God, or to withhold the name from all.

The answer is that, according to our definitions, we cannot withhold the name, if the Being answering to the name be proved to exist. We are consequently at liberty either to consider God as one being, or as four, so long as it is not proved that these four are one: that the principle of all existence is also that of all possibility, has no

superior, and is infinite. But, once more, and for the last time, the question of God's existence is quite different from that of the numerical unity of the Divine essence.

We must now rapidly set forth a few proofs which by themselves would not demonstrate the existence of God, according to all the plenitude of the idea, but which nevertheless are useful, if employed together with the proofs already given: what may be wanting to these in depth will be supplied to them by the former; and on the other hand, the latter will perhaps be more perspicuous to certain minds. However, we only use these arguments as secondary and auxiliary ones, knowing that against some of them many objections may be raised; they are thus only stated for the sake of fuller illustration of the subject, and because we consider the existence of God as a fact already settled by the four proofs just laid down.*

"God," has been previously defined as "the principle of all change." By "change," we understand the passage from one state to another, by which a being, having before existed in one manner, exists afterwards differently. Now, nothing can change itself alone, without any intervening cause whatever. Cold water, for instance, is not warm, and will never become warm of itself; if, therefore, we find that it has become warm, we naturally conclude that something external has acted upon it, whether as a productive or as an occasioning cause. In cold water there is only the possibility of warmth, not actual warmth; and if this mere possibility were left to itself, the water would doubtless remain eternally cold. In general, nothing can give itself what it has not; unless, indeed, we admit that it is possible to draw money out of an empty purse.

Something external must act upon the water, in order to change its state. This external agent is subject to the question: In acting upon the water does it change? does

* Some will be surprised to find that neither in the preceding nor in the following proofs, any mention is made of the well-known argument drawn from the order of the universe, that denotes a supreme Intelligence. The reason is that the proof, though good, has been so much impugned in the very principles on which it is based, by the modern school of Positivists, that it would take too much space to establish properly here.

it pass from the inactive to the active state? If it acts without change then it is a principle, and as such comes under the denomination of God. If it changes, then some other external agent determines the change, which agent is itself liable to the same enquiry. Now this question may recur again and again; but still we must come to an end at last. An infinite series of agents is absurd, because all such series must be so; and even were it not absurd in itself, it could not be admissible here. If you construct in imagination an infinite series of agents, you destroy the very principle of change; for you put it *nowhere*. Each particular agent is but the transmitter (so to speak) or conductor, not the real principle of change; and if you tell me that change has no beginning, no origin, you may as well tell that you have received a letter that had passed through an infinite series of postal stations, *without having been sent off by anybody*. An agent which only produces change by changing itself, is nothing else but a medium of transmission, not a principle, and, as all change supposes some degree of activity or actuation, when I see that activity or actuation I have the right to inquire whence it proceeds. If my researches lead me higher and higher, farther and farther, to a First Principle of mutation, which must exist if mutation exists, I call this principle God, and affirm its existence. If you say that there is no *first* principle of mutation, you deny that there is any principle, and according to you, that most universal phenomenon has *no sufficient reason* for being what it is.

Another definition describes God as the principle of all movement. Inertia is the first mechanical law of matter. And yet matter moves. You will say: It moves because it is moved by other matter; one ball pushes another forward and is itself urged on by a third. Yes: but who gave the impulsion to the third? You reply: We do not know how movement came into the world; but in the world it is, and the universe is so fortunately arranged that no movement is ever lost, but passes on from one body to another, and so on; until at last it returns to the

place whence it came. By that means we can very well do without the notion of a First Mover.

You can, can you? Whether that may be true philosophically speaking we do not know; we prefer submitting your hypothesis to the test—the terribly severe test—of common sense.

Take an uneducated countryman, as ignorant, as likely to be imposed upon as you can possibly imagine one. Show him a circular railroad, of, say a mile, in circumference. The whole of this railroad is crowded with carriages, which form, so to speak, a circular train. There is no engine, no locomotive; and yet the train moves on; one carriage touches another, and communicates the movement which it has itself received. Then tell the man that nobody has set all these in movement; that the carriages move each other, and that thus the whole moves on; that the idea of a first mover is a totally useless supposition, and that, since every part moves each other, the whole can be considered as self-moving. It is very much to be doubted whether he would take you in earnest; and he would certainly be right not to do so. And yet there are philosophers who claim to be in earnest, and wish us to believe the great movement of the universe (of which almost every material part—indeed every material part taken as such—is quite as inert as any railway carriage) to proceed from itself, and pass on from one portion of matter to another, without having to refer to any First Principle of Movement whatever.* Why should that which is absurd and nonsensical on a small scale, become reasonable and philosophical on a large one? For our own part, we see in such a system nothing but magnified absurdity and gigantic nonsense.

By a third definition, God is called the Author of moral obligation. We do not, absolutely speaking, allow this

* Mr. Bradlaugh seeks to elude the difficulty by defining the universe as "all that is necessary for the production of every phenomenon." He might as well define the train in question as "the carriages in movement, and all that is necessary to set them in movement." He would thus, by a confusion of terms, be able to say that the *train moves itself*, since he therein comprises the mover. But this is mere shuffling.

proof to be a good one; for we can only deduce the idea of moral obligation from that of the existence of God: it would consequently be a vicious circle to prove the existence of God by moral obligation. However, for those who do admit the existence of moral obligation, the proof is valid, and runs thus:

Certain acts we know to be wrong, and therefore forbidden. Now, what is "to forbid?" Is it merely the promulgation of a consequence: If you act thus, you will suffer thus? Murder, for instance. "If you commit murder and are caught, you will be hanged; and even if you are not caught, you will have to suffer from fears of the law, and sorrow for having destroyed a member of the human race." Is that all? Then let us suppose that from a murder committed no evil consequences should arise in this world: that it is impossible for the action to be detected, and equally impossible for any sorrow to arise, the man killed having been the object of the most deadly hatred on the part of the murderer. Well; would murder in this case still be forbidden? Of course it would, all reply. But then, by whom could it be forbidden? By society? Society can go no further than impose a penalty; and, if this penalty be eluded, society's prohibition is vain. By the murderer's own nature? But the murderer's own nature has prompted him to do deliberately what he has done; he has not acted under the impulse of passion, but with cold-blooded craft. How can nature forbid that which she herself does? You will say that human nature recoils from murder. So it does in general; but human nature taken in general is but an abstraction, and an abstraction cannot forbid a real concrete being. *This* human nature at least, *i.e.*, the murderer's, has not recoiled, since it has acted. Now, if man be responsible to none but to his own nature, his nature will absolve him in each particular case of crime which it has not hindered him from doing. And yet murder is forbidden? By whom? By the Author of moral obligation, whom we call God.

Take another instance. Is suicide forbidden? If we are answered in the negative, we can only prove it to be so by God's eternal prohibition; but we have a great majority

of men who consider it in no case to be allowed. To those then, we say: Who can forbid it? A man is utterly wretched in this world. Society cannot punish him for suicide, by which he escapes all punishment; by destroying his own human nature he does not punish himself; on the contrary, he liberates himself from a state which he feels to be unbearable. Besides, to diminish the sum of misery in the world may appear a good and virtuous action. And yet, is suicide forbidden? Yes. Who can forbid it? Only One on whom human nature depends, and who, independently of punishment, can say with truth: Man has no right to do wrong. And indeed, all men would, if God did not exist, have the right to *do wrong and suffer the consequences*. According to the Atheist, if a man were deliberately to choose that which is wrong, taking upon himself all consequences, he would have not only the physical power to act thus, but also the moral right. Each human being has the moral right to do whatever he chooses, if only he have no physical restraint upon him. And if this doctrine be contradictory to any one's idea of right and wrong, he must confess that by that idea he implicitly admits the existence of God.

Our work,—all but the part which refers to Mr. Bradlaugh's objections,—is now ended. Before we give our answers to those objections, we wish to say a few words as to the manner in which he came by them. Sages of all times, from the first ages of the world's existence up to the present day, have by the preceding arguments been satisfied, even to the most absolute certainty, that there exists a God. This great question once answered, they take up a second as important as the first (if possible), though entirely dependent upon it, viz.: What is God? What may be the nature of that existing and Infinite Principle of all? By dint of deep thought and profound meditative labour, they have succeeded in finding out some of His attributes, which, on one hand, are as certain as the facts which prove His existence, since they are only strict inferences drawn therefrom; and which, on the other, involve many mysterious problems, so wonderfully luminous that they almost seem self-contradictory: just as

the sun emits a blinding light. So Mr. Bradlaugh collects all he can find in the way of mysteries, and having brought them together, says: God must have these and those attributes; now each of them contradicts the other, therefore, the idea of God is absurd. He ought, however, to remember that we only draw our different inferences as to the attributes of God *after* having proved His existence; so our opponent ought first of all to prove invincibly that our demonstrations are of no value, and only then to attack those attributes, which are all based upon the said demonstrations. If God be an absurd being, there must certainly be a flaw in the proof; why then not point it out more clearly? * So long as Theists are able to defend their demonstrations—and that will be very long indeed—let him not trouble himself about anything else. So long as any one proof remains standing, it will be an insurmountable obstacle to Atheism. When we are reduced to silence, and the existence of God, instead of being an indubitable truth, is evidently proved to be a mere hypothesis, why, then it will be time to examine whether or no that hypothesis be absurd. What would become of science, were a similar method to be pursued, and the great truths it proclaims to be denied on account of the minute difficulties which those truths involve? Such objections are unfair, unless put with the intention, not to overthrow the truth, but only to cast more light upon the darker sides of the question. It is therefore in this sense alone that we are willing to answer them, considering our answers as only a development of that most fundamental answer to all difficulties—the demonstration.

1. What strikes Mr. Bradlaugh first of all is, that if God be Infinite, He cannot be called Supreme. If He were only the most perfect of all finite beings, He might receive that title; but, as soon as He is proved to be Infinite, it is impossible. He will not allow us to say that the Infinite is greater or less than the Finite, or even

* Mr. Bradlaugh does indeed assail the demonstrations of the existence of God; but, strange to say—or rather, *not* at all strange to say,—he dismisses the most important of them with a few words, and accumulates all the strength of his arguments upon the least important.

equal to it, if he follows up his principle, for we are not permitted to institute any comparison between them; the reason is, we suppose, in the axiom: *between the Infinite and the Finite there is no proportion.* But how did he come by the axiom? was it not by *comparing them with each other?* It is, therefore, only in a limited sense, and not absolutely (as Mr. Bradlaugh does) that we can say, that there is no proportion. The very axiom indeed, can be put under the form of a proportion, thus:

The Infinite is to the Finite, as 1 (or any number) is to 0.

Now the want of proportion between 0 and 1, does not hinder us from saying that 1 is greater than 0.

But, let us take a more direct view of the question. That there is between the Infinite and the Finite, considered as such, any other relation than that of inequality must of course be denied; but that of inequality exists. If so, the idea "greater than" can at once be applied to the Infinite in relation with the Finite. But is the idea "supreme" anything more? It only affirms besides, what we already know, viz.: that there is nothing greater than the Infinite.

Moreover, we can consider God independently of His Infinite attribute, and simply as one of the immense series of beings. We at once see that He occupies the first rank, above all others; for it is absurd to suppose that a real being cannot be classed with other real beings, if we abscond from what sets him apart from them. Every day we see naturalists place man at the head of the animal kingdom, along with monkeys, butterflies, snails and star-fishes, merely because they abscond from the faculty of reason that sets man apart from all other beings.* Seeing then that God is First of all things existing and possible, we can surely call Him supreme by relation to them.

Thus, as Infinite, God is above all finite beings; as a Being, He is at the head of the whole series. In both ways He is entitled to be called Supreme.

* And they are perfectly right so to do, reason not being a faculty that belongs to natural history, which ought only to describe exterior characteristics of the animated and inanimate world.

We shall now try the value of Mr. Bradlaugh's objection, by putting it in the same way to other subject-matter. The Queen cannot be called the supreme ruler of the land, for she would be supreme either in relation to another queen, or to subjects. Another queen there is not; but, "supreme" means, "the first of all in a series;" now, it is impossible for the Queen to be the first of all her subjects, since she is no subject. It is, perhaps, a very pretty play upon words,—we are no judges of such things; but it is nothing better than that.

He adds to this difficulty a short remark in which he says, that even if God were Supreme now, He would not always have been so, the fact of Creation being admitted. We shall only notice in reply, that the word "supreme" is a title referring to the existence of other beings, not to the nature of God in itself; therefore, even if there were a change in the idea, it would not be a substantial change in God, as considered before and after Creation. If I stand still, and a carriage passes from my left to my right, I may be said to have been, first at the right of the carriage, then at the left: and yet my position has not changed in the least. Suppose the Queen of England, (to return to our comparison) were one morning to find herself alone in her kingdom, all her subjects having died suddenly, she would, of course, be no longer queen; but would that involve any change whatever in *her*? Titles which proceed from an external relation are merely names which may be applicable or no, according as the relation changes.

2. Our adversary fares no better with the next objection, against the creation of the world. "Creation is the making of existence." Of *all* existence? We deny it formally; never did we think that God made Himself, although He is His own principle. Of *some* existence? That we are willing to admit. Creation is the making of a finite, contingent and temporal existence by an Infinite, necessary, and eternal one. So, before that temporal existence was, something existed already; and it is grossly unfair to represent Theism as supposing *nature commencement*, in the sense which Atheists give to "nature," *i. e.*, all that is.

Let us try an adaptation of Mr. Bradlaugh's argument on creation, and prove that it is impossible to light a fire. To light a fire is to produce heat: now heat cannot be produced; for, before heat was produced it was nowhere, and there was no such a thing as heat in the world. But I cannot look back to a moment when there was no heat, for I know that all bodies possess, and ever have possessed, more or less of it. Consequently, to light a fire is an impossible undertaking. Such an argument, applied to the lighting of a fire, would have brought its author to a cell in Bedlam; applied to the creation of the world, it has raised him to a seat in the parliament of England.

3. The argument against God's benevolence has the merit of being rather more specious. "A benevolent man is one who does more than his duty; a being infinitely benevolent ought to do infinitely more. God, in not creating a sinless world, has not done infinitely more: consequently God is not infinitely benevolent."

Indeed! Pray, what is the duty of God? He has none, and owes us nothing. The Supreme Being can be by no means bound by duty towards those who depend upon Him in *all*. Owing us nothing, it follows that in whatever world we live, and however little God may have done for us, He will have done *infinitely more than His duty*, if it be true that something is infinitely more than nothing, and that any number is infinitely more than zero. Even the most ardent Atheist will confess, we hope, that existence is better than non-existence, that to have a chance of being happy is better than to be utterly deprived of that chance. Well, all of us have both existence and a chance of being happy. God, by that gift, does infinitely more than He ought, and shows thereby His infinite benevolence. Why does God not do more still, since our world is not perfect? That we do not know, and if Mr. Bradlaugh wanted only to prove that man is not omniscient, he would easily gain his point; but as a proof that God is not benevolent it fails completely. We fancy that our opponent is led astray by a false idea of infinite action, which in his mind would be, "to do as much as one possibly can." Now the fact is, that an act can be infinite in itself, and yet produce only

finite results, on account of the debility and imperfection of the matter on which it works.

4. Another difficulty arises. God cannot be personal, because He is either infinite or not God. Now, all ideas of "personality" give us also the idea of limitation. We beg leave simply to deny the latter proposition without more ado. Personality we consider as the highest substantial perfection of an intelligent being. If the being in question involves in its essence limitation and imperfection, personality will no doubt be limited and imperfect, not because it is personality, but because it belongs to such a being. Thus, God having been demonstrated to be infinite, it follows that His personality is also infinite.

5. This brings us to the next question, whether an intelligent being can at the same time be infinite. We have not to ask whether in every known case intelligence is limited, but whether the very idea of intelligence argues limitation; and we answer in the negative. Intelligence is essentially clear: is the Infinite essentially dim? Intelligence is something definite and precise: is the Infinite indefinite and vague? Let Mr. Bradlaugh have the kindness to go back to our definition of the Infinite Being,—one who possesses perfection without end. Therefore the Infinite must be infinitely clear, infinitely definite, infinitely precise, since precision, definiteness, and clearness are perfections. All those qualities are qualities of intelligence, and intelligence is itself a perfection; consequently God must be intelligent, because He is infinite.

6. "Theism checks man's efforts," says Mr. Bradlaugh. That depends. A certain Theism, infected by fatalism, certainly does so. If we believe that whatever happens happens necessarily according to God's will *alone*; if we annihilate the liberty of man, and suppose that all that is to happen must take place antecedently to any display of human activity, and without his choice having any effect upon that which shall be, then we certainly check man's efforts in the most fatal way. But this is far from being Theism itself, since a great many schools of Theistic doctrine have declared in the most emphatic manner their abhorrence of this error. The only effect which we can

discern in the ordinary doctrine of submission to the will of God is that we learn

"To mend what can,
And bear what can't be mended;"

and not only to bear, but be glad of it, since we know that it is the will of the All-good. A seeming evil menaces us; our duty is to exert ourselves to the utmost in order to ward off the peril. But if all our endeavours are useless, if the seeming evil does really fall upon us, then we are happy; for we know that the evil is only a seeming one, and in reality a great good, since it comes from the All-good. A true Theist is the most happy of men; if successful, he is happy for having done what he wished to do; if unsuccessful, he is still more happy for not having done what was against the Divine will.

But a still more evident proof that Theism does not check man's efforts is, that Fatalism can exist independently of any Theistic doctrine; for Fatalism springs merely from the denial of human liberty, not from the affirmation of the power of God. Substitute to "God's almighty will" the "laws of nature," and you have modern fatalism, of which, if we are not much mistaken, Mr. Bradlaugh is himself an adept, for he seems clearly to deny free-will in man.* Now if, instead of all things proceeding from the eternal decree of an intelligent being, all proceeds from the everlasting law of an unintelligent one, we are at a loss to see how this sort of Atheism differs from that kind of Theism; both have the same maxim: *What is was to be, and could not be otherwise.* Why then give ourselves any trouble? is the natural consequence of both. We here detect a second stone which Mr. Bradlaugh throws, unmindful of the fragility of his own dwelling.

7. The argument we have next quoted, though directed against God's intelligence, only proves that the intelligence of God is of a different nature from ours; which, seeing all His other attributes, and the immeasurable distance between His nature and ours, was certainly a very likely conclusion. We perceive new ideas, remember old ones,

* "What did Jesus teach?" p. 7. "Heresy," p. 49.

and attain by reasoning to higher knowledge. God is omniscient, and therefore neither perceives, remembers, nor reasons; consequently, (according to Mr. Bradlaugh,) to know everything signifies to be without intelligence! If so, why should not the highest degree of intelligence be to know nothing? Cannot the gentleman see that if God does not perceive, remember, or reason, it is because He does not want those faculties, but has the grand faculty of omniscience, which transcends and supersedes them all? Why do we perceive? To fill up a defect in our intelligence, which is never in possession of all it is able to know. Why remember? Because another defect renders our intelligence unable to have everything present to its mental vision at the same time. And we reason only to supply a third defect, which is, that we cannot at once see all the relations of all ideas one with another, and all the conclusions that flow therefrom. Mr. Bradlaugh's enumeration of the acts of intelligence is, in fact, only the enumeration of the defects in *our* intelligence. Perfect intelligence is that which knows everything at one glance, with an implicit judgment contained in that glance. God has but *one* idea; this idea represents everything that is, that was, that will be, and contains in itself all true judgments, as the idea of existence affirmed, (*i.e.*, of the identity between the subject and the predicate,) is comprised in the idea "I." Such is the rapid and imperfect outline of God's intelligence, which we give for want of space to add more.

"Judgment," says Mr. Bradlaugh, "implies the joining of two ideas." Explicit judgment may do so; implicit judgment supposes the two ideas joined in one already. And the one idea which God has, being infinite, being God Himself, is equal to an infinite multitude of human ideas. "To think is to separate what is thought from what is not thought." Yes, in man, since man's mind is not able to think of all things at once and without confusion. But the Divine is not the human nature; His thought embraces all, absconds from nothing, unites all things in one vast affirmation, without concentration of mind on one particular object to the detriment of the rest. God's mind is concentrated upon all things together. And thus Mr.

Bradlaugh's objections prove only this,—that our intelligence is of a very bounded and feeble description, obliged to aid its flickering gleam by numerous faculties, which, while they help its action, declare openly its radical infirmity; just as the numerous members and organs of the lower animals at the same time supply a want and reveal an imperfection.

8. "But God is not all-wise, having created beings and parts of beings that are of no use."

Of no use? We cannot find words to treat such presumptuous ignorance as it deserves: but here silence is best, the silence of scorn: not for our opponent, but for his objection. Besides, another has, long ago already, in sublimer language than we can command, joined the highest flight of poetry to the soundest accents of reason in condemnation of such temerity. Our only answer will be a quotation from the immortal author of the "Seasons."

"Let no presuming impious railer tax
Creative Wisdom, as if aught was made
In vain, or not for admirable ends.
Shall little haughty ignorance presume
His works unwise, of which the smallest part
Exceeds the narrow vision of her mind?
As if upon a full-proportioned dome,
On swelling columns raised, the pride of art,
A critic fly, whose feeble ray scarce spreads
An inch around, with blind presumption bold,
Should dare to tax the structure of the whole?
And lives the man, whose universal eye
Has swept at once the unbounded scheme of things,
Marked their dependence so, and firm accord,
As with unfaltering accent to conclude
That this availeth nought?"*

9. Creation is again brought forward. "The sum of existence," say you, "cannot change." But we also, who believe in the creation, admit that, and we are algebraically right. Let us discuss the question algebraically, not that we intend thereby to decide whether or no algebra can be applied to philosophical reasoning, but merely as a manner of stating rather more clearly the point in discussion.

Call what existed before the creation, ∞ , (*i.e.*, the

* Thompson, "Seasons," (Summer.)

Creator,) and what existed after, $\infty + a$, (*i.e.*, the Creator and things created;) we say,

$$\infty = \infty + a;$$

and we defy any man who knows algebra to say that our equation is a false one: for nothing finite, however great, can add anything to that which is infinite already. The existence or the non-existence of creatures adds nothing whatever to the sum of existence, or, to speak with more exactitude, it adds comparatively nothing. Now, the infinite, to which you add something that is comparatively nothing, is like a quantity to which you add another infinitely small; it becomes no greater than it was before. And yet a may be as real as you like, as great as you like, as distinct as you like from the infinite, the result will be always the same. But if things are so according to algebra, the most precise of all sciences, what more will you have? If exactitude itself fails to content you, how can we hope to satisfy your objections?

10. "Some men are not convinced of God's existence." Thereupon Mr. Bradlaugh builds an argument to prove that the Deity is either not all-wise, or not all-powerful, or not all-good. To reply, we begin by denying the basis. There is no man who is not convinced of God's existence. Some may be so ignorant that they have never thought about the matter. Some there are who perversely refrain from thinking about it; others may strive to raise clouds before a truth as bright as the sun, accumulate objections without number, and pile up difficulties without end. But the honest doubt of a man who wishes sincerely to see his way to what is true, there certainly is not. And as neither pride, nor passion, nor wilful ignorance can be laid to the charge of God; as, moreover, ignorance, if not guilty, is not punished, we are right in affirming that there are practically no Atheists. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Not in his *mind*, even though he is a fool: conviction will not enter there. Where then? In his *heart*. That is, "I wish that there be no God. I have settled that there ought not to be one. I am determined to seek every reason to prove to myself that there is none."

But all that is useless, and the Atheist only succeeds in being an Atheist in his heart, and remains a fool. Certainly, the expression is strong; but should we use a softer one for a man who by every possible effort of will strove to elude the evident truth that two sides of a triangle are greater than the third? Now, the existence of God is not one whit less evident. Of course we do not by these remarks mean to say that Mr. Bradlaugh is anything but a very clever man; we only regret he should waste such abilities as his in so hopeless a cause.

11. He considers Theism as inadmissible, because it cannot show "how the first cause, which is motionless, can have moved to make the world." In this reasoning there are two weak points. Firstly, Theism is not bound to show *how* things are; it suffices that it shows that they are so: and that we have done already. Secondly, we deny that the First Cause *moves* to make the world. *It acts without moving*. How is that? we cannot understand it, but it is proved to be so. "Action" is not synonymous with "movement."* In movement we find an imperfection, a variation, a constant change, which may perhaps be essential to the action of finite beings, but certainly not to that of the Infinite One. An eternal immutable Act, which in eternity is the principle of God's own existence, and in time that of all other beings,—such is God. No movement, no mutation, but a calm, undying, unchangeable Activity. How can that be? No man knows: but nothing is further from absurdity than this act, the perfection of all acts, and from which every shade of passivity and inertia is banished.

12. And now we come to the last recorded objection, which argues either that God, being everywhere, made the universe nowhere, or that, if the universe is nowhere,

* On the contrary, we find in Mechanics that with levers of the first class, where the force is applied to the shorter arm, *the less the acting force moves, the greater is the movement it produces*: for the shorter the arm where the force is applied, the longer the other which is put in motion. Here we have, therefore, a very strong action combined with very little movement, which produces a very considerable movement of matter. Therefore, to act is to produce movement, but not necessarily to be moved oneself, at least, not at all in proportion with the intensity of the act.

God is not everywhere: and that, by the reason that two existences cannot be together in the same place. Mr. Bradlaugh is certainly very pardonable for bringing forward this difficulty, as it coincides perfectly with his views on the question. He says he is unable to conceive anything else but matter, and that for him the words "matter" and "existence" have the same sense. Now matter is universally allowed to be impenetrable, so that two different bodies cannot occupy the same place. If, therefore, we imagine God as a body, the argument might be very difficult, if not impossible to answer. But that is precisely what we deny; God, according to our point of view, is purely spiritual. Now, though an immaterial being may occupy space as well as a material one, it does not occupy space in the same way. It is not extended into quantitative parts by the proportionate parts of space which it occupies: it is only present by its *action in space*, and that is all. Besides, do we not every day see examples—not of bodies, it is true,—but of phenomena which compenetrates each other? A room is full of air; if you speak in the room, it will be filled with sound. How is it that sound and air exist at the same time in the same place? Because they do not exist in the same way. You are in a railway carriage; the train goes full speed, and you walk across from one window to another. Your body is in movement, but animated at the same time by two different motions: one, interior, that proceeds from itself; another, exterior, that comes from the train. How can two different movements exist in the same body at the same time? Because they do not exist in the same way. I know that these examples only prove co-existence for phenomena, and not for substances; but we say that if phenomena have the power of co-existing thus, we can suppose that a substance which is not a body can possess like qualities. All we humbly beg and pray our adversary to allow us, is that a spiritual substance can exist and occupy space in a different way from a corporeal one; it is very hard to refuse us so little. And yet he grounds his argument upon the fact that it is absurd to suppose a spirit that does not behave exactly like a bodily sub-

stance. If that is the starting-point of all his philosophy, and a self-evident proposition which cannot be proved, and which it is ridiculous to deny, we are surely in a very hard case: but then, why so much reasoning? If spiritualistic philosophy denies your very first principle, you had better leave it alone, and not seek to prove its falsity by means of a principle which it denies. If Tertullian, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz and Clarke, were all so mad as not to have seen what is self-evident, why should you dispute against their conclusions, which of course are still more foolish? Either agree that your axiom is not self-evident, and then prove your axiom by something besides itself, or abandon discussion altogether.

Let us, in conclusion, sum up the whole debate in few words.

1st. It is certain that in the universe there are many beings, since everybody admits, or ought to admit, that there are many phenomena, each existing separately from the other: for separate existence is all we require for the notion of a being.

2ndly. Of all the beings which we see or know directly, not one possesses in itself the principle of its existence. There must therefore exist another Being, which is at once its own and their principle of existence. That principle we call God.

3rdly. All objections here stated against the existence of that Being, drawn from its demonstrated attributes, although they take an obviously unfair advantage, may be and have been successfully answered.

4thly. Therefore, Mr. Bradlaugh's difficulties are utterly worthless, his doctrines ridiculously absurd, and his attempts to shake the demonstration of God's existence hopelessly inefficient.

5thly. All this does not in the slightest degree interfere with his being, privately and personally, a very remarkable man.