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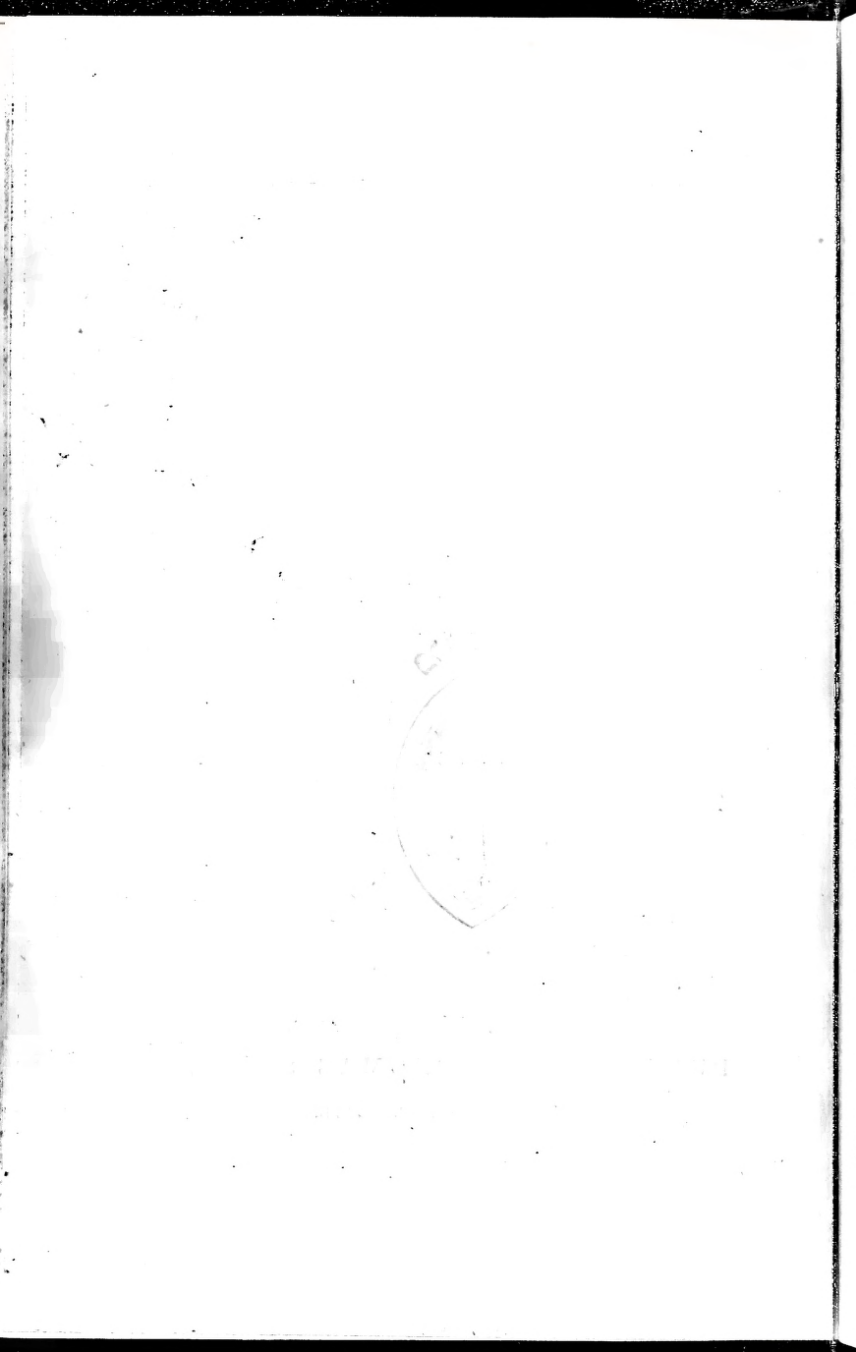
NOTES ON BISHOP MAGEE'S  
PLEADINGS FOR CHRIST.

BY A BARRISTER.



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## PLEADINGS FOR CHRIST.

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EVERY one, who knows anything of his public career, will be inclined to think and to speak favourably of Dr Magee, Bishop of Peterborough. A man who, by his own unaided talents and eloquence, has raised himself from the position of a humble curate to a deanery, and subsequently to the Episcopal Bench, must possess qualities of a character to recommend him to the sympathy of most Englishmen. His first speech in the House of Lords was such as abundantly to justify his elevation, if oratory is to be held as a qualification for the office of a Bishop. It was eminently rhetorical, but rhetoric is not out of place in a public assembly, and it possessed the superlative merit of being effective.

It is for these reasons that we lament seeing him in what we think a false character, that we regret to observe him not taking the proper measure of his natural powers. He should have contented himself with moving the hearts of men by his eloquence, and have avoided all attempts at close reasoning, either on scepticism or on any other subject. Above all, he should not have attempted to reason in *print*. "It would be as idle for an orator," says Lord Macaulay, "to waste deep meditation and long research on his speeches, as for a manager to adorn the crowd of courtiers and ladies who cross the stage with real pearls and diamonds." But the case is very different with a treatise intended not to command loud plaudits

but to be perused in the calm of the closet, not merely to excite admiration but to carry conviction. Here paste diamonds are quite inadmissible. And we regret to find that in the sermons before us Bishop Magee has given us nothing but paste.

We first took our pen in hand with the intention of briefly reviewing these remarkable sermons, and commencing our review by a sketch of their contents. We do not know whether it will be possible to carry out this intention, for the more they are examined the greater does the difficulty of the task appear. How to give a reduced outline of that which is, in itself, without form and void! Confused thought, bad logic, false analogies, mark every step of the Bishop's progress. For pages together, he fires at imaginary enemies, sometimes he fires in the air, at others, he is firing into the ranks of his own co-religionists. It is as difficult to convey an idea of his general argument, as to put together the fragments of an ill-prepared pudding which has fallen to pieces in the boiling. After reading and re-reading these sermons, a sense of hopelessness of reproducing their purport weighs on the mind, like that which appalls the hearer, after listening to Foote's burlesque narrative which ends in the marriage of the barber.

We are not exaggerating. We pledge ourselves to establish every one of these statements before we have done with the Bishop. We do not even profess to argue from the "sceptical" point of view; for we think that it is the orthodox who have a cause of complaint against such a "defence" as this. We are perfectly ready to admit that it furnishes no fair sample of what may be alleged in defence of Christian dogmas; and that from that side have emanated, and are even now being produced, defences of Christianity which, if to be answered at all, are only to be answered by writers of consummate skill in dialectics. Our observations apply solely to the pamphlet before us.



We repeat that it is impossible to give an idea of it as a whole, and that all that we can hope to do is to lay a few of the bricks of which it is built at the feet of the reader, in order to enable him to judge of the character of the edifice. We may take the opportunity of saying here that we should never have taken this trouble, if these discourses had not been heralded with an immense flourish of trumpets, and borne the name—with the announcement that they are revised and corrected by the preacher—of an English prelate. It may be added that they are edited by a dean who was at one time the head master of one of our greatest public schools. There has been a great labouring of the mountain; let us try and give some idea of the result.

These discourses, then—"Argumentative Discourses" they are called on the title-page—are three in number, "Christianity and Free-Thought," "Christianity and Scepticism," "Christianity and Faith," and they appear together under the general title of "Pleadings for Christ." The text of the first sermon is taken from St John's Gospel viii. 33, "How sayest thou 'Ye shall be made free?'" We regret to find at the outset that the Bishop does not understand the narrative which he has made the theme of his discourse; or, at any rate, does not seem to know that the rendering of it which he assumes to be the true one, is open to discussion. He supposes "they" at the beginning of verse 33, to refer to those Jews who are said to have "believed on Christ" in verses 30, 31, and he takes "the Jews" who are represented as disputing with Christ throughout the remainder of the chapter, and who ultimately take up stones to throw at him, to be these same converts, who immediately lapse into disbelief on hearing the words "Ye shall be made free." The way in which the narrative is printed in our English version should have guarded the Bishop against rushing to this conclusion. There is a ¶ before "They" at

verse 31, showing the sense the translators attached to the passage. The context should equally have warned him: at verse 37, "ye seek to kill me," cannot refer to those who had just professed their belief in him, but to the mass who still disbelieved. "The Jews" again are spoken of at verses 48, 52, 57. They it was, not "those Jews which had believed on him," who took up the stones. "The Jews" is the term constantly used by John to signify those who dispute with and do not acknowledge Christ. There is a similar division of opinion in the next chapter but one, x. 19. Further on, the Jews (the unbelievers) *again* pick up stones to throw at him. The Greek is *Ἀπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ*. "Answer was made to him;"\* as the orthodox commentator, Bloomfield, says, "not by those just before mentioned who 'believed on him,' but some bystanders." Dr Brown in his commentary writes, "The hostile part of his audience here breaking in upon the words of encouragement addressed to the believing portion," &c. "*Some present* asserted," (Scott). "That is *the other Jews* who had not believed," (Dr Adam Clarke.) This is the obvious sense, and so de Wette and most other commentators take it. Dean Alford, it is true, takes Bishop Magee's view, referring to v. 36, which we do not think by any means conclusive. So that the occurrence which the Bishop makes the theme of his discourse, pressing it upon our attention, with frequent repetitions of its purport, "First they believe on him, shortly afterwards they seek to take his life," the scene which is "a prophecy of the whole history of Christ's life in his church, the story of those who come and of those who go," &c., &c., is to our way of thinking, and if the opinions of the best commentators are worth anything, a purely imaginary one.

This, however, is a small matter. The Bishop

\* So Mark xii. 13, "And they send unto him," &c. Gr. *ἀποστέλλουσι πρὸς αὐτὸν τινὰς*, &c. Certain persons are sent to him. John xviii. 28, "Then led they Jesus," &c.

presently goes on to give us his idea of Free-thought and Free-thinkers. The ideas which he has formed on this subject, always more or less confused, and often contradicting each other, are constantly appearing on the surface all through his three discourses. As these free-thinkers are the class of persons against whom we presume that he directs his arguments, it is certainly essential that he should understand what is meant by the term. Let us see, then, what he does understand by it. Free-thinkers, it seems, are persons "determined not to hear reason," "unwilling even to listen to arguments for Christianity." They are men who say, "I cannot stop to listen to your evidences of Christianity, when upon the very face of it you bear this stamp of falsehood, that you are opposed to freedom." And again, "No evidence of prophecy or miracle will make me give up my freedom of thought." Elsewhere we read that free-thinkers are those "who reject either all or a *part* of Christianity." With regard to this last definition, we must notice, in passing, its singular felicity and clearness. According to the Bishop, a Unitarian is a free-thinker, because he rejects a part of Christianity, *i.e.*, the divinity of Christ. But the Bishop himself is a free-thinker, according to two-thirds of the Christian world; for he rejects a doctrine which is with them a part and parcel of Christianity, *i.e.*, that of a supreme visible church. What *is* "Christianity?" In this passage it must mean the particular form of it professed by Dr Magee.

Having thus introduced us to the Free-thinker—who is, it seems, a being who rejects all or a part of the Bishop's theological views, *because they interfere with his freedom*—the preacher proceeds, throughout the rest of his sermon, to treat us to a dissertation on free-thought in general. This, he says, can only be of three kinds. Freedom, as opposed to *necessity*; freedom, as opposed to *authority*; or freedom as opposed to *responsibility*. Our space does not permit us

to deal more than briefly with the Bishop's mode of arguing under these three heads.

The doctrine of "Freedom as opposed to necessity" — "that a man is free to think in one way or another, that it is not an absolute necessity for him always to think in one way or another, that his thoughts do not grow out of him as the blade grows out of the seed,"—we had generally heard defined as the doctrine of Free-will; and surely it is much better, in discussions of this kind, to adhere to a recognised term, than to devise a fresh one (unless good cause be shown), which may only serve to confuse all concerned. Here it is the Bishop himself who, as usual, becomes confused. "Thought" immediately afterwards figures as "belief," and an entirely new proposition is introduced to the reader: "Christianity teaches that man is free—ay, terribly free!—to will his own belief, when it teaches us that man is answerable for his belief, because men cannot be answerable for that over which they have no choice or power whatever."

Noting with pleasure this last admission, we must say that there is a good deal in this sentence which might challenge comment, as illustrating the Bishop's slipshod method, and which yet we must pass by. But we feel constrained to ask this question, Is it true that man has the power to will his own belief? To be of any service to the argument, belief must here mean a true belief. Man must have it in his power to will to believe what is certainly true, and must have some verifying faculty within him, independent of the external accidents which help to shape opinions, for the non-exercise of which faculty he is responsible. For it is only in consequence of his possessing such a power that he can be held to be justly punishable for going wrong, in which case alone he will be liable to punishment. This is only a roundabout way of stating an old view, as to which orthodox theologians are at issue with all reasonable Christians.



That a man is responsible for the steps which he takes and the care which he exercises in arriving at an opinion, is a reasonable statement ; but the assertion that he is responsible for the opinion itself, if it turns out to be a wrong one (in other words, that he has the power of willing to adopt a right one), is an assertion not likely to help the Bishop in his crusade against the free-thinkers. Nor will he probably make more way with them when he goes on to point out that it is a very remarkable and a very strange thing that it is the very people who call themselves free-thinkers—many of them at least—who most strongly insist upon the fact, that man is not answerable for his belief ; whereas, “it is the Christian” (*i.e.*, the man who holds the opposite view), “who is the real free-thinker.” They will be inclined to contend that there is more, much more, real freedom, not to speak of morality, in the doctrine that man is bound to form the very best opinion he can, without being subject to punishment in case he should honestly fall into error, than in the view which represents us as being complete masters of truth and error, on the condition of being subject to eternal damnation, if we perversely arrive at a conclusion different from that of the Bishop of Peterborough.

We are next treated to the Bishop's views on Free Thought as opposed to authority. “It is said that freedom of thought is opposed to all authority: and we are told that thought cannot be free if it submits to authority.” We do not know by whom these foolish statements are supposed to be “told” or “said.” Here as elsewhere the Bishop constructs a lay figure for the purpose of smashing it to pieces; an innocent pastime, but one not at all conducive to the spread of Christianity. Accordingly he proceeds to ask, in a tone of conscious triumph, “Have you ever considered how many of your most cherished opinions you are receiving on authority, not because you have proved them for

yourselves, but because you have taken them from some one who you believe knows more than you do? You take the opinion of your lawyer on law as an authority; you take the opinion of your doctor on medicine as an authority, &c." The Bishop might have added that we should be perfectly willing to accept *him* and other right reverend persons, as authorities on certain ecclesiastical subjects. If for instance we wished to know from what side of the altar or table, north, south, east, or west, it is lawful to read the communion service, and which are the Popish points of the compass in connection with that ceremony; what the precise functions of god-fathers and god-mothers, or of archdeacons may be; what the exact force of the damnatory clauses in the Athanasian creed, and how far an Anglican may be allowed to accept them *cum grano*; we should personally be glad to accept the Bishop as an authority on these matters, of which he must necessarily know a great deal more than we, who indeed know nothing. But the Bishop has omitted to say (indeed he could not say) that we are bound to accept any of these people as *infallible* authorities, even on the matters of fact to which they testify (as for instance, what *is* the law, lay, or ecclesiastical in a particular case, what *is* the precise effect, sudorific or emetic, of a certain drug, &c.), much less that we are bound so to accept them on points where an independent judgment may fairly be exercised, as for example the goodness or badness of a law, the beneficial effects of a particular mode of treatment, the wisdom or silliness of certain ecclesiastical practices. And without this notion of infallibility as attached to authority, his illustrations will be of no use at all against real free-thinkers: in fact, they are such as these latter will be glad to adduce on their own behalf. Thus, so far are we from yielding up our judgment implicitly to the authority of lawyers, that we believe some of the very worst laws ever devised to

have been their especial work, and nearly every bad law to have received their general approval. The mistakes of doctors are proverbial. The bleedings, and sweatings, and purgings and blisterings of the last century are pronounced by the modern practitioner to aggravate the very symptoms which they were intended to alleviate. Indeed, no better illustration than that of medicine could be adduced to show that authority is not always on the right side, and that we are bound, even in cases where some deference is due to it, not altogether to lay aside that watchful attitude of the mind which characterizes free thought. If the Bishop means to assert that theology is an exception to this rule, he is advocating Roman Catholic doctrine pure and simple, and that under circumstances which are not likely to commend it to our acceptance: since the very Protestantism of which he is a professing minister was founded at the Reformation by those who *refused* to submit to the then existing authority, and distinctly exercised their own free thought.

But, says the Bishop—*supposing* any one to work a miracle, then clearly you ought to submit to his authority. The passage in which he sets forth this view, is so curious, and at the same time so well illustrates the style of his reasoning, that we subjoin it.

“Let us suppose that you were walking through one of the grave-yards of this city in company with another, and that the discourse fell upon the resurrection of the dead, and that you were arguing that it was impossible—that there was no authority to prove it—and suppose that the person walking with you said, ‘I know more than you of the dead, and I will give you a proof that I know more than you do,’ and suppose that, stretching out his hand, he bid the dead in that grave-yard arise, and that they sprung up alive out of the earth where they had been sleeping, do you mean to say—is there any one in this congregation who could say, if he saw that miracle—that the person who had wrought it would be no authority on the question of the resurrection of

the dead, or that it would be any tyranny over his Free-thought to say, 'Believe this person?' Your free-thought, because it is free, would immediately ally itself with the authority of the person who had done this thing."

If by this it be meant that a man who went about raising dead people would be looked upon as an authority on the subject of raising the dead, this is a truism. He would, we think, be the sole living authority on that head. But if it be meant that a simple manifestation of miraculous power (and one miracle is not more wonderful than another) ought immediately to command our submission to the authority of the wonder-worker on all other points,—as for instance on morals,—this is diametrically opposed to common sense and to the teachings of Scripture. We are repeatedly warned in the Bible that the power to work miracles and signs and wonders is no proof of a Divine mission.\* We do not know what any of the congregation in Norwich Cathedral might do, under the hypothetical circumstances, but we hope that all of them would act in a way the exact opposite to that attributed to them by the Bishop. We trust that, instead of "allying themselves to the authority" of the resurrectionist, they would very carefully weigh any moral teaching with which he might favour them. In other words, we advise them, should the case arise, to use their "freedom of thought." Nor could a better illustration of the importance and necessity of exercising true Free-thought (as distinguished from the strange and unintelligible creation of the Bishop) be set before them.

The next two sentences have somewhat puzzled us. We append them in the hope and belief that the reader will be better able than ourselves to seize their full purport.

\* Matt. vii. 22 and xxiv. 24; Rev. xvi. 14; 2 Thess. ii. 9, &c. and of Deuteron. xiii. 1-5.



“So you see freedom of thought is not inconsistent with the authority we claim for the Christian Revelation. For this reason, that the revelation submits its proof to your Free-thought, and unless you accept its proof, of course you cannot accept its authority; but, if you do accept it, you do not lose your freedom; on the contrary, you are asserting and acting upon your freedom.”

Upon this, as far as we can understand it, and indeed upon the whole argument of which it forms a part, we must remark that we never heard of a person who rejected the Christian Revelation because it interfered with his freedom of thought, in the sense in which the term is used here, that is to say the exercise of his free-will. One man examines the evidences in favour of Christianity and is satisfied with them and embraces Christianity. Another, after examination, deems them inconclusive and declines to accept Christianity. Both these men exercise their “free-thought” or free-will. The Bishop is all the time tilting against a wind-mill. Or, to take the illustration with which he has himself furnished us: A. sees a person raise a dead body in a Norwich churchyard, and immediately yields an implicit obedience to this person. B., who sees the same thing, would like a little more information, before following this course. In what sense can it be said that A. is “asserting and acting upon his freedom” more than B?

The Bishop now approaches his third point. “Now, I come to the third idea of freedom—that of freedom as opposed to responsibility—and this is what I really believe most men mean, when they talk of Free-thought as opposed to Christianity.” We are glad, after following the preacher through a labyrinth of which we are never sure that we hold the clue, to find ourselves at last face to face with him on a bit of open ground. For it is certain that a claim to Free-thought must include the idea of our not being morally responsible for any opinion

honestly arrived at. We hold the truth of this idea, or proposition, to be absolutely unassailable, on the assumption that there is an equitable God. We do not say that man will not be punished eternally for an honest mistake; but we do assert that it is impossible to conceive such a punishment as other than immoral and unjust. Theologians have tried to get out of the difficulty by pleading that what seems unjust to us, may be just upon the whole, &c. But this does not really help them. Words must be used in the sense which is commonly attached to them, or there is an end of all clearness in our ideas and our reasoning. If Supreme Justice to all can, without a contradiction, be made to include what we call Injustice to us, we must think of it as Injustice, and are not assisted one whit, by reversing the terms and *calling* it Justice. Theologians, we repeat, have always felt this to be a great difficulty, and some of them have devised the doctrine that God may not after all be omnipotent, and may be compelled to doom the greater part of the human race to endless tortures. But the Bishop pours out his rhetoric, undismayed by any such considerations as these. To him everything is quite clear and satisfactory. Yet we should have thought that a little reflection might have induced him to pause before giving his approval to the doctrine that man ought to be condemned for his opinions. Supposing the dogma of the Church of Rome (which embraces the majority of Christians) to be correct—"Hors de l'Église point de salut," the Bishop himself would be liable to eternal hell-fire for his opinions, nor would it help him on his own theory, that he had formed them conscientiously. We are sure that if his Lordship examines his own heart, he will confess that he could not avoid thinking such a judgment on him to be an unjust one, and we are equally sure that he would be quite right in his conclusion.

The way in which the Bishop seeks to establish the propriety of eternal punishment for mistaken opinions from the analogies furnished by Society, Law and Nature, is as singular as anything in these singular discourses. He tells us that Society and the Laws are perpetually punishing men for their Free-thought. "If a man utters a seditious thought, if he utters a libellous thought about his neighbour, if he utters a foul or indecent thought, is it true that he ought not to be punished?" And again "Let a man entertain uncharitable thoughts, suspicious thoughts, evil and unkind thoughts of his neighbour—let him not even utter them in speech, but show them in his manner and look—let his fellow-men know that he thinks ill of them, or unjustly of them—and you know well how Society visits on that man this exercise of his Free-thought." Here it will be observed that, with systematic confusion, the Bishop uses "Free-thought" in an entirely new sense. It means here the claim of a man to think (and act) precisely as he pleases: and no reference is made to the one important point "Does the man honestly believe that he is doing right in indulging in the thought, or act?" In the majority of the instances given above, the man must clearly know that he is doing wrong, and he is very properly punishable both in this world and, as we believe, in that to come. By simply changing the meaning of Free-thought in this way the Bishop escapes in a cloud of verbiage. And yet, to take his own analogy, nothing is more clear than that society, in awarding its moral judgment, invariably attaches great weight to this plea, where it can be satisfactorily established, viz., that a man has done an act under a conscientious sense of its being a right one. The Laws, it is true, cannot always do this. The reason is, of course, that our Justice must necessarily be dispensed in a rude fashion. We are obliged to mark out certain

actions as injurious to society and to punish those who commit them: and not having the necessary machinery to weigh motives, we are, as a general rule, obliged to neglect them, though even here a striking exception will occur to every one in the case of the insane, whom we do not punish, but only keep out of harm's way, on the ground that *they are not responsible, because they are supposed not to know that they are doing wrong.* No one, now-a-days, will call General Washington and his associates criminals: and the fact of their success in their enterprize has nothing to do with their criminality or innocence; they would have been precisely the same men, morally speaking, if they had succumbed to the British Forces instead of gaining the advantage over them. Yet it is probable that they would all have been hanged or shot if the issue had been different. The Law would have punished and society would have acquitted them. Charlotte Corday was executed, and we think rightly executed, for assassinating Marat: but posterity has refused to assign to her action any but an infinitesimal share of moral blame. We remember reading some years ago of a Swedish clergyman who, if we recollect rightly, poisoned some of the most religious among his congregation, under the idea that he was conferring a benefit on them by sending them to Heaven. This man was probably put to death—he ought to have been, if sane—but it is clear that, if the truth of his plea could be established, his offence in a moral point of view, was of a totally different kind from that of Thurtell or the Mannings. It is true then that the Law does often punish men for acting on conscientious motives: but this arises from the necessary imperfection of all Law which as we have said can go only a very little way into the question of Intent and must deal with the overt Act. To argue from this that an all-seeing Being who is acquainted with



intents and motives must be expected to act in a similar way, is a strange piece of reasoning. Nor does it appear to us that any such conclusion can be drawn from the Analogy of Society. It is true that it has often punished men for their conscientious opinions; but the more civilization has advanced the more has such a practice come to be admitted, in theory at least, to be indefensible and barbarous. And there is no surer sign of a healthy society than this; that its members should be allowed to hold and to express publicly any opinion whatever that is not positively illegal, or immoral, without incurring reprobation. In short, we are altogether at a loss to see how any inference can be drawn from the "Analogy of Society" of a kind to lead us to suppose that God will condemn honest error to never-ending torment.

In appealing to the "Analogy of Nature" the Bishop seems to us to be standing on much firmer ground. In all these sixty-six closely printed pages, the only coherent argument is one adapted from Butler. Bishop Magee points out that the forces of nature are inexorable. However conscientious a man's views may be as to these, yet, if they happen to be wrong ones, they may lead him to his destruction. "Let him freely think that fire does not burn, or water drown; let him think that fever is not infectious, or that ventilation is unhealthy; let him think wrongly concerning any law of nature, and he will find that he will be visited by a sharp and merciless punishment."

We must enter some preliminary objection to the word "punishment" here. No doubt the term *is* used popularly, precisely in this sense. Nothing is more common than to hear of a person being "punished for a mistake:" though, even here, if we are able to show that the mistake was unavoidable, this is generally held to be destructive of any such view, and the idea of Punishment disappears. The same vague use of the term obtains in such expressions as "punished for

the sins of his ancestors." But, in its more exact sense, we shall find punishment (at any rate among civilized nations) invariably conceived as the consequence of wrong-doing. The history of Persecution furnishes no exception to this, for the Catholics who burnt the Protestants, burnt them, among other reasons, for this one: that they believed them to be indulging themselves in wanton and wilful errors. They had not arrived at the conception (any more than Bishop Magee appears to have arrived at it), that a conviction might *force* itself upon the mind. They thought, as he does, that every man has a complete control over his own belief, and a power of forming a true belief, and as they felt that their belief was the true one, they deemed every one deeply culpable who did not conform to it. In any case, the fact that the word "punishment" is used in a loose, and sometimes figurative sense of almost everything that hurts, should make us cautious about accepting it here, where it takes for granted a point that admits of argument. We are aware that Death and Suffering of all kinds are looked upon by theologians as punishments from on high, but this is a position which requires to be established, and cannot be *assumed* in the above passage. We do not think then that the man who innocently runs his head against one of the great powers of nature and is stunned, as far as this life is concerned, can properly be said to be punished, in the sense in which that term is affixed to the endless punishment of the impenitent. We once knew of a person whose case was exactly that which the Bishop puts. He had arrived at certain very strong notions as to the power of volition. He had convinced himself that if a man who had never learnt to swim, found himself all of a sudden out of his depth, and retained perfect presence of mind, he would instinctively strike out in a swimming attitude, and so remain on the surface. Full of this discovery, and of the great benefit which he would

confer upon mankind by illustrating it in his person, he jumped into the Severn and was immediately drowned. We have never been able to think of the waters which closed over this good soul's head as *punishing* him, or doing anything else to him than stopping his breath, and so removing him from the world. Similarly, one of ourselves who overdrinks himself is properly "punished" by a splitting headache: but we should not use the same word (at least not in the same sense) in the case of a savage who drank off a flask of brandy in ignorance of its intoxicating properties. A spectator who adventures himself into a battle is said to be punished for his temerity by receiving a bullet in his person, but no one uses the word in the case of a soldier engaged in the fight. Take any instances that you like, and you will always find that the idea of punishment, properly speaking, corresponds with the idea of wilful transgression, (of which, of course, negligence is a form), and that wilful transgression excludes the notion of a conscientious mistake.

Putting aside this consideration, however, and admitting, as we must do, that at any rate *suffering* does often, in this world, follow upon innocent mistakes, it seems to us a very large deduction to make from these premises, that a like order of things may be expected to hold good in another world. We do not recollect that even Bishop Butler went so far as this. He argued that the analogy of nature, the whole present course of things, shows that there is nothing incredible in God's rewarding and punishing men for their actions (*i.e.*, their good or bad actions) hereafter; and this we think a reasonable proposition. If we may argue from our experience of this world, that men in another world will suffer for their mistakes here, there are many like inferences to be drawn with as good reason as this one: for example that, inasmuch as many generations are known to suffer through the innocent error of an ancestor, a similar law may be

expected to be enforced hereafter: which surely will commend itself to no one.\* These are assumptions altogether without warrant; mere projections of all the admitted difficulties which we find in our present imperfect scheme into another one, of which we know nothing positive. And they have the suspicious appearance (which marks Butler's great treatise throughout) of being devised as buttresses to a pre-established dogmatic system of theology. As there were many things in this, which, impartially considered, must offend the moral sense of mankind, it was deemed opportune to show that there were many similar things in the constitution of nature. There is no theology, however monstrous, which might not be bolstered up by the same method. That because A, who disbelieves in infection,† catches the small-pox, there is reason to believe that B, who is not satisfied on the evidence that the Pentateuch is an inspired work, will be roasted everlastingly, is an inference that never would have occurred to any one educated human being, if there had not been a church or churches in existence which had previously insisted on the latter proposition.

Granting, however, to the fullest extent, the truth of the Bishop's position, and admitting that man may (or if you please will) be punished hereafter for errors in belief: we are at a loss to see how he can turn this to account in arguing with an infidel, *e.g.*, a man who does not believe in miracles. If we can conceive the

\* Whenever a dogma in theology suggests itself to the imagination, of such a monstrous character as to provoke the internal exclamation, "Nobody can believe this!" one is always forced to check the utterance by the second thought that probably a great number of persons *do* preach and believe either that or something still more monstrous. But we hope no one holds the exact view in the text. Adam's error, it will be recollected, was not an innocent one.

† We take one of the Bishop's illustrations, without committing ourselves to an opinion on the theory of infection prevalent among most medical men. He is probably aware that it has been disputed.



latter as becoming convinced of the truth of the assertion, he will only exclaim with the Roman Catholic, "So much the worse then for the Bishop of Peterborough, and those who agree with him!" The fact is, and this crops up all through these sermons, the Bishop does not really believe in the existence of such a thing as an *honest* and *conscientious* rejection of a miraculous revelation. As he himself tells us, further on, such facts as that Jesus Christ was miraculously conceived and born of a virgin, that he descended into hell, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, are to him, "facts as certain as the great lights of heaven; we cannot conceive the *possibility of our doubting them.*" He *feels* that they are true; therefore they must be true. It would be as impossible for a reasoner of this description to imagine that there are people holding opinions diametrically opposite to his own, with an earnestness, a sincerity, a tenacity of conviction, and a sense of deep responsibility to God for the way in which those opinions have been formed, in no respect inferior to his, as it was for the Eastern King to imagine the existence of ice. Somehow or other, if these people would only take proper pains, they *must* see how wrong they are! The Bishop thinks that if they were once convinced of the awful consequences which may attend mistakes in theology, they would be induced to change their views. He warns them of their danger, as one might warn a parcel of careless school-boys playing on the edge of a precipice. We know some old Tories who altogether deny that modern Radicals can be sincere, and modern Radicals who hold precisely the same narrow-minded view about old Tories. We make no doubt, both these Tories and Radicals would hold as certain, that if their adversaries could once be convinced of this dogma, that "a mistaken view of politics may entail eternal damnation," they would immediately become frightened, reconsider their position, and come over to the opposite side!

Before concluding our notice of this discourse, there are two more passages in it which we must briefly call attention to. "Ah! there is something after all in that word, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty,'—there is something in knowing and believing in an omnipotent and loving will, that has the power to save the free thought of an erring creature from the terrible punishment which comes from the soulless and merciless machinery of law," and further on we read of the great importance to us of God "suspending those terrible laws which we so dread." We are not sure that we quite understand this. If by "the soulless and merciless machinery of law," and "those terrible laws which we so dread," are meant those general laws which we observe working around us, we do not see that as a rule they are suspended, or that erring creatures are ever rescued, except by the operation of other laws, from their effects. As the preacher himself has very correctly put it,—“The great machinery of the world will not arrest its revolutions for the cry of a human creature, who, by a very innocent error, by the mistaken action of his free thought, is being ground to pieces beneath them.” It cannot therefore be of any importance to us, in this sense, that God should have the power to save us from the machinery of these laws, or to suspend them, since, in point of fact, he never does exercise these powers. The Bishop evidently alludes to laws supposed to hold good in regard to another world, as, for instance, that all men are by nature doomed to endless and excruciating torment through the fault of Adam—a law the operation of which was miraculously suspended by the Almighty in favour of certain persons. The Bishop quietly *assumes* the existence of this law as a matter not open to dispute, just as that fire burns and water drowns, and then cries out, "How important it is that we should have some one to save us from its operation!" We think it much more important that no such frightful law

should exist, and the Free-thinker is, in our opinion, quite justified who requires very strong proof of it. And, for this reason, we entirely concur in the remarks which follow. "Let us," he says, "introduce a new fact into the world of existing facts. Let us suppose, for argument's sake, that there is a God. Can it be possible that it should be a matter of indifference how men think about this new fact? Does it make no difference to us whether he is a father or a tyrant?" &c., &c. We believe that there is not a Free-thinker who would not cordially endorse this; and we have read the same sentiments, almost the same words, from the pens of some among them.\* In short, while it is granted on both sides that it is of the greatest importance to us to acquire, as far as we are able to do so, correct notions about God, and that it certainly does make a great "difference to us whether he is a father or a tyrant," the Free-thinker argues that it is the orthodox doctrine which represents him as a tyrant. We must say that there is some *primâ facie* ground for this assertion. An Almighty Sovereign who condemns the great majority of his subjects to unceasing agonies of the most exquisite kind, bears some resemblance to such a character, and it is for theologians to prove that there is no likeness between the two. It will not help them with their opponents (and we presume that it is their object to persuade and to convince such), to point out the importance of believing in a Being able mercifully to suspend "terrible laws," the existence of which these latter deny; or who, if they admitted them,

\* "Is there not something absolutely rotten in the condition of those who contentedly jog on with what may be entirely false notions of their Deity? Assuredly it is of as much consequence to the human race to acquire, as far as it is able to do so, correct notions about him as about the physical configuration of the world it inhabits. And if people don't choose to inquire, they cannot make sure that their notions on this head may not be deplorably false ones."—*Pleas for Free Inquiry* (published in this Series), page 12.

would look upon such an exercise of mercy as akin to the act of a king of Dahomey, who, after condemning a thousand of his captives to slow torture, should mercifully except a few who happened to strike his fancy.

We must now take the liberty of explaining to the Bishop, in a few words, what we take to be the meaning of a Free-thinker and Free Thought. We do not hold Free Thought, in our acceptation of the word, to have anything to do with the doctrines of Necessity and Free Will, or to be opposed to authority (in the sense of all authority), or to responsibility (in the sense of all responsibility). Still less are we ready to admit that Free Thought "will not stop to listen to evidence." On the contrary, we understand by a Free-thinker in religion, a man who lays claim to the right of what is called private judgment, the right of examining for himself the evidences of every creed that is submitted to him, in opposition to the dogma that he is bound to accept any one creed solely on authority. Niebuhr was a free-thinker on the subject of early Roman history, but so far from not stopping to listen to the evidence, we should say that a great part of his life was passed in weighing it. Protestantism is the legitimate outcome of free-thought. Wicklyffe, Luther, Calvin, and the rest of the Reformers, were free-thinkers. The belief which the Bishop professes, has been established by the persistent exercise of this right; but as sometimes happens in the case of the heir to a wealthy tradesman, he is for repudiating the very means by which his possessions have been acquired. The fact is that, whenever a religion becomes stereotyped, it inevitably puts forth this claim to authority. In the case of Roman Catholicism, this is a consistent claim, and the term *libre penseur* has a definite meaning, as opposed to implicit obedience to authority, the doctrine of the church, and the word is freely applied by Roman Catholic divines to Protestants. For a Protestant



Bishop to take arms against Free-thought, is to try and cut away the ground from under his own creed. Unless indeed it be contended that a man is free to examine into the claims of orthodox Protestantism on the condition of accepting them, but not free to examine on the condition of rejecting them, which is a very Irish way indeed of expressing the doctrine of authority.

It will be said that this is not the meaning vulgarly attached to the term a Free-thinker. This is quite true. By a process, the steps of which are very plain, the development of Protestantism (originally the creation of Free-thought) into a system not less authoritative in its claims than that from which it sprang, has been the cause that "Free-thinker" has come to be applied to a man who ventures to inquire into and to doubt these its own claims. It means generally the same thing as Sceptic, Infidel, Unbeliever. In Brande's Dictionary of Science, it is defined as "almost synonymous with Deist." If the Bishop had used the word in this accepted sense, we should not have had to trouble ourselves with questions of definition. But he has not so used it. He has credited Free-thinkers with opinions and modes of reasoning evolved out of the depths of his own internal consciousness. Against Free-thinking in the ordinary meaning of the term, it would be easy to show that his arguments are altogether worthless. But we must go on briefly to consider his second sermon, which bears the title "Christianity and Scepticism."

Here, again, we think it a great pity that he has not stuck to the use of words in their ordinary sense. We all know what is meant by the expression, "Mr So-and-so is a religious sceptic." It means that he doubts, that he does not yield a full assent to the dogmas of Christianity, or it may cover more than this, and imply that he disbelieves them. In ordinary parlance, the term is not distinguished from Free-thinker, Infidel, &c., as we have just said. But the

Bishop in his affectation of exact definitions has furnished us with a Sceptic whom we do not recognize. With him a Sceptic is a man who "will not recognize the existence of a God until he has it demonstrated as clearly as that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles." "He doubts all human testimony." "He demands *certainty*." "He will assent only upon scientific demonstration," &c., &c. And in a wonderful passage (wonderful even in these sermons) he supposes his audience to have come to listen to him, not only possessed of this same view of the meaning of Scepticism, but actually prepared to hear him (the Bishop) demolish it once and for ever by a proof of the truths of Christianity, as clear to their minds as that two and two make four! After exclaiming "We cannot demonstrate Christianity!" (the ejaculation is printed once in italics, and twice in capital letters) he goes on, "With what effect does this announcement fall upon your hearts? Possibly upon some with a feeling of disappointment. You may have come to these sermons, expecting to go away from them, with your faith made as clear and certain to you, as that two and two make four. You may exclaim, 'If, after all you say, there is room for doubt, what do you mean by talking of evidence? Evidence leaves no room for doubt. I thought you were going to make my faith so certain that I should never doubt again. I thought you were going to answer all questions, to silence all objections, and to send me away with a mathematical certainty of every truth in my creed?'" We know nothing of Norwich, but we do not believe that any single individual in the Cathedral was such an idiot as this passage would seem to imply—that he came under the impression that the truths of Christianity might possibly be demonstrated like a proposition in Euclid, and that now, after eighteen centuries, the Bishop of Peter-

borough, with his brilliant reputation, was the man likely to furnish the demonstration.

We do not deny that there may be in the world sceptics who answer the Bishop's description, though, after a considerable intercourse with those who bear the name, we have never chanced to meet with such a person. We think it not at all unlikely that in this case he may have drawn upon his personal experience. Possibly some infidel cobbler or tinker may have accosted him during his ministrations as a hard-working curate (we can hardly imagine such a being coming in contact with a Dean or a Bishop) with the remark, "Prove to me your religion as you prove that two and two are four, and then I will believe it!" And Dr Magee has perhaps gone away with the reflection, "This then is modern Scepticism!" A very small attention to the arguments, the "insidious objections," as Dean Goulburn calls them—which are exciting so much consternation in the orthodox camp, might have convinced him that this is not Modern Scepticism. This is not the foe that he has to combat, if he would render any service to the cause which he has at heart. Those who reject "all human testimony" must of necessity be a very small minority, call them by what name you will, and seem to us scarcely worth powder and shot, for they must reject the story of Cæsar and of Napoleon as well as that of Christ. If by the term "all human testimony" be meant, "human testimony in favour of the *miraculous*," this ground has certainly been taken up by respectable advocates, but it has been expressly repudiated by nearly every sceptical thinker of eminence. When you are going out to meet an enemy, it is of no use directing your artillery at one of his outlying wings, which is not only disowned by the main body, but has got itself hopelessly entangled in a morass.

There is, indeed, such a thing as a Sceptical school in Philosophy—the school of Pyrrho and others—of

which we should imagine that not one in every hundred of the Norwich audience had ever heard—a confused notion of which may have been present to the Bishop's mind in constructing his definitions—yet, even as applied to that, they would be wholly wide of the mark. We cannot of course go into this: and shall content ourselves with remarking that the last known Sceptic of this school, the man who, in modern times, dropped the plummet of scepticism into human consciousness itself, was David Hume.

“Sceptic,” in its proper acceptation—since the Bishop is so particular in his definitions—means one who meditates before giving his assent to a proposition, who looks about him, observes, deliberates, entertains doubts, suspends his judgment. He need not be one who suspends his judgment as to the dogmas of Christianity (or anything else) because they are not capable of mathematical demonstration—as the Bishop's definition implies—but he may doubt, on the ground that the evidence for them is not satisfactory to his mind. This is the case with nine out of ten sceptics properly so called. And it is of course only a truism to say that we are all of us sceptics on many points, on precisely the same grounds. We are, for instance, ourselves, at this present moment of writing (September, 1871) entire “sceptics,” in the proper sense of the term, as to the Tichborne case. It is not that we refuse to hear evidence on the question, for we have waded, with great attention, through all the evidence that has been produced: it is not that we demand absolute demonstration before forming an opinion, for we shall be satisfied with a reasonable balance of probability, on one side or the other, just as we are often perfectly satisfied with the result of a conviction for murder based on circumstantial evidence. Supposing the suit to determine through the death of the claimant, or some other cause, and no fresh facts to be adduced, we should remain permanently in this state of mind. If we were told that we must believe one way or the other, on pain of



eternal damnation, we should be infallibly damned to all eternity; because it would not be "in our power to will a belief" (notwithstanding the Bishop's ridiculous assertion to the contrary) but only to affect one; and we should not take the trouble to do this, because it would not answer the purpose. To Hell we must go. Imagine a person in this frame of mind being stowed into a cathedral and talked at for an hour on the impropriety of not arriving at a conclusion as to the validity of the plaintiff's claim, on the folly of requiring *absolute demonstration*, and being warned how a similar demand would be fatal to all morality, &c., and he will tell you that all this does not touch *him*. "The gentleman in the pulpit," he will say, "does not understand my case." And similarly, we believe, that throughout the whole of this sermon, the Bishop has misunderstood modern Scepticism as completely as in the preceding one he has misunderstood Free-thought.

Every sceptic, then, with whom we are acquainted will entirely concur with the Bishop in thinking it most unreasonable to ask for mathematical proof of Christianity, and will be ready to admit that there is much which we ought to believe on less evidence than this. We agree also in this, that the laws of morality are not susceptible of any such proof, and yet we should be for immediately hanging up the next convicted murderer, without taking the least notice of his plea that we had not *demonstrated* murder to be wrong. In short, we agree in several of the Bishop's conclusions, while carefully repudiating all connection with his arguments and his inferences, when we are lucky enough to be able to understand them.

For example, while he is quite right in saying, that we ought not to ask for positive proof of the existence of a God, we think he is entirely without warrant in adding, "If we could give you the same kind of proof that there is a God, that we can give you that two and two make four, then your religion would do you

just as much good as the knowledge that two and two make four." This is assuredly a startling mode of expression, for we had thought that without the knowledge that two and two make four, man would still be a hairy savage, frequenting caves and hollow trees instead of cathedrals.\* The bishop would seem to take the view of the charity-boy in "Pickwick," who, after being taught his letters, wondered whether it was worth while going through so much to learn so little. However, he immediately explains his meaning: "It would not cultivate that which religion is meant to cultivate in you; and that is the quality of faith—of belief in spite of doubt, of assent in spite of difficulty." Of course the same argument applies to the Evidences of Christianity. If these were made quite plain, "the dwellers in the citadel would die for want of food; the faith that should be the nutriment of your souls would perish utterly." This is not new, and it has the awkward appearance which we noticed just now, in a somewhat similar case, of being an *ex post facto* plea, in view of certain difficulties in the way of the Christian evidences, which had to be admitted. If the difficulties had not existed, or could have been boldly denied, we should not have heard of the plea. Such as it is, it is good for every religion under the sun, for the distinctive tenets of Catholicism, for Buddhism, Confucianism, Mahometanism, Mormonism, Spiritualism. Indeed, if "belief in spite of doubt, assent in spite of difficulty," be "the quality which religion is meant to cultivate in us," it might be alleged, without any violent absurdity, that the greater the difficulties, the more highly is this quality of faith exercised, and that, consequently, that religion is most likely to be true on behalf of which the smallest amount of evidence can be offered. Grant-

\* Galton, in his *Tropical South Africa* (quoted by Sir J. Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation*, 2nd edition, pp. 334, 335), tells an amusing story of the difficulty experienced by a savage in understanding that two and two make four.

ing, however, that absence of direct proof, and even (for the sake of argument) of very strong proof, should be no bar to our accepting a revelation; yet it seems to us to be an entirely unauthorised inference to draw from this, that God could not, if he had so chosen, have favoured us with a revelation of his will as clear as that two and two make four, without thereby causing our highest faculties to deteriorate, "to die for want of food," to cease to be "living things." Yet this is what the Bishop's assertion means. We may be quite sure that if divines thought they could establish their dogmas by a mathematical proof, they would not hesitate to make the attempt; \* and they would point (with great justice) to the fact, or supposed fact, of their being so provable, as a sure evidence of their divine origin. It would be represented to be inconceivable that God should suffer man to be led astray by difficulties purposely interposed in the way of his arriving at the truth on matters affecting his eternal interests, or should furnish him with less than a mathematical proof on a subject of such absorbing importance; as inconceivable as that two and two should not always and everywhere be equal to four, or that the properties of one triangle should not be found in every similar triangle; in other words, that God should throw difficulties in the way of all attempts at a science of Numbers, or Mensuration or

\* The late Professor Ferrier actually did make the attempt, in his *Institutes of Metaphysics*, to establish the existence of a God, in a series of propositions, after the manner of Euclid. If he had succeeded, there can be no doubt that his work would have been hailed—and not by divines only—as the most important of all contributions to human knowledge. We should have heard nothing of the "decay of faith," &c., consequent on his discovery. Similar attempts have been made (not to speak of Descartes) by Dr Samuel Clarke, Mr Gillespie, and other Christian writers. Bishop Butler, in his well-known correspondence with the former, says, that he had for a long time made it his business to try and *prove* the being and attributes of God. He clearly did not think, with Bishop Magee, that success in such an undertaking would be injurious to mankind.

Astronomy. Indeed, there is no end to the considerations which might be pressed into the service of an analogy between nature and revelation, if (which is conceivable) a revelation had been imparted in this particular way.

A few pages on, we are surprised to find the Bishop, who is preaching against one form of scepticism, launch into praises of Doubt, or the sceptical spirit, as Buckle terms it. Is it possible that he has taken to bless, what he was called to curse? "Very valuable and important is this first calling out of the instinct of doubt, this first awakening of the sceptical part of man—of his understanding. . . the sceptical inquiring mind is ever questioning of every apparent fact. . . . doubt, precious and invaluable doubt, is ever leading man on from question to question. . . . doubt is the cause of progress, the implement of discovery, the spur to reformation, the motive power that is specially needed for the ever onward march of humanity in knowledge and science. Doubt! without this invaluable instinct of doubt, humanity would be stagnant: with it and by its help humanity progresses. We do not disparage, we highly value the uses of doubt." This passage, by the way, is a singular illustration of the manner in which a man may be unconsciously the subject of influences to the tendencies of which he is opposed. The Bishop cannot altogether shake off the philosophy of his epoch: the breath of Free Inquiry plays through his Theology. You would search in vain for such a passage in the writings of an orthodox Divine of the eighteenth century.

It is true that he qualifies this by the observation that "doubt is useful upon one condition, and one only—that it start from a first belief." This is defined as "the supreme instinctive belief that beneath all appearances there *is* a reality—that something underlies and causes all being. It is the search after this



(if I may so speak of it) Essence of Existence, the search after this I AM that still leads on the doubter." We are not sure that we understand this, and should like to apply it to an example. Among the doubts, *i.e.*, instances of the exercise of the sceptical spirit, which have most largely benefited Humanity, are the doubts which arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as to the reality of witchcraft. Fighting against the general faith of mankind and the authority of the Bible, wielded by the clergy, this doubt has passed into a conviction. It seems to us now-a-days well-nigh incredible that hecatombs of innocent creatures should have been offered up to a mischievous delusion and a passage in Exodus: toothless old crones, even such as have a hump on their backs, live in peace in their cottages, or at the Union workhouse: the superstition has been banished to such localities as the wilds of Scotland and Cornwall, where its evil effects are kept in check by the strong arm of the law. Surely this doubt was a *useful* one. What then was "the first belief" from which it started? What is meant by "the search after the Essence of Existence, the great I AM" which must have "led on the doubters" in this case, if they were to render any service? We should imagine that great service might have been rendered by men who had no belief in the world but one, and that of a negative character, namely, that there was no such thing as witchcraft. We should suppose that Atheists and Sceptics such as the Bishop is arguing with, might render great service by their doubts, on various points, even though their doubts were attached to no "primary belief that there is a cause in all things" even though they denied a God, and Futurity, and the existence of a soul, and the existence of matter, and the trustworthiness of the senses, and the reality of everything but phenomenal impressions. Indeed we know that men such as this have constantly benefited humanity by their

scepticism on other questions, and originated and stimulated *doubts* of the most beneficial character.

Not one whit more clear is the Bishop, in his exposition, when he comes to deal with the important subject of morality. He is quite right in saying that the rules of morality cannot be proved, and he should have contented himself with this, which is a good rejoinder to those who demand that the truths of Christianity should be proved. He should, we think, have followed the advice of Lord Mansfield to the gentleman possessed of little law who was going out to the colonies as a judge, and have pronounced an opinion, without giving his reasons. As it is, he follows his adversary to a point, where his own retreat seems to be cut off. "What is morality?" he asks, "Morality is that code or rule of action which you follow in questions of right or wrong. It is something different from the moral sense or the power of *feeling* right or wrong." It is the power of *knowing* what is right or wrong. All this is very slovenly as a definition, and we do not understand the last words, especially taken in connection with what follows. It is of course a part of the Bishop's case that the rules of morality cannot be demonstrated, and by way of clinching this argument, he reminds us that these rules are constantly varying. They vary from one generation to another. "Whose morality is it that you will have? That of your own day, or that of the past generation? These differ very much on many points. As you know, our ancestors approved of duelling and the slave trade. We disapprove of both. Which are in the right?" We should like to ask the Bishop a similar question. What guarantee has he for his morality, whatever it may be? There is of course a certain moral code laid down in the New Testament which will serve as his Law generally, but on points of constant occurrence which cannot be referred to this code, or on which its interpretation may

be doubtful, how does he decide, and how does he know that he is right in his decision? Of course the Bishop would repudiate any guide of such a grovelling character and mushroom origin as Utilitarianism. Faith is his guide! "An act of Faith" relieves him of all his difficulties. "He wills and chooses to believe that conscience in him is something supreme and divine" (and yet two pages before this it is admitted that man "knows that his conscience has been mistaken more than once—that at one time he thought that right, which he now thinks wrong." How can a man have that within him which is Supreme and Divine, and which at the same time is continually urging him to do what he ought *not* to do? And how can this be a guide of any kind?) In the next sermon the Bishop reiterates his point. "We must submit the understanding to the soul; must elevate the conscience above the merely logical and questioning faculty; must say, by the help of that instinct of faith which is given us for the very purpose of rising above the instinct of doubt—'In spite of all that can be pleaded to the contrary, I *feel*, I *know* that this is right and true.'"

Surely all this only requires to be stated, and needs no refutation. And yet it was preached to a number of persons and appears in print "revised and corrected by the preacher." Let us take one case as an illustration. Not so very long ago, Christian Inquisitors "handed over to the secular arm" or, in other words, caused to be burnt, persons who differed from their theological views, and they believed that they were doing not only a moral, but a religious act. Supposing an inquisitor to have conceived some doubts as to the propriety of the practice, he should according to this view have stilled them at once (we have no doubt that some did so still them) by reasoning like that of Bishop Magee's, "I will submit my understanding to my soul. I will elevate my conscience above the

reasoning faculty. I will appeal to the instinct of faith which was given to me to stifle doubt. In spite of all that can be pleaded to the contrary, I *feel*, I *know* that it is right to burn the man. To the stake with the heretic!" We will admit that the inquisitor may have *thought* that it was right to act as he did: and we do not suppose that any moral culpability would in that case attach to him on account of his action. But we altogether deny that he *knew* that he was right, because he *thought* that he was right. This appeal to the instinct of Faith, this silencing of doubts, these wild cries of "This *must* be so!" "This *shall* be so!" "I *feel* I am right!" "I *know* I am right!" furnish, it is needless to say, no foundation for a science of morals. They are shifting quicksands, in which every attempt at a building would immediately sink out of sight, and be engulfed for ever. They form the kind of argument which we should expect to see put with perfect sincerity, before a missionary, by a Feejee Chief about to offer up a human sacrifice to his Deity. "A fig for your objections! I feel I'm right! I know I'm right!" &c. And if the Bishop happened to be that missionary, we don't see how he could meet the argument. It is his own.

It is not very easy to follow the Bishop's meaning in his Third Sermon. His chain of reasoning may be set forth in the following terms, without omitting any material link.

Our whole moral and religious life is based upon faith; faith being a trust in a person—in a nature—*i.e.* in our spiritual as opposed to our animal nature. Whenever these two latter are brought into conflict, man is subject to a trial, a discipline, &c. But we have to deal not only with our own higher and better selves (our spiritual nature); we also come in contact with other natures higher than our own. Whenever we come in contact with these higher natures, the same trial is repeated, which occurs when our animal is



brought in contact with our spiritual nature. There is a trial whether the lower nature will recognize the good that is in the higher one, and admit it to be higher than itself. For this higher nature, in that it is higher, must necessarily be a mystery to a lower one.

Now, there is in the heart of every one of us an instinctive belief that there must be somewhere a perfect nature. Suppose such a perfect being to exist, and suppose him to make himself known to man by means of a revelation, we should expect from analogy that the same thing would occur, that the manifestation of him would be a trial to our faith, that it would be mysterious and self-contradictory. It might be said beforehand, that a God who was as easy to understand as a proposition of Euclid, could not be the true God.

In this last sentence, we think that the Bishop is again drawing a most unwarranted inference. A few pages ago, we were told that God could not make a revelation of himself which should be incapable of being denied, without thereby causing man to deteriorate. Now, we learn that he could not make his nature and attributes intelligible to mankind. This is a purely gratuitous assumption, and it is surely unwise in a preacher, or indeed in any one, thus to limit the powers of the Almighty, and to attempt to show, or at least to infer, that no other kind of revelation was possible to God except that on behalf of which he is arguing. Moreover, it is wholly unnecessary for his purpose. The Bishop, like an inexperienced soldier, almost always charges the enemy to a point where he is left without supports. It is indeed quite true (and we suppose this is what is meant by the preceding part of the paragraph) that we should not expect or think it *likely*, a priori, that a revelation from God would make the whole of his nature as plain to man as a proposition in Euclid. We should expect it to be a revelation of his existence, and of such a portion of his attributes as he might choose

to convey to us, coupled it may be with some commands, or intimations which would amount to commands, as to our duties towards him, and towards one another. Granting this, how will it help the Bishop? We never heard the contrary maintained. We never heard it urged as an objection to the Mosaic and Christian revelations that they do not make perfectly plain to man all the mysteries of the Divine Existence. And it is not too much to say that not a single Free-thinker or Sceptic would take up this ground.

The Bishop's argument now takes a jump of a startling character. Not only should we expect that a revelation would be accompanied by all sorts of difficulties—for without such difficulties where would be the trial of faith?—"but we should expect also that it would be a revelation of God by means of *a person*, because we know that the highest tendencies of our being, at its best moments, are ever to find a *righteous* personality; we should expect, therefore, that if there came to us a revelation of God, it would not come merely in the form of certain propositions or doctrines, but in the manifesting of a nature." We are bewildered on meeting with this remark from the pen of a prelate who must necessarily believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament. For if its records be true, it is certain that God Almighty *did* make a revelation "in the form of certain propositions or doctrines," and without any exhibition of "a person" or "a righteous personality," or "a nature" such as the Bishop postulates as antecedently to be expected in the case of all revelations. If it be objected that this revelation contains prophecies of the future manifestation of a perfect human nature, we reply that a prophecy of what was one day to take place under a more perfect dispensation does not in any way affect the fact that a revelation was made by God to the Jews of a character precisely the opposite of what the Bishop tells us "we should expect." The Mosaic revelation, we repeat, was

not made "by means of a Person," (though it may have contained intimations of the future appearance of such a person), but by means of "propositions and doctrines" communicated by God to Moses and the Jews throughout their history. This we think altogether fatal to the argument that, granted the possibility of a revelation, we should expect it *a priori* to be made by means of a Person—for here is a well-authenticated instance of a revelation which was not made in this manner. It is indeed astonishing how persons of average intelligence can imagine that they are advancing arguments of great weight when, starting from an established theological belief or dogma, they proceed to show by an *a priori* method how every one who considered the matter must have anticipated exactly what they themselves believe to have happened. Nor is there any creed, past or present, or conceivable by the human mind, which is not susceptible of this treatment. By the exercise of a little trouble, a very plausible case might be made out for the Buddhist, Confucian, or Mahometan systems. It might, for instance, be shown to be antecedently probable that the descendants of Ishmael would in time receive a revelation in the same manner as the descendants of Isaac had received one, through the direct communications of God to a mighty prophet of their own race. Or, if Jesus had appeared in the shape of a woman (a conceivable hypothesis, and one in no way blasphemous) it is easy to see how divines might have shown that the selection of this sex for the exhibition of the highest and most loveable qualities of humanity was exactly what might have been expected, and that the fact of Jesus appearing as a woman, and not as a man, was among the most startling proofs of the truth of the whole story. On looking closely into this kind of reasoning, we see that for the purpose of convincing an adversary it is absolutely valueless. Thus the Bishop tells us that among the things to be expected

was this : that the earth should be visited by a perfect man. Or, to give his exact words, "We do believe that in answer to the craving desire of the soul of man to look upon human perfection, this earth has once been visited by a perfect man." We do not believe that there exists a craving desire in the soul of man to look upon an absolutely perfect being of his own species—much less a desire so intense that it was to be expected that a miracle would be wrought to gratify it. We admit, indeed, that there is such a thing as an abstract idea of moral perfection—for of course it is *moral* perfection that is here spoken of—that there is a vague ideal, which in different minds assumes different types, of perfect wisdom, goodness, &c., an ideal towards which the best minds are always striving; but this is a different proposition altogether. If there be such a natural craving to look upon an embodied specimen of human perfection, and one so strong, as to demand the exhibition of a miracle, there are other natural cravings much stronger, and which by a parity of reasoning, would require miracles to satisfy them. For instance, the desire to have some positive experience of the existence of the soul after death, some knowledge of the conditions of such existence, if real, are far more intense in man than the one just mentioned. It would follow that in answer to this he ought to be visited by spirits, or in some other way have his craving satisfied, and in fact we believe that this is the doctrine professed by Mrs Guppy and Mr Home, but not assented to, as far as we have been able to learn, by any person of sound judgment.

But the Bishop does not stop here. Not only was it to be *expected* that if God revealed himself to mankind, he would reveal himself by means of a Person, and that an absolutely perfect one (or, in other words, that God would assume a human form, since to no being save God can we attribute absolute perfection) but, he adds, it was similarly to be expected that on



the appearance of God in the flesh, he would be treated just as he was treated. "You would expect to hear just what the story tells you—how he was despised and rejected of men; how those who saw him besought him that he would depart out of their coasts." We should have been led to anticipate all this "before we opened a page of the gospels, before we read a line of that wondrous life!" That is to say, we should have been led to anticipate beforehand not only that God would put on the form of man, but also that of a very humble man, so as to admit of his being "despised and rejected;" and that many would eye him unfavourably; for we scarcely suppose the Bishop to mean, in his last sentence, that we should have been irresistibly led to infer such a detail as that the Divine Being would transport devils into swine, and so cause his absence to be desired, though this would not be much more absurd than the rest of the right reverend prelate's *a priori* "expectations." Now, we are afraid that this style of argument is not likely to carry great weight with the free-thinkers and sceptics, to convince whom has been the Bishop's object in penning, and preaching, and printing these discourses. Nor do we think it calculated to have much weight with anybody. Nothing, we repeat, is more easy, and at the same time more thoroughly useless, than to construct an enormous chain of antecedent probabilities, leading necessarily to any religious dogmas whatever. It is like a man designing a labyrinth of his own, and taking care that the issues shall all be in one direction. Thus the Roman Catholic, taking up the Bishop's expectations, would add another of his own. He would expect beforehand that a divine Being would not leave the truths which he had come to proclaim to be scrambled for by a multitude of differing sects, but would found a divine society or church as the infallible authority to be looked up to after his departure. And granting the premises, this seems to us



as reasonable an anticipation as any of those which the Bishop sets before us. A Jew's "anticipations" will be exactly opposite to those of the Bishop. He will tell you that it was not to be expected that God must necessarily reveal himself *through* a divine person, and that when the Messiah appeared, he would *not* appear in a lowly station to be derided and persecuted, but to rule over his nation as a king. A Mahometan or a Buddhist would have no difficulty in showing how the events recorded in their several religious histories, and the dogmas of their several creeds, were just such as "might have been expected" from the nature of things. And a Parsee would expect, "before you opened a page" of the Zendavesta, "before you read a line of that wondrous book," that it would contain just exactly whatever it does contain. When the preacher, by the aid of fancy, transports himself back to a period antecedent to the Christian revelation, he carries his own religious belief with him, and ingeniously projects into the imaginary future what he has brought from the real past. Deprive him of this knowledge, and we shall never hear of his expecting any of the events which he says were to be expected. As gratitude has been defined to be a lively sense of favours to come, so expectation, in this sense, may be described as a lively anticipation of occurrences which we believe to have actually taken place.\*

The preacher, to do him justice, seems, at the close of his discourse, to be visited by a faint glimmering of consciousness of the utter uselessness of this kind of talk. "We have reached the point," he says, "at which, leaving speculations as to what might be or ought to be, we arrive at the historical facts which we assert have been. Others will take up the argu-

\* A well-known illustration of the truth we have been affirming—if what is so obvious needs illustration—is to be found in the argument of Irenæus, showing how we should have expected from analogy that there would be *four* Gospels.

ment here, and go on to show you, from history, or prophecy, or miracle, such evidences as the facts of the Christian story may furnish. My task ends with the attempt to remove those stumbling-blocks which might prevent your coming to hear them. It will be their task to lead you onwards from the door of the temple to its very innermost shrine ; it has been mine to lead you up these three steps, as it were, just to the very threshold." We cannot congratulate the Bishop upon his metaphors any more than upon his arguments. The stumbling-blocks which are interposed between the free-thinker and the door of Norwich Cathedral are partly of his Lordship's own laying. There cannot be three greater ones than these three discourses which lie before us. So far from being able to lead any one up a flight of steps, the Bishop has been quite unable to maintain his own equilibrium. In plain English, these "Pleadings for Christ" are calculated to do a good deal of harm to the cause of orthodoxy in Norwich, where we suppose they will be principally read. Sceptics or free-thinkers there will be led to suppose that such a prelude as this contains small promise for the series of sermons to which it serves as an introduction. They will be apt to surmise that when one preacher has so ingeniously avoided, where he has not entirely misapprehended, their real difficulties, others will be likely to follow in the same path. It would have been better, we think, if these discourses had begun at the point where the Bishop of Peterborough leaves off. It would have been better if those who, he says, are going to "*prove* the miracles of Christianity"\* (which he elsewhere says can't be proved), had at once addressed themselves to that task, which, if accomplished, would have rendered any preface unnecessary and all reply useless.

We cannot conclude without giving one or two detached specimens of the Bishop's reasoning powers.

\* Discourse i., page 13.

They might be taken almost at random from almost every page. The difficulty is in making a selection. Thus, at the very outset, we have this: "Those who tell you that Christianity was received in an ignorant age, because men thought they saw miracles to prove it, say what is contradicted by the story of Christianity itself, and forget that many of those who saw the miracles nevertheless rejected the worker of the miracles." We must not be understood to profess the view as to the propagation of Christianity which the Bishop assails; but for the life of us we cannot see how the statement that Christianity was received in an ignorant age, because men (*i. e.* the converts) saw certain phenomena which they deemed miracles, to prove it, is contradicted by the fact that many other people who saw the same phenomena rejected Christianity. Substitute "Spirit-rapping," for "Christianity;" "Manifestations," for "Miracles," and soften down "an ignorant age" into "an age not free from superstition" and you will see what nonsense this makes. "Those who tell you that Spirit-rapping was received (*i. e.* believed in) in an age not free from superstition because men thought that they saw manifestations to prove it, say what is contradicted by the story of Spirit-rapping itself and forget that many of those who saw the manifestations nevertheless rejected the workers of the manifestations." In this case both statements are true and neither contradicts the other. Nor is there any contradiction in the case put by the Bishop. "Miracles," too, is used in two entirely different senses in this sentence of his. The word, in the first place means "acts which whether real miracles or not they believed to be such." In the second place, it may mean either this or "acts which were really miracles, but which they did not deem to be such" and this entirely vitiates the reasoning. For, in no case would the statement that Christianity was received in an ignorant

age, because people thought they saw what they deemed to be miracles to prove it, be contradicted by the fact that other people who saw the miracles (not necessarily believing them to be miracles) rejected it. There are other instances of confusion in this one sentence, which in an ordinary sermon we should have thought nothing of; but which in "an argumentative series of discourses in defence and confirmation of the Faith" are quite inexcusable. But the whole book is, in this sense, inexcusable.

For instance, what is meant by this assertion? "All mysteries, everything that we cannot understand, must come to our understanding in the shape of two contradictory propositions; we view the thing on two opposite sides, because we cannot see it all round and at once." We are aware that some mysteries are of this character, but we are surprised to hear that this is true of everything that we cannot understand. We should not have hesitated to say, for instance, that the sensations of animals are a great mystery to man. What, then, are the two contradictory propositions which this mystery conveys to the understanding? Again, the authorship of Junius, is to many people still a mystery. As to this, not two but some twenty different propositions, each one contradicting all the rest, will probably suggest themselves to the mind.

We had marked some other samples for comment, but our Paper is already swollen to twice its projected bulk. We cannot however take leave of the Preacher, without noticing his parting fling at Science and Civilization. "Did Science ever comfort a sorrow?" he asks, "Did Science ever heal a broken heart? Faith in civilization! Did civilization ever yet remedy the evils that are burrowing and festering into the heart of Society? Civilization! . . . . It means the rich growing very rich. It means the poor growing very poor. . . . Civilization and Science! Have they arrested war? Have they



softened the heart of humanity? Civilization and art and science! Why, they are busy making mitrail-leuses," and so on.

We are certainly not among those, if such there be, who hold that Science is likely to remove all evil and misery from among us, to turn men into angels and the earth into a paradise. But we do think, at the same time, that the above expressions of Dr Magee on the subject of Science and Civilization are most pernicious nonsense. And we think further that it is very sad that such nonsense should fall from the lips of a man who receives five thousand a-year of the public money, and is accommodated with a seat in the Legislature in the capacity of a National Instructor. "*Did science ever comfort a sorrow?*" Yes, in thousands and hundreds of thousands of cases, and startling proofs of this are before the Bishop's eyes every day of his life. A man is smitten with a disease which a couple of centuries ago was deemed incurable. Science relieves him by an operation, and restores a smile to the faces of his sorrowing wife and children. The agonizing dread with which, in times past, he would have contemplated the prospect of being hacked and cut into, is soothed by the assurance that he will undergo the process without pain. The telegraph summons the operator, and the railway train brings him in time to save the life of the patient. Here, under God, Science has comforted the sorrows of a whole family. A widowed mother is expecting her only son home from a distant land, and trembles with apprehension as she hears the wind roar down the chimney. Her son is at sea in the gale, but Science, in the shape of a chart, points out the dangerous coast to the captain, and Science, in the shape of steam, enables him to avoid it. When the ship springs a leak, Science is there with its pumps, which keep her from sinking. Science throws up a rocket, and Science puts out a life-boat. Civilization brings a number of



people down to the beach with offers of lodging and dry clothes for the shipwrecked mariners, where, less than a hundred years ago, false lights would have been exhibited by wreckers, and the vaults of the parish church would have been stocked with smuggled casks of brandy, with the full knowledge and acquiescence of the parson. Will any one say that Science has not comforted the sorrow of the widow by restoring her son to her? Does the Bishop suppose that reading the Bible in the solitude of one's closet has ever comforted a sorrow! We are sure that he does. Has he reflected that if civilization had not given birth to printing, there would have been no printed Bibles to read? "Science never healed a broken heart!" Has he considered how many hearts have been prevented from breaking at the loss of their dear ones, by the single discovery of Jenner?—a discovery which, by the way, like that of chloroform, was bitterly opposed, on religious grounds, by the clergy.\* Really, these are the kind of observations which we should feel ourselves called upon to make in a Dame's school. Civilization, he says, has never yet remedied the evils that burrow and fester into the heart of Society. It has not remedied all of them certainly, and never will, but it has put a stop to, and diminished a good many. That men are no longer bought and sold as slaves, or burnt and drowned for witches, or tortured to make them confess crimes of which they are innocent, or

\* "The introduction of vaccination was fiercely opposed, because it was alleged to be repugnant to religion, morality, law, and humanity. The pulpits resounded with attacks on the impious and presumptuous man who dared to interfere with a visitation from God." Dr Lyon Playfair, Speech in the House of Commons, May 24, 1870. The use of Chloroform in cases of child-birth was similarly opposed, as being a violation of Genesis iii. 16, but happily with little effect. Civilization, or in other words, the progress of Science and Enlightenment, had by this time provided men with an armour of proof against these theological darts, which, being found incapable of doing serious harm, ceased to be thrown.

hung for trifling acts of dishonesty prompted by hunger, or loaded with chains and beaten with whips when insane, or tortured for their religious opinions, that drunkenness has died out of the upper and is surely doomed in the lower classes, that duelling, and bull-baiting and cock-fighting and prize-fighting are things of the past, that bribery is deemed disreputable, that a respectable householder has a voice in the government of the country, and can no longer be politically disposed of, along with a number of other householders, like a pack of sheep, by a Duke, or a Dean and Chapter; these are among a thousand blessings which will suggest themselves to every one as being due to the advance of Civilization in this country. In most cases they have been gained without any active aid on the part of the clergy—in many, despite their opposition. And this is intelligible, for the Bishop, in his tirade against Civilization, is only advocating—doubtless with good intentions and perhaps unconsciously—the interests of his own class. The motto of the bulk of the clergy (we admit that there are bright exceptions) is, and always has been, *Quieta non movere*, for advancing civilization means necessarily the decline of the theological spirit. But the Bishop has not done belabouring civilization. “It means the rich growing very rich; it means the poor growing very poor.” What it really means for the poor man is cheaper necessaries and cheaper luxuries, many of the things which he has learnt to look upon as necessaries having formerly been luxuries even for the wealthy. It means cheaper provisions, cheaper bread, cheaper tea, cheaper sugar, cheaper clothing, cheaper furniture, cheaper newspapers. The conveniences now to be found in the cottage of a Lancashire mechanic were not to be found in the castle of the greatest mediæval baron. Giles, the Devonshire ploughman, after his day’s work, repairs, if he is a steady, sober man, without a wife, or with a good one, to his very humble

but very tidy abode, puts his damp linen to dry before the fire-place if he is wet, has his bit of supper, possibly with his bit of fresh meat at harvest or other times, drinks his cup of tea, puts on his spectacles, reads his Bible, or a scrap of old newspaper, with his feet resting on a square of cheap carpet, goes up to his bed-room, opens or shuts his window according to the state of the temperature, extinguishes the benzoline lamp on his little deal table, and creeps into his rough but not very dirty sheets, covered with a blanket. Giles's ancestor, four hundred years ago, after a longer day's work, had nothing but a mud hovel to resort to, without furniture, linen, fire-place, tea, spectacles, carpet, bed, sheets, blankets, window, table, lamp, newspaper, or Bible. He never tasted meat. The few waking hours which he spent out of his work were as complete a blank to him, in respect to intellectual resources, as the waking hours of a pig or a goose. He was not permitted to change the character of his labour, or the place of his residence. When past work he simply rotted off the face of the earth. That civilization has made "the poor poorer" is utterly untrue; it has made them infinitely richer than they were before. "Have civilization and science softened the heart of humanity?" asks the Bishop. We do not remember to have met with a sillier question than this, even in a sermon. The poor benighted heathen poet answered it eighteen hundred years ago.

"*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes  
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse ferus,*"

is among the first passages in his *Delectus* which the school-boy is put to construe. Look merely to the experience of the last forty years. The amendment of our Draconian code, the abandonment of the brutal pastimes of our forefathers, the laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals, the improved treatment of prisoners, the whole course of legislation with regard to the poorer classes, the Factory Acts, the prohibition of female and

infant underground labour, the law relating to chimney-sweeps, the laws passed for the protection of sailors, the establishment of post-office savings' banks, loan societies, benefit building societies, the sanitary acts, the recent provision for enabling a pauper to have his children educated at the public expense, not to speak of that much older law acknowledging the right of the worn-out labourer to claim the means of subsistence from the commonwealth—all these are so many glaring proofs that civilization *does* soften the heart of humanity. But, says the Bishop, "Have civilization and science arrested war?" No. But we may ask in return—"Has religion?" The priests of the various Christian sects, while loudly proclaiming their horror of all war in general, have always accommodated themselves most cheerfully to each individual war in particular. The Archbishop of Paris is invoking the blessing of the Almighty on the chassepot, while the Archbishop of Cologne is invoking his blessing on the needle-gun. Perhaps Dr Magee may recollect, himself, putting up prayers for the successes of the national arms (in other words, that a large number of Russians might be slaughtered) during the Crimean war; and the priests at Moscow and Odessa were, we may be sure, offering up similar prayers for the destruction of the Allies. The victory of Sedan is a "divine mercy" to the Christians in one part of the world, as the victory of Jena was to those in another. Where the Divinity is thus made to figure on both sides, revelation will have no more effect in changing the general estimate of war than the introduction of the same quantity into both sides of an equation will alter its value. We are silent as to the numerous wars which have been *directly* provoked by religion. Now civilization has certainly done what theology has utterly failed to do. It has greatly ameliorated and softened the usages of war, from the days when prisoners ceased to be slaughtered in cold blood and saw death commuted to slavery, to the



days of the Geneva Convention. And if anything is likely to put a complete stop to war, it is precisely that very science which the bishop describes as manufacturing implements of such a deadly character. The man who invents a machine which, at the touch of a spring, will sweep away a whole army, will be one of the greatest benefactors to humanity that the world ever saw. Supposing the discovery to become generally known, as must inevitably be the case, he will have rendered war impossible. We have heard of duels across a pocket handkerchief, but not when *both* combatants have loaded pistols in their hands. Now it is in this direction that the most deadly discoveries in science are unquestionably tending—appalling in the immediate destruction of life which they cause, beneficent in the ultimate saving of it.

We believe, then, in Science, and also in civilization, or in other words, in the moral and material improvement of the race effected by man's own intelligence and exertions. We believe that one is the mainspring of the other. What is it that the Bishop would have us turn to, as a panacea for our ills? "Faith!" Faith in what? What is meant by Faith in this place? The Bishop is not very clear on the point: nor do we make this a subject of reproach, for we have noticed the word used in the same hazy sense elsewhere. Does he mean Faith in the dogmas of Christianity? We should suppose so, from the general scope of his argument, and from a passage in which he says: "We believe in an eternal peace, but it is to be at the coming of the Prince of Peace." "It is in *this faith and this alone*," he adds, "that we gain courage to look upon the sins and sorrows which afflict humanity." If this be so, then this is a mere assertion of his own views, which he is quite entitled to make, provided he does not put it before us in the light of an argument. With Free-thinkers it can carry no weight whatever. If he means something different from this: a belief in



a God, in our responsibility to God, in what are called the truths of Natural Religion, we do not see how this will help him. For nine out of every ten Free-thinkers will agree with him, not only in holding these as truths, but as truths of the highest interest and importance to mankind. Believing in the conclusions of Science, as being what they undoubtedly are, so many direct revelations of His *modus operandi* made by God to man, they are prepared to yield an assent to other propositions which are not capable of a scientific demonstration. Of this character is the existence of a God. They hold that this and other similar propositions rest upon a very solid basis of reason, in that they solve all the phenomena to which they can be applied, and are the only attainable solutions which can be made to solve them. But they do not believe them to have been the subject of any special and miraculous revelation. A man may hold this sort of faith, thousands do, without believing in a revealed religion. Now it is on behalf of a revealed religion that the Bishop has been arguing throughout.

It is not perhaps a bad suggestion on the part of the Dean of Norwich, who edits this pamphlet, that the Cathedrals "with their naves capable of holding vast congregations" should be utilized for the delivery of sermons in aid of the orthodox faith. But we must warn him of one thing. "The vast congregations" which are likely to pour into the cathedrals on these occasions will be mainly composed of women, and orthodox males, who do not require these sermons, and of the curious, the people who are always attracted by a "Star," and who will be mightily pleased by an eloquent and frothy discourse, till they lose the recollection of it in the next monster concert or thrilling melodrama. The unbelievers, the class for whom these productions are specially intended, will, for the most part, see them in their printed form.

We think, then, that it would be judicious to enlist, at any rate for some portion of this series, the services of preachers of whom happily there are many in the Church of England: men who without any public reputation as Bishops and debaters, are able to think consecutively, and have made themselves acquainted with the real difficulties which lie in the way of belief. We notice this, because we observe that the only other name on the rota is that of another Bishop and brilliant speaker, the Bishop of Derry. What he may do for the cause we have no means of prejudging. He may do excellently well. He can scarcely do worse than his predecessor. But there are, we repeat, numerous clergymen of less note admirably adapted for this task: who might not half fill the nave and north aisle of Norwich Cathedral, but who would produce something that Free-thinkers and Sceptics would have to attend to: who would carry out the object promised to us in the programme to this series, and furnish us with what the pamphlet before us certainly does not contain—“*Argumentative* discourses in defence and *confirmation* of the Faith.”

