

# Superstition Unveiled eBook

## Superstition Unveiled

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



# Contents

<a href="#">Superstition Unveiled eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>



[Page 23..... 29](#)

[Page 24..... 31](#)

[Page 25..... 32](#)

[Page 26..... 34](#)

[Page 27..... 35](#)

[Page 28..... 37](#)

[Page 29..... 38](#)

[Page 30..... 39](#)

[Page 31..... 40](#)

[Page 32..... 41](#)

[Page 33..... 42](#)

[Page 34..... 43](#)

[Page 35..... 44](#)

[Page 36..... 45](#)

[Page 37..... 46](#)

[Page 38..... 47](#)

[Page 39..... 48](#)

[Page 40..... 49](#)

[Page 41..... 50](#)

[Page 42..... 51](#)

[Page 43..... 53](#)

[Page 44..... 54](#)

[Page 45..... 56](#)

# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
BY		1
SUPERSTITION UNVEILED.		1



# Page 1

BY

*Charles Southwell,  
author of "Supernaturalism exploded;" "Impossibility of atheism  
demonstrated," Etc.*

Abridged by the Author from his  
"Apology for atheism."

"Not one of you reflects that you ought to  
know your Gods before you worship them."

*London:  
Edward Truelove, 240, Strand,  
three doors from Temple bar,  
and all booksellers*

1854.

## SUPERSTITION UNVEILED.

Religion has an important bearing on all the relations and conditions of life. The connexion between religious faith and political practice is, in truth, far closer than is generally thought. Public opinion has not yet ripened into a knowledge that religious error is the intangible but real substratum of all political injustice. Though the 'Schoolmaster' has done much, there still remain among us, many honest and energetic assertors of 'the rights of man,' who have to learn that a people in the fetters of superstition cannot, secure political freedom. These reformers admit the vast influence of Mohammedanism on the politics of Constantinople, and yet persist in acting as if Christianity had little or nothing to do with the politics of England.

At a recent meeting of the Anti-State Church Association it was remarked that *throw what we would into the political cauldron, out it came in an ecclesiastical shape*. If the newspaper report may be relied on, there was much laughing among the hearers of those words, the deep meaning of which, it may safely be affirmed, only a select few of them could fathom.

Hostility to state churches by no means implies a knowledge of the close and important connection between ecclesiastical and political questions. Men may appreciate the justice of voluntaryism in religion, and yet have rather cloudy conceptions with respect to the influence of opinions and things ecclesiastical on the condition of nations. They may clearly see that he who needs the priest, should disdain to saddle others with the cost of him, while blind to the fact that no people having faith in the supernatural ever



failed to mix up such faith with political affairs. Even leading members of the 'Fourth Estate' are constantly declaring their disinclination for religious criticism, and express particular anxiety to keep their journals free of everything 'strictly theological.' Their notion is, that newspaper writers should endeavour to keep clear of so 'awful' a topic. And yet seldom does a day pass in which this self-imposed editorial rule is not violated—a fact significant, as any fact can be of *connection* between religion and politics.

## Page 2

It is quite possible the editors of newspapers have weighty reasons for their repugnance to agitate the much vexed question of religion; but it seems they cannot help doing so. In a leading article of this days' *Post*, [Endnote 4:1] we are told—*The stain and reproach of Romanism in Ireland is, that it is a political system, and a wicked political system, for it regards only the exercise of power, and neglects utterly the duty of improvement.* In journals supported by Romanists, and of course devoted to the interests of their church, the very same charge is made against English Protestantism. To denounce each other's 'holy apostolic religion' may be incompatible with the taste of 'gentlemen of the press,' but certainly they do it with a brisk and hearty vehemence that inclines one to think it a 'labour of love.' What men do *con amore* they usually do well, and no one can deny the wonderful talent for denunciation exhibited by journalists when writing down each other's 'true Christianity.' The unsparing invective quoted above from the *Post* is a good specimen. If just, Irish Romanism *ought* to be destroyed, and newspaper writers cannot be better employed than in helping on the work of its destruction, or the destruction of any other religion to which the same 'stain and reproach' may be fairly attached.

I have no spite or ill-will towards Roman Catholics though opposed to their religion, and a willing subscriber to the opinion of Romanism in Ireland expressed by the *Post*. The past and present condition of that country is a deep disgrace to its priests, the bulk of whom, Protestant as well as Romanist, can justly be charged with 'regarding only the exercise of power, while neglecting utterly the duty of improvement.'

The intriguing and essentially political character of Romanism it would be idle to deny. No one at all acquainted with its cunningly contrived 'system' will hesitate to characterise it as 'wickedly political,' productive of nothing but mischief—a system through whose accursed instrumentality millions are cheated of their sanity as well as substance, and trained dog-like to lick the hand that smites them. So perfect is their degradation that literally they 'take no thought for to-morrow,' it being their practice to wait 'till starvation stares them in the face,' [4:2] and *then* make an effort against it.

The *Globe* of Thursday, October 30th, 1845, contains an article on the damage sustained by the potatoe crop here and in Ireland, full of matter calculated to enlighten our first-rate reformers who seem profoundly ignorant that superstition is the bane of intellect, and most formidable of all the obstacles which stand between the people and their rights. One paragraph is so peculiarly significant of the miserable condition to which Romanism *and* Protestantism have reduced a peasantry said to be 'the finest in the world,' that I here subjoin it.



## Page 3

*The best means to arrest the progress of the pestilence in the people's food have occupied the attention of scientific men. The commission appointed by government, consisting of three of the most celebrated practical chemists, has published a preliminary report, in which several suggestions, rather than ascertained results, are communicated, by which the sound portions of the root may, it is hoped, be preserved from the epidemic, and possibly, the tainted be rendered innocuous, and even partially nutritious. Followed implicitly, their directions might mitigate the calamity. But the care, the diligence, the persevering industry which the various forms of process require, in order to effecting the purpose which might result if they were promptly adopted and properly carried out, are the very qualities in which the Irish peasantry are most deficient. In the present crisis, the people are more disposed to regard the extensive destruction of their crops in the light of an extraordinary visitation of Heaven, with which it is vain for human efforts to contend, than to employ counteracting, or remedial applications. "Sure the Almighty sent the potatoe-plague and we must bear it as well as we can," is the remark of many; while, in other places, the copious sprinklings of holy water on the potatoe gardens, and on the produce, as it lies upon the surface, are more depended on for disinfecting the potatoes than those suggestions of science which require the application of patient industry.*

Daniel O'Connell boasted about Irish morale and Irish intellect—the handsome women, and stalwart men of his 'beloved country,' but no sensible persons paid the least attention to him. It is, at all events, too late in the day for we 'Saxons' to be either cajoled or amused by such nonsense. An overwhelming majority of the Irish people have been proved indolent beyond all parallel, and not much more provident than those unhappy savages who sell their beds in the morning, not being able to foresee they shall again require them at night. A want of forethought so remarkable and indolence so abominable, are results of superstitious education. Does any one suppose the religion of the Irish has little, if anything, to do with their political condition? Or can it be believed they will be fit for, much less achieve, political emancipation, while priests and priests alone, are their instructors? We may rely upon it that intellectual freedom is the natural and necessary precursor of political freedom. *Education*, said Lord Brougham, *makes men easy to lead but difficult to drive; easy to govern but impossible to enslave*. The Irish peasantry clamoured for 'Repeal,' never considering that did they get it, no essential change would be made in their social, moral, or, to say all in one word, *political* condition. They would still be the tool of unprincipled political mountebanks—themselves the tool of priests.



## Page 4

Great was the outcry raised against the 'godless colleges' that Sir Robert Peel had the courageous good sense to *inflict* on Ireland. Protestant, as well as Romanist priests, were terribly alarmed lest these colleges should spoil the craft by which they live. Sagacious enough to perceive that whatever influence they possess must vanish with the ignorance on which it rests, they moved heaven and earth to disgust the Irish people with an educational measure of which superstition formed no part. Their fury, like 'empty space,' is boundless. They cannot endure the thought that our minister should so far play the game of 'infidelity' as to take from them the delightful task of teaching Ireland's young idea 'how to shoot.' Sir Robert Inglis *christened* this odious measure, a 'gigantic scheme of godless education,' and a large majority of Irish Roman Catholic Prelates have solemnly pronounced it 'dangerous to faith and morals.' Neither ministerial allurements, nor ministerial threats can subdue the cantankerous spirit of these bigots. They are all but frantic and certainly not without reason, for the Irish Colleges' Bill is the fine point of that wedge which, driven home, will shiver to pieces their 'wicked political system.' Whatever improves Irish intellect will play the mischief with its 'faith,' though not at all likely to deteriorate its 'morals.' Let the people of Ireland be well employed as a preliminary to being well educated, and speedily they may *deserve* to be singled out as 'the most moral people on the face of the earth.'

An educated nation will never tamely submit to be priest-ridden, and well do Ireland's enslavers know it. The most stupid of her priests, equally with the shrewdest of her 'patriots,' are quite alive to the expediency of teaching as fact the fraudulent fables of the 'dark ages.' To keep the people ignorant, or what is worse, to teach them only what is false, is the great end of *their* training; and if a British ministry propose anything better than the merest mockery of education, they call it 'dangerous to faith and morals.'

Superstition is the curse of Ireland. To the rival churches of that country may be traced ALL the oppressions suffered by its people who never can be materially improved till purged of their faith in priests. When that salutary work shall be accomplished, Ireland will indeed be 'a nation' in the secure enjoyment of political liberty. The priest-ridden may talk of freedom, but can never secure it.

What then can be thought of the first-rate reformers, before alluded to, who are going to emancipate every body without the least offence to any body's superstition? It should be borne in memory that other people are superstitious as well as the Irish, and that the churches of all countries are as much parts of 'a wicked political system' as are the churches of Ireland.

## Page 5

The judges of *our* country frequently remind us that its laws have a religious sanction; nay, they assure us Christianity is part and parcel of those laws. Do we not know that orthodox Christianity means Christianity as by law established? And can any one fail to perceive that such a religion must needs be political? The cunning few, who esteem nothing apart from their own aggrandisement, are quite aware that the civil and criminal law of England is intimately associated with Christianity—they publicly proclaim their separation impossible, except at the cost of destruction to both. They are sagacious enough to perceive that a people totally untrammelled by the fears, the prejudices, and the wickedness of superstition would never consent to remain in bondage.

Hence the pains taken by priests to perpetuate the dominion of that ignorance which proverbially is 'the mother of devotion.' What care they for universal emancipation? Free themselves, their grand object is to rivet the chains of others. So that those they defraud of their hard earned substance be kept down, they are not over scrupulous with respect to means. Among the most potent of their helps in the 'good work' are churches, various in name and character but in principle the very same. All are pronounced true by priests who profit by them, and false by priests who do not. Every thing connected with them bears the stamp of despotism. Whether we look at churches foreign or domestic, Popish or Protestant, 'that mark of the beast' appears in characters as legible as, it is fabled, the handwriting on the wall did to a tyrant of old. In connection with each is a hierarchy of intellect stultifiers, who explain doctrines without understanding them, or intending they should be understood by others; and true to their 'sacred trust,' throw every available impediment in the way of improvement. Knowledge is their accuser. To diffuse the 'truth' that 'will set men free' is no part of their 'wicked political system.' On the contrary, they labour to excite a general disgust of truth, and in defence of bad governments preach fine sermons from some one of the many congenial texts to be gathered in their 'Holy Scripture.' Non-established priesthoods are but little more disposed to emancipate 'mind' and oil the wheels of political progression than those kept in state pay. The air of conventicles is not of the freest or most bracing description. The Methodist preacher, who has the foolish effrontery to tell his congregation 'the flush lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and, *therefore*, every person born into the world deserveth God's wrath and damnation,' may be a liberal politician, one well fitted to pilot his flock into the haven of true republicanism; but I am extremely suspicious of such, and would not on any account place my liberty in their keeping.

## Page 6

I possess little faith in political fanaticism, especially when in alliance with the frightful doctrines enunciated from conventicle pulpits, and have no hesitation in saying that Anti-State Church Associations do not touch the root of political evils. Their usefulness is great, because they give currency to a sound principle, but that principle though important, is not all-important—though powerful, is not all-powerful. If universally adopted, it is questionable that any useful change of a lasting character would be worked in the economy of politics.

Wise men put no trust in doctrine which involves or assumes supernatural existence. Believing that supernaturalism reduced to 'system' cannot be other than 'wickedly political,' they see no hope for 'slave classes,' apart from a general diffusion of anti-superstitious ideas. They cannot reconcile the wisdom of theologians with undoubted facts, and though willing to admit that some 'modes of faith' are less absurd than others, are convinced they are all essentially alike, because all fundamentally erroneous.

Speculative thinkers of so radical a temper are not numerous. If esteemed, as happens to certain commodities, in proportion to their scarcity they would enjoy a large share of public respect. Indeed, they are so few and far between, or at least so seldom make their presence visible, that William Gillespie is convinced they are an anomalous species of animal produced by our common parent 'in a moment of madness.' Other grave Christian writers, though horrified at Universal—nicknamed Athe-ism—though persuaded its professors, 'of all earth's madmen, most deserve a chain;' and, though constantly abusing them, are still unable to believe in the reality of such persons. These, among all the opponents of Sense and Wisdom may fairly claim to be considered most mysterious; for, while lavishing on deniers of their idols every kind of sharp invective and opprobrious epithet, they cannot assure themselves the 'monsters' did, or do, actually exist. With characteristic humour David Hume observed, 'There are not a greater number of philosophical reasonings displayed upon any subject than those which prove the existence of Deity, and refute the fallacies of Atheists, and yet the most religious philosophers still dispute whether any man can be so blinded as to be a speculative Atheist;' 'how (continues he) shall we reconcile these contradictions? The Knight-errants who wandered about to clear the world of dragons and of giants, never entertained the least doubt with regard to the existence of these monsters.' [8:1]



## Page 7

The same Hume who thus pleasantly rebuked 'most religious philosophers,' was himself a true Universalist. That he lacked faith in the supernatural must be apparent to every student of his writings, which abound with reflections far from flattering to the self-love of superstitionists, and little calculated to advance their cause. Hume astonished religious fanatics by declaring that *while we argue from the course of nature and infer a particular intelligent cause, which first bestowed, and still preserves order in the universe, we embrace a principle which is both uncertain and useless. It is uncertain, because the subject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience. It is useless, because our knowledge of this cause being derived entirely from the course of nature, we can never, according to the rules of just reasoning, return back from the cause with any new inference, or making additions to the common and experienced course of nature, establish any principles of conduct and behaviour.* [9:1]

Nor did Hume affect to consider popular Christianity less repugnant to reason than any other theory or system of supernaturalism. Though confessedly fast in friendship, generous in disposition, and blameless in all the relations of life, few sincere Divines can forgive his hostility to their faith. And, without doubt, it was hostility eminently calculated to exhaust their stock of patience, because eminently calculated to damage their superstition, which has nothing to fear from the assaults of ignorant and immoral opponents; but when assailed by men of unblemished reputation, who know well how to wield the weapons of wit, sarcasm, and solid argumentation, its priests are not without reason alarmed lest their house should be set *out* of order.

It would be difficult to name a philosopher at once so subtle, so profound, so bold, and so *good* as Hume. Notwithstanding his heterodox reputation, many learned and excellent Christians openly enjoyed his friendship. A contemporary critic recently presented the public with 'a curious instance of contrast and of parallel,' between Robertson and Hume. 'Flourishing (says he) in the same walk of literature, living in the same society at the same time; similar in their habits and generous dispositions; equally pure in their morals, and blameless in all the relations of private life: the one was a devout believer, the other a most absolute Atheist, and both from deep conviction, founded upon inquiries, carefully and anxiously conducted. The close and warm friendship which subsisted between these two men, may, after what we have said, be a matter of surprise to some; but Robertson's Christianity was enlarged and tolerant, and David Hume's principles were liberal and philosophical in a remarkable degree.' [9:2]

This testimony needs no comment. It clearly tells its own tale, and ought to have the effect of throwing discredit upon the vulgar notion that disgust of superstition is incompatible with talents and virtues of the highest order; for, in the person of David Hume, the world saw absolute Universalism co-existent with genius, learning, and moral excellence, rarely, if ever, surpassed.



## Page 8

The unpopularity of that grand conception it would be vain to deny. A vast majority of mankind associate with the idea of disbelief in their Gods, everything stupid, monstrous, absurd and atrocious. Absolute Universalism is thought by them the inseparable ally of most shocking wickedness, involving 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost,' which we are assured shall not be forgiven unto men 'neither in this world nor in that which is to come.' Educated to consider it 'an inhuman, bloody, ferocious system, equally hostile to every restraint and to every virtuous affection,' the majority of all countries detest and shun its apostles. Their horror of them may be likened to that it is presumed the horse feels towards the camel, upon whom (so travellers tell us) he cannot look without *shuddering*.

To keep alive and make the most of this superstitious feeling has ever been the object of Christian priests, who rarely hesitate to make charges of Atheism, not only against opponents, but each other; not only against disbelievers but believers. The Jesuit Lafiteau, in a Preface to his 'Histoire des Sauvages Americaines,' [10:1] endeavours to prove that only Atheists will dare assert that God created the Americans. Not a metaphysical writer of eminence has escaped the 'imputation' of Atheism. The great Clarke and his antagonist the greater Leibnitz were called Atheists. Even Newton was put in the same category. No sooner did sharp-sighted Divines catch a glimpse of an 'Essay on the Human Understanding' than they loudly proclaimed the Atheism of its author. Julian Hibbert, in his learned account 'Of Persons Falsely Entitled Atheists,' says, 'the existence of some sort of a Deity has usually been considered undeniable, so the imputation of Atheism and the title of Atheist have usually been considered as insulting.' This author, after giving no fewer than thirty and two names of 'individuals among the Pagans who (with more or less injustice) have been accused of Atheism,' says, 'the list shews, I think, that almost all the most celebrated Grecian metaphysicians have been, either in their own or in following ages, considered, with more or less reason, to be Atheistically inclined. For though the word Atheist was probably not often used till about a hundred years before Christ, yet the imputation of *impiety* was no doubt as easily and commonly bestowed, before that period, as it has been since.' [11:1]

Voltaire relates, in the eighteenth chapter of his 'Philosophie de L'Histoire,' [11:2] that a Frenchman named Maigrot, Bishop of Conon, who knew not a word of Chinese, was deputed by the then Pope to go and pass judgment on the opinions of certain Chinese philosophers; *he treated Confucius as Atheist, because that sage had said, 'the sky has given me virtue, and man can do me no hurt.'*

## Page 9

On grounds no more solid than this, charges of Atheism are often erected by 'surplined sophists.' Rather ridiculous have been the mistakes committed by some of them in their hurry to affix on objects of their hate the brand of Impiety. Those persons, no doubt, supposed themselves privileged to write or talk any amount of nonsense and contradiction. Men who fancy themselves commissioned by Deity to interpret his 'mysteries,' or announce his 'will,' are apt to make blunders without being sensible of it; as did those worthy Jesuits who declared, in opposition to Bayle, that a society of Atheists was impossible, and at the same time assured the world that the government of China was a society of Atheists. So difficult it is for men inflamed by prejudices, interests, and animosities, to keep clear of sophisms, which can impose on none but themselves.

Many Universalists conceal their sentiments on account of the odium which would certainly be their reward did they avow them. But the unpopularity of those sentiments cannot, by persons of sense and candour, be allowed, in itself, a sufficient reason for their rejection. The fact of an opinion being unpopular is no proof it is false. The argument from general consent is at best a suspicious one for the truth of any opinion or the validity of any practice. History proves that the generality of men are the slaves of prejudice, the sport of custom, and foes most bigoted to such opinions concerning religion as have not been drawn in from their sucking-bottles, or 'hatched within the narrow fences of their own conceit.'

Every day experience demonstrates the fallibility of majorities. It palpably exhibits, too, the danger as well as folly of presuming the unpopularity of certain speculative opinions an evidence of their untruth. A public intellect, untainted by gross superstition, can nowhere be appealed to. Even in this favoured country, 'the envy of surrounding nations and admiration of the world,' the multitude are anything but patterns of moral purity and intellectual excellence. They who assure us *vox populi* 'is the voice of God,' are fairly open to the charge of ascribing to Him what orthodox pietists inform us exclusively belongs to the Father of Evil. If by 'voice of God' is meant something different from noisy ebullitions of anger, intemperance, and fanaticism, they who would have us regulate our opinions in conformity therewith are respectfully requested to reconcile mob philosophy with the sober dictates of experience, and mob law with the law of reason.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* [12:1] assures us *the majority of every nation consists of rude uneducated masses, ignorant, intolerant, suspicious, unjust, and uncandid, without the sagacity which discovers what is right, or the intelligence which comprehends it when pointed out, or the morality which requires it to be done.* And yet religious philosophers are fond of quoting the all but universal horror of Universalism as a formidable argument against that much misunderstood creed!

## Page 10

The least reflection will suffice to satisfy any reasonable man that the speculative notions of rude, uneducated masses, so faithfully described by the Scotch Reviewer, are, for the most part, grossly absurd and consequently the reverse of true. If the masses of all nations are ignorant, intolerant, suspicious, unjust, and uncandid, without the sagacity which discovers what is right, or the intelligence which comprehends it when pointed out, or the morality which requires it to be done, who with the least shadow of claim to be accounted *reasonable* will assert that a speculative heresy is the worse for being unpopular, or that an opinion is false, and *must* be demoralising in its influence, because the majority of mankind declare it so.

I would not have it inferred from the foregoing remarks that horror of Universalism, and detestation of its apostles, is *confined* to the low, the vulgar, the base, or the illiterate. Any such inference would be wrong, for it is certainly true that learned, benevolent, and very able Christian writers, have signalled themselves in the work of obstructing the progress of Universalism by denouncing its principles, and imputing all manner of wickedness to its defenders. It must, indeed, be admitted that their conduct in this particular amply justifies pious Matthew Henry's confession that 'of all the Christian graces, zeal is most apt to turn sour.'

One John Ryland, A.M., of Northampton, published a 'Preceptor, or General Repository of useful information, very necessary for the various ages and departments of life,' in which 'pride and lust, a corrupt pride of heart, and a furious filthy lust of body,' are announced as the Atheist's 'springs of action,' 'desire to act the beast without control, and live like a devil without a check of conscience,' his only 'reasons for opposing the existence of God,' in which he is told 'a world of creatures are up in arms against him to kill him as they would a venomous mad dog,' in which, among other hard names, he is called 'absurd fool,' 'beast,' 'dirty monster,' 'brute,' 'gloomy dark animal,' 'enemy of mankind,' 'wolf to civil society,' 'butcher and murderer of the human race,' in which, moreover, he is *cursed* in the following hearty terms;—'Let the glorious mass of fire burn him, let the moon light him to the gallows, let the stars in their courses fight against the Atheist, let the force of the comets dash him to pieces, let the roar of thunders strike him deaf, let red lightnings blast his guilty soul, let the sea lift up her mighty waves to bury him, let the lion tear him to pieces, let dogs devour him, let the air poison him, let the next crumb of bread choke him, nay, let the dull ass spurn him to death.'

This is a notable specimen of zeal turned sour.



## Page 11

Bishop Hall was a Divine of solid learning and unquestionable piety, whose memory is revered by a large and most respectable part of the Christian world. He ranked amongst the best of his class, and, generally speaking, was so little disposed to persecute his opponents because of their heterodox opinions, that he wrote and published a "Treatise on Moderation," in the course of which he eloquently condemns the practice of regulating, or, rather, attempting to regulate opinion by act of parliament; yet, incredible as it may appear, in that very Treatise he applauds Calvin on account of his conduct towards Servetus. Our authority for this statement is not 'Infidel' but Christian—the authority of Evans, who, after noticing the Treatise in question, says, 'he (Bishop Hall) has discussed the subject with that ability which is peculiar to all his writings. But this great and good man, towards the close of the same Treatise, forgetting the principles which he had been inculcating, devotes one solitary page to the cause of intolerance: this page he concludes with these remarkable expressions: "Master Calvin did well approve himself to God's Church in bringing Servetus to the stake in Geneva."

Remarkable, indeed! and what is the moral that they point? To me they are indicative of the startling truth, that neither eloquence nor learning, nor faith in God and his Scripture, nor all three combined, are incompatible with the cruelest spirit of persecution. The Treatise on Moderation will stand an everlasting memorial against its author, whose fine intellect, spoiled by superstitious education, urged him to approve a deed, the bare remembrance of which ought to excite in every breast, feelings of horror and indignation. That such a man should declare the aim of Universalists is 'to dethrone God and destroy man,' is not surprising. From genuine bigots they have no right to expect mercy. He who applauded the bringing of Servetus to the stake must have deemed their utter extermination a religious duty.

That our street and field preaching Christians, with very few exceptions, heartily sympathise with the fire and faggot sentiments of Bishop Hall, is well known, but happily, their absurd ravings are attended to by none save eminently pious people, whose brains are *unclogged* by any conceivable quantity of useful knowledge. In point of intellect they are utterly contemptible. Their ignorance, however, is fully matched by their impudence, which never forsake, them. They claim to be considered God's right-hand men, and of course duly qualified preachers of his 'word,' though unable to speak five minutes without taking the same number of liberties with the Queen's English. Swift was provoked by the prototypes of these pestiferous people, to declare that, 'formerly the apostles received the gift of speaking several languages, a knowledge so remote from our dealers in the art of enthusiasm, that they neither understand propriety of speech nor phrases of their own, much less the gift of tongues.'



## Page 12

The millions of Christian people who have been trained up in the way they should *not* go, by this active class of fanatics, are naturally either opposed to reason or impervious to it. They are convinced not only that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God, but that wisdom with God is foolishness with the world; nor will any one affirm their 'moderation' in respect to unbelievers one tittle more moderate than Bishop Hall's; or that they are one tittle less disposed than 'that good and great man,' to think those who bring heretics to the stake at Geneva or elsewhere, 'do well approve themselves to God's Church.' Educated, that is to say *duped* as they are, they cannot but think disbelief highly criminal, and when practicable, or convenient, deal with it as such.

It is, nevertheless, true, that Universalists have been helped to some of their best arguments by adversaries. Bishop Watson, to wit, has suggested objections to belief in the Christian's Deity, which they who hold no such belief consider unanswerable. In his famous 'Apology' he desired to know what Paine thought 'of an uncaused cause of everything, and a Being who has no relation to time, not being older to day than he was yesterday, nor younger to day than he will be to-morrow—who has no relation to space, not being a part here and a part there, or a whole anywhere? of an omniscient Being who cannot know the future actions of man, or if his omniscience enables him to know them, of the contingency of human actions? of the distinction between vice and virtue, crime and innocence, sin and duty? of the infinite goodness of a Being who existed through eternity without any emanation of his goodness manifested in the creation of sensitive beings? or, if it be contended that there was an eternal creation, of an effect coeval with its cause, of matter not posterior to its maker? of the existence of evil, moral and natural, in the work of an Infinite Being, powerful, wise, and good? finally, of the gift of freedom of will, when the abuse of freedom becomes the cause of general misery?' [15:1]

These questions imply much. That they flowed from the pen of a Bishop, is one of many extraordinary facts which have grown out of theological controversy. They are questions strongly suggestive of another. Is it possible to have experience of, or even to imagine, a Being with attributes so strange, anomalous, and contradictory? It is plain that Bishop Watson was convinced 'no man by searching can find out God.' The case is, that he, in the hope of converting Deists, ventured to insinuate arguments highly favourable to Atheism, whose professors consider an admission of utter ignorance of God, tantamount to a denial of His existence. Many Christians, with more candour, perhaps, than prudence, have avowed the same opinion. Minutius Felix, for example, said to the Heathen, 'Not one of you reflects that you ought to know your Gods before you worship them.' [15:2] As if he felt the absurdity of pretending to love and honour an unknown 'Perhaps.' That he did himself what he ridiculed in them proves nothing but his own inconsistency.

## Page 13

The Christian, equally with the Heathen, is open to the reproach of worshipping HE KNOWS NOT WHAT. Yes, to idol-hating 'enlightened Christians,' may be fairly applied the severe sarcasm Minutius Felix so triumphantly levelled against idol-loving 'benighted Heathens.' Will any one say the Christian absolutely knows more about Jehovah than the Heathen did about Jupiter? I believe that few, if any, who have attentively considered Bishop Watson's queries, will say the 'dim Unknown,' they so darkly shadow forth, is conceivable by any effort either of sense or imagination.

Under cover, then, of what reason can Christians escape the imputation of pretending to adore what they have no conception of? The very 'book of books,' to which they so boldly appeal, is conclusive *against* them. In its pages they stand convicted of idolatry. Without doubt a God is revealed by Revelation; but not *their* God, not a supernatural Being, infinite in power, in wisdom, and in goodness. The Bible Deity is superhuman in nothing; all that His adorers have ascribed to Him being mere amplification of human powers, human ideas, and human passions. The Bible Deity 'has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;' is 'jealous,' especially of other Gods; changeful, vindictive, partial, cruel, unjust, 'angry with the wicked every day;' and altogether a Being far from respectable, or worthy to be considered infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness. Is it credible that a Being supernaturally wise and good, proclaimed the murderous adulterer David, a man after his own heart, and commanded the wholesale butchery of Canaanites? Or that a God of boundless power, 'whose tender mercies are over all his works,' decreed the extermination of entire nations for being what he made them? Jehovah did all three. Confessedly a God of Armies and Lord of Hosts; confessedly, too, a hardener of men's, hearts that he might destroy them, he authorised acts at which human nature shudders, and of which it is ashamed: yet to *reverence* Him we are commanded by the self-styled 'stewards of his mysteries,' on peril of our 'immortal souls.' Verily, these pious anathematisers task our credulity a little too much. In their zeal for the God of Israel, they are apt to forget that only Himself can compass impossibilities, and altogether lose sight of the fact that where, who, or what Jehovah is, no man knoweth. Revelation (so-called) reveals nothing about 'the creator of heaven and earth,' on which a cultivated intellect can repose with satisfaction. Men naturally desire positive information concerning the superhuman Deity, belief in whom is the *sine qua non* of all superstition. But the Bible furnishes no such information concerning Jehovah. On the contrary, He is there pronounced 'past finding out,' incomprehensible, and the like. 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' are questions put by an 'inspired writer,' who felt the cloudy and unsatisfactory nature of all human conceit concerning Deity.

## Page 14

Now, a Revelation from God might reasonably be expected to make the mode and nature of His existence manifest. But the Christian Bible falls infinitely short in this particular. It teaches there is a God; but throws no light on the dark question *What is God?* Numerous and various as are Scripture texts, none can be cited in explanation of a Deity no older to-day than he was yesterday, nor younger to-day than he will be to-morrow; of a Deity who has no relation to space, not being a part here and a part there, or a whole any where: in short, of that Deity written about by Bishop Watson, who, like every other sincere Christian, made the mistake of resting his religious faith on 'words without knowledge.'

It is to this description of faith Universalists object. They think it the root of superstition, that greatest of all the plagues by which poor humanity is afflicted. Are they to blame for thus thinking? The Christian has no mercy on the superstition of the Heathen, and should scorn to complain when the bitter chalice is returned to his own lips. Universalists believe the God of Bishop Watson a supernatural chimera, and to its worshippers have a perfect right to say, *Not one of you reflects that you ought to know your Gods before you worship them.* These remarkable words, originally addressed to the Heathen, lose none of their force when directed against the Christian.

No one can conceive a supernatural Being, and what none can conceive none ought to worship, or even assert the existence of. Who worships a something of which he knows nothing is an idolater. To talk of, or bow down to it, is nonsensical; to pretend affection for it, is worse than nonsensical. Such conduct, however pious, involves the rankest hypocrisy; the meanest and most odious species of idolatry; for labouring to destroy which the Universalist is called 'murderer of the human soul,' 'blasphemer,' and other foolish names, too numerous to mention.

It would be well for all parties, if those who raise against us the cry of 'blasphemy,' were made to perceive that 'godless' unbelievers cannot be blasphemers; for, as contended by Lord Brougham in his *Life of Voltaire*, blasphemy implies belief; and, therefore, Universalists cannot logically or justly be said to blaspheme him. The blasphemer, properly so called, is he who imagines Deity, and ascribes to the idol of his own brain all manner of folly, contradiction, inconsistency, and wickedness.

Superstition is universally abhorred, but no one believes *himself* superstitious. There never was a religionist who believed his own religion mere superstition. All shrink indignantly from the charge of being superstitious; while all raise temples to, and bow down, before 'thingless names.' The 'masses' of every nation erect chimera into substantial reality, and woe to these who follow not the insane example. The consequences—the fatal consequences—are everywhere apparent. In our own country we see social disunion on the grandest possible scale. Society is split up into an almost infinite variety of sects whose members imagine themselves patented to think truth and never to be wrong in the enunciation of it.



## Page 15

*Sanders' News Letter and Daily Advertiser* of Feb. 18, 1845, among other curiosities, contains an 'Address of the Dublin Protestant Operative Association, and Reformation Society,' one sentence of which is—*We have raised our voices against the spirit of compromise, which is the opprobrium of the age; we have unfurled the banner of Protestant truth, and placed ourselves beneath it; we have insisted upon Protestant ascendancy as just and equitable, because Protestant principles are true and undeniable.*

Puseyite Protestants tell a tale the very reverse of that so modestly told by their nominal brethren of the Dublin Operative Association. They, as may be seen in Palmer's Letter to Golightly, *utterly reject and anathematise the principle of Protestantism, as a heresy with all its forms, sects, or denominations.* Nor is that all our 'Romeward Divines' do, for in addition to rejecting utterly and cursing bitterly, as well the name as the principle of Protestantism, they eulogise the Church of Rome, because forsooth *she yields*, says Newman in his letter to Jelf, *free scope to feelings of awe, mystery, tenderness, reverence, and devotedness*; while we have it on the authority of Tract 90, that the Church of England is *in bondage; working in chains, and* (tell it not in Dublin)\_ *teaching with the stammering lips of ambiguous formularies\_.* Fierce and burning is the hatred of Dublin Operative Association Christians to Popery, but exactly that style of hatred to Protestantism is avowed by Puseyites. Both sets of Christians are quite sure they are right: but (alas! for infallibility) a third set of Christians insist that they are both wrong. There are Papists, or Roman Catholics, who consider Protestant principles the very reverse of true and undeniable, and treat with derisive scorn the 'fictitious Catholicism' of Puseyite Divines.

Count de Montalambert, in his recently published 'Letter to the Rev. Mr. Neale on the Architectural, Artistical, and Archaeological Movements of the Puseyites,' enters his 'protest' against the most unwarranted and unjustifiable assumption of the name of Catholic by people and things belonging to the actual Church of England. *'It is easy,'* he observes, *'to take up a name, but it is not so easy to get it recognised by the world and by competent authority. Any man for example, may come out to Madeira and call himself a Montmorency, or a Howard, and even enjoy the honour and consideration belonging to such a name till the real Montmorencys or Howards hear something about it, and denounce him, and then such a man would be justly scouted from society, and fall down much lower than the lowness from which he attempted to rise. The attempt to steal away from us and appropriate to the use of a fraction of the Church of England that glorious title of Catholic is proved to be an usurpation by every monument of the past and present—by the coronation oath of your sovereigns—by all the laws*



## Page 16

*which have established your Church—even by the recent answer of your University of Oxford to the lay address against Dr. Pusey, &c., where the Church of England is justly styled the Reformed Protestant Church. The question then is, have you, the Church of England, got the picture for your frame? have you got the truth, the one truth; the same truth as the men of the middle ages. The Camden Society says yes; but the whole Christian world, both Protestant and Catholic, says no; and the Catholic world adds that there is no truth but in unity, and this unity you most certainly have not. One more; every Catholic will repeat to you the words of Manzoni, as quoted by M. Faber: 'The greatest deviations are none if the main point be recognised; the smallest are damnable heresies, if it be denied. That main point is the infallibility of the Church, or rather of the Pope.'*

No one desires to be eternally punished; and, therefore, if any one embrace a false faith, it is because he makes the mistake of supposing it the true one. The three sets of Christians, just adverted to, may all be equally sincere, but cannot all have the true faith. Protestant principles, as taught by the Dublin Operative Association, may be true. Anglo-Catholic principles, as taught by the Oxford Tractmen, may be true. Roman Catholic principles, as taught by the Count de Montalembert, may be true; but they cannot ALL be true. It is impossible to reconcile that orthodox Papists' 'main point,' *i.e.* the infallibility of the (Romish) Church, or rather of the Pope, with the 'main point' of orthodox Protestants, who denounce 'the great harlot of Babylon,' that 'scarlet lady who sitteth upon the seven hills,' in the most unmeasured and virulent terms. Anti-Christ is the name they 'blasphemously' apply to the actual 'old chimera of a Pope.' Puseyite Divines treat his Holiness with more tenderness, but even *they* boggle at his infallibility, and seem to occupy a position between the rival churches of Rome and England analogous to that of Captain Macheath when singing between two favourite doxies—

How happy could I be with either,  
Were t'other dear charmer away;  
But while you thus tease me together,  
The devil a word will I say.

Infallibility of Popes is the doctrine insisted upon by Count De Montalembert as essential—as doctrine the smallest deviation from which is damnable heresy. Believe and admit Antichrist is *not* Antichrist, but God's accredited viceregent upon earth, infinite is the mercy in store for you; but woe to those who either cannot or will not believe and admit anything of the kind. On them every sincere Roman Catholic is sure that God will empty the vials of his wrath.

Priests ascribe to Deity the low, grovelling, vindictive, feelings which agitate and disgrace themselves. If Roman Catholic principles are true and undeniable, none but Roman Catholics will be saved from the wrath to come. If Anglo-Catholic principles are true and undeniable, none but Anglo-Catholics will be saved from the wrath to come. If

orthodox Protestant principles are true and undeniable, none but orthodox Protestants will be saved from the wrath to come.



## Page 17

Thus superstitionists

Grunt and groan,  
Cursing all systems but their own.

Agreeing in little else save disagreement, the 'main point' of this class of believers is a matter of little consequence to that class of believers, and no matter at all to a third class of believers. Look at the thousand-and-one sects into which the Christian world is divided. 'Some reject Scripture; others admit no other writings but Scripture. Some say the Devils shall be saved, others that they shall be damned; others that there are no Devils at all. Some hold that it is lawful to dissemble in religion, others the contrary. Some say that Antichrist is come, some say not; others that he is a particular man, others that he is not a man, but the Devil; and others that by Antichrist is meant a succession of men. Some will have him to be Nero, some Caligula, some Mohammed, some the Pope, some Luther, some the Turk, some of the Tribe of Dan; and so each man according to his fancy will make an Antichrist. Some only will observe the Lord's day, some only the Sabbath; some both, and some neither. Some will have all things in common, some not. Some will have Christ's body only in Heaven, some everywhere; some in the bread, others with the bread, others about the bread, others under the bread, and others that Christ's body is the bread, or the bread his body. And others that his body is transformed into his divinity. Some will have the Eucharist administered in both kinds, some in one, some not at all. Some will have Christ descend to hell in respect of his soul, some only in his power, some in his divinity, some in his body, some not at all. Some by hell understand the place of the damned, some *limbus patrum*, others the wrath of God, others the grave. Some will make Christ two persons, some give him but one nature and one will; some affirming him to be only God, some only man, some made up of both, some altogether deny him. Some will have his body come from Heaven, some from the Virgin, some from the elements. Some will have our souls mortal, some immortal; some bring them into the body by Infusion, some by traduction. Some will have souls created before the world, some after; some will have them created altogether, others severally; some will have them corporeal, some incorporeal; some of the substance of God, some of the substance of the body. So infinitely are men's conceits distracted with a variety of opinions, whereas *there is but one Truth*, which every man aims at, but few attain it; every man thinks he hath it, and yet few enjoy it.' [20:1]

Chiefs of these sects are, for the most part, ridiculously intolerant; so many small Popes, who fancy that whomsoever they bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whomsoever they loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. They remorselessly cobble the true faith, without which, to their 'sole exclusive Heaven,' none can be admitted.

## Page 18

As if religion were intended,  
For nothing else but to be mended.

And never seem so happy as when promising eternal misery to those who reject their chimeras.

But wisdom, we read, is justified by her children; and to the wise of every nation the Universalist confidently appeals. He rejects popular religion, because such religion is based on principles of imaginative ignorance. Bailly defines it as 'the worship of the unknown, piety, godliness, humility, before the *unknown*.' Lavater as 'Faith in the supernatural, invisible, *unknown*'. Vauvenargus as 'the duties of men towards the *unknown*.' Dr. Johnson as 'Virtue founded upon reverence of the *unknown*, and expectation of future rewards and punishments.' Rivarol as 'the science of serving the *unknown*.' La Bruyere as 'the respectful fear of the *unknown*.' Du Marsais, as 'the worship of the *unknown*, and the practice of all the virtues.' Walker as 'Virtue founded upon reverence of the *unknown*, and expectation of rewards or punishments; a system of divine faith and worship as opposed to other systems.' De Bonald as 'social intercourse between man and the *unknown*.' Rees as 'the worship or homage that is due to the *unknown* as creator, preserver, and, with Christians, as redeemer of the world,' Lord Brougham as 'the subject of the science called Theology:' a science he defines as 'the knowledge and attributes of the *unknown*' which definitions agree in making the essential principle of religion a principle of ignorance. That they are sufficiently correct definitions will not be disputed, and upon them the Universalist is satisfied to rest his case. To him the worship or adoration of what is confessedly unknown is mere superstition; and to him professors of theology are 'artists in words,' who pretend to teach what nobody has any conception of. Now, such persons may be well-intentioned; but their wisdom is by no means apparent. They must be wonderfully deficient of the invaluable sense so falsely called 'common.' Idolizers of 'thingless names,' they set at naught the admirable dictum of Locke that it is 'unphilosophic to suppose names in books signify real entities in nature, unless we can frame clear and distinct ideas of those entities.'

Theists of every class would do well to calmly and fully consider this rule of philosophising, for it involves nothing less than the destruction of belief in the supernatural. The Jupiter of Mythologic History, the Allah of Alkoran, and the Jehovah of 'Holy Scripture,' if entities at all, are assuredly entities that baffle human conception. To 'frame clear and distinct ideas of them' is impossible. In respect to the attribute of *unknown ability* all Gods are alike.



## Page 19

Books have been written to exhibit the difficulties of (what priests choose to call) Infidelity, and without doubt unbelief has its difficulties. But, according to a universally recognised rule of philosophising, of two difficulties we are in all cases to choose the least. From a rule so palpably just no one can reasonably depart, and the Universalist, while freely admitting a great difficulty on his own side, is satisfied there can be demonstrated an infinitely greater difficulty on the side of his opponents. The Universalist labours to convince mankind they are not warranted by the general course of Nature in assigning to it a Cause; inasmuch as it is more in accordance with experience to suppose Nature the uncaused cause, than to imagine, as errorists do, that there is an uncaused cause of Nature.

Theologians ask, who created Nature? without adducing satisfactory evidence that Nature was created, and without reflecting that if it is difficult to believe Nature self-existent, it is much more difficult to believe some self-existent Super-nature, capable of producing it. In their anxiety to get rid of a natural difficulty, they invent a supernatural one, and accuse Universalists of 'wilful blindness,' and 'obstinate deafness,' for not choosing so unphilosophic a mode of explaining universal mystery.

The rule of philosophising just adverted to—that rule which forbids us, in any case, to chose the greater of two difficulties—is of immense importance, and should be carefully considered by every one anxious to arrive at correct conclusions with respect to theology. For if believers in God do depart from that rule—if their belief necessarily involve its violation—to persist in such belief is to persist in what is clearly opposed to pure reason. Now, it has been demonstrated, so far as words can demonstrate any truth whatever, that the difficulty of him who believes Nature never had an author, is infinitely less than the difficulty of him who believes it had a cause itself uncaused.

In the 'Elements of Materialism,' an unequal, but still admirable work by Dr. Knowlton, a well-known American writer, this question of comparative difficulty is well handled.

'The sentiment,' says the Doctor, 'that a being exists which never commenced existence, or what is the same thing, that a being exists which has existed from all eternity, appears to us to favour Atheism, for if one Being exist which never commenced existence—why not another—why not the universe? It weighs nothing, says the Atheist, in the eye of reason, to say the universe appears to man as though it were organised by an Almighty Designer, for the maker of a thing must be superior to the thing made; and if there be a maker of the universe there can be no doubt, but that if such maker were minutely examined by man, man would discover such indications of wisdom and design that it would be more difficult for him to admit that such maker was

## Page 20

not caused or constructed by a pre-existing Designer, than to admit that the universe was not caused or constructed by a Designer. But no one will contend for an infinite series of Makers; and if, continues the Atheist, what would, if viewed, be indications of design, are no proofs of a designer in the one case, they are not in the other; and as such indications are the only evidence we have of the existence of a Designer of the universe, we, as rational beings, contend there is no God. We do not suppose the existence of any being, of which there is no evidence, when such supposition, it admitted, so far from diminishing would only increase a difficulty, which, at best, is sufficiently great. Surely, if a superior being may have existed from all eternity, an inferior may have existed from all eternity; if a great God sufficiently mighty to make a world may have existed from all eternity, of course without beginning and without cause, such world may have existed from all eternity, without beginning, and without cause.' [23:1]

These are 'strong reasons' for Universalism. They prove that Theists set at nought the rule of philosophising which forbids us to choose the greater of two difficulties. Their system compels them to do so; for having no other groundwork than the strange hypotheses that time was when there was no time—something existed when there was nothing, which something created everything; its advocates would be tongue-tied and lost if reduced to the hard necessity of appealing to facts, or rigidly regarding rules of philosophising which have only their reasonableness to recommend them. They profess ability to account for Nature, and are of course exceeding eager to justify a profession so presumptuous. This eagerness betrays them into courses, of which no one bent on rejecting whatever is either opposed to, or unsanctioned by, experience, can possibly approve. It is plain that of the God they tell us to believe 'created the worlds,' no man has any experience. This granted, it follows that worship of such fancied Being is mere superstition. Until it be shown by reference to the general course of things, that things had an author, Himself uncreated or unauthorized, religious philosophers have no right to expect Universalists to abandon their Universalism. The duty of priests is to reconcile religion with reason, *if they can*, and admit their inability to do so, *if they cannot*.

Romanists will have nothing to do with reason whenever it appears at issue with their faith. All sects, as sects, play fast and loose with reason. Many members of all sects are forward enough to boast about being able to give a reason for the faith that is in them; but an overwhelming majority love to exalt faith above reason. Philosophy they call 'vain,' and some have been found so filled with contempt for it, as to openly maintain that what is theologically true, is philosophically false; or, in other terms, that the truths of religion and the truths of philosophy



## Page 21

have nothing in common. According to them, religious truths are independent of, and superior to, all other truths. Our faith, say they, if not agreeable to *mere* reason is infinitely superior to it. Priests are 'at one' on the point. Dissenting and Protestant, as well as Romanising priests, find it convenient to abuse reason and extol faith. As priests, they can scarcely be expected to do otherwise; for reason is a stern and upright judge whose decrees have hitherto been unfavourable to superstition. Its professors, who appeal to that judge, play a part most inconsistent and dangerous, as is evident in the case of Origen Bachelor, who more zealous and candid than prudent, declared the real and only question between Atheism and Theism a question of fact; reducing it to these terms—'Is there reason, all things considered, for believing that there is a God, an intelligent cause of things, infinite and perfect in all his attributes and moral qualities?' [24:1]

Now, the reader has seen that the hypothesis of 'an intelligent cause of things' involves difficulties, greater, infinitely greater than the one difficulty involved in the hypothesis that things always existed. He has seen the folly of explaining natural, by the invention of supernatural mystery, because it manifestly violates a rule of philosophising, the justness of which it would be ridiculous to dispute. Having clearly perceived thus much, he will perhaps think it rather 'too bad' as well as absurd, to call Universalists 'madmen' for lacking faith in the monstrous dogma that Nature was caused by 'something amounting to nothing' itself uncaused.

There is something. That truth admits not of being evidenced. It is, nevertheless, accepted. It is accepted by men of all religious opinions, equally with men of no religious opinions. If any truth be self-evident and eternal, here is that truth. To call it in question would be worse than idle. We may doubt the reality of an external world, we may be sceptical as to the reality of our own bodies, but we cannot doubt that there is something. The proposition falls not within the domain of scepticism. It must be true. To suppose it false is literally impossible. Its falsehood would involve contradiction, and all contradiction involves Impossibility. But, if proof of this were needed, we have it in the fact that no man, sage or simple, ever pretended to deny there is something. Whatever men could doubt or deny they have doubted or denied, but in no country of the world, in no age, has the dogma—there is something—been denied or even treated as doubtful. Here then Universalists, Theists, and Polytheists agree. They agree of necessity. There is no escape from the conclusion that something is, except we adopt the unintelligible dogma—there is nothing—which no human being can, as nothing amounts to nothing, and of what amounts to nothing no one can have an idea. To define the word something by any other word would be labour in

## Page 22

vain. There is no other word in any language whose meaning is better understood, and they who do not understand what it means, if such persons there be, are not likely to understand the meaning of any word or words whatever. Ideas of nothing none have. That there is something, we repeat, must be true, all dogmas or propositions being necessarily true whose denial involves an impossibility. What the nature of that something may be is a secondary question, and however determined cannot affect the primary dogma—things are things whatever may be their individual or their aggregate nature. Nor is it of the least consequence what name or names we may see fit to give things, so that each word has its fixed and true meaning. Whether, for example, we use for the sign of that something which is, the word Universe, or God, or Substance, or Spirit, or Matter, or the letter X, is of no importance, if we understand the word or letter used to be merely the sign of that something. Words are seldom useful except when they are the sign of true ideas; evidently therefore, their legitimate function is to convey such ideas; and words which convey no ideas at all, or what is worse, only those which are false, should at once be expunged from the vocabularies of nations. Something is. The Universalist calls it matter. Other persons may choose to call it other names: let them. He chooses to call it this one—and no other.

There ever has been something. Here, again, is a point of unity. All are equally assured there ever has been something. Something is, something must always have been, cry the religious, and the cry is echoed by the irreligious. This last dogma, like the first, admits not of being evidenced. As nothing is inconceivable, we cannot even imagine a time when there was nothing. Universalists say, something ever was, which something is matter. Theists say, something has been from all eternity, which something is not matter but God. They boldly affirm that matter began to be. They affirm its creation from nothing, by a something, which was before the universe. Indeed, the notion of universal creation involves first, that of universal annihilation, and secondly, that of something prior to everything. What creates everything must be before everything, in the same way that he who manufactures a watch must exist before the watch. As already remarked, Universalists agree with Theists, that something ever has been, but the point of difference lies here. The Universalist says, matter is the eternal something, and asks proof of its beginning to be. The Theist insists that matter is not the eternal something, but that God is; and when pushed for an account of what he means by God, he coolly answers, a Being, having nothing in common with anything, who nevertheless, by his Almighty will, created everything. It may without injustice be affirmed, that the sincerest and strongest believers in this mysterious Deity are often tormented by doubts, and, if candid, must own they believe in the existence of many things with a feeling much closer allied to certainty than they do in the reality of their 'Great First Cause, least understood.' No man's faith in the inconceivable is ever half so strong as his belief in the visible and tangible.



## Page 23

But few among professional mystifiers will admit this, obviously true as it is. Some have done so. Baxter, of pious memory, to wit, who said, *I am not so foolish as to pretend my certainty be greater than it is, because it is dishonour to be less certain; nor will I by shame be kept from confessing those infirmities which those have as much as I, who hypocritically reproach with them.* MY CERTAINTY THAT I AM A MAN IS BEFORE MY CERTAINTY THAT THERE IS A GOD.

So candid was Richard Baxter, and so candid are *not* the most part of our priests, who would fain have us think them altogether *un*sceptical. Nevertheless, they write abundance of books to convince us 'God is,' though they never penned a line in order to convince us, we actually are, and that to disbelieve we are is a 'deadly sin.'

Could God be known, could his existence be made 'palpable to feeling as to sight,' as unquestionably is the existence of matter, there would be no need of 'Demonstrations of the existence of God', no need of arguments *a priori* or *a posteriori* to establish that existence. Saint John was right; 'No man hath seen God at any time', to which 'open confession' he might truly have added, 'none ever will,' for the unreal is always unseeable. Yet have 'mystery men' with shameless and most insolent pertinacity asserted the existence of God while denying the existence of matter.

*The incomprehensible is not to be defined.* It is difficult to give *intelligible* account of an Immense Being confessedly mysterious and about whom his worshippers admit they only know, they know nothing, except that

'He is good,  
And that themselves are blind.'

Spinoza said, *of things which have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other;* and to me it seems eminently unphilosophic to believe a Being having nothing in common with anything, capable of creating or causing everything. 'Only matter can be touched or touch;' and as the Christian's God is not material, his adorers are fairly open to the charge of superstition. An unknown Deity, without body, parts or passions, is of all idols the least tangible; and they who pretend to know and reverence him, are deceived or deceivers.

In this Christian country, where men are expected to believe and called 'Infidel' if they *cannot* believe in a 'crucified Saviour,' it seems strange so much fuss should be made about his immateriality. All but Unitarian Christians hold as an essential article of faith, that in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily; in other words, that our Redeemer and our Creator, though two persons, are but one God. It is true that Divines of our 'Reformed Protestant Church,' call everything but gentlemen those who lay claim to the equivocal privilege of feasting periodically upon the body and blood of Omnipotence. The pains taken by Protestants to show from Scripture, Reason and Nature, that Priests cannot change lumps of dough into the body, and bumpers of wine into the blood, of

their God, are well known and appreciated. But the Roman Catholics are neither to be argued nor laughed out of their 'awful doctrine' of the real presence, to which they cling with desperate earnestness.



## Page 24

Locke wrote rather disparagingly of 'many among us,' who will be found upon Inquiry, to fancy God in the shape of a man fitting in heaven, and have other absurd and unfit conceptions of him.' As though it were possible to think of shapeless Being, or as though it were criminal in the superstitious to believe 'God made man after his own image.'

That Christians as well as Turks 'really have had whole sects earnestly contending that the Deity was corporeal and of human shape', is a fact, so firmly established as to defy contradiction. And though every sincere subscriber to the Thirty Nine Articles must believe, or at least must believe he believes in Deity without body, parts, or passions, it is well known that 'whole sects' of Christians do even now 'fancy God in the shape of a man sitting in heaven, and entertain other absurd and unfit conceptions of him.'

Mr. Collibeer, who is considered by Christian writers 'a most ingenious gentleman', has told the world in his Treatise entitled 'The Knowledge of God,' that Deity must have some form, and intimates it may probably be the spherical; an intimation which has grievously offended many learned Theists who considered going so far an abuse of reason, and warn us that 'its extension beyond the assigned boundaries, has proved an ample source of error.' But what the 'assigned boundaries' of reason are, they don't state, nor by whom 'assigned.' That if there is a God he must have *some* form is self-evident and why Mr. Collibeer should be ostracized by his less daringly imaginative brethren, for preferring a spherical to a square or otherwise shaped Deity, is to my understanding what God's grace is to their's.

But admitting the unfitness, and absurdity, and 'blasphemy' of such conceptions, it is by no means clear that any other conceptions of the 'inconceivable' would be an improvement upon them. Undoubtedly, the matter-God-system has its difficulties, but they are trifles in comparison with those by which the spirit-God system is encompassed; for, one obvious consequence of faith in bodiless Divinity is an utter confusion of ideas in those who preach it, as regards possibilities and impossibilities.

The universe is an uncaused existence, or it was caused by something before it. By universe we mean matter, the sum total of things, whence all proceeds, and whither all returns. No truth is more obviously true than the truth that matter, or something not matter, exists of itself, and consequently is not an effect, but an uncaused cause of all effects.

From such conviction, repugnant though it be to vulgar ideas, there is no rational way of escape; for however much we may desire, however much we may struggle to believe there was a time when there was nothing, we cannot so believe. Human nature is constituted intuitively or instinctively to feel the eternity of something. To rid oneself of that feeling is impossible. Nature or something not Nature must ever have been, is a conclusion to which what poets call Fate—



## Page 25

Leads the willing and drags the unwilling.

But does this undeniable truth make against Universalism? Far from it—so far, indeed, as to make for it. The reason is no mystery. Of matter we have ideas clear, precise, and indispensable, whereas of something not matter we cannot have any idea whatever, good, bad, or indifferent. The Universe is extraordinary, no doubt, but so much of it as acts upon us is perfectly conceivable, whereas, any thing within, without, or apart from the Universe, is perfectly inconceivable.

The notion of necessarily existing matter seems fatal to belief in God; that is, if by the word God be understood something not matter, for 'tis precisely because priests were unable to reconcile such belief with the idea of matter's self-existence or eternity, that they took to imagining a 'First cause.'

In the 'forlorn hope' of vanquishing the difficulty of necessarily existing *Matter*, they assent to a necessarily existing *Spirit*, and when the nature of spirit is demanded from these assertors of its existence, they are constrained to avow that it is material or nothing.

Yes, they are constrained to make directly or indirectly one or other of these admissions; for, as between truth and falsehood, there is no middle passage; so between something and nothing, there is no intermediate existence. Hence the serious dilemma of Spiritualists, who gravely tell us their God is a spirit, and that a spirit is not any thing, which not any thing or nothing (for the life of us we cannot distinguish between them) 'framed the worlds' nay, *created* as well as framed them.

If it be granted, for the mere purpose of explanation, that spirit is an entity, we can frame 'clear distinct ideas of'—a real though not material existence, surely no man will pretend to say an uncreated Spirit, is less inexplicable than uncreated Matter. All could not have been caused or created unless nothing can be a Cause, the very notion of which involves the grossest of absurdities.

*Whatever is produced, without any cause, is produced by nothing; or, in other words, has nothing for its cause. But nothing never can be a cause no more than it can be something or equal to two right angles. By the same intuition that we perceive nothing not to be equal to two right angles, or not to be something, we perceive that it can never be a cause, and consequently must perceive that every object has a real cause of its existence. When we exclude all causes we really do exclude them, and neither suppose nothing nor the object itself to be the causes of the existence, and consequently can draw no argument from the absurdity of these suppositions except to prove the absurdity of that exclusion. If everything must have a cause, it follows that upon the exclusion of other causes, we must accept of the object itself or nothing as causes. But it is the very point in question whether everything must have a cause or*

*not, and therefore, according to all just reasoning ought not to be taken for granted.*  
[29:1]



## Page 26

This reasoning amounts to logical demonstration (if logical demonstration there can be) of a most essential truth, which in all ages has been obstinately set at nought by dabblers in the supernatural. It demonstrates that something never was, never can be, caused by nothing, which can no more be a cause, properly so called, than it can be something, or equal to two right angles; and therefore that everything could not have had a cause, which, the reader has seen, is the very point assumed by Theists—the very point on which as a pivot they so merrily and successfully turn their fine metaphysical theories and immaterial systems.

The universe, quoth they, must have had a cause, and that cause must have been First Cause, or cause number one, because nothing can exist of itself. Oh, most lame and impotent conclusion! How, in consistency, can they declare nothing can exist without a cause in the teeth of their oft repeated dogma that God is uncaused. If God never commenced to be, *He* is an uncaused existence, that is to say, exists without a cause. [29:2] The difference on this point between Theists and Universalists is very palpable. The former say, Spirit can exist without a cause, the latter say Matter can exist without a cause. Whole libraries of theologic dogma would be dearly purchased by Hume's profound remark—*if everything must have a cause, it follows that upon the exclusion of other causes we must accept of the object itself or of nothing as causes.*

Saint Augustine, more candid than modern theologians, said 'God is a being whom we speak of but whom we cannot describe and who is superior to all definitions.' Universalists, on the other hand, as candidly deny there is any such being. To them it seems that the name God stands for nothing, is the archetype of nothing, explains nothing, and contributes to nothing but the perpetuation of human imbecility, ignorance and error. To them it represents neither shadow nor substance, neither phenomenon nor thing, neither what is ideal nor what is real; yet is it the name without senseless faith in which there could be no superstition.

If Nature is all, and all is Nature, nothing but itself could ever have existed, and of course nothing but itself can be supposed ever to have been capable of causing. To cause is to act, and though body without notion is conceivable, action without body is not. Neither can two Infinities be supposed to tenant one Universe. Only 'most religious philosophers' can pretend to acknowledge the being of an infinite God co-existent with an infinite Universe.

Universalists are frequently asked—What moves matter? to which question *nothing* is the true and sufficient answer. Matter moves matter. If asked how we know it does, our answer is, because we see it do so, which is more than mind imaginers can say of their 'prime mover.' They tell us mind moves matter; but none save the *third sighted* among them ever saw mind, and if they never saw mind, they never could have seen matter pushed about by it. They babble about mind, but nowhere does mind exist save in their mind; that is to say, nowhere but nowhere. Ask these broad-day dreamers where mind is *minus* body? and very cutely they answer, body is the mind, and mind is the body.



## Page 27

That this is neither joke nor slander, we will show by reference to No. 25 of 'The Shepherd,' a clever and well known periodical, whose editor, [30:1] in reply to a correspondent of the 'chaotic' tribe, said 'As to the question—where is magnetism without the magnet? We answer, magnetism is the magnet, and the magnet is magnetism.' If so, body is the mind and the mind is body; and our Shepherd, if asked, 'Where is mind without the body?' to be consistent, should answer, body is the mind and the mind is the body. Both these answers are true, or both are false; and it must be allowed—

Each lends to each a borrowed charm,  
Like pearls upon an Ethiop's arm.

Ask the 'Shepherd' where is mind without the body? and, if not at issue with himself, he *must* reply, mind is the man and man is the mind.

If this be so,—if the mind is the man and the man is the mind, which none can deny who say magnetism is the magnet and the magnet magnetism—how, in Reason's name, can they be different, or how can the 'Shepherd' consistently pretend to distinguish between them; yet he does so. He writes about the spiritual part of man as though he really believed there is such a part. Not satisfied, it would seem, with body, like Nonentitarians of vulgar mould, he tenants it with Soul or Spirit, or Mind, which Soul, or Spirit, or Mind, according to his own showing, is nothing but body in action; in other terms, organised matter performing vital functions. Idle declamation against 'facts mongers' well becomes such self-stultifying dealers in fiction. Abuse of 'experimentarians' is quite in keeping with the philosophy of those who maintain the reality of mind in face of their own strange statement, that magnetism is the magnet and the magnet magnetism.

But we deny that magnetism is the magnet. These words magnetism and magnet do not, it is true, stand for two things, but one thing: that one and only thing called matter. The magnet is an existence, *i.e.*, that which moves. Magnetism is not an existence, but phenomenon, or, if you please, phenomena. It is the effect of which magnetic body is the immediate and obvious cause.

To evade the charge of Materialism, said Dr. Engledue, we (Phrenologists) content ourselves with stating that the immaterial makes use of the material to show forth its powers. What is the result of this? We have the man of theory and believer in supernaturalism quarrelling with the man of fact and supporter of Materialism. We have two parties; the one asserting that man possesses a *spirit* superadded to, but not inherent in, the brain—added to it, yet having no necessary connection with it—producing material changes, yet immaterial—destitute of any of the known properties of matter—in fact an *immaterial something* which in one word means *nothing*, producing all the cerebral functions of man, yet not localised—not susceptible of proof; the other party contending that the belief in spiritualism fetters and ties down physiological

investigation—that man's intellect is prostrated by the domination of metaphysical speculation—that we have no evidence of the existence of an *essence*, and that organised matter is all that is requisite to produce the multitudinous manifestations of human and brute cerebration.



## Page 28

We rank ourselves with the second party, and conceive that we must cease speaking of 'the mind,' and discontinue enlisting in our investigations a spiritual essence, the existence of which cannot be proved, but which tends to mystify and perplex a question sufficiently clear if we confine ourselves to the consideration of organised matter—its forms—its changes—and its aberrations from normal structure. [31:1]

The eccentric Count de Caylus, when on his death-bed, was visited by some near relation and a pious Bishop, who hoped that under such trying circumstance he would manifest some concern respecting those 'spiritual' blessings which, while in health, he had uniformly treated with contempt. After a long pause he broke silence by saying, '*Ah, my friends, I see you are anxious about my soul;*' whereupon they pricked up their ears with delight; before, however, any reply could be made the Count added, '*but the fact is I have not got one, and really my good friends you must allow me to know best.*'

If people in general had one tenth the good sense of this *impious* Count, the fooleries of Spiritualism would at once give place to the philosophy of Materialism, and none would waste time in talking or writing about non-entities. All would know that what theologians call sometimes spirit, sometimes soul, and sometimes mind, is an imaginary existence. All would know that the terms *immaterial something* do in very truth mean *nothing*. Count de Caylus died as became a man convinced that soul is not an entity, and that upon the dissolution of our 'earthly tabernacle', the particles composing it cease to perform vital functions, and return to the shoreless ocean of Eternal Being. Pietists may be shocked by such *nonchalance* in the face of their 'grim monster;' but philosophers will admire an indifference to inevitable consequences resulting from profoundest love of truth and contempt of superstition. Count de Caylus was a Materialist, and no Materialist can consistently feel the least alarm at the approach of what superstitionists have every reason to consider the 'king of terrors.' Believers in the reality of immaterial existence cannot be 'proper' Materialists. Obviously, therefore, no believers in the reality of God can be *bona fide* Materialists; for 'God' is a name signifying something or nothing; in other terms matter or that which is not matter. If the latter, to Materialists the name is meaningless—sound without sense. If the former, they at once pronounce it a name too many; because it expresses nothing that their word MATTER does not express better.

Dr. Young held in horror the Materialist's 'universe of dust.' But there is nothing either bad or contemptible in dust—man is dust—all will be dust. A *dusty* universe, however, *shocked* the poetic Doctor, whose writings analogise with—

Rich windows that exclude the light,  
And passages that lead to nothing.

## Page 29

A universe of nothing was more to his taste than a universe of dust, and he accordingly amused himself with the 'spiritual' work of imagining one, and called its builder 'God.'

The somewhat ungentle 'Shepherd' cordially sympathises with Dr. Young in his detestation of the Materialist's universe of dust, and is sorely puzzled to know how mere dust contrives to move without the assistance of 'an immaterial power between the particles;' as if he supposed anything could be between everything—or nothing be able to move something. Verily this gentleman is as clever a hand at 'darkening counsel by words without knowledge' as the cleverest of those he rates so soundly.

The names of Newton and Clarke are held in great esteem by all who are familiar with the history of mechanical and metaphysical philosophy. As a man of science, there is no individual, ancient, or modern, who would not suffer by comparison with Sir Isaac Newton; while common consent has assigned to Dr. Samuel Clarke the first place among religious metaphysicians. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to cite any other Theists of better approved reputation than these two, and therefore we introduce them to the reader's notice in this place; for as they ranked among the most philosophic of Theists, it might be expected that their conceptions of Deity, would be clear, satisfactory, and definite.—Let us see, then, *in their own writings*, what those conceptions were.

Newton conceived God to be one and the same for ever, and everywhere, not only by his own virtue or energy, but also in virtue of his substance.—Again, 'All things are contained in him and move in him, but without reciprocal action' (*sed sine muta passione*) God feels nothing from the movements of bodies; nor do they experience any resistance from his universal presence. [33:1]

Pause, reader, and demand of yourself whether such a conception of Deity is either clear, satisfactory, or definite,—God is *one*. Very good—but one *what?* From the information, 'He is the same for ever and everywhere,' we conclude that Newton thought him a Being. Here, however, matter stops the way; for the idea of Being is in all of us inseparably associated with the idea of substance. When told that God is an 'Immense Being,' without parts, and consequently unsubstantial, we try to think of such a Being; but in vain. Reason puts itself in a *quandary*, the moment it labours to realise an idea of absolute nothingness; yet marvellous to relate, Newton did distinctly declare his Deity 'totally destitute of body,' and urged that *fact* as a *reason* why He cannot be either seen, touched, or understood, and also as a *reason* why he ought not to be adored under any corporeal figure!



## Page 30

The proper function of 'Supernaturality or Wonder,' according to Phrenologists, is to create belief in the reality of supernatural beings, and begets fondness for news, particularly if extravagant. Most likely then, such readers of this book as have that organ 'large' will be delighted with Newton's rhodomontade about a God who resists nothing, feels nothing, and yet with condescension truly divine, not only contains all things, but permits them to move in His motionless and 'universal presence;' for 'news' more extravagant, never fell from the lips of an idiot, or adorned the pages of a prayer-book.

By the same great *savan* we are taught that God governs all, not as the soul of the world, but as the Lord and sovereign of all things: that it is in consequence of His sovereignty He is called the Lord God, the Universal Emperor—that the word God is relative, and relates itself with slaves—and that the Deity is the dominion or the sovereignty of God, not over his own body, as those think who look upon God as the soul of the world, but over slaves—from all which *slavish* reasoning, a plain man who had not been informed it was concocted by Europe's pet philosopher, would infallibly conclude some unfortunate lunatic had given birth to it. That there is no creature now tenanting Bedlam who would or could scribble purer nonsense about God than this of Newton's, we are well convinced—for how could the most frenzied of brains imagine anything more repugnant to every principle of good sense than a self-existent, eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent Being, creator of all the worlds, who acts the part of 'universal emperor,' and plays upon an infinitely larger scale, the same sort of game as Nicholas of Russia, or Mohammed of Egypt, plays upon a small scale. There cannot be slavery where there is no tyranny, and to say, as Newton did, that we stand in the name relation to a universal God, as a slave does to his earthly master, is practically to accuse such God, at reason's bar of *tyranny*. If the word God is relative, and relate itself with slaves, it incontestably follows that all human beings are slaves, and Deity is by such reasoners degraded into the character of universal slave-driver. Really, theologians and others who declaim so bitterly against 'blasphemers,' and take such very stringent measures to punish 'infidels', who speaks or write of their God, should seriously consider whether the worst, that is, the least superstitious of infidel writers, ever penned a paragraph so disparaging to the character of that God they effect to adore, as the last quoted paragraph of Newton's.



## Page 31

If even it could be demonstrated that there is a super-human Being, it cannot be proper to clothe Him in the noblest human attributes—still less can it be justifiable in pigmies, such as we are, to invest Him with odious attributes belonging only to despots ruling over slaves. Besides, how can we imagine a God, who is 'totally destitute of body and of corporeal figure,' to have any kind of substance? Earthly emperors we know to be substantial and common-place sort of beings enough, but is it not sheer abuse of reason to argue as though the character of God were at all analogous to theirs; or rather, is it not shocking abuse of our reasoning facilities to employ them at all about a Being whose existence, if we really have an existence, is perfectly enigmatical, and allowed to be so by those very men who pretend to explain its character and attributes? We find no less a sage than Newton explicitly declaring as incontestible truth, that God exists necessarily—that the same necessity obliges him to exist always and everywhere—that he is all eyes, all ears, all brains, all arms, all feeling, all intelligence, all action—that he exists in a mode by no means corporeal, and yet this same sage, in the self-same paragraph, acknowledges God is *totally unknown to us*.

Now, we should like to be informed by what *reasonable* right Newton could pen a long string of 'incontestible truths,' such as are here selected from his writings, with respect to a Being of whom, by his own confession, he had not a particle of knowledge. Surely it is not the part of a wise man to write about that which is 'totally unknown' to him, and yet that is precisely what Newton did, when he wrote concerning God.

So much for the Theism of Europe's chief religious philosopher. Turn we now to the Theism of Dr. Samuel Clarke.

He wrote a book about the being and attributes of God, in which he endeavoured to establish, first, that 'something has existed from all eternity;' second, that 'there has existed from eternity some one unchangeable and independent Being;' third, that 'such unchangeable and independent Being, which has existed from all eternity, without any external cause of its existence, must be necessarily existent;' fourth, that 'what is the substance or essence of that Being, which is necessarily existing, or self-existent, we have no idea—neither is it possible for us to comprehend it;' fifth, that 'the self-existent Being must of necessity be eternal as well as infinite and omnipresent;' sixth, that 'He must be one, and as he is the self-existent and original cause of all things, must be intelligent;' seventh, that 'God is not a necessary agent, but a Being endowed with liberty and choice;' eighth, that 'God is infinite in power, infinite in wisdom, and, as He is supreme cause of all things, must of necessity be a Being infinitely just, truthful, and good—thus comprising within himself all such moral perfections as becomes the supreme governor and judge of the world.'

## Page 32

These are the leading dogma contained in Clarke's book—and as they are deemed invincible by a respectable, though not very numerous, section of Theists, we will briefly examine the more important important of them.

The dogma that *something has existed from all eternity*, as already shown, is perfectly intelligible, and may defy contradiction—but the real difficulty is to satisfactorily determine *what that something is*. Matter exists, and as no one can even imagine its non-existence or annihilation, the Materialist infers *that* must be the eternal something. Newton as well as Clark thought the everlasting Being destitute of body, and consequently without parts, figure, motion, divisibility, or any other such properties as we find in matter—*ergo*, they did not believe matter to be the eternal something; but if not matter, again we ask, what can it be? Of bodilessness or incorporeity no one, even among those who say their God is incorporeal, pretend to have an idea. Abady insisted that *the question is not what incorporeity is, but whether it be?* Well, we have no objection to parties taking that position, because there is nothing more easy than to dislodge those who think fit to do so—for this reason: the advocates of nothing, or incorporeity, can no more establish by arguments drawn from unquestioned facts, that incorporeity *is* than they can clearly show *what* it is. It has always struck the author as remarkable that men should so obstinately refuse to admit the possibility of matter's necessary existence, while they readily embrace, not only as possibly, but certainly, true, the paradoxical proposition that a something, having nothing in common with anything, is necessarily existent. Matter is everywhere around and about us. We ourselves are matter—all our ideas are derived *from* matter—and yet such is the singularly perverse character of human intellect that, while resolutely denying the possibility of matter's eternity, an immense number of our race embrace the incredible proposition that matter was created in time by a necessarily existing Being, who is without body, parts, passions, or positive nature!

The second dogma informs us that this always-existing Being is unchangeable and independent. One unavoidable inference from which is that Deity is itself immovable, as well as unconnected with the universe—for a moveable Being must be a changeable Being, by the very fact of its motion; while an independent Being must be motiveless, as it is evident all motives result from our relationship to things eternal; but an independent Being can have no relations, and consequently must act without motives. Now, as no intelligent *human* action can be imagined without necessary precursors in the shape of motives, reasoning from analogy, it seems impossible that the unchangeable and independent Being, Clarke was so sure must ever have existed, could have created the universe, seeing he could have had no *motive* or *inducement* to create it.



## Page 33

The third dogma may be rated a truism—it being evidently true that a thing or Being, which has existed from eternity without any eternal cause of its existence, must be self-existent: but of course that dogma leaves the disputed question, namely, whether matter, or something *not* matter, is self-existent, just where it found it.

The fourth dogma is not questioned by Universalists, as they are quite convinced that it is not possible for us to comprehend the substance or essence of an immaterial Being.

The other dogmas we need not enlarge upon, as they are little more than repetition or expansion of the preceding one. Indeed, much of the foregoing would be superfluous, were it not that it serves to illustrate, so completely and clearly theistical absurdities. The only dogma worth overturning, of the eight here noticed, is the *first*, for if that fall, the rest must fall with it. If, for example, the reader is convinced that it is more probable matter is mutable as regards *form* but eternal as regards *essence*, than that it was willed into existence by a Being said to be eternal and immutable, he at once becomes a Universalist—for if matter always was, no Being could have been before it, nor can any exist after it. It is because men in general are shocked at the idea of matter without beginning and without end, that they do readily embrace the idea of a God, forgetting that if the idea of eternal matter shock our sense of the *probable*, the idea of an eternal Being who existed *before* matter, *if well considered*, is sufficient to shock all sense of the *possible*.

The man who is contented with the universe, who stops at *that* has at least the satisfaction of dealing with something tangible—but he who don't find the universe large enough for him to expatiate in, and whirls his brains into a belief that there is a necessarily existing something beyond the limits of a world *unlimited*, is in a mental condition no reasonable man need envy.

Of the universe, or at least so much of it as our senses have been operated upon by, we have conceptions clear, vivid, and distinct; but when Dr. Clarke tell us of an intelligent Being, not *part* but *creator* of that universe, we can form no clear, vivid, distinct, or, in point of fact, *any* conception of such Being. When he explains that it is infinite and omnipresent, like poor Paddy's famed ale, the explanation 'thickens as it clears;' for being ourselves *finite*, and necessarily present on one small spot of our very small planet, the words *infinite* and *omnipresent* do not suggest to us either positive or practical ideas—of course, therefore, we have neither positive nor practical ideas of an infinite and omnipresent Being.



## Page 34

We can as easily understand that the universe ever did exist, as we now understand that it does exist—but we cannot conceive its absence for the millionth part of an instant—and really it puzzles one to conceive what those people can be dreaming of who talk as familiarly about the extinction of a universe as the chemist does of extinguishing the flame of his spirit-lamp. The unsatisfactory character of all speculations having for their object 'nonentities with formidable names,' should long ere this have opened men's eyes to the folly of *multiplying causes without necessity*—another rule of philosophising, for which we are indebted to Newton, but to which no superstitious philosopher pays due attention. Newton himself in his theistical character, wrote and talked as though most blissfully ignorant of that rule.

The passages given above from his 'Principia' palpably violate it. But Theists, however learned, pay little regard to any rules of philosophising, which put in peril their fundamental crotchet.

A distinguished modern Fabulist [38:1] has introduced to us a philosophical mouse who praised beneficent Deity because of his great regard for mice: for one half of us, quoth he, received the gift of wings, so that if they who have none, should by cats happen to be exterminated, how easily could our 'Heavenly Father,' out of the bats re-establish our exterminated species.

Voltaire had no objection to fable if it were symbolic of truth; and here is fable, which, according to its author, is symbolic of the little regarded truth, that our pride rests mainly on our ignorance, for, as he sagely says, 'the good mouse knew not that there are also winged cats.' If she had her speculations concerning the beneficence of Deity would have been less orthodox, mayhap, but decidedly more rational. The wisdom of this pious mouse is very similar to that of the Theologian who knew not how sufficiently to admire God's goodness in causing large rivers almost always to flow in the neighbourhood of large towns.

To jump at conclusions on no other authority than their own ignorant assumption, and to Deify errors on no other authority than their own heated imagination, has in all ages been the practice of Theologians. Of that practice they are proud, as was the mouse of our Fabulist. Clothed in no other panoply than their own conceits they deem themselves invulnerable. While uttering the wildest incoherencies their self-complacency remains undisturbed. They remind one of that ambitious crow who, thinking more highly of himself than was quite proper, strutted so proudly about with the Peacock's feathers in which he had bedecked himself.—Like him, they plume themselves upon their own egregious folly, and like him should get well *plucked* for their pains.

## Page 35

Let any one patiently examine their much talked of argument from design, and he will be satisfied that these are no idle charges. That argument has for its ground-work beggarly assumption, and for its main pillar, reasoning no less beggarly. Nature must have had a cause, because it evidently is an effect. The cause of Nature must have been one God, because two Gods, or two million Gods, could not have agreed to cause it. That cause must be omnipotent, wise, and good, because all things are double one against another, and He has left nothing imperfect. Men make watches, build ships or houses, out of pre-existing metals, wood, hemp, bricks, mortar, and other materials, therefore God made nature out of no material at all. Unassisted nature cannot produce the phenomena we behold, therefore such phenomena clearly prove there is something unnatural. Not to believe in a God who designed Nature, is to close both ears and eyes against evidence, therefore Universalists are wilfully deaf and obstinately blind.

These are samples of the flimsy stuff, our teachers of what nobody knows, would palm upon us as demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.

By artfully taking for granted what no Universalist can admit, and assuming cases altogether dissimilar to be perfectly analogous, our natural theologians find no difficulty in proving that God is, was, and ever will be; that after contemplating His own perfections, a period sufficiently long for 'eternity to begin and end in,' He said, let there be matter, and there was matter; that with Him all things are possible, and He, of course, might easily have kept, as well as made, man upright and happy, but could not consistently with his own wisdom, or with due regard to his own glorification. Wise in their generation, these 'blind leaders of the blind' ascribe to this Deity of their own invention powers impossible, acts inconceivable, and qualities incompatible; thus erecting doctrinal systems on no sounder basis than their own ignorance; deifying their own monstrous errors, and filling the earth with misery, madness, and crime.

The writer who declared theology *ignorance of natural causes reduced to system*, did not strike wide of the true mark. It is plain that the argument from design, so vastly favoured by theologians, amounts to neither more nor less than ignorance of natural causes reduced to system. An argument to be sound must be soundly premised. But here is an argument whose primary premise is a false premise—a mere begging of the very question in dispute. Did Universalists *admit* the universe was contrived, designed, or adapted, they could not *deny* there must have been at least one Being to contrive, design, or adapt; but they see no analogy between a watch made with hands out of something, and a universe made without hands out of nothing. Universalists are unable to perceive the least resemblance between the circumstance of one intelligent body reforming or

## Page 36

changing the condition of some other body, intelligent or non-intelligent, and the circumstance of a bodiless Being creating all bodies; of a partless Being acting upon all parts; and of a passionless Being generating and regulating all passions. Universalists consider the general course of nature, though strangely unheeded, does proclaim with 'most miraculous organ,' that dogmatisers about any such 'figment of imagination' would, in a rational community, be viewed with the same feelings of compassion, which, even in these irrational days, are exhibited towards confirmed lunatics.

The author, while passing an evening with some pleasant people in Ashton-under-Lyne, heard one of them relate that before the schoolmaster had made much progress in that *devil-dusted* neighbourhood, a labouring man walking out one fine night, saw on the ground a watch, whose ticking was distinctly audible; but never before having seen anything of the kind, he thought it a living creature, and full of fear ran back among his neighbours, exclaiming that he had seen a most marvellous thing, for which he could conceive of no better name than CLICKMITOAD. After recovering from their surprise and terror, this 'bold peasant' and his neighbours, all armed with pokers and other formidable weapons, crept up to the ill-starred ticker, and smashed it to pieces.

The moral of this anecdote is no mystery. Our clickmitoadist had never seen watches, knew nothing about watches, and hearing as well as seeing one for the first time, naturally judged it must be an animal. Readers who may feel inclined to laugh at his simplicity, should ask themselves whether, if accustomed to see watches growing upon watch trees, they would feel more astonished than they usually do when observing crystals in process of formation, or cocoa-nuts growing upon cocoa-nut trees; and if as inexperienced with respect to watches, or works of art, more or less analogous to watches, they would not under his circumstances have acted very much as he did.

Supposing, however, that theologians were to succeed in establishing an analogy between 'the contrivances of human art and the various existences of the universe,' is it not evident that Spinoza's axiom—of things which having nothing in common one cannot be the cause of the others—is incompatible with belief in the Deity of our Thirty-Nine Articles, or, indeed, belief in *any* unnatural Designer or Causer of Material Nature. Only existence can have anything in common with existence.

Now, an existence, properly so called, must have at least two attributes, and whatever exhibits two or more attributes is matter. The two attributes necessary to existence are solidity and extension. Take from matter these attributes and matter itself vanishes. That fact was specially testified to by Priestley, who acknowledged the primary truths of Materialism though averse to the legitimate consequences flowing from their recognition.



## Page 37

According to this argument, nothing exists which has not solidity and extension, and nothing is extended and solid but matter, which in one state forms a crystal, in another a blade of grass, in a third a butterfly, and in other states other forms. The *essence* of grass, or the *essence* of crystal, in other words, those native energies of their several forms constituting and keeping them what they are, can no more be explained than can the *essentiality* of *human* nature.

But the Universalist, because he finds it impossible to explain the action of matter, because unable to state why it exhibits such vast and various energies as it is seen to exhibit, is none the less assured it *naturally* and therefore *necessarily* acts thus energetically. No Universalist pretends to understand how bread nourishes his frame, but of the *fact* that bread does nourish it he is well assured. He understands not how or why two beings should, by conjunction, give vitality to a third being more or less analogous to themselves, but the *fact* stares him in the face.

Our 'sophists in surplices,' who can no otherwise bolster up their supernatural system than by outraging all such rules of philosophising as forbid us to choose the greater of two difficulties, or to multiply causes without necessity, are precisely the men to explain everything. But unfortunately their explanations do, for the most part, stand more in need of explanation than the thing explained. Thus, they explain the origin of matter by reference to an occult, immense, and immensely mysterious phantasm without body, parts or passions, who sees though not to be seen, hears though not to be heard, feels though not to be felt, moves though not to be moved, knows though not to be known, and, in short, does everything, though not to be *done* by anything. Well might Godwin say *the rage of accounting for what is obviously unaccountable, so common among philosophers of this stamp, has brought philosophy itself into discredit.*

There is an argument against the notion of a Supernatural Causer which the author does not remember to have met with, but which he considers an argument of great force—it is this. Cause means change, and as there manifestly could not be change before there was anything to change, to conceive the universe caused is impossible.

That the sense here attached to the word cause is not a novel one every reader knows who has seen an elaborate and ably written article by Mr. G.H. Lewes, on 'Spinoza's Life and Works,' where effect is defined as cause realised; the *natura naturans* conceived as *natura naturata*; and cause or causation is define as simply change. When, says Mr. Lewes, the change is completed, we name the result effect. It is only a matter of naming.



## Page 38

These definitions conceded accurate, the conclusion that neither cause nor effect *exist*, seems inevitable, for change of being is not being itself any more than attraction is the thing attracted. One might as philosophically erect attraction into reality and fall down and worship *it* as change which is in very truth a mere “matter of naming.” Not so the things changing or changed; *they* are real, the prolific parent of all appearance we behold, of all sensation we experience, of all ideas we receive, in short, of all causes and of all effects, which causes and effects, as shown by Mr. Lewis, are merely notional, for “we call the antecedent cause, and the sequent effect; but these are merely relative conceptions; the sequence itself is antecedent to some subsequent change, and the former antecedent was once only a sequent to its cause, and so on.”

Ancient Simonides, when asked by Dionysius to explain the nature of Deity, demanded a day to “see about it,” then an additional two days, and then four days more, thus wisely intimating to his silly pupil, that the more men think about Gods, the less competent they are to give any rational account of them.

Cicero was sensible and candid enough to acknowledge that he found it much easier to say what God was not, than what he was. Like Simonides, he was *mere* Pagan, and like him, arguing from the known course of nature, was unable, with all his mastery of talk, to convey positive ideas of Deity. But how should he convey to others what he did not, could not, himself possess? To him no revelation had been vouchsafed, and though my Lord Brougham is quite sure, without the proof of natural Theology, revelation has no other basis than mere tradition; we have even better authority than his Lordship's for the staggering fact that natural Theology, without the prop of revelation, is a 'rhapsody of words,' mere jargon, analogous to the tale told by an idiot, so happily described by our great poet as 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.' We have a Rev. Hugh M'Neil 'convinced that, from external creation, no right conclusion can be drawn concerning the *moral* character of God,' and that 'creation is too deeply and disastrously blotted in consequence of man's sin, to admit of any satisfactory result from an adequate contemplation of nature.' [42:1] We have a Gillespie setting aside the Design Argument, on the ground that the reasonings by which it is supported are 'inapt' to show such attributes as infinity, omnipresence, free agency, omnipotency, eternality, or unity,' belong in any way to God. On this latter attribute he specially enlarges, and after allowing the contrivances we observe in nature, may establish a unity of *counsel*, desires to be told how they can establish a unity of *substance*. [42:2] We have Dr. Chalmers and Bishop Watson, whose capacities were not the meanest, contending that there is no natural proof of a God, and that



## Page 39

we must trust solely to revelation. [42:3] We have the Rev. Mr. Faber in his 'Difficulties of Infidelity' boldly affirming that no one ever did, or ever will 'prove without the aid of revelation, that the universe was designed by a *single* designer.' Obviously, then, there is a division in the religious camp with respect to the sufficiency of natural Theology, unhelped by revelation. By three of the four Christian authors just quoted, the design argument is treated with contempt. Faber says, 'evident design must needs imply a designer,' and that 'evident design shines out in every part of the universe.' But he also tells us 'we reason exclusively, if with the Deist we thence infer the existence of one and only one Supreme Designer.' By Gillespie and M'Neil, the same truth is told in other words. By Chalmers and Watson we are assured that, natural proof of a God there is none, and our trust must be placed solely in revelation; while Brougham, another Immense Being worshipper, declares that revelation derives its chief support from natural Theology, without which it has 'no other basis than vague tradition.'

Now, Universalists agree with Lord Brougham as to the traditionary basis of Scripture; and as they also agree with Chalmers and Watson with respect to there being no natural proof of a God, they stand acquitted to their own consciences of 'wilful deafness' and 'obstinate blindness,' in rejecting as inadequate the evidence that 'God is,' drawn either from Nature, Revelation, or both.

It was long a Protestant custom to taunt Roman Catholics with being divided among themselves as regards topics vitally important, and to draw from the fact of such division an argument for making Scripture the only 'rule of faith and manners.' Chillingworth said, *there are Popes against Popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves—a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age, the church of one age against the church of another age. Traditive interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found. No tradition but only of Scripture can derive itself from the fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in in such an age after Christ, or that in such an age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient certainty but of Scripture only for any considering man to build on.* [43:1] And after reading this should 'any considering man' be anxious to know something about the Scripture on which alone he is to build, he cannot do better than dip into Dr. Watt's book on the right use of Reason, where we are told *every learned (Scripture) critic has his own hypothesis, and if the common text be not favourable to his views a various lection shall be made authentic. The text must be supposed to be defective or redundant, and the sense of it shall be literal or metaphorical according as it best supports his own scheme. Whole chapters*



## Page 40

*or books shall be added or left out of the sacred canon, or be turned into parables by this influence. Luther knew not well how to reconcile the epistle of St. James to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and so he could not allow it to be divine. The Papists bring all their Apocrypha into their Bible, and stamp divinity upon it, for they can fancy purgatory is there, and they find prayers for the dead. But they leave out the second commandment because it forbids the worship of images. Others suppose the Mosaic history of the creation, and the full of man, to be oriental ornaments, or a mere allegory, because the literal sense of those three chapters of Genesis do not agree with their theories.*

These remarks are certainly not calculated to make 'considering men' put their trust in Scripture. Coming from a Protestant Divine of such high talent and learning, they may rather be expected to breed in 'considering men' very unorthodox opinions as well of the authenticity as the genuineness of *both* Testaments, and a strong suspicion that Chillingworth was joking when he talked about their "sufficient certainty." The author has searched Scripture in vain for 'sufficient certainty,' with respect to the long catalogue of religious beliefs which agitate and distract society. Laying claim to the character of a 'considering man,' he requires that Scripture to be proved the word of a God before appealed to, as His Revelation; a feat no man has yet accomplished. Priests, the cleverest, most industrious, and least scrupulous, have tried their hands at the pious work, but all have failed. Notwithstanding the mighty labours of our Lardner's and Tillemont's and Mosheim's, no case is made out for the divinity of either the Old or New Testament. 'Infidels' have shown the monstrous absurdity of supposing that any one book has an atom more divinity about it than any other book. These 'brutes' have completely succeeded in proving that Christianity is a superstition no less absurd than Mohammedanism, and to the full as mischievous.

Christian practice is after all, the best answer to Christian theory. Men who think wisely, do not, it is true, always act wisely; but generally speaking, the moral, like the physical tree, is known by its fruit, and bitter, most bitter, is the fruit of that moral tree, the followers of Jesus planted. Notwithstanding their talk about the pure and benign influence of their religion, an opinion is fast gaining ground, that Bishop Kidder was right, when he said, *were a wise man to judge of religion by the lives of its professors, perhaps, Christianity is the last he would choose.*

He who agrees with Milton that

To know what every day before us lies  
Is the prime wisdom,



## Page 41

will in all likelihood not object to cast his eyes around and about him, where proofs of modern priestly selfishness are in wonderful abundance. By way of example may be cited the cases of those right reverend Fathers in God the Bishops of London and Chester, prelates high in the church; disposers of enormous wealth with influence almost incalculable; the former more especially. And how stand they affected towards the poor? By reference to the *Times* newspaper of September 27th, 1845, it will be seen that those very influential and wealthy Bishops are supporters *en chef* of a Reformed Poor Law, the virtual principle of which is 'to reduce the condition of those whose necessities oblige them to apply for relief, below that of the labourer of the *lowest class*.' A Reformed Poor Law, having for its 'object,' yes reader, its object, the restoration of the pauper to a position below that of the independent labourer.' This is their 'standard' of reference, by rigid attention to which they hope to fully carry out their 'vital principle,' and thus bring to a satisfactory conclusion the great work of placing 'the pauper in a worse condition than the 'independent labourer.' It appears, from the same journal, that in reply to complaints against their dietary, the Commissioners appointed to work the Reformed Poor Law, consider that twenty-one ounces of food daily 'is more than the hard working labourer with a family could accomplish for himself by his own exertions.' This, observes a writer in the *Times*, being the Commissioners' reading of their own 'standard,' it may be considered superfluous to refer to any other authority; but, as the Royal Agricultural Society of England have clubbed their general information on this subject in a compilation from a selection of essays submitted to them, we are bound to refer to such witnesses who give the most precise information on the actual condition of the *independent labourer*, with minute instructions for his general guidance, and the economical expenditure of his income. 'He should,' they say, 'toil early and late' to make himself 'perfect' in his calling. 'He should *pinch and screw* the family, even in the *commonest necessities*,' until he gets 'a week's wages to the fore.' He should drink in his work 'water mixed with some powdered ginger,' which warms the stomach, and is 'extremely cheap.' He should remember that 'from three to four pounds of potatoes are equal in point of nourishment to a pound of the best wheaten bread, besides having the great advantage of *filling* the stomach. He is told that 'a lot of bones may always be got from the butchers for 2d., and they are never scraped so clean as not to have some scraps of meat adhering to them.' He is instructed to boil these two penny worth of bones, for the first day's family dinner, until the liquor 'tastes something like broth.' For the *second* day, the bones are to be again boiled in the same manner, but for a *longer* time. Nor is this all, they say 'that the bones, if again boiled for a *still longer* time, will *once more* yield a nourishing broth, which may be made into pea soup.'



## Page 42

This is the system and this is the schoolmastership expressly sanctioned by the Bishops of London and Chester. In piety nevertheless those prelates are not found wanting. They may starve the bodies but no one can charge them with neglecting the souls of our 'independent labourers.' Nothing can exceed their anxiety to feed and clothe the spiritually destitute. They raise their mitred fronts, even in palaces, to proclaim and lament over the spiritual destitution which so extensively prevails—but they seldom condescend to notice *physical* destitution. When the cry of famine rings throughout the land they coolly recommend rapid church extension, thus literally offering stones to those who ask them for bread. To get the substantial and give the spiritual is their practical Christianity. To spiritualise the poor into contentment with the 'nourishing broth' from thrice boiled bones, and to die of hunger rather than demand relief, are their darling objects.

Did Universalists thus act, did they perpetrate, connive at, or tolerate such atrocities as were brought to light during the Andover inquiry, such cold blooded heartlessness would at once be laid to the account of their principles. Oh yes, Christians are forward to judge of every tree by its fruit, except the tree called Christianity.

The vices of the universalist they ascribe to his creed. The vices of the Christian to anything but his creed. Let professors of Christianity be convicted of gross criminality, and lo its apologists say such professors are not Christian. Let fanatical Christians commit excesses which admit not of open justification, and the apologist of Christianity coolly assures us such conduct is *mere rust on the body of his religion—moss which grows on the stock of his piety.*

From age to age the wisest among men have abhorred and denounced superstition. It is true that only a small section of them treated religion as if *necessarily* superstition, or went quite as far as John Adams, who said, *this would be the best of all possible worlds if there were no religion in it.* But an attentive reading of ancient and modern philosophical books has satisfied the author that through all recorded time, religion has been *tolerated* rather than *loved* by great thinkers, who had *will*, but not *power* to wage successful war upon it. Gibbon speaks of Pagan priests who, 'under sacerdotal robes, concealed the heart of an Atheist.' Now, these priests were also the philosophers of Rome, and it is not impossible that some modern philosophical priests, like their Pagan prototypes, secretly despise the religion they openly profess. Avarice, and lust of power, are potent underminers of human virtue. The mighty genius of Bacon was not proof against them, and he who deserves to occupy a place among 'the wisest and greatest' has been 'damned to eternal fame' as the 'meanest of mankind.'

Nor are avarice and lust of power the only base passions under the influence of which men, great in intellect, have given the lie to their own convictions, by calling that religion which they knew to be rank superstition. Fear of punishment for writing truth is the grand cause why their books contain so little of it. If Bacon had openly treated

Christianity as mere superstition, will any one say that his life would have been worth twenty-four hours' purchase?

## Page 43

There is an old story about a certain lady who said to her physician, 'Doctor, what is your religion?' My religion, madame, replied the Doctor, 'is the religion of all sensible men.' 'What kind of religion is that?' said the lady. 'The religion, madame,' quoth the Doctor, 'that no sensible man will tell.'

This doctor may be given as a type of the class of shrewd people who despise superstition, but will say nothing about it, lest by so doing they give a shock to prejudice, and thus put in peril certain professional or other emoluments. Too sensible to be pious, and too cautious to be honest, they must be extremely well paid ere they will incur the risk attendant upon a confession of anti-superstitious faith.

Animated by a vile spirit of accommodation, their whole sum of practical wisdom can be told in four words—BE SILENT AND SAFE. They are amazed at the 'folly' of these who make sacrifices at the shrine of sincerity; and while sagacious enough to perceive that superstition is a clumsy political contrivance, are not wanting in the prudence which dictates at least a *seeming* conformity to prevailing prejudices.

None have done more to perpetrate error than these time-serving 'men of the world,' for instead of boldly attacking it, they preserve a prudent silence which bigots do not fail to interpret as consent. Mosheim says, [47:1] 'The simplicity and ignorance of the generality in those times (fifth century) furnished the most favourable occasion for the exercise of fraud; and the impudence of impostors, in contriving false miracles, was artfully proportioned to the credulity of the vulgar, while the sagacious and the wise, who perceived these cheats, were overawed into silence by the dangers that threatened their lives and fortunes, if they should expose the artifice. Thus,' continues this author, 'does it generally happen, when danger attends the discovery and the profession of truth, the prudent are *silent*, the multitude *believe*, and impostors *triumph*.'

Beausobre, too, in his learned account of Manicheism reads a severe lesson to those who, under the influence of such passions as *fear* and *avarice*, will do nothing to check the march of superstition, or relieve their less 'sensible,' but more honest, fellow-creatures from the weight of its fetters. After alluding to an epistle written by that 'demi-philosopher,' Synesius, when offered by the Patriarch the Bishopric of Ptolemais, [48:1] Beausobre says, 'We see in the history that I have related a kind of hypocrisy, which, perhaps, has been far too common in all times. It is that of ecclesiastics, who not only do not say what they think, but the reverse of what they think. Philosophers in their closet, when out of them they are content with fables, though they know well they are fables. They do more; they deliver to the executioner the excellent men who have said it. How many Atheists and profane persons have brought holy men to the stake under the pretext of heresy? Every day, hypocrites consecrate the host and cause it to be adored, although firmly convinced as I am that it is nothing more than a piece of bread.'

## Page 44

Whatever may be urged in defence of such execrable duplicity, there can be no question as to its anti-progressive tendency. The majority of men are fools, and if such 'sensible' politicians as our Doctor and the double doctrinising ecclesiastics, for whose portraits we are indebted to Mosheim and Beausobre, shall have the teaching of them, fools they are sure to remain. Men who dare not be 'mentally faithful' to themselves may obstruct, but cannot advance, the interests of truth. In legislation, in law, in all the relations of life, we want honesty *not* piety. There is plenty of piety, and to spare, but of honesty—sterling, bold, uncompromising honesty—even the best regulated societies can boast a very small stock. The men best qualified to raise the veil under which truth lies concealed from vulgar gaze, are precisely the men who fear to do it. Oh, shame upon ye self-styled philosophers, who in your closets laugh at 'our holy religion,' and in your churches do it reverence. Were your bosoms warmed by one spark of generous wisdom, *silence* on the question of religion would be broken, the multitude cease to *believe*, and imposters to *triumph*.

London: Printed by Edward Truelove, 240, Strand.

### [ENDNOTES]

[4:1] 25th November, 1845.

[4:2] Vide 'Times' Commissioner's Letter on the Condition of Ireland, November 28, 1845.

[8:1] 'Essay on Providence and a Future State.'

[9:1] Essay of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy. [9:2] Critical remarks on Lord Brougham's 'Lives of Men of Letters and Science, who flourished in the time of George III.'—The *Times*, Wednesday, October 1, 1845.

[10:1] History of American Savages.

[11:1] Appendix the Second to 'Plutarchus and Theophrastus on Superstition.'

[11:2] Philosophy of History.

[12:1] See a Notice of Lord Brougham's Political Philosophy, in the number for April, 1845.

[15:1] 'Apology for the Bible,' page 133.

[15:2] Unusquisque vestrum non cogitat prius se debere Deos nosse quam colere.

[20:1] See a curious 'Essay on Nature,' Printed for Badcock and Co., 2, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row. 1807.



[23:1] Elements of Materialism, chapter 1.

[24:1] Discussion on the Existence of God, between Origen Bachelor and Robert Dale Owen.

[29:1] Hume's Treatise on Human Nature.

[29:2] This sexing is a stock receipt for mystification.—*Colonel Thompson*.

[30:1] The Rev. J.K. Smith.

[31:1] 'An Address on Cerebral Physiology and Materialism,' delivered to the Phrenological Association In London, June 20, 1842.

[33:1] Principia Mathematica, p. 528, Lond. edit., 1720.

[38:1] Lessing.

[42:1] Lecture by the Rev. Hugh M'Neil, Minister of St. Jude's Church, Liverpool, delivered about seven years since, in presence of some 400 of the Irish Protestant Clergy.

## Page 45

[42:2] The necessary existence of Deity, by William Gillespie.

[42:3] Page 106 of a Discussion on the Existence of God, between Origen Batchelor and R.D. Owen.

[43:1] Quoted by Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his introduction to the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity.

[47:1] Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii, page 11.

[48:1] Manicheisme, tome ii, p. 568.