

An Apology for Atheism eBook

An Apology for Atheism

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

An Apology for Atheism eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	6
Page 1.....	7
Page 2.....	9
Page 3.....	10
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	13
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	15
Page 9.....	16
Page 10.....	17
Page 11.....	18
Page 12.....	19
Page 13.....	21
Page 14.....	22
Page 15.....	23
Page 16.....	24
Page 17.....	25
Page 18.....	26
Page 19.....	27
Page 20.....	29
Page 21.....	30
Page 22.....	31

Page 23.....	32
Page 24.....	33
Page 25.....	34
Page 26.....	35
Page 27.....	36
Page 28.....	37
Page 29.....	38
Page 30.....	39
Page 31.....	41
Page 32.....	42
Page 33.....	43
Page 34.....	44
Page 35.....	45
Page 36.....	46
Page 37.....	47
Page 38.....	48
Page 39.....	49
Page 40.....	50
Page 41.....	52
Page 42.....	53
Page 43.....	54
Page 44.....	55
Page 45.....	56
Page 46.....	57
Page 47.....	58
Page 48.....	59

Page 49.....	60
Page 50.....	61
Page 51.....	63
Page 52.....	64
Page 53.....	65
Page 54.....	66
Page 55.....	67
Page 56.....	68
Page 57.....	70
Page 58.....	71
Page 59.....	72
Page 60.....	73
Page 61.....	74
Page 62.....	75
Page 63.....	76
Page 64.....	77
Page 65.....	78
Page 66.....	79
Page 67.....	80
Page 68.....	82
Page 69.....	83
Page 70.....	84
Page 71.....	85
Page 72.....	86
Page 73.....	87
Page 74.....	88

Page 75.....	89
Page 76.....	90
Page 77.....	91
Page 78.....	92
Page 79.....	94

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
AN APOLOGY FOR ATHEISM:		1
AN APOLOGY FOR ATHEISM		1

Page 1

AN APOLOGY FOR ATHEISM:

*Addressed to
religious investigators of every denomination
by one of its apostles.*

“Not one of you reflects, that you ought know your Gods before you worship them.”

*London:
J. Watson, 5, Paul's Alley, paternoster row.
And all booksellers.*

1846

AN APOLOGY FOR ATHEISM

It would be absurd to doubt that religion has an important bearing on all the relations and conditions of life. The connexion between religions faith and political practice is, in truth, far closer than is generally thought. Public opinion has not 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 and hold some away among us, many honest and energetic assertors of 'the rights of man,' who have to learn that a people in the fetters of superstition, can never achieve political freedom. Many of these reformers admit the vast, the incalculable influence of Mahommedanism 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 voluntarism 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 'Third Estate' are constantly declaring their disinclination for religious controversy, 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 fact can be, of that connection between religion and politics the author thinks has been far too little regarded.

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 day's *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.

The author of this Apology has 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*, *because convinced of its truth*. 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 like the dog 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,' [5:1] and *then* make an effort against it. Notwithstanding the purely Christian education of which they are taught to boast, nothing can exceed the superstitious recklessness displayed in their daily conduct.

The *Globe* of Thursday, October 30th, 1845, contains an article on the damage sustained by the potato crops 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 we 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 innoxious, 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 purposes 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 potato-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 potato gardens, and on the produce, as it lies upon the surface, are more depended on for disinfecting the potatoes than the suggestions of science, which require the application of patient industry.'

Daniel O'Connell may continue to boast about Irish morale and Irish intellect—the handsome women, and stalwart men of his 'beloved country;' but no sensible persons will pay 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, as characterize the peasantry of Ireland, are results of their religious education. Does any one suppose the religion of that peasantry 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 clamour 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 O'Connell and other unprincipled political mountebanks—themselves the tool of priests.

Page 4

Great has been 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 are terribly alarmed lest those 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 religion formed no part. Their fury, like 'empty space,' is boundless. They cannot endure the thought that our ministers should so far play the game of 'infidelity' as to take from them the delightful task of teaching Ireland's young ideas '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.' The best guarantee for national morality is to be found in national intelligence; nor need any one feel alarmed at the progress of principles and measures inimical to faith in either Romanism or Protestantism. Let the people of Ireland be properly 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 facts, 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.'

The sage who writes 'leaders' for the *Morning Herald*, is of opinion that Ireland would indeed be 'great, glorious, and free,' if its Roman Catholic people were to cease all efforts for Repeal, and turn good Protestants. But the *Herald* does greatly err not knowing human nature and the source of Irish evils. It is not by substituting Protestantism for Romanism that those evils are to be cured. Were every Romanist in Ireland at once to turn 'good Protestant,' their political emancipation would be far off as ever. Protestantism everywhere, like Romanism everywhere, is 'a political system, and a wicked political system, for it regards only the exercise of power, and neglects utterly the duty of improvement.'

Page 5

Religion is the curse of Ireland. To the rival churches of that country may be traced nearly 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; for, as truly said by one of our most admired poets—

Tis man's base grovelling nature makes the priest,
Who always rides a superstitious beast.

And he is a poor politician who expects to see political liberty achieved or enjoyed by nations made up of 'base, grovelling' specimens of human nature.

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. The judges of our own 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 make a market of delusion, and 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 religion would never consent to remain in bondage.

Hence the pains taken by piety-mongers 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 mark 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 hand writing 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

Page 6

every available impediment in the way of improvement. Knowledge is their devil. So far as antagonism to progression goes, there is no sensible difference between the hierarchies of Rome or of England, or of Constantinople. 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.'

Nor is it found that non-established priesthoods are much 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. No doubt the 'voluntary principle' is just—only brazen faced impostors will say it is right to tax a man for the support of those who promulgate doctrines abhorrent to his feelings and an insult to his judgment. Still, the fact is incontestable, that Dissenting Priests are, for the most part, opposed to the extension of political rights, or, what is equal, that knowledge which would infallibly secure them. The Methodist preacher, who has the foolish effrontery to tell his congregation 'the flesh 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 the author is extremely suspicious of such persons, and would not on any account place his liberty in their keeping. He has little faith in political fanaticism, especially when in alliance with the frightful doctrines enunciated from conventicle pulpits, and has no hesitation in saying that Anti-State Church Associations do not touch the root of all 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.

Priests of all religion are the same, said Dryden—the religions they teach are false, and in their tendency anti-progressive, say Atheists, who put no trust in doctrine which involves or assumes supernatural existence. Believing that supernaturalism reduced to 'system' cannot be other than 'wickedly political,' the Atheist, truly so called, sees no hope for 'slave classes,' apart from a general diffusion of anti-religious ideas. According to his theory, religion is in part a cunningly and in part a stupidly devised fable. He cannot reconcile the wisdom of theologians with undoubted facts, and though willing to admit that some 'modes of faith' are less absurd than others, is convinced they are all essentially alike, because all fundamentally erroneous. Rousseau said 'philosophy can do nothing that religion cannot do better, and religion can do many things which philosophy cannot do at all.' But Atheists believe religion the most formidable evil with which progressors have to cope, and see in philosophy that mighty agent in the work of improvement so beautifully described by Curran as *the irresistible genius of universal emancipation*.

Page 7

Speculative thinkers of so decidedly irreligious 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 Atheism—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 Atheism and Atheists, may fairly claim to be considered most mysterious; for, while lavishing on deniers of their Gods 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.' [10:1]

The same Hume who thus pleasantly rebuked 'most religious philosophers,' was himself a true Atheist. 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 religionists, and little calculated to advance their cause. Many Deists have been called Atheists: among others Robert Owen and Richard Carlile, both of whom professed belief in something superior to nature, something acting upon and regulating matter, though not itself material. [11:1] This something they named *power*. But Hume has shown we may search 'in vain for an idea of power or necessary connection in all the sources from which we would suppose it to be derived. [11:2] Owen, Carlile, and other Atheists, falsely so called, supposed power the only entity worthy of deification. They dignified it with such appellations as 'internal or external cause of all existence,' and ascribed to it intelligence, with such other honourable attributes as are usually ascribed to 'deified, error.' But Hume astonished religious philosophers 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. [11:3]

Page 8

Nor did Hume affect to consider 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 religion, 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.' [12:1]

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 all religion is incompatible with talents and virtues of the highest order; for, in the person of David Hume, the world saw absolute Atheism co-existent with genius, learning, and moral excellence, rarely, if ever, surpassed.

The unpopularity of that creed it would be vain to deny. A vast majority of mankind associate with the idea of disbelief in their Gods every thing stupid, monstrous, absurd, and atrocious. Absolute Atheism is thought by them the inseparable ally of most shocking wickedness, involving as it manifestly does that '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*.

Page 9

To keep alive and make the most of this strong religious 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 in God. The Jesuit Lafiteau, in a Preface to his 'Histoire des Sauvages Americaines,' [13:1] endeavours to prove that only Atheists will dare assert that God created the Americans. Scarcely 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.' [13:2]

Voltaire relates, in the eighteenth chapter of his 'Philosophie de L'Histoire,' [13:3] 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.'

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. These persons, no doubt, supposed they were 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, by Voltaire and many others considered the most ancient on earth, was a society of Atheists. So difficult it is for men inflamed by religious prejudices, interests, and animosities to keep clear of sophisms, which can impose on none but themselves.

Page 10

Many Atheists 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 a creed 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 bigotted to such opinions concerning religion as have not been drawn in from the sucking-bottles, or 'hatched within the narrow fences of their own conceit.' No prudent searcher after truth will accept an opinion because it is the current one, but rather view it with distrust for that very reason. The genius of him who said, in our journey to the other world the common road is the safest, was cowardly as deceptive, and therefore opposed to sound philosophy. Like horses yoked to a team, 'one's nose in t'others tail,' is a mode of journeying anywhere the opposite of dignified, pleasant, or improving. They who are enamoured of 'the common road,' unless handsomely paid for journeying thereon, must be slavish in feeling, and willing submitters to every indignity sanctioned by custom, that potent enemy of truth, which from time immemorial has been 'the law of fools.'

Every day experience demonstrates the fallibility of majorities. It palpably exhibits, too, the danger as well as the folly of presuming the unpopularity of certain speculative opinions an evidence of their falsity. 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* [15:1] 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 Atheism as a formidable argument against that much misunderstood creed.

Page 11

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 Atheism is false, and must be demoralising in its influence because the majority of mankind declare it so.

The Author of this Apology does not desire it may be inferred from the foregoing remarks, that horror of Atheism, 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 Atheism by denouncing its principles, and imputing all manner of wickedness to its defenders. It must indeed be admitted by the really enlightened of every name, that their conduct in this particular amply justifies pious Matthew Henry's confessions, 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.'

Page 12

Dr. Balguy in the course of a Treatise which the 'liberal' author of a Sketch of the Denominations of the Christian World, 'considered an excellent antidote against atheistical tenets,' expresses himself in the following manner: 'Of all the false opinions which ever infested the mind of man, nothing can possibly equal that of atheism, which is such a monstrous contradiction of all evidence, to all the powers of the understanding and the dictates of common sense, that it may well be questioned whether any man can really fall into it by a deliberate use of his judgment. All nature so clearly points out, and so clearly proclaims a Creator of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, that whoever hears not its voice and sees not its proofs may well be thought wilfully deaf and obstinately blind.'

These are notable specimens of zeal turned sour.

Now, when it is considered that such writings are carefully put into popular hands, and writings of an irreligious character as carefully kept out of them, astonishment at human intolerance must cease. So far, indeed, from wondering that the 'giddy multitude' shrink aghast from Atheists we shall conceive it little short of miraculous, that they do not fall upon and tear them to pieces.

Beattie, another Christian doctor, towards the close of his celebrated Essay on the Immutability of Truth, denounces every sincere outspoken unbeliever as a 'murderer of human souls,' and it being obvious that the murderer of a single soul must to the 'enlightened' majority of our people appear an act infinitely more horrible than the butchery of many bodies, it really does at first view seem 'passing strange' that body murderers are almost invariably hanged, whilst they who murder 'souls,' if punished at all, usually escape with some harmless abuse and a year or two's imprisonment.

Even the 'tolerant' Richard Watson, Lord Bishop of Llandaff, wrote with contemptuous bitterness of 'Atheistical madmen,' and in his Apology for the Bible, assured Deistical Thomas Paine, Deism was so much better than Atheism, he (Bishop Watson) meant 'not to say anything to its discredit.'

The Rev. Mr. Ward, whose 'Ideal of a Christian Church' spread such consternation in the anti-popish camp, describes his own hatred of Protestantism as 'fierce and burning.' Nothing can go beyond that—it is the *ne plus ultra* of bigotry, and just such hatred is displayed towards Atheists by at least nine-tenths of their opponents. Strange to say, in Christians, in the followers of him who is thought to have recommended, by act and word, unlimited charity, who is thought to have *commanded* that we judge not, that we be sat judged; the Atheist finds his most active foe, his bitterest and least scrupulous maligner. To exaggerate their bigotry would be difficult, for whether sage or simple, learned or unlearned, priests or priest-led, they regularly practise the denunciation of Atheists in language foul as it is false. They call them 'traitors to human kind,' yea 'murderers of the human soul,' and unless hypocrites, or much better than their

sentiments, would rather see them swing upon the gibbet than murderers of the body, especially if like John Tawell, 'promoters of religion and Christian Missions.'

Page 13

Robert 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 the Author of this Apology 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 Atheists 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 the utter extermination of Atheists a religious duty.

That our street and field preaching Christians, with very few exceptions, heartily sympathise with the fire and faggot sentiments of Robert 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 forsakes 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 14

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. Hence, arguing with them is sheer waste of brains and leisure—a casting of pearls before swine. 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 Robert 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 unbelief highly criminal, and when practicable, or convenient, deal with it as such. Atheists would, be ‘astonished with a great astonishment’ if they did not. Their crafty teachers adjure them to do so ‘on peril of their souls;’ and if, as Mr. Jay, of Bath, said in one of his best sermons, ‘the readiest way in the world to thin heaven, and replenish the regions of hell, is to call in the spirit of bigotry,’ the Author of this Apology would not for all the treasures of India stand in the shoes of these men, whose whole time and energies are employed in generating and perpetuating that detestable spirit. But when your Rylands, and Balguys and Beatties, and Watsons and Halls make a merit of abusing those who cannot believe as they believe, what can be hoped or expected from the tribe of illiterate canters, who ‘go about Mawworming?’

It is nevertheless true, that Atheists 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?’ [20:1]

Page 15

These questions imply what, to the author of this Apology, appears an ample *justification* of Atheism. 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? To that question reason prompts an answer in the negative—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.’ [20:2] 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. To the Author of this Apology it seems certain, a God whose being is not as our being, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and whose ways are not as our ways, is neither more nor less than the merest figment of ill-regulated imagination. He is *sure* a Being, above nature, can only be conceived of by itself; it being obviously true that the natural cannot attain to the supernatural.

The Christian, equally with the Heathen, is open to the reproach of worshipping he knows not what. Yes, to idol-hating, enlightened Christians, may fairly be applied the severe sarcasm Minutius Felix so triumphantly levelled at idol-loving ‘benighted Heathens.’ Will any one say the Christian absolutely knows more about Jehovah than the Heathen did about Jupiter? The Author believes 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 Christians can escape the imputation of pretending to adore what they have no conception of, the Author of this Apology is unable to divine. 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;’

Page 16

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 love, respect, yea, reverence Him, we are commanded by the self-styled 'stewards of his mysteries,' on peril of our 'immortal souls.' Verily, these pious anathematisers ask 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 imagined 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 religion. But the Bible furnishes no such information concerning Jehovah. On the contrary, he is their 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 about Gods.

Now, a Revelation from God, at least so thinks the Author of this Apology, 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 questions, who, what, or where 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 anywhere: 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 Atheists object. They think it the root of superstition, that greatest of all 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. Atheists 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.

Page 17

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, Atheists are called 'murderers of the human soul,' 'blasphemers,' and other foolish names, too numerous to mention.

It would be well for all parties, if those who raise against Atheists 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, Atheists who do not believe in God, 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. Yes, the blasphemer is he who invents a monster and calls it God; while to reject belief therein, is an act both reasonable and virtuous.

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 'thingless names' into substantial realities, and woe to those, who follow not the insane example. The consequences—the fatal consequences—are everywhere apparent. In our own country, one consequence is 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. This if no idle or frivolous charge, as the Author of this Apology can easily show.

Before him is *Sanders' News Letter and Daily Advertiser* of Feb. 18, 1845, which, 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

Page 18

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 the reader has seen exactly that style of hatred to Protestantism is avowed by Mr. Ward. 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 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 name itself is spurned at with indignation by the greater half, at least, of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom. The judgment of the whole indifferent world—the common sense of humanity—agrees with the judgment of the Church of Rome, and with the sense of her 150,000,000 of children, to dispossess you (Puseyites) of this name. The Church of England, who has denied her mother, is rightly without a sister. She has chosen to break the bonds of unity and obedience; let her therefore stand before the judgment-seat of God and of man. Again, supposing the spirit of the Camden Society ultimately to prevail over its Anglican adversaries; supposing you do one day get every old thing back again; copes, letters, roodlofts,

Page 19

candlesticks, and the abbey lands into the bargain, what will it all be but an empty pageant, like the Tournament of Eglington Castle, separated from the reality of Catholic truth and unity, by the abyss of three hundred years of schism? 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. Once 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.'

Our Anti-Romish priests would have us think the more and more we have of-faith, the more and more we have of happiness. Faith they exalt far, very far, above hope or even charity. 'Oh Lord, increase our faith,' is the text on which they love to enlarge. Faith is their panacea for all human ills: but their faith is worse than useless if it be not true faith. And how can we so test conflicting faiths as to distinguish the true from the false? Aye, there's the rub! Undoubtedly faith is to religion what the root is to the tree; and men in search of 'saving faith' are naturally anxious to find it. 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 Montalambert, 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 teaze me together,
The devil a word can I say.

The Infallibility of Popes is the doctrine insisted upon by Count De Montalambert as essential—as doctrine, the smallest deviation from which is damnable heresy. Believe and admit 'Antichrist' is not Antichrist, but God's accredited vicegerent 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 God will pour out the vials of his wrath, as if the 'Great Perhaps,'

Page 20

Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,

could be angry with creatures of his own creation for thinking what they cannot help thinking, and being what they cannot help being. Every one has heard of the Predestinarian, who, having talked much of his God, was asked by a bystander to speak worse of the Devil if he could; but comparatively few persons feel the full force of that question, or are prepared to admit God-worshippers in general, picture their Deities as if they were demons. 'Recognise,' exclaims the Roman Catholic Priest, 'the "main point" of our holy apostolic religion, or God will judge and eternally punish you.' The priests of nearly all religious denominations 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-Catholic 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. Thus do religionists

Grunt and groan,
And curse all systems but their own;

Never scrupling to assure the advocates of those systems a hell is waiting to receive them. 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

Page 21

the place of the damned, some *limbus partum*, 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.' [27:1]

The 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;

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

and rarely seem so happy as when promising eternal misery to those who reject their chimeras. Even Dissenting ministers, from whom better things might be expected, have been heard to declare at public meetings, called by themselves for the purpose of sympathising with, and supporting one of themselves who was suffering for 'conscience sake,' that when they spoke of liberty to express opinions, they meant such liberty for religionists, not irreligionists. When learned and 'liberal' Dissenters gratuitously confess this species of faith, none have a right to be surprised that the 'still small voice of truth' should be drowned amid the clamour of fanaticism, or that Atheists should be so recklessly villified.

But wisdom, we read, is justified of her children; and to the wise of every nation the Atheist confidently appeals. He rejects religion, because 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.'

Page 22

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 Atheist 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.' Idolisers 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 *unknowability* all Gods are alike. They are all supernatural; and the merely natural cannot attach rational ideas to names assumed to stand for something above nature. It is easy to talk about seeing the Creator in creation, looking through nature up to nature's God, and the like, but very difficult to have any idea whatever of a God without body, parts, or passions; that is to say, the God set forth in one of the Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles.

No such God can be believed to exist by reasoners who rigidly abide by John Locke's rule of philosophising, and if it be urged that he, the author of the rule, was a Theist and a Christian—our answer is, that in such case, like many other philosophers, he practically gave the lie to his own best precept.

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 Atheist, 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 Atheist 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 religionists do, that there is an uncaused cause of Nature.

Page 23

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 Atheists of 'wilful blindness,' and 'obstinate deafness,' for not choosing so unphilosophic a mode of explaining universal mystery. Call upon them to define their 'all-creative Deity,' and they know not what to answer. Ask them who, what, or where He is, and at once you have them on the hip; at once you spy their utter ignorance, and reduce them to a condition very similar to that of Master Abraham Slender, when with stammering lips he 'sings small like a woman.' To assume everything they are always ready; but to prove anything concerning their Immense Supernatural, they are never prepared. Regularly drilled to argue in a circle, they foolishly imagine everybody else should do the same, and marvel at the man who rigidly adheres to just rules of philosophising and considers experience of natural derivation a far safer guide than their crude, undigested, extravagant, contradictory notions about the confessedly *unknown*.

The rule of philosophising just adverted to—that rule which forbids us, in any case, to choose 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, and the Author of this Apology conceives most satisfactorily exhausted.

'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 24

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, if 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.' [31:1]

These are 'strong reasons' for Atheism—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 exceedingly 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 unauthorised, religious philosophers have no right to expect Atheists to abandon their Atheism. 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 25

have nothing in common. According to them, religious truths are independent 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 religion. 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? [32:1]

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 Atheists '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 a 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 Atheists, 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

Page 26

be labour in 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 only useful, when they are the signs 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 Atheist 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 religions, 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. Atheists 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 second, that of a 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. Atheists agree with Theists, that something ever has been; but the point of difference lies here. The Atheist 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.

Page 27

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 can be so fully and perfectly satisfied there is a God in heaven as the Author of this Apology cannot but be of his own existence on earth. No man's faith in the imaginary is ever half so strong as his belief in the visible and tangible.

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 they have no more, and we ought to have no more, doubt about God's existence than our own. 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.

Define your terms, said Locke. Atheists do so, and where necessary insist upon others following the philosophic example. On this account they are 'ugly customers' to Priests, who, with exceptions, much dislike being called upon to explain their idealess language. Ask one to define the word God and you stagger him. If he do not fly into a passion deem yourself fortunate, but as to an intelligible definition, look for nothing of the sort. He can't furnish such definition however disposed to do so. The incomprehensible is not to be defined. It is difficult to give an 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.'

Page 28

Spinoza said, *of things which have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other*; and to the Author of this Apology, 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. Knowledge of, and reverence for an object, imply, the power of conceiving that object; but who is able to conceive a God without body, parts, or passions?

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 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. Proselytes are apt to misunderstand, and make sad mistakes about, that doctrine. Two cases are cited by Hume in his 'Essay of the Natural History of Religion,' which he announces as 'pleasant stories, though somewhat profane.' According to one, a Priest gave inadvertently, instead of the sacrament, a counter, which had by accident fallen among the holy wafers. The communicant waited patiently for some time, expecting that it would dissolve on his tongue, but finding that it still remained entire, he took it off. I hope, said he, to the Priest, you have not made a mistake; I hope you have not given me God the Father, he is so hard and tough that there is no swallowing him. The other story is thus related. A famous General, at that time in the Muscovite Service, having come to Paris for the recovery of his wounds, brought along with him a young Turk whom he had taken prisoner. Some of the doctors of the Sorbonne (who are altogether as positive as the dervises of Constantinople) thinking it a pity that the poor Turk should be damned for want of instruction, solicited Mustapha very hard to turn Christian, and promised him for encouragement, plenty of good wine in this world and paradise in the next. These allurements were too powerful to be resisted; and therefore having been well instructed

Page 29

and catechised, he at last agreed to receive the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, the Priest to make everything sure and solid, still continued his instructions, and began the next day with the usual question, *How many God's are there? None at all*, replied Benedict, for that was his new name. *How! None at all?* Cries the Priest. *To be sure*, said the honest proselyte, *you have told me all along that there it but one God; and yesterday I ate him.*

This is sufficiently ridiculous; and yet if we fairly consider the whole question of divinity there will be found no more absurdity in the notion of our Benedict eating the Creator, than in Jews crucifying Him. Both notions involve materiality. A God without body, parts, or passions, could no more be nailed upon a cross than taken into the stomach. And if it be urged there is something awful in the blasphemy of him who talks of swallowing his God, the Author of this Apology can as conscientiously urge that there is something very disgusting in the idea of a murdered Deity.

Locke wrote rather disparagingly of 'many among us,' who 'will be found upon inquiry, to fancy God in the shape of a man sitting 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.' A 'Philosophical Unbeliever,' who made minced meat of Dr. Priestley's reasonings on the existence of God, well remarked that 'Theists are always for turning their God into an overgrown Man. Anthropomorphites has long been a term applied to them. They give him hand and eyes, nor can they conceive him otherwise than as a corporeal Being. We make a Deity ourselves, fall down and worship him. It is the molten calf over again. Idolatry is still practised. The only difference is that now we worship idols of our own imagination before of our hands.' [37:1]

This is bold language, but if the language of truth and soberness no one should take offence at it. That Christians as well as Turks 'have had whole sects earnestly contending that the Deity was corporeal and of human shapes,' is a fact, testified to by Locke, and 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 a man sitting in heaven, and entertain other absurd and unfit conceptions of him.'

Page 30

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 consider 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 'called over the coals' 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. The Author's serious and deliberate opinion is, that ascribing to Deity a body analagous to our own, is less ridiculous than affirming he has *no* body; nor can he admire the wisdom of those Christians who prefer a partless, passionless God, to the substantial piece of supernaturalism adored by their forefathers. 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 have it, as regards possibilities and impossibilities. The Author confidently submits that, no man having 'firm faith' in a Deity—without body parts and passions—can be half so wise as the famous cook of my Lord Hoppergollop, who said,

What is impossible can't be,
And never never comes to pass.

He, moreover, confidently submits that, granting the existence of so utterly incomprehensible a Deity, still such Deity could not have caused nature, or matter, unless we deny the palpably true proposition of Spinoza, to wit—Of things which have nothing in common, one cannot be the cause of the other. In harmony with this proposition, Atheists cannot admit the supernatural caused the natural; for, between the natural and the supernatural it is impossible to imagine any thing in common.

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 31

Leads the willing and drags the unwilling.

But does this undeniable truth make against Atheism? 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 to the Author of this Apology 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 clearing 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 and distinct ideas of'—a real though not material existence, surely no man will pretend to say an uncreated reality called 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,' said Hume, '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 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. [40:1]

Page 32

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 a 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. The difference on this point between Theists and Atheists 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.'

If the God of our Deists and Christians is not matter, what is He? Upon them devolves the difficult duty of answering that question. They are morally bound to answer it or make the humiliating confession that they 'ignorantly worship;' that with all their boasted certainty as to the existence of their 'deified error' they can furnish no satisfactory, or even intelligible account of His [41:1] nature, if indeed a supernatural or rather Unnatural Being can properly be said to have a nature.

The author of 'Good Sense' has observed, that names which may be made to mean anything in reality mean nothing. Is not God a name of this class? Our 'state puppet showmen,' as my Lord Brougham nicknamed Priests, who talk so much about Gods, forcibly remind one of that ingenious exhibitor of puppets, who, after saying to his juvenile patronisers—'Look to the right, and there you will see the lions devouring the dogs,' was asked—Which is the lion and which is the dogs?' to which query he replied, 'Vichever you please, my little dears, it makes no difference votsomnever.' For in exactly the same spirit do our ghostly exhibitors, they who set up the state puppet show meet the inquiries of the grown children they make so handsomely (again we are under an obligation to Lord Brougham) 'to pay for peeping.' Children of this sort would fain know what is meant by the doctrines concerning the many 'true Gods' they hear such precious rigmaroles about in Church and Conventicle, as well as the many orthodox opinions of that God, whose name is there so often 'taken in vain.' But Priests like the showman in question, answer, in language less inelegant to be sure, but substantially the same, 'Vichever you please, my little dears, it makes no difference votsomnever.'

Page 33

He who declared that the word God was invented by philosophers to screen their own ignorance, taught a valuable truth, though the Author of this Apology never fails mentally to Substitute *quacks* for *philosophers*.

Saint Augustin 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.' Atheists 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 full faith in which there could be no religion. If to the name God some rational signification cannot be attached away goes, or at least away *ought* to go, that belief in something supernatural which is 'the fundamental principle of all false metaphysics.' 'No such belief can for a moment be entertained by those who see in nature the cause of all effects, and treat with the contempt it merits, the preposterous notion that out of nothing at the bidding of something, of which one can make anything, started everything.

The famous Mr. Law, in his 'Appeal to all that doubt or disbelieve the truths of the Gospel,' gratuitously allows 'it is the same impossibility for a thing to be created out of nothing as by nothing,' for which sensible allowance 'insane philosophy' owes him much. Indeed the dogma, if true, proves all religion false, for it strikes full at belief in a God, a belief which, it cannot be too often repeated, is to religion what blood is to the brain and oxygen to the blood.

Materialism is hated by priests, because no consistent Materialist can stop short of disbelief in God. He believes in Nature and Nature alone. By Nature he understands unity. The ONE which; includes all, and is all.

That it pertains to the nature of substance to exist; and that all substance is necessarily infinite, we are told by Spinoza, who understood by substance that which exists in itself, and is conceived through itself; *i.e.* the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of anything antecedent to it.

This substance of Spinoza is just the matter of Materialists. With him most likely, with them certainly, matter and substance are convertible terms. They have no objection to the word substance so long as it is the sign of something substantial; for substantiality implies materiality. Whether we say—Substance exists, and is conceived through itself; *i.e.* the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of anything antecedent to it, or—Matter exists and is conceived through itself; *i.e.* 'the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of anything antecedent to itself'—our meaning is exactly the same.

Page 34

To exclude matter from our conception (if it were possible) would be to think universal existence out of existence, which is tantamount to thinking without anything to think about. The ideas of those who try their brains at this odd sort of work, have been well likened to an atmosphere of dust superintended by a whirlwind. They who assume the existence of an unsubstantial *i.e.* immaterial First Cause, outrage every admitted rule and every sound principle of philosophising. Only pious persons with ideas like unto an atmosphere of dust superintended by a whirl wind would write books in vindication of the monstrously absurd assumption that there exists an unsubstantial Great First Cause of all substantialities. Nothing can be wilder than the speculations of such 'hair brained' individuals, excepting only the speculations of those sharp-sighted enough to see reason and wisdom in them.

A Great Cause, or a Small Cause, a First Cause, or a Last Cause, involves the idea of real existence, namely, the existence of matter. By cause of itself, said Spinoza, I understand that which involves existence, or that the nature of which can only be considered as existent. And who does not so understand Cause? Why Gillespie and other eminently dogmatic Christian writers whose Great First Cause cannot be considered an entity, because they assert, yes, expressly assert its immateriality.

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 action is conceivable, action without body is not. Neither can two Infinites 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.

Atheists 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 *second 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 acutely they answer, body is the mind and mind is the body.

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, [44:1] 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—

Page 35

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 apart. Not satisfied, it would seem, with body, like Nonentitarians of vulgarest 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 'fact 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. Those 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.

Cause implies action; and till Nonentitarians can explain how nothing may contrive to cause something, they should assume the virtue of modesty, even if they have it not. To rail at 'fact mongers' is, doubtless, far easier than to overturn facts themselves. The 'Shepherd' calls Atheists 'Chaotics' and Materialism 'the philosophy of lunacy,' which is a very free and very easy way of 'Universalising.' But arguments grounded on observation and experience are not to be borne down by hard names. Man, like the magnet, is something—he acts. Dust and ashes he was; dust and ashes he will be.—He may be touched, and tasted, and seen, and smelt. In the immateriality of *his* composition no one believes; and none but Nonentitarians pretend to do so. He thinks—thinking is the very condition of his existence. To think is to live. To the sum total of vital manifestations we apply the term mind. To call mind matter, or matter mind, is ridiculous—*genuine* lunacy. It would be as wise to call motion matter and wind up the spiritual work by making nothing of both. The man who ran half round our planet in search of his soul did not succeed in finding it. How should he when there is no such thing as soul.

Page 36

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 connexion 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.

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. [46:1]

The eccentric Count de Caylus, when on his death-bed, was visited by some near relations and a pious Bishop, who hoped that under such trying circumstances 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, 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 nonentities. 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

Page 37

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 religionists 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 analogue with—

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

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.

We observe that motion is caused by body, and apart from body no one can conceive the idea of motion. Local motion may, but general motion cannot be accounted for. The Shepherd contends there is nothing more mysterious than motion. There he is right; and had he said nothing is *less* mysterious than motion he would have been equally so.

For telling these unpalatable truths the Atheist is bitterly detested. 'The Shepherd' is a most unorthodox kind of Pantheist; yet even he does not scruple to swell the senseless cry against 'Godless infidels,' whom he calls an almost infinite variety of bad names, and among other shocking crimes accuses them of propounding a 'dead philosophy.' Yet the difference between his Pantheism and our Atheism is only perceptible to the microscopic eye of super-sublimated spiritualism. The subjoined is offered to the reader's notice as a sample of Pantheism so closely resembling Atheism, that, like the two Sosias in the play, to distinguish them is difficult:

Page 38

'What Coleridge meant by the motto (all Theology depends on mastering the term nature) concerns us not. We appropriate the motto, but we do not profess to appropriate it in the same sense as Coleridge appropriated it. Every man must appropriate it for himself. Coleridge perceived what every thinking mind has perceived—the difficulty of believing in two self-determining powers, viz., God and Nature, as also the consequences of regarding them as identical. If Nature be one power and God another power, and if God be not responsible for what Nature does, then Nature is a self-subsisting God. If God and Nature be esteemed one universal existence, this is Pantheism, which is denominated an accursed doctrine by the disciples of Sectarianism, and formed no part of the creed, of the great dialectician of modern times. The attempt to separate God from Nature will mistify the clearest head: not even Coleridge could wade the depths of this vulgar Theology. Is there any man who can rest satisfied in the faith of two independent powers who exist together in any other sense than the two polar energies of a magnet, which are really one? No: and men are afraid to regard them as one. On the one hand they are puzzled to understand an unintelligible absurdity, and on the other, they are afraid to admit a simple truism which leads to the abolition of all ceremonial forms, and lip professions of religion, and is execrated by priests and their accomplices on this very account. We do not pretend to understand anything. Every subject whatsoever is too high, too deep, and too broad for us. But coming into a world where men act upon certain modes of reasoning, which are unsatisfactory to our minds, we battle immediately with these men, like an animalcule thrown into a glass of water amongst other animalcules of opposite principles, and in doing so we act from the impulse within which is our sole authority—that impulse within is the preference we give to a mode of reasoning which begins by regarding the existing of every kind and, degree as a 'perfect unity,' and making the unity, responsible for every mode—the cause of every mode.' [49:1] That is to say, dealing with it as what it is, the only existence; the one, or all and in all. Can Atheists object to that? No, surely, for they uniformly thus reason with respect to Nature; and unless traitors to their own principles, cannot object to Pantheistical philosophy *as here laid down*. Atheists say, Nature never had an Author—so do Pantheists of the 'Shepherd' school. Atheists say Nature is at once the womb and grave and cause and effect of all phenomena—so do they. Atheists say 'death is nothing, and nothing death;' all matter breathing the breath of life—so do they. Indeed, notwithstanding their talk about God and Devil, they think Nature both, which amounts to denying both. Can Atheists do more? or can Pantheists do so much without themselves being Atheists?

Page 39

But the Rev. Mr. Smith is no Atheist; at least he makes no profession of Atheism. *Au contraire*, he makes fine sport with those who do. Himself a Pantheist of the all-God school, he took to calling Atheists 'ugly names,' as if quite innocent that no 'thinking mind' can fail to perceive the downright lunacy, or something worse, of supposing a pin to choose on the score of piety, between universal Deity and no Deity at all. The 'Shepherd' of a new philosophic flock should have known better than to attempt the reform of 'vulgar theology' by setting forth the mystical nonsense of 'vulgar' Pantheism. All falsehood is 'vulgar'; but the most 'vulgar' of falsehood is that which assumes the convenient garb of transcendentalism, with a view to throw dust in the eyes of 'vulgar' lookers-on. If Pantheists of this reverend gentleman's school are neither sophists nor simpletons, Materialism is neither true nor false. They do not plainly write down philosophy of so strangely negative a kind; that would be too ridiculous; but every reader of the 'Shepherd' knows that, in their way, they cleverly demonstrate all doctrine—their own of course excepted—true *and* false, which, no one need mount a pair of 'universal' spectacles to see, comes to neither true *nor* false. Spiritualism receives at their hands no better treatment than Materialism, nor Southcottianism than either. Southcottianism (they say) is true and false; Materialism is true and false; Spiritualism is true and false: in brief, all doctrine, positive or negative, faithful or unfaithful, is true and false, except the doctrine of Pantheism alias Universalism, which is, bye and bye, to supersede every other. According to this mystically wise, but rather inconsistent school, Atheists are stupid as Christians, Christians stupid as Mohammedans, and Mohammedans stupid as nearly everybody else. These men are peculiarly fitted to make in the world of intellect the best possible 'arrangements for general confusion.' Atheists in all but good sense, and seemingly without knowing it, they contrive to mix up, with skill worthy of better employment, a very novel and amusing species of philosophical hodge-podge. Their Reverend leader or 'Shepherd' was wont to rail most furiously against dogmatists, especially those of the Atheistic sort; but his own dogmatism is at least a match for theirs. He did more than dogmatize when combatting Materialism, he from ignorance or design, libelled it by putting, according to a custom 'more honoured in the breach than the observance,' words into the mouths of Materialists that no real Materialist could utter. Take an example. In the periodical just referred to and quoted from, [50:1] are these words:—'The mode of (matter's) existence is the only subject in dispute. The Materialist says, it is an infinite collection of dead unintelligent particles of sand; the spiritualist, that it is the visible and tangible development of an infinite, eternal, omnipresent,

Page 40

thinking, sentient mind.’ Now, the truth is, Materialists contend that matter *as a whole* cannot in strictness be considered either dead or living, intelligent or non-intelligent, but simply matter; which matter when in certain well-known states is called dead, and when in other equally well-known states is called living. If where motion is there is life, then there is no dead matter; for all matter, or at least all matter of which we have experience, moves. To charge upon Materialists the dogma of matter’s deadness is a paltry trick which a writer like Mr. Smith should disdain to practice. Nor does it become him to lecture Atheists about their dogmatism, while from his own published writings can be adduced such passages as the following:—

‘We know that the two principal attributes of matter are visibility and tangibility, and these two properties are purely spiritual or immaterial. Thus resistance is nothing but that mysterious power we call repulsion—a power which fills the whole universe—which holds the sun, moon, and stars in its hand, and yet is invisible.’

This is what our Rev. Pantheist calls one of Spiritualism’s ‘splendid arguments,’ and splendidly absurd it certainly is; quite equal, considered as a provocative of mirth, to Robert Owen’s sublimest effusions about that very mysterious and thoroughly incomprehensible power which ‘directs the atom and controuls the aggregate of nature.’ But the argument though ‘splendid,’ is false. Who is ignorant that resistance is *not* a power at all, though we properly enough give the name resistance to one of matter’s phenomena. Only half crazed Spiritualists would confound phenomena with things by which they are exhibited. Matter under certain circumstances resists, and under certain other circumstances attracts. But neither repulsion nor attraction exists, though we see every day of our lives that matter does repel and does attract. Its doing so proves it is able to do so, and proves nothing more. Mr. Smith says, ‘if we want repose for our minds upon this subject we may find it; but it can only be found in the universal mind.’ He does not however explain the co-existence of universal mind with universal matter. He does not tell us how two universals could find room in one universe.

‘We are gravely assured (by spiritualising Pantheists among the rest) that God is something out of time and space; but since our knowledge is intuition comprehended under conception, we cannot have any knowledge of that which is not received into the imaginary recipients of time and space, and consequently God is not an entity.

‘But here comes the jugglery—reason forms the idea of the soul or a substance out of nature, by connecting substance and accident into infinite and absolute substance. What is that verbiage, but that the reason gives the name of soul to something that does not exist at all?’

'Reason forms the idea of God or of Supreme Intelligence out of Nature, by connecting action and reaction into infinite and absolute concurrence. What is God out of Nature? Where is out? Where is God? What is God?—an absolute nothing.'

Page 41

'For an imagination to exist there must be two properties or qualities coming in contact with each other to produce that imagination. For these two properties or qualities to exist there must be matter for them to exist in; and for matter to exist there must be space for it to exist in, and so on. Matter might exist without two different properties to produce an imagination; but neither two properties nor one property can exist without matter for it to exist in. Man may exist for a time as he does when he is dead without an imagination; but the imagination cannot exist without the material man. Matter cannot become non-existent, but the imagination can and does become so. Matter therefore is the reality and the imagination a nonentity, an unsubstantial idea; or an imagination only.' [52:1]

The anonymous writer of the passages here given within inverted commas clearly draws the line of demarcation between the real and the unreal. His remarks on imagination are specially important. Theologians do not seem to be aware that imagination is a modification of mind, and mind itself a modification of sensibility—no sensations—no thought—no life. Though awkwardly expressed, there is truth in the dogma of Gassendi—*ideas are only transformed sensations*. All attempts to conceive sensibility without organs of sense are vain. As profitably might we labour to think of motion where nothing exists to be moved, as sensibility where there is no organ of sense. We often see organs void of sensibility, but who ever saw, or who can imagine sensibility independent of organs? Pantheists and other Divinitarians write about mind as if it were an existence; nay, they claim, for it the first place among existences, according to 'mere matter' the second. The 'Shepherd' plainly tells us mind is a *primary* and matter a *secondary* existence. Having conjured up an Universal Mind God, it was natural he should try to establish the supremacy of mind—but though a skilful logician he will be unable to do so. Experience is against him. On experience of natural operations Materialists base their conclusion that matter without mind is possible, and mind without matter is impossible. It has been proved that even the modification of mind called imagination is indebted for all its images, yea, for its very existence as imagination, to the material world.

D'Alembert states in the Discourse prefixed to the French Encyclopaedia that 'the objects about which our minds are occupied are either spiritual or material, and the media employed for this purpose are our ideas either directly received or derived from reflection'—which reflection he tells us 'is of two kinds, according as it is employed in reasoning on the objects of our direct ideas, or in studying them as models for imitation.' And then he tells us 'the imagination is a creative faculty, and the mind, before it attempts to create, begins by reasoning upon what it sees and knows.' He lauds the metaphysical division of things into Material and Spiritual, appending however to such laudation these remarkable words—'With the Material and Spiritual classes of existence, philosophy is equally conversant; but as for imagination, her imitations are imitations entirely confined to the material world.'

Page 42

Des Cartes, in his second 'Meditation,' says—*Imaginari nihil aliud est quam rei corporeos figuram seu imaginem contemplari*—which sentence indicates that he agreed with D'Alembert as to the exclusive limitation of imagination to things material and sensible.

The same opinion seems to have been held by Locke, who in the concluding chapter of his 'Essay on the Human Understanding,' states as something certain, and therefore beyond dispute, that 'the understanding can only compass, first—the nature of things as they are in themselves, their relations and manner of operation—or secondly, that which man ought to do, as a rational and voluntary agent, for the attainment of any end, especially happiness—or thirdly, the ways and means by which the knowledge of both the one and the other of these is attained and communicated.'

Adam Smith too, in book 5, c. 1, of his 'Wealth of Nations,' assures us the ancient Greek philosophy was divided, into three branches—Physics, Ethics, and Logic; and after praising such general division of philosophy, as being perfectly agreeable to the nature of things, says that, 'as the human, mind and the Deity, in whatever their essence may be supposed to consist, are parts of the great system, of the universe, and parts too, productive of the most important effects, whatever was taught in the ancient schools of Greece concerning their nature, made a part of the system of Physics.'

Dr. Campbell, in his 'Philosophy of Rhetoric,' ventures to assign 'local habitation,' as well as 'name' to spirit itself. Nay, he makes something of Deity, and the Soul; for spirit, says he, which here comprises only the Supreme Being and the human Soul, is surely as much included under the idea of natural object as body is, and is knowable to the philosopher purely in the same way—by observation and experience.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of these opinions—they are eminently worthy of attention. If God is a spirit—and spirit 'is surely as much a natural object as body is'—the idea of something supernatural cannot for one instant be entertained. If God is really no more than a 'part' of the great system of the universe, to immaterialise Him is absurd, inconsistent, and idolatrous. Let it be granted that God is 'part of nature, and a part too, productive of most important effects;' and what Logician will be foolhardy enough to declare Him without body, parts, or passions?

Nor are Locke's *dicta* as to the compass of the understanding easier to be explained away than these of Dr. Campbell and Adam Smith. If we cannot know more than 'the nature of things as they are in themselves,' their relations, manner of operation, &c. only ignorant or cunning men will pretend acquaintance with the supernatural. That nothing natural can possibly conceive what is above nature is indeed so palpably true as to deserve a place among philosophical axioms. Imagination

Page 43

itself, however lofty, wild, or daring its flights, cannot quit the universe—matter is its prison, where, like Sterne's starling, it is 'caged and can't get out.' Fortunately, however, imagination, though a prisoner, has abundance of room to legitimately exercise itself in. But, is it not obvious that if, as Des Cartes and D'Alembert contended, the 'imitations of imagination are imitations entirely confined to the material world,' all conceits about a Supernatural somebody, or Supernatural somebodies, are necessarily false, because of purely natural origin, and should be viewed as at best 'mere cobwebs of learning, admirable indeed, for the fineness of the thread and work, but of no substance or profit.' [54:1]

It is unfortunate for Theologians that the fundamental principle of their 'science' either cannot be comprehended, or, if comprehended, cannot be reconciled with any known principle of nature. 'God is,' they pompously declare; but what He is they are unable to tell us, without contradicting themselves and each other. Some say God must be material; some say, nay, He must be no such thing; some will have Him spiritual, others immaterial, others again neither spiritual nor material, nor immaterial, nor even conceivable. Some say, if a Spirit, He can only be known by His place and figure; some not. Some call Him the author of Sin, some the permitter of sin, while some are sure He could not consistently, with his own perfections, either authorize sin or grant to sinners a permit. Some say He made the Devil, others that the Most Low bedevil'd himself; others that He created Him angelic and upright, but could not keep him so. Some say He hardens men's hearts, others that they harden their own hearts; others again, that to harden men's hearts is the Devil's peculiar and exclusive privilege. Some say He has prepared a Hell for all wicked people, others that Hell will receive many good as well as tricked, while others cannot believe either the just or the unjust, the faithful or the unfaithful, will be consigned to perdition and made to endure torments unutterable by a God 'whose tender mercies are over all his works.' Some affirm His omnipotency, some deny it; some say He is no respecter of persons, some the reverse. Some say He is Immensity, others that He fills Immensity; others that He don't fill anything, though 'the Heaven, of Heavens cannot contain Him;' others again, that He neither contains nor is contained, but 'dwells on his own thoughts.' Some say He created matter out of nothing; some say it is quite a mistake—inasmuch as creation meant bringing order out of chaos. Some say He is not one person, but three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which together constitute Godhead; others that He is 'one and indivisible,' while others believe Him 'our father which art in heaven,' but will have nothing to do with the Son and the Holy Ghost, Unitarians, for example, one of whose popular preachers in the town of Manchester, was about twelve months ago charged with having in the course of a single sermon 'killed, two Gods, one Devil, and slacked out Hell Fire.'

Page 44

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 mutua passione*) God feels nothing from the movements of bodies; nor do they experience any resistance from his universal presence. [56:1]

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!

The proper function of 'Supernaturality or Wonder,' according to Phrenologists, is to create a belief in the reality of supernatural beings, and begets fondness for news, particularly if extravagant. Most likely then, such readers of our Apology 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.

Page 45

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 tenanted 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 large 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 same 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 of God is relative, and relates 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 speak or write of their God, should seriously consider whether the worst, that is, the least religious of infidel writers, ever penned a paragraph so disparaging to the character of that God they affect to adore, as the last quoted paragraph of Newton's. 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 attributes? 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 a shocking abuse of our reasoning faculties to employ them at all about a Being whose existence, if it 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 incontestable 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*.

Page 46

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 about God.

There is, however, one remark of his respecting the God he thought necessarily existed, worthy of notice, which is, that 'human beings revere and adore Gad on account of his (supposed) sovereignty, and worship him like his slaves;' for to all *but* worshippers, the practice as well as principle of worship does appear pre-eminently slavish. Indeed, the Author has always found himself unable to dissociate the idea of worshipping beings or things of which no one has the most remote conception, from that of genuine hypocrisy. Christians despise the rude Heathen for praying to a Deity of wood or stone, whom he soundly cudgels if his prayer is not granted; and yet their own treatment of Jehovah, though rather more respectful, is equally ridiculous. When praying, they lay aside truth, sincerity, and sanity. Their language is the language of fawning, lying, imbecile, cowardly slaves. Intending to exalt, they debase the imaginary object of their adoration. They presume Him to be unstable as themselves, and no less greedy of adulation than Themistocles the Athenian, who, when presiding at certain games of his countrymen, was asked which voice pleased him best? '*That,*' replied he, '*which sings my praises.*' They love to enlarge on 'the moral efficacy of prayer,' and would have us think their 'omnipotent tyrant' best pleased with such of his 'own image' as best 'sing his praises.' Of their 'living God' they make an amplified Themistocles, and thus reduce (conscientiously, no doubt,) the Creator to a level with His creature.

The author is without God; but did he believe there is one, still would he scorn to *affect* for Him a love and a reverence that nothing natural can feel for the supernatural; still would he scorn to *carry favour* with Deity by hypocritical and most fulsome adulation.

Finely did Eschylus say of Aristides—

To be and not to seem is this man's maxim;
His mind reposes on its proper wisdom,
And wants no other praise.

Tell us, ye men of mystery, shall a God need praises beneath the dignity of a man? Shall the Creator of Nature act less worthily than one of his creatures? To do God homage, we are quite aware, is reckoned by Christians among their highest duties. But, nevertheless, it seems to us impossible that any one can love an existence or creature of which he never had any experience. Love is a feeling generated in the human breast, by certain objects that strike the sense—and in no other conceivable way can love be generated!

Page 47

But God, according to Newton, is neither an *object* nor a *subject*, and though, all eyes, all ears, all brains, all arms, all feeling, all intelligence, and all action, he is *totally unknown to us*. If Christians allow this to be a true description of the God they worship, we wish to understand how they can love Him so vehemently as they affect to do—or how they can pay any other than *lip* homage to so mysterious a Deity? It is usual for slaves to feign an affection for their masters that they do not, cannot feel—but that believers in a God should imagine that he who 'searcheth all hearts,' can be ignorant of what is passing in theirs, or make the tremendous mistake of supposing that their *lip homage*, or interested expressions of love, are not *properly* appreciated by the Most High God, and 'Universal Emperor,' is indeed very strange. To overreach or deceive a God who created the heavens and the earth, is altogether beyond the power of puny mortals. Let not therefore those who bend the knee, while the heart is unbent, and raise the voice of thankful devotion, while all within is frost and barrenness, fancy they have stolen a march upon their Deity; for surely *if* the lord liveth, he judgeth rightly of these things. But it were vain to expect that those who think God is related to his creatures as a despot is related to his slaves, will hope to please that God by aught save paltry, cringing, and dishonestly despicable practices. Yet, no other than a despotic God has the great Newton taught us to adore—no other than mere slaves of such a God, has he taught us to deem ourselves. 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.'

These are the leading dogmas 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 of them.

Page 48

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 Clarke 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 immoveable, 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 external; but an independent Being can have no relations, and consequently must act without motives. Now, as no 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.

The third dogma may be rated a truism—it being evidently true that a thing or Being, which has existed from eternity without any external 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.

Page 49

The fourth dogma is not questioned by Atheists, 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 repetitions or expansions 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 an Atheist—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 so 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 tells 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 a 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.

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 about who talk as familiarly about the extinction of a universe as the chemist does of extinguishing the flame of his spirit-lamp.

Page 50

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 religious 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. If they did, Atheism would need no apologist, and Theism have no defenders; for Theism, in all its varieties, presupposes a supernatural Causer of what experience pronounces natural effects.

The Author is aware that 'Natural Theologians' seek to justify their rebellion against the rules of philosophising, to which the reader's attention has been specially directed, by appealing to (what they call) evidences of design in the universal fabric. But though they think so highly of the design argument, it is not the less true that that argument rests on mere assumption of a disputed fact; that even though it were proved the universe was designed, still whether designed by one God, two Gods, or two million of Gods, would be unshown; and that Paley, 'the most famous of natural Theologians'— Paley, who wrote as never man wrote before on the design question, has been satisfactorily refuted *in his own words*. [63:1]

A distinguished modern Fabulist [63:2] 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 we 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 assumptions, and to Deify errors on no other authority than their own heated imaginations, 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 51

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 assumptions 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 materials at all. Unassisted nature cannot produce the phenomena we behold, therefore such phenomena clearly prove there is something supernatural. Not to believe in a God who designed Nature, is to close both ears and eyes against evidence, therefore Atheists are wilfully deaf and obstinately blind.

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

Design, said Shelley, must be proved before a designer can be inferred—the matter in controversy, is the existence of design in the universe, and it is not permitted to assume the contested premises and thence infer the matter in dispute. Insidiously to employ the words contrivance, design and adaptation, before these circumstances are apparent in the universe, thence justly inferring a contriver, is a popular sophism against which it behoves us to be watchful.

To assert that motion is an attribute of mind, that matter is inert, that every combination is the result of intelligence, is also an assumption of the matter in dispute.

Why do we admit design in any machine of human contrivance? simply because innumerable instances of machines having been constructed by human art are present to our mind—because we are acquainted with persons who could construct such machines; but if having no previous knowledge of any artificial contrivance, we had accidentally found a watch upon the ground, we should have been justified in concluding that it was a thing of nature, that it was a combination of matter with whose cause we were unacquainted, and that any attempt to account for the origin of its existence would be equally presumptuous and unsatisfactory. [64:1]

The acuteness and, accuracy of this reasoning can only be disputed by persons wedded to system, who either lack capacity to understand what is advanced in opposition to it, or,

Being convinced against their will,
Are of the same opinion still.

Page 52

Experience, the only safe guide on religious as well as other topics, lends no sanction to belief in design apart from material agency. By artfully taking for granted what no Atheist 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 Atheists *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—Atheists are unable to perceive the least resemblance between the circumstance of one intelligent body reforming or 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. Atheists 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 was recently passing an evening with some pleasant people in Ashton-under-Lyne, one of whom related that before the schoolmaster had 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 or ether formidable weapons, crept up to the ill-starred ticker, and smashed it to pieces.

Page 53

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. Admirably is it said in the unpublished work before referred to, that the analogy which theologians attempt to establish between the contrivances of human art and the various existences of the universe is inadmissable. We attribute these effects to human intelligence, because we know beforehand that human intelligence is capable of producing them. Take away this knowledge, and the grounds of our reasoning will be destroyed. Our entire ignorance therefore of the Divine Nature leaves this analogy defective in its most essential point of comparison.

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. This fact was specially testified to by Priestley, who acknowledged the primary truths of Materialism though averse to the legitimate consequences flowing from their recognition.

According to this argument, then, 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 Atheist, 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 Atheist 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.

Page 54

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, like immortal Gibbs, 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 of this Apology 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,' [68:1] where effect is defined as cause realised, the *natura naturans* conceived as *natura naturata*; and cause or causation is defined as simply change. When, says Mr. Lewis, the change is completed, we name the result effect. It is only a matter of naming.

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." Now, to reconcile with this theory of causation, the notion of an

Eternal, mighty, causeless God,

may be possible, but the Author of this Apology cannot persuade himself that it is. His poor faculties are unequal to the mighty task of conceiving the amazing Deity in question, whom Sir Richard Blackmore, in his Ode to Jehovah, describes as sitting on an 'eternal throne'—

Page 55

Above the regions of etherial space,
And far extended frontier of the skies;
Beyond the outlines of wide nature's face,
Where void, not yet enclosed, uncultivated lies;
Completely filling every place
And far outstretching all imaginary space.

Still less has he the right to pretend acquaintance with a process of reasoning by which such

Eternal, mighty, causeless God

can be believed in consistently with the conviction that cause is effect realised, and means only CHANGE.

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.' [69:1] 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, eternity, 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*. [69:2] 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 we must trust solely to revelation.' [69:3] 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

Page 56

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 all the contempt it merits. 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, Atheists agree with Lord Brougham as to the traditionary basis of Scripture; and as they also agree with Chalmers and Watson with respect to their 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. [70:1] 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 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 fall 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.

Page 57

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 of this Apology 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. Those 'brutes' have completely succeeded in proving that Christianity is a superstition, no less absurd than Mohammedanism, and to the full as mischievous. To us, we candidly avow that its doctrines, precepts, and injunctions appear so utterly opposed to good sense, and good government, that we are persuaded even if it were practicable to establish a commonwealth in harmony with them at sun-rise it would infallibly go to pieces before sunset. The author has read that Roman augurs rarely met to do the professional without laughing at each other, and he is bothered to understand how Christian priests contrive to keep their countenances, amid the many strong temptations to mirth, by which, in their official capacity they are surrounded. No doubt very many of them laugh immoderately in private, by way of revenge for the gravity they are constrained to assume in public. It is well known that hypocrites are most prone to an affectation of sanctity; which marvellously steads them in this world, happen what may in the world to come. Nine-tenths of those who make a parade of their piety, are rotten at heart, as that Cardinal de Crema, Legate of Pope Calixtus 2nd, in the reign of Henry 1st, who declared at a London Synod, it was an intolerable enormity, that a priest should dare to consecrate, and touch the body of Christ immediately after he had risen from the side of a strumpet, (for that was the decent appellation he gave to the wives of the clergy), but it happened, that the very next night, the officers of justice, breaking into a disorderly house, found the Cardinal in bed with a courtesan; an incident, says Hume, [72:1] "which threw such ridicule upon him, that he immediately stole out of the kingdom; the synod broke up, and the canons against the marriage of its clergymen, were worse executed than ever."

Page 58

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 Kiddor 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.'

No unprejudiced thinker who is familiar with the history of religion will deny, that of all priests in this priest-ridden world Christian priests are the worst. Though less potent they are not much less proud or ambitious than when Pope Pascal II. told King Henry I. that all ecclesiastics must enter into the church through Christ and Christ alone, not through the civil magistrate or any profane laymen. Nor are they less jealous of such as would fain reduce the dimensions of their 'spiritual jurisdiction,' than when that haughty Pope reminded his king that 'priests are called God in Scripture as being the vicars of God;' while in consideration for the poor and the oppressed, modern priests are disadvantageously distinguished, from those 'vicars of God,' who trod upon the necks of emperors and kings, made or unmade laws at pleasure, and kept Europe, intellectual Europe, in unreasoning, unresisting subjection. The reader who agrees with Milton that

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

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

Page 59

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.'

This is the system and this the schoolmastership expressly sanctioned by the Bishops of London and Chester. In piety nevertheless these 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 stone 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. Verily, if these and men like these do not grind the faces of the poor, the Author of this Apology is unable to conceive in what that peculiar process consists.

Page 60

In Scripture we are told, the bread of the poor is his life, and they who defraud him thereof are men of blood; and by whom are the poor defrauded of their bread if not by those who, like the Bishops of London and Chester, legislate for poverty as if it were a crime, and lend theft sanction to a system which, while it necessitates the wholesale pinching and screwing even in the commonest necessities of life 'of independent labourers,' does also necessitate the wholesale starvation of still more wretched paupers? Formerly our 'surplus populations' were 'killed off' by bullet and sabre, now they are got rid of in Poor Law Unions by a process less expensive perhaps, but not less effectual.

Did Atheists 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 trees by their fruit, except the tree called Christianity. Their great 'prophet' argued that if the tree is good the fruit will be good; but when their own religion is in question they give such argument the slip. The vices of the Atheist 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 Christians. 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.

It has been computed that the Spaniards in America destroyed in about forty-five years ten millions of human creatures, and this with a view of converting them to Christianity. Bartholomew Casa, who made this computation, affirms that they (the Spaniards) hanged those unhappy people *thirteen in a row*, in honour of the *thirteen Apostles*, and that they also gave their infants to be devoured by dogs. [75:1]

Corsini, another religious author, tells us the Spaniards destroyed more than fifteen millions of American aborigines, and calculates that the blood of these devoted victims, added to that of the slaves destroyed in the mines, where they were compelled to labour, would weigh as much as all the gold and silver that had been dug out of them.

If these or similar horrors were perpetrated by Atheists, who can doubt that Roman Catholics would at once ascribe them to the pestiferous influence of Atheistical principles. And the Author of this Apology is of opinion that they would be justified in so doing. When whole nations of professed irreligionists shall be found conquering a country, and hanging the aborigines of that country thirteen in a row, in honour of some thirteen apostles of Atheism, their barbarity may fairly be ascribed to their creed. Habit does much, and perhaps much of our virtue, or its opposite is

Page 61

contingent on temperament; but no people entertaining correct speculative opinions could possibly act, or tolerate, atrocities like these. But strange to say, neither Roman Catholic, nor any other denomination of Christians, will submit to be tried to the same standard they deem so just when applied to Atheists. Now sauce for the goose every body knows is equally sauce for the gander, and it is difficult to discover the consistency or the honesty of men, who trace to their creed the crimes or merest peccadilloes of Atheists, and will not trace to their creed the shocking barbarity of Christians. To understand such men is easy; to admire them is impossible; for their conduct in this particular palpably shocks every principle of truth and fairness. Why impute to Atheism the vices or follies of its Apostles, while refusing to admit that the vices or follies of Christians should be imputed to Christianity. Of both folly and vice it is notorious professing Christians have 'the lion's share.' Yet the apologists of Christianity, who would fain have us believe the lives of Atheists a consequence of Atheism, will by no means believe that the lives of Christians are a consequence of Christianity.

Let no one suppose the Author of this Apology is prepared to allow that Atheists are men of cruel dispositions or vicious. He will not say with Coleridge that only men of good hearts and strong heads can be Atheists, but he is quite ready to maintain that the generality of Atheists are men of mild, generous, peaceable studious dispositions, who desire the overthrow of superstition, or true religion as its devotees call it, because convinced a superstitious people never can be enlightened, virtuous, free, or happy. Their love of whatever helps on civilisation and disgust of war are testified to even by opponents. We may learn from the writings of Lord Bacon not only his *opinion* that Atheism leaves men to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation, all which, he justly observes, may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but the *fact* that 'the times inclined to Atheism (as the times of Augustus Caesar) were civil times.' Nay, he expressly declared 'Atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves as looking no further.' [76:1] Can the same be said of religion? Will any one have the hardihood to say religion did never perturb states, or that the times inclined to religion (as the times of Oliver Cromwell) were civil times, or that it makes man wary of themselves as looking no further? During times inclined to religion more than one hundred thousand witches were condemned to die by Christian tribunals in accordance with the holy text, thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. During times inclined to religion it was usual to burn, broil, bake, or otherwise murder heretics for the glory of God, and at the same time to spare the vilest malefactors. During times inclined to religion, it has been computed

Page 62

that in Spain alone no less than 32,382 people were, by the faithful, burnt alive; 17,690 degraded and burnt in effigy; and all the goods and chattels of the enormous number of 291,450 consigned to the chancery of the Inquisition. [77:1] In short, during those 'good old times,' men yielded themselves up to practices so strangely compounded of cruelty and absurdity, that one finds it difficult to believe accounts of them, however well authenticated.

Speaking of the bigotted fury of certain ecclesiastics, Hippolyto Joseph de Costa, in his 'Narrative of the persecution' he suffered while lodged gratis by the Portuguese Inquisition for the pretended crime of Free Masonry, says, it would exceed the bounds of credulity, had not facts in corroboration of it been so established by witnesses, that nothing can shake them. Among ecclesiastics of this denomination we may mention that Pontiff, who, from a vile principle of hate for his predecessor, to whom he had been an enemy, as soon as he ascended the Papal chair directed the corpse to be taken out from the grave, had the fingers and the head cut off and thrown into the sea, ordered the remainder of the body to be burnt to ashes and excommunicated the soul. Could revenge be carried farther than in this instance? The institution itself of the inquisition and the cruelty with which its members persecute those whom they suspect of tenets different from their own, may well excite surprise. In their eyes the tortures and the death of their fancied enemies are a mere amusement. They burn some of their prisoners alive, render their memories infamous, and prosecute their children and all the connections of these unhappy sufferers; they deprive orphans of the inheritance of their parents, dishonour families in every possible shape, and at length have recourse to the auto da fe, [77:2] on which occasion, while the miserable wretches are lingering in torments, the members of the inquisition not only feast their eyes with this Infernal spectacle, but regale themselves with their friends at the expense of their unhappy victims. Such are the practises of the Inquisition.

When those Spanish Christians who amused themselves by hanging poor wretches, thirteen in a row, in honour of the thirteen apostles, were taunted with cruelty, they boldly affirmed that as God had not redeemed with his blood the souls of the Indians, no difference should be made between them and the lowest of beasts. In Irvings history of New York is a letter written, we are told, by a Spanish priest, to his superior in Spain, which, 'among other curiosities, contain this question—'Can any one have the presumption to say these savage pagans have yielded anything more than an inconsiderable recompense to their benefactors, in surrendering to them a little pitiful tract of this dirty sublunary planet in exchange for a glorious inheritance hereafter.'

Page 63

Such is the conceit as well as cruelty of men who imagine themselves the vicegerents and avengers of Deity. In His name they burn, and slay, and rob without compunction or remorse; nay, when like Sir Giles Overreach, their ears are pierced by widows cries, and undone orphans wash with tears their thresholds, they only think what 'tis to make themselves acceptable in the sight of God. Believing pious ends justify any means, they glory in conduct the most repugnant to every principle of decency, equity, and humanity.

In the cathedral of Saragossa, is a magnificent tomb, raised, in honor of a famous inquisitor; around it are six pillars, to each of which is chained a Moor preparatory to his being burnt. And if additional evidence were needed of human folly, and stupid disposition, like dray horses to go perpetually, on 'one's nose in t'others tail,' we have it in the astounding fact, that when the Spanish Cortes proposed the abolition of the Inquisition, the populace of Spain considered such proposal, 'an infringement of their liberties.' [78:1] We have it on respectable authority, that Torquemada in the space of fourteen years that he wielded the chief inquisitorial powers, robbed, or otherwise persecuted eighty thousand persons, of whom about six thousand were committed to the flames.

Inquisitors made no secret of their hatred towards heretics; to destroy them they considered a sacred duty. Far from ashamed of their cruelty towards heretics, they gloried in it, as undeniable evidence of their enthusiasm in the cause of Christ. Simoncas, one of their most esteemed writers, said, 'the heretics deserve not merely one death, but many deaths; because a single death is the punishment of an ordinary heretic; but these (the heretics) are deserving of punishment without mercy, and particularly the teachers of the Lutheran heresy, who must by no means be spared.' Pegma, another of their writers, insists, that dogmatical heretics should be punished with death, even though they gave the most unequivocal proof of their repentance.

That eminently pious monarch, Phillip the Second of Spain, so loved to hear heretics groan, that he rarely missed Auto da Fes; at one of which several distinguished persons were to be burnt for heresy; among the rest Don John de Cesa, who while passing by him, said, 'Sire, how can you permit so many unfortunate persons to suffer? How can you be witness of so horrid a sight without shuddering?' Phillip coolly replied, 'If my son, sir, were suspected of heresy, I should myself hand him over to the Inquisition.' 'My detestation,' continued he, 'of you and your companions is so great, that I would act myself as your executioner, if no other could be found.'

Page 64

Phillip the Fifth, as may be seen in Coxe's Memoirs of the Kings of Spain, 'presented about the year 1172, three standards taken from 'infidels' to our lady of Atocha; and sent another to the Pope, as the grateful homage of the Catholic King to the head of the Church. He also, for the first time, attended the celebration of an Auto da Fe, at which in the commencement of his reign he had refused with horror to appear, and witnessed the barbarous ceremony of committing twelve Jews and Mohammedans to the flames.' So great during times inclined to religion was inquisitorial power, that monarchs and statesmen of liberal tendencies were constrained to quail before it. It is related that a Jewish girl, entered into her seventeenth year, extremely beautiful, who in a public *act of faith*, at Madrid, June 30th, 1680, together with twenty others of the same nation of both sexes, being condemned to the stake, turned herself to the Queen of Spain, then present, and prayed, that out of her goodness and clemency she might be delivered from the dreadful punishment of the fire. 'Great Queen,' said she, 'is not your presence able to bring me some comfort under my misery? Consider my youth, and that I am condemned for a religion which I have sucked in with my mother's milk.' The Queen turned away her eyes, declaring, she pitied the miserable creature, but did not dare to intercede for her with a single word.

Not only have Roman Catholic writers defended these inquisitorial abominations, but, with what every Protestant must needs consider daring and blasphemous impiety, laboured to prove that the first Inquisitor was God himself. Luis de Paramo, for instance, in his book 'De Origine et Progressu Officii Sanctoe Inquisitionis, ejusque dignitate et utilitate,' proves God to be the first Inquisitor, and that in the Garden of Eden was the first auto da fe.

Nor do these most pious casuists discover anything in Scripture which forbids the burning of heretics, notwithstanding such texts as 'Whosoever sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed,' which they contend inquisitors do never violate the true meaning or spirit of, it being evident that to burn men is not to shed their blood—thus eluding the maxim *Ecclesia non novit sanguinem*. And if their right to burn heretics was questioned they triumphantly cited the text (as given in the 'Beehive' of the Romish Church) 'Whosoever doth not abide in me, shall be cast out of the vineyard as a branch and there wither; and men gather those branches and cast them into the fire and burn them.'

On this text John Andreas, Panormitamis, Hostraensii, Bernardus Leizenburgen, and others of the Roman Catholic casuists built up their proof that heretics, like grape branches, should be cast into the fire and burnt.

Page 65

The execrable duplicity of these men is by Protestant priests made the theme of unsparing invective, as if the burning of heretics and its justification by Scripture were crimes peculiar to Roman Catholics, when in point of fact both have been shamelessly committed by Christians rejoicing in the name of Protestants. John Calvin burnt Servetus, and Robert Hall, as we have seen, applauded the act. England, to say nothing of other countries, has had its auto da fe, as well since as before the Reformation. Heretics were first made bonfires of in England during the reign of Henry the Fourth, who permitted the abomination in order to please certain bishops he was under obligation to for assisting him to depose Richard the Second and usurp his throne. But that the practice of committing heretics to the flame prevailed in England long after Popery ceased to be the dominant religion is notorious. If heretics were thus sacrificed by Henry the Fourth to please Popish Bishops, they were also sacrificed by Elizabeth with a view to the satisfaction of Protestant Bishops. Cranmer literally compelled her brother, the amiable Edward, to send a half crazed woman named Joan Boacher to the stake. Elizabeth herself caused two Dutch Anabaptists to be burnt in Smithfield, though it is but just to admit that, unlike her sullen sister, she preferred rather to hang than to burn heretics. Lord Brougham has recently done mankind another valuable piece of service by painting the portrait of that Protestant princess in colours at once so lively and faithful that none, save the lovers of vulgar fanaticism and murderous hypocrisy, will gaze on it without horror. [81:1]

'Mary, honoured with the title of "bloody," appears to me a far more estimable character than her ripping-up sister Elizabeth, who, when Mary, on her death-bed, asked her for a real avowal of her religion, "prayed God" that the earth might open and swallow her up if she was not a true Roman Catholic.' She made the same declaration to the Duke of Ferria, the Spanish Ambassador, who was so deceived that he wrote to Philip, stating no change in religious matters would take place on her accession, and soon afterwards began ripping up the bellies of Catholics. That was quite the fashionable punishment in this and the succeeding reign. I have the account, with names, dates, and reference of no less than 101 more Catholics who were burnt, hung, ripped up, &c., by Elizabeth, and on to Charles the Second's end, than there were Protestants in Mary's, and all the reigns which preceded her, letting lying Fox count all he has got. Elizabeth, too, was by law a bastard, and is to this day; and so soon did her intentions appear of changing the religion, that all the bishops but one refused to crown her; and when this was done, it was by the Catholic ritual. However the Act-of-Parliament religion was set up again; the prayer book of Cranmer was set up again, after sundry alterations: it was altered too, in Edward's reign, yet when

Page 66

first made, it was duly declared to come from the 'Holy Ghost;' so it was after its second polishing under Elizabeth. To refuse the Queen's supremacy was death; it was death to continue in that religion, which, at her coronation she had sworn to firmly believe and defend. It was high treason to admit or harbour, or relieve a priest, and hosts of these were ripped up, for, in the piety of their hearts, risking all to afford the consolations of their religion to the Catholics of England. Victim after victim came to the sacrifice, mostly from the college of Douay. It is really horrible to read of these good and faithful champions of their religion being hung, cut down instantaneously, their bellies ripped up, their hearts cut out, their bodies chopped in pieces with every insult and indignity added to injury, all through this reign, and then to be talked to about 'bloody Mary,' and the 'Good Queen-Bess.' Verily, countrymen, you are vilely deceived. Taking into account the rippings, and burnings, and roastings, and hanging; the racks, whips, fines, imprisonments, and other horrors of the reign of this 'Good Bess,' there was a hundred times more human misery inflicted in her reign than in that of 'Bloody Mary.' [82:1]

The second Catherine of Russia, though remarkable for rigid and scrupulous adherence to the ceremonial mummeries of her 'true church,' was at the same time as remarkable for liberality of sentiment. It is said, that upon a certain occasion, being strongly advised by her ministers to deal out severe punishment on some heretics of Atheistical tendencies, who had given offence by rather freely expressing their opinions, she laughingly said, 'Oh, fie, gentlemen fie, if these heretics are to be eternally miserable in the other world, we really ought to let them be comfortable in this.'

Few religious persons are liberal as this empress, whose strong good sense seems to have been fully a match for her bad education: that education was Christian. She was taught to loathe the opinions, aye, and the persons, of heretics, under which denomination may be included all dissenters from religious truth as it was in her, or rather in the church of which she was chief member. No other kind of teaching is accounted orthodox in our 'land of Bibles' than that of state paid priests of law established religion. Look at the true Church of England's Thirty-Nine Articles. Do they not abound in anathema, and literally teem with the venom of intolerance? Do they not shock the better feelings even of those who believe them divine? The truth is, all priests teach religion which no wit can reconcile with reason, and very many of them make their followers believe, and perhaps believe themselves, that to villify, abuse, and hunt down 'infidels,' are acts acceptable in the sight of God. The idea of compensating poor unbelievers in this world by an extra quantum of comfort for the torments they are doomed to suffer in the next, never enters their head. Indeed,

Page 67

not a few of them gloat with satisfaction over the prospect of 'infidels' gnashing their teeth in that fiery gulph prepared for the devil and his angels. By this odious class of fanatics neither the worm that dieth not, nor the flame never to be extinguished, is deemed sufficient punishment for the wretch whose thoughts concerning religion are not as their thoughts. By them the imagined 'Creator of the Heavens and the earth' is dressed, up in attributes the most frightful. Witness the character of Him implied in the conceit of that popular preacher who declared 'there are children in hell not a span long'—a declaration which could only be made by one whose humanity was extinguished by divinity.

Our pulpits can furnish many such preachers of 'a religion of charity,' while a whole army of Christian warriors might be gathered from metropolitan pulpits alone, who deeming it impious to say their God of mercy would permit the burning of infants not a span long, do nevertheless, firmly believe that 'children of a larger growth' may justly be tormented by the great king of kings; and as *ignorantia legis non excusat* is a maxim of *human law*, so, according to them, ignorance of *divine law* is no excuse whatever, either for breaking or disregarding it.

The Author of this Apology was recently in Scotland, where a vast number of religious tracts were put into his hand, one of which contains the following among other striking paragraphs:—

'Man could, not *create* himself, and far less can he save himself. When God made him, he brought him out of nothing; when God. saves him, he brings him out of a state far lower and worse than nothing. If in the one case, then, everything depended, upon God's will and decree, much more in the other. There can be no injustice here. Had God pleased, He might have saved the whole world. But he did not; and thousands are now in hell, and shall be to all eternity.'

'Hell is peopled already with millions of immortal souls doomed to fiery wrath; while Heaven is filled with ransomed sinners as vile, yea perhaps viler than they.' [83:1]

If the writer of this horrid nonsense do not blaspheme, there surely can be no possibility of blaspheming. If he do not impute to his God of mercy cruelty and injustice the most monstrous that can enter into human conception, all language is void of meaning, and men had far better cease 'civilising,' and betake themselves to woods and wilds and fastnesses, to enjoy the state of mere brutishness so infinitely preferable to that *reasonable* state in which they are shaken and maddened by terrible dreams of a vengeful cruel God.

Better be with the dead
Than on the tortures of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy.

Better, far better, roam the desert or the forest like any other brutes, than educate ourselves and others into the monstrous belief in a God who might have saved the world and would not; who predestinates to endless and unutterable agonies; who has with the one hand peopled Hell with millions of immortal creatures, while with the other has filled Heaven with millions of ransomed sinners, as vile, yea perhaps viler than they.

Page 68

In justice however to the large class of Christians under the despotic and truly lamentable influence of this belief, the Author is bound to admit that they are far more consistent and logical in their notions of Deity than perhaps any other section of Theists, for it cannot properly be denied that the doctrine of an Omnipotent and Prescient God destroys all distinction of virtue and vice, justice and injustice, right and wrong, among men. Let the omnipotency and prescience of a First Cause be granted, the corollary of 'whatever is, is right,' is one of the most obvious that can flow from any proposition: the distance of any link in the eternal sequence cannot lessen the connection with a First Cause, admitting its Omnipotency and Prescience.

The author of these detestable paragraphs admits both. He is a rigid Predestinarian, which no one can be who doubts the all powerfulness or foreknowledge of that God whom Christians worship. Taking Scripture as his guide, the Predestinarian must needs believe some are foredoomed to Hell, and some to Hell, irrespective of all merit; it being manifestly absurd to suppose one man can deserve more or less than another, in a world, where all are compelled to believe, feel, and act, as they do believe, feel, and act. The disgrace attached to the memory of Judas, supposing him really to have betrayed his Divine Master, has no foundation in human justice, for 'surely as the Lord liveth,' he was foredoomed, and therefore compelled to betray him. Luther saw that truth, and had the good sense to avow it. No more rational or just are the denunciations of Judas than those so unsparingly heaped upon the Jews for crucifying the Redeemer of the world, when every body must, or at least, should know, that admitting the world's redemption depended upon the Crucifixion of Christ, if the Jews had *not* crucified him the world could not have been redeemed. So far then from blackguarding Judas and the Jews for doing, what in the Gospel they are represented to have done, we should consider them rather as martyrs in the cause of Divine Providence than as villains worthy only of abhorrence and execration. To the Author of this Apology it seems certain that if there is a God, such as the Christian delighteth to honour, nothing happens, nothing has happened, nothing can happen contrary to His will. And is it not absurd to say that what He pre-ordains mere mortals can hinder coming to pass? Even the Devil, believed in by Christians, is a creature—how then could he be anything else than the Creator thought fit to make him? Grant he is the Father of Lies, and then he will appear worthy of compassion, if you reflect that he was made so by the Father of Truth. In the Tract to which such special reference has been made, it is contended that Adam was made not because he chose to be made, but because God chose to make him, and surely the same may be contended on the part of Judas, the Jews, and last, though, assuredly, not

Page 69

least, the Devil himself. He who is without God cannot run into absurdities and blasphemies like these, whereas he who is with one cannot keep clear of them. If consistent he must clothe Him with Calvinistic attributes. To present Him stripped of foreknowledge, or omnipotency would outrage all just conception of that 'Immense Being' who brought his worshippers out of nothing. And yet if we allow him these attributes there is no help for us, headlong we go into the dark and fathomless doctrine of predestination, than which no religious doctrine is so consistent or so revolting. Receive it, and at once you find yourself bound heart and brain to belief in a supernatural MONSTER—'a vengeful, pitiless, and Almighty Fiend, whose mercies are a nickname for the rage of hungry tigers.'

The believers in this terrible offspring of heated imagination, naturally aim at imitating, and thus rendering themselves acceptable, to Him. Here is the source, whence for ages have flowed the bitter waters of religious intolerance. If Calvin had not worshipped a cruel God, he never could have hoped to please Him by the murder of Servetius. If Cranmer had wanted lively faith in a God who people's Hell 'with millions of immortal souls,' he never would have brought Joan Bocher to the stake. Full of that Christian zeal, so 'apt to tarn sour,' these men lived like the hermit Honorius, 'in hopes of gaining heaven by making earth a hell.'

The savage bigotry of an Elizabeth or a Mary, naturally resulted from the notion that monarchs unquestionably ruling by Divine right, were called upon by every earthly, as well as heavenly consideration, to prove their zeal in the cause of God, by destroying His adversaries. Heretics have been consigned to dungeon and to name, for His glory, and His satisfaction. All inquisitors from St. Dominic downward, have indignantly repelled the charge that they have punished heretics just to glut their own appetite for cruelty. Worshippers of a God who saith, 'vengeance is mine,' they have felt themselves mere instruments in His hands; of themselves, and for themselves, they did nothing; all was for God. To please Him, the Jew and the Heretic shrieked amid the flames. They are not ashamed, why should they? to perform His behests. When the late Duke of York was about to leave Lisbon, its Inquisitor-General waited upon him, with a humble request that he would delay his departure for a few days, in order to make one at an Auto da Fe, where it was kindly promised, some Jews should be burnt for his diversion: so cruel and so blind are the superstitious.

Queen Mary has long been the mark at which our most eloquent Protestant Divines have aimed their shafts, while of her no less 'bloody' sister's reputation, they have been most watchful and tender. With respect to *her* persecution of heretics, they preserve a death-like silence. Fear of damaging Protestantism deters them from exposing the enormous abomination of Protestant monarchs. Against the

Page 70

bigotry of Catholics they hurl the fiercest denunciations; but if called upon to denounce as fiercely the bigotry of Protestants, they make us understand 'the case being altered, that alters the case.' A Popish Inquisition they abhor, but see no evil in Inquisitions of their own. Smithfield Auto da Fe's, according to these consistent Christians, were wrong during the reign of Mary, and right during the reign of her pious sister, 'Good Queen Bess.' Such is the justice of superstition. Its votaries knowing themselves the favoured of heaven, feel privileged to outrage and trample under foot the great principles of sense, propriety, and honour. Between Catholics and Protestants as regards these principles there is little to distinguish; for in the race of abomination, they have kept pretty nearly neck and neck. The author of this Apology has no sympathy with either, but of the two much prefers Popery. There is about it a breadth of purpose, a grandeur, and a potency which excites some respect, even in the breast of an enemy. Unreasonable it assuredly is, but Christians who object to it on that ground, may be told—religion was never meant to be reasonable; and that an appeal to rational principles will as little avail one religion as another, as little avail Protestant as Roman Catholic faith. All religion is unreasonable, and, moreover, to rationalize would be to destroy it. Hobbes could discover nothing in superstition essentially different from religion, nor can we. He deemed true religion as the religion which is fashionable, and superstition as the religion which is not fashionable.

So do we, so do all absolute Atheists. The notion that false religion implies the true, just as base coin implies the pure, will have weight with those, and only those, who cannot detect the sophistry of an argument *a rubii toto caelo differentibus*; or in plain English, from things entirely different presumed to be similar. Between coin and religion there is no precise analogy. False coin implies true coin, because none are sceptical as to the reality of true coin, but false religion does not necessarily imply true religion, because the reality of true religion is not only questionable, but questioned. It is not usual for money-dealers to be at issue as to the quality of their cash. The genuine article will stand the test, and always passes muster. A practised ear can easily decide between the rival claims of two half-crowns, one genuine, the other spurious, thrown upon a tradesman's counter. But where are the scales in which we can weigh to a nicety true and false religions? Where is the ear so well practised and so delicately sensitive as to distinguish the true from the 'number without number' of false voices raised in their behalf? Where the eye so perfectly theologic, so sharp, piercing, and free of that film called prejudice, as to see which of our religions is the genuine article? All are agreed as to the genuineness of current money. All are at 'daggers drawn' as to the genuineness of any one religion. That Christianity is true no Christian denies, but which is the true Christianity *has not* and we think *cannot* be determined.

Page 71

The knot of old fashioned politicians who call themselves Young England, are enamoured of 'graceful superstition.' Alarmed at the march of reason, and admirers of 'blind faith in mystery,' they sigh for a renewal of those times when no one doubted the propriety of drowning witches, or being touched for the king's evil. *Cui bono* is the question repeatedly put to the proselytising Atheist by this modern antique class of persons, who cannot see the utility of destroying the vital principle of all religions. But if that principle is false, no sane man can doubt the expediency of proving it so. Falsehood may be useful to individuals, but cannot tend to the moral and political advancement of nations. Apologists of error find the presumed unfitness of their fellow creatures to appreciate truth a sufficient reason for not teaching it. To raise up the populace to their own intellectual level they deem impracticable, and therefore speak down to their lowest passions and prejudices: like Varro they contend there are some truths the vulgar had better think falsehoods, and many falsehoods they had better think truths. The consequences of such 'moral swindling' are everywhere visible: on all sides superstition, wild, unreasoning, senseless superstition rears its hateful front, and vomits forth anathema on the friend of progress, humanity, and social justice. Look at Ireland: see to what a Pandaemonium superstition has converted 'the first flower of the land and first gem of the sea.' In that unhappy country may be seen seven or eight millions of people cheated, willingly defrauded of their substance, by a handful of designing priests, who, dead to shame, erect the most stupid credulity into exalted virtue —battle in support of ignorance because knowledge is incompatible with their 'blood-cemented pyramid of greatness,' and to aggrandise themselves, perpetuate the vilest as well as most palpable delusions that ever assumed the mask of divine truth. Daniel O'Connell may object to have them called 'surpliced ruffians,' not so the philosopher, who sees in pious fraud on a gigantic scale, the worst species of ruffianism that ever disgraced the earth.

These are no new tangled or undigested notions. 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 so 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 of this Apology 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.'

Page 72

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. He lived at a time when heresy, to say nothing of Atheism, was *rewarded* with death. Bacon was not the man to be ambitious of such a reward. Few great geniuses are. Philosophers seldom covet martyrdom, and hence it came to pass that few of them would run the terrible risk of provoking bigotted authority by the 'truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' concerning religion. In our own day the smell of a faggot would be too much for the nostrils of, that still unamiable but somewhat improved animal, called the public. One delightful as well as natural consequence is, that philosophical writers do ever and anon deal much more freely with religion than its professors are *disposed*, though *compelled*, to tolerate. But, even now, with all our boasted liberty of conscience, not one in one thousand of those who *think* truth about religion dare express it. Philosophy still exhibits, in deference to popular prejudice and fanaticism, what the great French maximist defined as 'the homage that vice pays to virtue.' Such is the rule to which, most fortunately for the pause of truth, there are many, and some splendid, exceptions. One of these is worth citing not only because of its intrinsic merit, but because the thing to be cited includes an opinion of religion, and a marked distinction between what is *pious* and what is honest, that calls for especial notice. The exception referred to is a paragraph from a paper on Saint Simonianism, written by Colonel Thompson, and originally published in the Westminster Review, of April 1, 1832, containing these remarkable words:—'The world wants *honest* law-givers, not pious ones. If piety will make men honest, let them favour us with the honesty and keep the piety for God and their own consciences. There never was a man that brought piety upon the board when honesty would do, without its being possible to trace a transfusion in the shape of money or money's worth, from his neighbour's pocket into his. The object of puzzling the question with religion is clear. You cannot quarrel for sixpences with the man who is helping you the way to heaven. The man who wants your sixpences, therefore, assumes a religious phraseology, which is cant, and cant is fraud, and fraud is dishonesty, and the dishonest should have a mark set on them.'

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

Page 73

This doctor may be taken as a type of the class of shrewd people who despise religion, 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 irreligious faith. Like Colonel Thompson, they know the world needs *honest* lawgivers not pious ones, but unlike him, they won't say so. 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 those who make sacrifices at the shrine of sincerity; and while sagacious enough to perceive that religion is a clumsy political contrivance, are not wanting in the prudence which dictates at least a warning conformity to prevailing prejudices.

None have done more to perpetuate 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, [90:1] '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 imposters, 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 the truth, the prudent are *silent*, the multitude *believe*, and impostors *triumph*.'

Beausobre, too, in his learned, account of Manicheism reads a severe lesson to the 'sensible *dummies*, 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, [91:1] 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 74

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 persecuting 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. Colonel Thompson is right. 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 them 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*. But the desire to enlighten others is lost in regard for yourselves, and what Mrs. Grundy may say, is sufficient to frighten ye from the enunciation truth.

Is superstition no evil? Is there nothing hateful, nothing against which unceasing war should be waged, in the degradation of those unhappy persons who worship idols of their own imagination? Can error be fraught with good and truth with evil, that we should shrink from doing justice to both? Everywhere are learnedly ignorant or basely cunning men, who would scare us from dealing with religious error, as all error deserves to be dealt with, by high-sounding jargon about the danger of freeing vulgar minds from the wholesome restraints of certain antiquated beliefs. Themselves essentially vulgar by habit and in feeling, their estimate of human tendencies is of the meanest, the most grovelling description. Measuring the *chaff* of other men by their own bushel, they arrive at the pious but false conclusion that without fear of God there can be no genuine love of man, and that without faith in some one of our five hundred and odd true religions, all the thoughts of our hearts would be evil continually. They insist upon it that the 'absolute Atheist,' if virtuous, is so by accident not design; that he can neither love truth, justice, nor his neighbour, except by sheer luck, and that, if bad as his principles, would cut the throat of every man, woman, and child who might have the misfortune to fall in his way. They argue as if none can think good thoughts or purposely perform good acts unless so far eaten up by superstition as always to keep in view the probable *rewards*, or equally probable *vengeance* of some supernatural Being. Faith in human goodness, irrespective of reward and

Page 75

punishment, either here or hereafter, sophists of this bigotted class have literally none. Influenced by fanaticism and stimulated by cupidity they let slip no opportunity of dealing out upon such as oppose their hideous doctrines the choicest sort of vituperative blackguardism. The reader knows this is no idle or ill-considered charge. He has seen at the commencement of this Apology verbatim extracts, affecting the moral character of Atheists, from books written by pious Christians, so utterly disgusting that only those in whom every sense of delicacy, truth, and justice has been obliterated, by a worse than savage creed, can peruse them without horror.

Not inaptly, we conceive, has religion been likened to a madman's robe, for the least puff of reason parts it and shows the wearer's nakedness. This view of religion explains the otherwise inexplicable fact that eminent piety is usually associated with eminent imbecility. Such men as Newton, Locke, and Bacon are not remembered and revered on account of their faith. By all but peddling narrow-thoughted bigots they are held in honour for their science, their matter-of-fact philosophy; not their puerile conceits about 'airy nothings,' to which half crazed supernaturalists have assigned 'a local habitation and a name.' Lord Bacon laid down principles so remote from pious, that no man can understand and philosophise in strict accordance with them, if he fears to embrace Atheism. From his *Novum Organum Scientiarum* may be extracted an antidote to the poison of superstition, for it is there we are told that *aiming at divine things through the human, breeds only an odd mixture of imaginations*. There we are told that *Man, the servant and interpreter of Nature, can only understand and act in proportion as he observes or contemplates the order of nature—more he cannot do*. There too is set down the wise lesson that truth is justly to be called the daughter, not of Authority, but Time. Bacon abhorred superstition. He denounced it as the 'confusion of many states,' and for a 'religious philosopher' wrote most liberally of Atheism. No one who has read his Essay on Superstition can doubt that he thought it a far greater evil than Atheism. Any man who should now write as favourably of Godlessness would be suspected of a latitudinarianism quite inimical to the genius and spirit of 'true religion.' The orthodox much prefer false piety to no piety at all. Mere honesty does not satisfy them. They insist on faith in their chimerical doctrines and systems, as 'the basis of all excellence.' To please them we must sacrifice truth as it is in Nature, at the shrine of truth as it is in Jesus, and believe what derives no sanction from experience. Bacon taught us to 'interpret nature,' and that 'aiming at the divine through the human breeds only an odd mixture of imaginations;' but these hair-brained fanatics who would have us believe him *one of them*, care little for natural

Page 76

knowledge, and affect contempt for all that concerns most intimately our 'earthly tabernacles.' Bacon taught us to *consider as suspicious every relation, which depends in any degree upon religion*, [93:1] but wiser than that 'wisest of mankind,' our *real* Christians execrate such teaching, and will have nothing *good* to do with those who walk in the light and honestly act in the spirit of it. How dare they then pretend to sympathise with the opinions of Bacon? It is true he announced himself willing to swallow all the fables of the Talmud or the Koran, rather than believe this Almighty frame without a Mind; but who is now prepared to determine the precise sense in which our illustrious philosopher used the words 'without a mind.' We believe his own interpretation altogether unchristian. 'To palter in a double sense' has ever been the practice of philosophers who, like Bacon, knew more than they found it discreet to utter. But with all their discretion, Locke, Milton, and even Newton did not succeed in establishing an orthodox reputation. The passages from Locke given in this Apology do at least warrant our opinion that it may fairly be doubted whether he was either a Christian or a Theist. Had he been disposed to avow Atheistical sentiments, he could not have done so, except at the imminent hazard of his life. Speculative philosophers do not usually covet the crown of martyrdom, and are seldom unwilling to fling down a few religious sops to the Cerberus of popular bigotry. It was the boast of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, that when communing with himself, he was always a philosopher, but when dealing with the mass of mankind, he was always a priest. Who knows how far John Locke followed the *safe* example. That he was a materialist his writings prove; and every far sighted Theist will admit that Atheism is the natural termination of Materialism. John Locke may have been a devout believer in 'thingless names,' to which no merely human creature can attach clear and distinct ideas: he may have thought the Bible had one of the said 'thingless names' for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its matter; though very probable he affected such belief, to shield himself from persecution; but it is quite certain, and may be affirmed without injustice, that he should to have professed Atheism; for his own rule of philosophising is inconsistent with belief in any thing supernatural. While living he was often charged with Atheism, by opponents who understood the tendencies of his philosophy better than he appeared to do himself. But the Author of this Apology has no such mean opinion of John Locke, as to suppose him ignorant that Materialism, as he taught it, is totally irreconcilable with that God, and that Religion in which he professed to believe. Belief in inconceivable entities cannot be reconciled with disbelief of all entities, save those of which we can frame clear and distinct ideas. Nor is it easy to persuade oneself that Locke could so far have done violence to his own principles as to feel 'lively faith' in a 'science' with no other aim, end, or ground-work, than 'the knowledge and attributes of the unknown.'

Page 77

By a late writer in the Edinburgh Review, we are told that 'some of the opinions avowed by Milton,' were so 'heterodox,' as to have 'excited considerable amazement.' We can scarcely conceive, says this writer, that any one could have read his *Paradise Lost* without suspecting him of heterodoxy; nor do we think that any reader acquainted with the history of his life, ought to be much startled by his opinions on marriage. The opinions which he expressed regarding the nature of the Deity, the eternity of matter, and the observation of the Sabbath, might, we think, have caused more just surprise. [95:1] Add to this good reader, Dr. Johnson's statement, ('Lives of the Poets,' p. 134, Art. Milton,) that in the distribution of his (Milton's) hours *there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household*; and then come, if you can, to the conclusion that he was a Christian.

The piety of Newton we are not prepared to dispute. It is certain he manufactured for himself a God, inasmuch as to space he ascribed the honor of being His sensorium. It is equally clear that he believed Christianity a divine system, inasmuch as he wrote, and rushed into print with, a lot of exquisite nonsense about the exquisitely nonsensical Apocalypse. But we defy pietists to ferret out of his religious writings, any argument in defence of religion, not absolutely beneath contempt; the best of them are execrably bad—mere ravings of a disordered and o'erwrought intellect. 'The sublime Newton,' said D'Holbach, 'is but a child when he quits physical science, to lose himself in the imaginary regions of theology.' He failed, nevertheless, to achieve the favour, or escape the wrath, of thorough-going theologians who were in ecstasies at his childishness, but bitterly detested him, as they detested every man who had the audacity to open up new, and widen old fields, of investigation; to reject chimera and hold fast by fact in the pursuit of knowledge, and to teach a series of scientific truths, no ability can reconcile with the philosophy (?) of Jesus and Moses, who, according to wise Dr. Epps, never intended to teach man NATURAL SCIENCE, which he defines to be 'God in Creation;' but 'came to teach, in referring to natural events, SCIENTIFIC UNTRUTHS. [95:2]

The Author hopes that the opinions here advanced in reference to what may be named the Argument from 'Authority,' as contradistinguished from 'Time,' will make obvious to Christians themselves, that it is an unsafe argument, an argument which, like the broken reed, not only fails, but cruelly wounds the hand that rests upon it. Much evidence *has been*, and much more *can be* adduced to show that no prudent, well-informed Christian will say anything about the sanction lent to Christianity, or religion of any sort, by the writings of Newton, Milton, Bacon, and Locke. By admirers of such sanction, (?) this, our Apology for Atheism will, no doubt, be rejected with indignant contempt, but we venture to predict for it better treatment at the hands of those who are convinced that *untruth* can no more be *scientific*, than truth can be *unscientific*, and that belief, whether in the God of Nature, the God of Scripture, or the Scripture itself, opposed to Philosophy, must needs be opposed to Reason and Experience.

Page 78

[ENDNOTES]

[4:1] 25th of November, 1845.

[5:1] Vide 'Time's' Commissioner's Letter on the Condition of Ireland,' November 28, 1843.

[10:1] Essay 'of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy.'

[11:1] See the Creeds of R. Owen and R. Carlile in No. 14 of the Promptor.

[11:2] 'Essay of the Idea of Necessary Connexion.'

[11:3] 'Essay of a Providence and a Future State.'

[12:1] 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.

[13:1] History of American Savages.

[13:2] Appendix the Second to 'Plutarchus and Theophrastus on Superstition.'

[13:3] Philosophy of History.

[15:1] See a Notice of Lord Brougham's Political Philosophy, in the number for April, 1845.

[20:1] 'Apology for the Bible,' page 133.

[20:2] Unusquisque vestrum non cogitate prius se debere Deos nosse quam colere.

[27:1] See a curious 'Essay on Nature.' Printed for Badcock and Co., 2, Queen's Head Passage, Paternoster Row. 1807.

[31:1] Elements of Materialism, chapter I.

[32:1] Discussion on the Existence of God, between Origen Bachelor and Robert Dale Owen.

[37:1] Answer to Dr. Priestly on the existence of God, by a Philosophical Unbeliever.

[40:1] Treatise on Human Nature.

[44:1] The Rev. J.E. Smith.



[47:1] 'An Address on Cerebral Physiology and Materialism,' delivered to the Phrenological Association in London, June 20, 1842.

[50:1] 'The Shepherd,' Vol. i., page 40.

[52:1] Extracts from an able letter to the Editor of 'The Shepherd,' in No. 23 of that periodical.

[54:1] Novum Organon.

[56:1] Principia Mathematica, p. 528. Lond. edit., 1726.

[63:1] See a pamphlet, price Sixpence, entitled 'Paley refuted in his own words,' by G.J. Holyoake.'

[63:2] Lessing.

[64:1] See "Extract from an unpublished work, entitled the 'Refutation of Deism,'" by the late P.B. Shelley—given in the Model Republic of May 1st, 1813.

[68:1] 'Westminster Review' for May, 1843.

[69:1] 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.

[69:2] The necessary existence of Deity, by William Gillespie.

[69:3] Page 105 of a Discussion on the Existence of God, between Origen Batchelor and R.D. Owen.

[70:1] Quoted by Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his introduction to the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity.

[72:1] History of England, p. 51.

[75:1] 'Dictionary of Conversions,' page 4.

[77:1] See article 'Auto da Fe,' vol. i. of 'Recreative Review,' published in 1821.

[77:2] Act of Faith.

Page 79

[78:1] St. Foix observes, with respect to this tomb, that if the Jack Ketch of any country should be rich enough to have a splendid tomb, this might serve as an excellent model.

[81:1] 'Lives of Men of Letters,' by Henry Lord Brougham.

[82:1] Vol iii., page 593, 594, of 'A few hundred Bible Contradictions, a Hunt after the Devil, and other odd matters.' By John P.Y., M.D.

[83:1] No. 8 of J. Rutherford's Series of Tracts, and entitled 'Electing Love.'

[90:1] Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. page 11.

[91:1] 'Manicheisme,' tome ii, p. 568, 569.

[93:1] Nov. Org., lib; ii. aph. 29.

[95:1] See 'Edinburgh Review' containing a notice of Milton's 'De Doctrina Christiana.'

[95:2] Page 55 of a Pamphlet entitled, 'The Devil.'