

# MODERN ATHEISM

UNDER ITS FORMS OF

PANTHEISM, MATERIALISM, SECULARISM,  
DEVELOPMENT, AND NATURAL LAWS.

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE contents of this volume originally constituted about one half of a work, entitled "Faith in God and Modern Atheism compared, in their Essential Nature, Theoretic Grounds, and Practical Influence." Simultaneously with the first issue of that work in Scotland, the five principal chapters in this volume were published separately, accompanied with the announcement that *each was complete in itself*. The hint thus given by the author, has been acted upon by the present publishers. On examining the whole work, it was found to be divided into four Sections. Of these, the third was devoted exclusively to "*Modern Atheism*." It embraced the five chapters already alluded to, together with a general introduction and four shorter chapters. It appeared, in fact, to be a complete treatise by itself; and it is now presented to the American public in the conviction that such a work is peculiarly demanded by the present state of religious opinion in this country.

The author is one of the most distinguished divines of the Free Church of Scotland. In 1845, he was appointed Professor of Apologetic Theology in the New College, Edinburgh; and, on the death of Dr. Chalmers, in 1847, he was translated to the Chair of Systematic Theology thus made vacant. In the former position, it became his duty to prepare a complete course of Lectures on Natural Religion. His work on "Faith in God," &c., contains, in an altered form, adapted to general readers, the substance of those Lectures.

Respecting this work, the British press generally has spoken in the highest terms. The distinguished geologist, Hugh Miller, says, in the *Edinburgh Witness*: "It is one of, at once, the most readable

and solid which we have ever perused;" and the *News of the Churches*, the organ of the Free Church, describes it as "a work of which nothing less can be said than that, both in spirit and substance, style and argument, it fixes irreversibly the name of its author as a leading classic in the Christian literature of Britain." An American critic says: "His succinct analysis of the doctrines held by the various schools of modern atheism are admirable, and his criticisms on their doctrines original and profound; while his arguments in defence of the Christian faith against philosophical objectors are unsurpassed by those of any modern writer. Clear, vigorous, logical, learned, and strong as a Titan, he fairly vanquishes all antagonists by pure mental superiority; never understating their views or evading their arguments, but meeting them in all their force and *crushing* them." Another critic says: "It is a great argument for Theism and against Atheism, magnificent in its strength, order, and beauty. . . . The style is lucid, grave, harmonious, and every way commensurate with the dignity and importance of the subject. . . . The chapter on Pantheism is admirable. Regarding it as 'the most formidable rival of Christian Theism at the present day,' Dr. Buchanan seems to have specially addressed himself to the task of exposing and refuting this error. His statement of Spinoza's system is beautifully clear."

The reader will find that there is no exaggeration in these encomiums. Hugh Miller, always felicitous in his choice of words, has exactly described the two leading characteristics of "Modern Atheism," by the phrase "readable and solid." Every one who begins the book will find himself drawn strongly onward to the end; and no one can rise from its perusal without a conviction that it contains a weight of argument against *all* the forms of Atheism such as never before has been combined in one book.

Should the reception of this volume by the public furnish sufficient encouragement, it is the intention of the publishers to issue the remainder of the work ("Faith in God," &c.), in uniform style.

BOSTON, December, 1856.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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A TREATISE on the Being and Perfections of God, as the Creator and Governor of the world, can scarcely be adapted to the exigencies of modern society, unless it be framed with express reference to the existing forms of unbelief, and the prevailing tendencies both of philosophical thought and of popular opinion. It is quite possible, indeed, to construct a scheme of evidence on this subject out of the ample materials which the storehouse of nature affords, without entering into any discussion of the questions, whether Physical or Metaphysical, which have been raised respecting it. But this method, although it might be sufficient for many, perhaps for most, of our readers — for all, indeed, who come to the study of the subject with reflective but unsophisticated minds — could scarcely be expected to meet the case or to satisfy the wants of those who stand most in need of instruction; the men, and especially the young men, in all educated communities, who, imbued with the spirit of philosophical speculation, and instructed, more or less fully, in the principles of modern science, have been led, under the influence of certain celebrated names, to adopt opinions which prevent them from seriously considering any theological question, and to regard the whole subject of religion with indifference or contempt, as one that lies beyond the possible range of science, — the only legitimate

domain of human thought. In such cases (and they are neither few nor unimportant), it may be useful and even necessary to neutralize those adverse presumptions or "prejudicate opinions," which prevent them from considering the evidence to which Theism appeals, and to review the various theories from which they spring, so as to show that they afford no valid reason for discarding the subject, and no ground for alleging that it is not fit *to go to proof*. It is true that we must ultimately rely, for the establishment of our main positions, on that body of natural and historical evidence, which depends little, if at all, on any of the Theories of Philosophical Speculation, or even on any of the discoveries of Physical Science; but it is equally true that the evidence, however conclusive in itself, cannot be expected to produce conviction unless it be candidly examined and weighed; and if there be anything in the existing state of public opinion which leads men to regard the whole subject with indifference or suspicion, to conceive of it as a problem insoluble by the human faculties, and to treat Theology as a fond fancy or a waking dream, it were surely well to examine the grounds of such opinions, to expose their fallacy so as to counteract their influence, and to refute those theories which prevent men from judging of the evidence as they would on any other topic of Inductive Inquiry. In adopting this course, we are only following the footsteps of the profound author of the "Analogy," who finding it, he knew not how, "to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry," set himself, in the first instance, to prove "that it is not, however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it;" — this preliminary proof being designed to neutralize objections, and to disburden the subject of all adverse presumptions, so as to be judged on its own proper and independent merits. We are imitating, too, the example of another sagacious writer on a kindred theme, who thought that "Apologists had paid too little attention to the *prejudices* of

their opponents, and had been too confident of accomplishing their object at once, by an overpowering statement of the direct evidence, forgetting that the influence of prejudice renders the human mind very nearly inaccessible to both evidence and argument."<sup>1</sup>

If this method was ever necessary or expedient, it is peculiarly so in the present age. Opinions are afloat in society, and are even avowed by men of high philosophical repute, which formally exclude Theology from the domain of human thought, and represent it as utterly inaccessible to the human faculties. They amount to a denial, not merely of its truth, but of its very possibility. They place it among the dreams of the past—with the fables of the Genii, or the follies of Alchemy, or the phantoms of Astrology. They intimate, in no ambiguous terms, not only that Catholicism is effete, and Christianity itself dead or dying, but that Theology of every kind, even the simplest and purest form of Theism, must speedily vanish from the earth. Admitting that the religious element was necessarily developed in the infancy of the species, and that its influence was alike inevitable and salutary during the world's minority, when it was placed provisionally "under tutors and governors," they proclaim that mankind have outgrown the vestments which suited them in earlier times, and that now they must "put away childish things." That such sentiments have been publicly avowed, that they have been proclaimed as the scientific results of speculative thought, and that they have been widely circulated in the vehicles both of philosophic discussion and of popular literature, will be proved by evidence, equally sad and conclusive, in the succeeding chapters; in the meantime we refer to them merely for the purpose of showing that, in so far as their influence prevails, they must necessarily tend, unless

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP BUTLER, "Analogy," Preface, p. II.

DR. INGLIS, "Vindication of the Christian Faith," p. VI.

they be counteracted by some effective antidote, to generate such a prejudice against the whole scheme of Theology, whether Natural or Revealed, as may be expected, especially in the case of young, inexperienced, and ardent minds, to prevent them from entertaining the subject at all, or examining, with serious and candid interest, any kind or amount of evidence that might be adduced in regard to it. For this reason, we propose to review the various Theories or Systems which may be said to embody and exhibit these prevailing tendencies, to meet our opponents on their own chosen ground, and to subject their favorite speculations to a rigorous and sifting scrutiny; and this, not for the purpose of proving our fundamental position, for that must rest on its proper and independent evidence, but simply with the view of neutralizing the adverse presumptions which prevent many from considering its claims, and proving that it is a subject that demands and deserves their serious and sustained attention.

Taking a comprehensive view of European Science and Literature during the last half century, we may discern the great currents, or chief tendencies, of speculative thought, in so far as it bears on the evidences and doctrines of Religion, in several distinct but closely related systems of opinion, which, whether considered severally or collectively, must exert, in proportion to their prevalence, a powerful influence on the side of Atheism. These systems may be divided generally into *two* great classes, according as they relate to the *substance* or to the *evidence* of Theism, to the *truths* which it involves, or the *proofs* to which it appeals. The interval between the first and second French Revolutions may be regarded as the season during which the theories to which we refer were progressively developed, and ultimately consolidated in their existing forms. The germ of each of them may have existed before, and traces of them may be detected in the literature of the ancient world, and even in the writings of

mediæval times; nay, it might not be too much to affirm that in the systems of Oriental Superstition, and in the Schools of Grecian Skepticism, several of them were more fully taught in early times than they have yet been in Modern Europe, and that the recent attempts to reconstruct and reproduce them in a shape adapted to the present stage of civilization, have been poor and meagre in comparison with those more ancient efforts of unenlightened reason. What modern system of Skepticism can rival that of Sextus Empiricus? What code of Pantheism, French or German, can be said to equal the mystic dreams of the Vedanta School? What godless theory of Natural Law can compete with the Epicurean philosophy, as illustrated in the poetry of Lucretius? The errors of these ancient systems have been revived even amidst the light of the nineteenth century, and prevail to an extent that may seem to justify the apprehension, frequently expressed on the Continent of late years, of the restoration of a sort of Semi-Paganism in Modern Europe; and it is still necessary, therefore, for the defence of a pure Theism, to reëxamine those ancient forms of error which have reappeared on the scene after it might have been supposed that they had vanished for ever. For the very tenacity with which they cleave to the human mind, and their perpetual recurrence at intervals along the whole course of the world's history, show that there must be something in the wants, or at least in the weaknesses of our nature, which induces men to tolerate and even to embrace them. But the chief danger, as we conceive, lies in those new, or at least newly organized, theories that have only recently received their full development in the Inductive and Scientific pursuits which constitute the peculiar glory of modern times; and which, commencing with the era of Bacon and Descartes, and gradually matured by Newton, Leibnitz, and their successors, have at length issued in the construction of a solid fabric of Science. To Theism there is no danger in Science, in so far as it is true, for all truth is

self-consistent and harmonious ; but there may be much danger in the use that is made of it, or in the spirit in which it is applied. In the hands of Bacon, and Newton, and Boyle; the doctrine of Natural Laws was treated as an ally, not as an antagonist, to Theology ; in the hands of Comte it becomes a plea for Atheism ; and even in the hands of Combe an argument against a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer. Here the danger is the greater just by reason of the acknowledged truth and practical value of the Inductive Philosophy ; for its certainty is so well ascertained, and its manifold uses so generally appreciated, that if it shall come to be regarded as incompatible with the recognition of God and Religion, Society will soon find itself on the verge of universal Atheism. And this is the fearful issue to which the more recent schools of speculation are manifestly tending. The first French Revolution was brought about by the labors of men who fought against Christianity, at least ostensibly, under the banner of Deism or Natural Religion ; the second Revolution was consummated under the auspices, not of a Deistic, but of an Atheistic philosophy. The school of Voltaire and Rousseau has given place to the school of Comte and Leroux. The difference between the two indicates a rapid and alarming advance. It may not be apparent at first sight, or on a superficial survey ; but it will become evident to any one who compares the two French Encyclopædias, which may be regarded as the exponents of the reigning philosophy of the two great revolutionary eras. The first, the *Encyclopedie* of D'Alembert, Voltaire, and Diderot, sought to malign and extirpate Christianity, while it did frequent homage to Natural Theology ; the second, the "*Nouvelle Encyclopedie*" of Pierre Leroux and his coadjutors, proclaims the deification of Humanity, and the dethronement of God !

# MODERN ATHEISM.

## CHAPTER I.

### GENERAL VIEW OF ATHEISM.

BEFORE entering on a detailed discussion of the theories to which it appeals, it may be useful to offer some general reflections on ATHEISM itself, its generic nature and specific varieties, its causes and springs, whether permanent or occasional, and its moral and social influence, as illustrated alike by individual experience and by public history.

[By Atheism we mean any system of opinion which leads men either to *doubt* or to *deny* the Existence, Providence, and Government of a living, personal, and holy God, as the Creator and Lord of the world. In its practical aspect, it is that state of mind which leads them to *forget, disown, or disobey* Him.]

We are met, however, at the outset, by a previous question, *Whether Atheism be a real or even a possible thing?* a question which was wont to be discussed by divines under the head, *an dentur Athei?*<sup>1</sup> and which has recently been revived by the strong protestations of some philosophic writers, who deny not only the existence, but the very possibility of Atheism. On this point the policy which infidels have pursued has been widely different at different times. On some occasions, they have sought to exaggerate the number of Atheists, claiming as their own adherents or allies a large majority of the intellectual classes, as well as whole tribes or nations of barbarians, in

<sup>1</sup> BUDDÆI, "Theses Theologicæ de Atheismo et Superstitione," cap. I.

order to impress the public mind with the conviction that belief in God is neither natural nor universal; at other times, they have sought to allay the prejudice which avowed Atheism seldom fails to awaken, by disclaiming much that had been imputed to them, by professing a sort of mystic reverence for the Spirit of Nature, and by denying that their speculations involve a disbelief in God. In following these opposite courses at different times, they have been actuated by a politic regard to the exigencies of their wretched cause, and have alternately adopted the one or the other, just as it might seem, in existing circumstances, to be more expedient either to brave or to conciliate public opinion. It is incumbent, therefore, on every enlightened advocate of Christian Theism to exercise a prudent discretion in the treatment of this topic, and to guard equally against the danger either of being led to exaggerate the extent, or of being blinded to the existence of the evil. Nor is it difficult to discover a safe middle path between the opposite extremes: it is only necessary to define, in the first instance, what we mean when we speak of Theism or Atheism respectively, and then to ascertain, in the second place, whether any, and what, parties have avowed principles which should fairly serve to connect them with the one system or with the other. A clear conception of the radical principle or essential nature of Atheism is indispensable; for without this, we shall be liable, on the one hand, to the risk of imputing Atheism to many who are not justly chargeable with it — a fault which should be most carefully avoided;<sup>1</sup> and equally liable, on the other hand, to the danger of overlooking the wide gulf which separates Religion from Irreligion, and Theism from Atheism. There is much room for the exercise both of Christian candor and of critical discrimination, in forming our estimate of the characters of men from the opinions which they hold, when these opinions

<sup>1</sup> J. C. WOLFIUS, "De Atheismi falso Suspectis."

relate not to the vital truths of religion, but to collateral topics, more or less directly connected with them. It is eminently necessary, in treating this subject, to discriminate aright between systems which are essentially and avowedly atheistic, and those particular opinions on cognate topics which have sometimes been applied in support of Atheism, but which may, nevertheless, be held by some *salvâ fide*, and without conscious, still less avowed, Infidelity. And hence Buddæus and other divines have carefully distinguished between the radical principles or grounds of Atheism, and those opinions which are often, but not invariably, associated with it.<sup>1</sup>

But it is equally or still more dangerous, on the other hand, to admit a mere nominal recognition of God as a sufficient disproof of Atheism, without inquiring what conception is entertained of His nature and perfections; whether He be conceived of as different from, or identical with, Nature; as a living, personal, and intelligent Being, distinct from the universe, or as the mere sum of existing things; as a free Creator and Moral Governor, or as a blind Destiny and inexorable Fate. | These are vital questions, and they cannot be evaded without serious detriment to the cause of religion. A few examples will suffice to prove our assertion. M. Cousin contends that *Atheism is impossible*, and assigns no other reason for his conviction than this,—that the existence of God is necessarily implied in every affirmation, and may be logically deduced from the premises on which that affirmation depends.<sup>2</sup> His reasoning may pos-

<sup>1</sup> BUDDÆI, "Theses Theologicæ," cap. III., "De dogmatibus quæ cum Atheismo conjuncta sunt, aut ad eum ducunt," p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> COUSIN, "Introduction Generale a l'Histoire de la Philosophie," I. 169 :—"Que toute pensée implique une foi spontanée à Dieu, et qu'il n'y a pas d'Atheisme naturel. Croit-il qu'il existe, par exemple? S'il croit cela, cela me suffit,"—"il a donc foi au principe de la pensée;—or là est Dieu,"—"Selon moi, toute parole prononcée avec confiance, n'est pas moins qu'une profession de la foi à la pensée,—à la raison en soi,—c'est à dire à Dieu."

sibly be quite conclusive *in point of logic*, in so far as it is an attempt to show that the existence of God *ought* to be deduced from the consciousness of thought; but it cannot be held conclusive as to *the matter of fact*, that there is no Atheism in the world, unless it can be further shown that all men know and acknowledge His existence as a truth involved in, and deducible from, their conscious experience. Yet he does not hesitate to affirm that "every thought implies a spontaneous faith in God;" nay, he advances further, and adds that even when the sage "denies the existence of God, still his words imply the idea of God, and that belief in God remains unconsciously at the bottom of his heart." Surely the denial or the doubt of God's existence amounts to Atheism, however inconsistent that Atheism may be with the natural laws of thought, or the legitimate exercise of speech.

Yet the bold paradox of COUSIN was neither an original discovery nor an unprecedented delusion. It was taught, in a different form, but with equal confidence, by several writers belonging to the era of the first French Revolution. Thus HEL-VETIUS, in his work on MAN, says expressly: "There is no man of understanding who does not acknowledge *an active power in Nature; there is, therefore, no Atheist*. He is not an Atheist who says that *motion is God*; because, in fact, motion is incomprehensible, as we have no clear idea of it, since it does not manifest itself but by its effects, and because by it all things are performed in the universe. He is not an Atheist who says, on the contrary, that *motion is not God*, because motion is not a being, but a mode of being. They are not Atheists who maintain that motion is essential to matter, and regard it as the invisible and moving force that spreads itself through all its parts," "as the universal soul of matter, and the divinity that alone penetrates its substance. Are the philosophers of this last opinion Atheists? No; they equally acknowledge an unknown force in the universe. Are even those who have no

ideas of God Atheists? No; because then all men would be so, because no one has a clear idea of the Divinity."<sup>1</sup>

A more recent writer, the ABBE LAMENNAIS, is equally explicit, and very much for the same reasons: "The Atheist himself has his own notion of God, only he transfers it from the Creator to the creation; he ascribes to finite, relative, and contingent being the properties of the necessary Being; he confounds the work with the workman. Matter being, according to him, eternal, is endowed with certain primitive, unchangeable properties, which, having their own reason in themselves, are themselves the reasons of all successive phenomena;" and "it matters little whether he rejects the *name* of God or not," or "whether he has, or has not, an explicit knowledge of Him;" he cannot but acknowledge an eternal First Cause.<sup>2</sup> And so a whole host of Pantheistic Spiritualists will indignantly disclaim the imputation of Atheism, and even attempt to vindicate Spinoza himself from the odious charge.<sup>3</sup> Nay, some of the grossest Materialists, such as Atkinson and Martineau, while they explicitly deny the existence of a living personal God, will affirm that Pantheism is not Atheism.<sup>4</sup> Now, unquestionably, if by Theism we mean nothing more than the recognition of an active power in nature,—such a power as may or may not be identified with motion, and as may be designated indifferently as the Divinity, or as the Soul of the world,—the possibility of Atheism may be effectually excluded; but this only serves to show the indispensable necessity of a correct definition of the terms which are employed in this

<sup>1</sup> M. HELVETIUS, "Treatise on Man, his Intellectual Faculties and Education:" translated by W. Hooper, M.D., I. 247.

<sup>2</sup> M. LAMENNAIS, "Esquisse d'une Philosophie," I. 95.

<sup>3</sup> "Spinoza is a God-intoxicated man."—NOVALIS, quoted in T. Carlyle's Essays, II. 43.

<sup>4</sup> "Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development, by H. G. ATKINSON and HARRIET MARTINEAU," p. 241.

discussion, since it is perfectly manifest that they are not used in the same sense by the contending parties, and that consequently the disputants are not arguing about the same thing. For Pantheism, whatever form it may assume, and whatever language it may adopt, can be regarded in no other light than as a system of Atheism, by all who have any definite conception of what is meant when we either affirm or deny the existence and government of a living, intelligent, personal God.

As Atheism has appeared in several distinct forms, it is necessary to consider both its generic nature and its specific varieties. It may be defined, generally, as that state of mind which involves either *the denial* or *the doubt* of the existence and government of God as an all-perfect Being, distinct from the created universe ; or which leads to the habitual forgetfulness and wilful neglect of His claims as our Creator, Preserver, and Lord. This state of mind, whether evinced by words or by actions, contains in it the essence of Atheism, and it is recognized in Scripture, in each of its two aspects, as an evil alike natural and prevalent. The words of the Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God,"<sup>1</sup> whether they be interpreted as the expression of an *opinion* or of a *wish*, indicate in either case the existence of that state of mind which has just been described, and which may issue either in practical or speculative Atheism, according to the temperament of individual minds, and the influences which are brought to bear upon them. The same inspired writer has said,<sup>2</sup> that "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God ; God is not in all his thoughts ;" — "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten ; He hideth his face ; He will never see it." — "Wherefore doth the wicked condemn God ? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it ;" And these words exhibit a graphic delineation of that state of mind in

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 14 : 1 ; 53 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 10 : 4, 11, 13.

which occasional thoughts of God are neutralized by habitual unbelief, and the warnings of conscience silenced by the denial of a supreme moral government. In like manner, when the apostle tells the Ephesian converts that at one time "they were *without God* in the world,"<sup>1</sup> and the Galatians, that "when they knew not God, they did service unto them which by nature are no gods;" when he further speaks of some as "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," as "professing that they know God, but *in works denying Him*;"<sup>2</sup>—in all these statements we see the generic nature of that ungodliness which cleaves as an inveterate disease to our fallen nature, and which, whether it appears only in the form of practical unbelief and habitual forgetfulness, or assumes the more daring aspect of avowed infidelity, contains in it the essence of Atheism.

While such is its *generic nature*, we must further discriminate between its specific varieties; for it does not always wear the same aspect, or rest on the same grounds. It may be divided, first of all, into *speculative* and *practical* Atheism: the former implying a denial, or a doubt of the existence and government of God, either openly avowed or secretly cherished; while the latter is perfectly compatible with a nominal religious profession, and consists in the habitual forgetfulness of God and of the duties which arise out of His relation to us as His creatures and subjects. Speculative Atheism is comparatively rare; Practical Atheism is widely prevalent, and may be justly regarded as the grand parent sin, the universal characteristic of fallen humanity.<sup>3</sup> It is not Atheism in profession, it is Atheism in practice. Those who are chargeable with it may "profess that they *know* God, but in works they *deny* Him."

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 2 : 12, *Ἀθεοὶ ἐν τοῦ κόσμου.*

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 4 : 8 ; 2 Tim. 3 : 4 ; Titus 1 : 16.

<sup>3</sup> ESTLIN, "Discourse on Atheism," pp. 8, 19, 28.

DR. CHALMERS, "Institutes," I. 375.

As distinguished from theoretical or speculative Atheism, it is fitly termed *ungodliness*. It does not necessarily imply either the denial or the doubt of the existence or government of God, but consists mainly in the forgetfulness of His character and claims. Speculative Atheism always implies habitual ungodliness; but the latter may exist where the former has never been embraced, and has even been openly and sincerely disclaimed. Yet such is the *connection* between the two, that Speculative Atheism invariably presupposes and perpetuates practical ungodliness; and that the latter has also a tendency to produce the former, since the habitual disregard of God in the practical conduct of life indicates a state of mind in which men are peculiarly exposed to the seductions of infidelity and prone to yield to them, especially in seasons of revolutionary excitement or of prevailing epidemic unbelief. It would be wrong to rank every ungodly man among professed or even conscious Atheists, for he may never have denied or even doubted the existence and government of God; yet it were equally wrong to represent or treat him as a true believer, since he shows that, practically, "God is not in all his thoughts;" and hence the necessity of our *first* distinction between *theoretical* or *speculative*, and *practical* or *habitual* Atheism.

Speculative Atheism, again, is either *dogmatic* or *skeptical*. It is *dogmatic*, when it amounts to an affirmation, either that there is no God, or that the question of his existence is necessarily insoluble by the human faculties. Atheism has been distinguished from Anti-theism; and the former has been supposed to imply merely the non-recognition of God, while the latter asserts His non-existence. This distinction is founded on the difference between *unbelief* and *disbelief*; <sup>1</sup> and its validity is admitted in so far as it discriminates merely between dogmatic and skeptical Atheism. But Anti-theism is main-

<sup>1</sup> DR. CHALMERS, Works, "Natural Theology," I. 58.

"The Reasoner," edited by HOLYOAKE, XI. 15, 232.

tained, in the strictest sense of the term, where it is affirmed either that there is no God, or that the existence of the Supreme Being *cannot* in any circumstances become an object of human knowledge. In each of these forms, Atheism is dogmatic; it denies the existence of God, or it denies the possibility of His being known. But there is also a *skeptical* Atheism, which does not affirm absolutely either that there is no God, or that the knowledge of God is necessarily excluded by the limitations of human reason, but contents itself with saying, "*non-liquet*," — *i. e.*, with denying the sufficiency of the evidence. It answers every appeal to that evidence by saying that, however satisfactory it may be to the minds of some, it does not carry conviction to the minds of all, and that for this reason it may be justly regarded as doubtful or inconclusive. These two forms of Atheism — the Dogmatic and the Skeptical — are widely different from each other; they rest on distinct grounds, and they require, therefore, to be discussed separately, each on its own peculiar and independent merits. The Dogmatic Atheist feels no force in the arguments which are directed merely against his skeptical ally; for, strong in his own position and confident in his ability to maintain it, he is conscious of no speculative doubt, and affirms boldly what he unhesitatingly believes. The Skeptical Atheist, again, feels no force in the arguments which are directed against a Dogmatic System such as he utterly disclaims; he is equally unwilling to affirm either that there is, or that there is not, a God: he takes refuge in doubt, and refuses alike to affirm or to deny; his only plea is, the want or the weakness of evidence on either side. From this radical difference between the two forms of Speculative Atheism, there arises a necessity for discussing each of them on its own merits; and yet, although theoretically they may be easily distinguished, it will be found that practically they are often conjoined, since the same mind will often fluctuate between the two, and shift its ground by betaking itself

alternately to the one or the other, according to the exigencies of the argument. Assail the Dogmatic Atheist with the unanswerable statement of John Foster, that it would require nothing less than Omniscience to warrant the denial of a God, and he will probably defer to it so far as to admit that he cannot prove his negative conclusion, but will add that he is not bound to do so, and that all that can be reasonably required of him is to show that the evidence adduced on the opposite side is insufficient to establish the Divine existence, or that the phenomena which supply that evidence may be as well, or more satisfactorily, explained in some other way. Assail, in like manner, the Skeptical Atheist with the self-evident truth that, even on his own principles, he is not entitled to assume or to act upon the assumption, that *there is no God*, since the result of his reasonings is *doubt* merely, and such doubt as implies that there *may be* a Creator, Governor, and Judge, he will probably defer to it so far as to admit that this is the only logical result of his system, but will add that, where there is no conclusive evidence on either side, there can be no moral obligation to a religious life, and no guilt in living "without God in the world." It will be found, too, that, distinct as these two forms of Speculative Atheism may appear to be, yet they have often been made to rest on a common ground, and the self-same arguments have been adduced in support of both. Thus the doctrine of Materialism, the theory of Development, and the system of Natural Laws, have all been applied by the Dogmatic Atheist to justify his denial of the existence and government of God, on the ground that all the phenomena of Nature may be accounted for without the supposition of a Supreme Mind; while the very same doctrines or theories have been also applied by the Skeptical Atheist to justify, not his *denial*, but his *doubt*, and to vindicate his verdict of "*non-liquet*" on the evidence adduced. And as the same arguments are often employed by both parties in support of their respective

views, so they make use, for the most part, of the same objections in assailing the cause of Theism; insomuch that it would be impossible, and even were it possible it would be superfluous, to attempt a formal refutation of either, without discussing those more general principles which are applicable to both. For this reason, we propose to examine in the sequel the various theories which have been applied in support alike of Dogmatic and of Skeptical Atheism, so as to illustrate the grounds that are common to both, while we consider also the distinctive peculiarities of the two systems, and more particularly the grounds of Religious Skepticism.

Besides the radical distinction between Dogmatic and Skeptical Atheism, we must consider the difference between *the four great leading systems* which have been applied to account for the existing order of Nature, without the recognition of a living, intelligent, personal God. There are many specific varieties of Atheism; but, ultimately, they may be reduced to *four* classes. The *first* system assumes and asserts the eternal existence of THE COSMOS; that is, of the present order of Nature, with all its laws and processes, its tribes and races, whether of vegetable or animal life; and affirms that the world, as now constituted, never had a beginning, and that it will never have an end. This has been called the Aristotelian Hypothesis, because Aristotle, while he spoke of a Supreme Mind or Reason, maintained not only the eternity of matter, but also the eternity of "substantial forms and qualities."

The *second* system affirms, not the eternal existence of THE COSMOS,—for the commencement of the existing order of Nature is admitted to be comparatively recent,—but the eternal existence of Matter and Motion; and attempts to account for the origin of the world and of the races by which it is peopled, either by ascribing it, with Epicurus, to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or, with more modern Speculatists, to a law of progressive development. This has been called the

Epicurean Hypothesis, because Epicurus, while nominally admitting the existence of God, denied the creation of the world, and ascribed its origin to atoms supposed to have been endued with motion or certain inherent properties and powers, and to have been self-existent and eternal.

The *third* system affirms the coëxistence and coëternity of God and the World; and, while it admits a distinction between the two, represents them as so closely and necessarily conjoined, that God can be regarded only as the Soul of the World,—superior to matter, as soul is to body, but neither anterior to it, nor independent of it, and subject, as matter itself is, to the laws of necessity and fate. This has been called the Stoical System; since the Stoics, notwithstanding all their sublime moral speculations and their frequent recognition of God, taught that God sustains the same relation to the World as the soul of man does to his body.

The *fourth* system denies the distinction between God and the World, and affirms that all is God, and God is all; that there exists only *one substance* in the Universe, of which all existing beings are only so many modes or manifestations; that these beings proceed from that *one substance*, not by creation, but by emanation; that when they disappear, they are not destroyed, but reäbsorbed; and that thus, through endless cycles of change, of reproduction and decay, it is one and the same eternal being that is continually modified and manifested. This has been called the Pantheistic Hypothesis, and it is exemplified, on a large scale, in the speculations of the Brahmins in India, and, in Europe, in those of Spinoza and his numerous followers.

If this be a correct analysis of Speculative Atheism, in so far as it assumes a positive or dogmatic shape, we have only to conjoin with it the peculiar characteristics of that which is merely Skeptical, and we shall obtain a comprehensive view of the whole subject, which may serve as a useful guide in the

selection and treatment of the topics which demand our chief attention in the prosecution of this inquiry.

It is necessary, however, in discussing this subject, to bear in mind that there is a wide difference between Systems of Atheism, such as we have briefly described, and certain doctrines which have sometimes been associated with it, or even applied in its support or vindication. These doctrines may have been connected, historically, with the promulgation and defence of atheistic views; they may even seem to have a tendency adverse to the evidence or truths of Christian Theism; but they must not on that account be summarily characterized as atheistic, nor must those who have at any time maintained them be forthwith classed among avowed infidels.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, which in the hands of Jonathan Edwards was applied, whether consistently or otherwise, in illustration and defence of Christian truth, became in the hands of Collins and Godwin an associate and ally of anti-Christian error; the doctrine of the natural Mortality of the Soul, which in the hands of Dodwell was applied, whether consistently or otherwise, to vindicate the peculiar privileges of the Christian Covenant, has often been applied by infidels as a weapon of assault against the fundamental articles of Natural Religion itself; the doctrine of Materialism, which in the hands of Priestly was maintained, whether consistently or otherwise, in connection with an avowed belief in God as the Creator and Governor of the world, became in the hands of Baron D'Holbach and his associates the corner-stone of the atheistic "System of Nature;" the doctrine of "Natural Laws," which in the hands of Bishop Butler is so powerfully applied in proof of a system of Divine Government, has become in the hands of Mr. Combe a plausible pretext for denying a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer; and the mere fact that these

<sup>1</sup> ROBERT HALL'S Works, I. 58.

doctrines have been applied to such different and even opposite uses, is a sufficient proof of itself that they are not in their own nature essentially atheistic, and that they should be carefully discriminated from the systems with which they have been occasionally associated. We are not entitled to identify them with Atheism, in the case of those by whom Atheism is explicitly disclaimed; and yet there may be such an apparent connection between the two, and such a tendency in the human mind to pass from the one to the other, as may afford a sufficient reason for examining these cognate doctrines, each on its proper merits, for defining the sense in which they should be severally understood, for estimating the evidence which may be adduced for or against them individually, and for showing in what way, and to what extent, they may have a legitimate bearing on the grounds of our Theistic belief. For this reason, we shall bring under review, not only several systems of avowed Atheism, but also various theories, not necessarily atheistic, which have been applied to the support and defence of Atheism, and which have a tendency, as thus applied, to induce an irreligious frame of mind.

¶ The *causes and springs of Atheism* may easily be distinguished from *the reasons* on which it is founded. In the present state of human nature, there is a *permanent cause* which is abundantly sufficient to account for this species of unbelief, notwithstanding all the evidence which Nature affords of the being, perfections, and providence of God. Our Lord explained in a single sentence the whole Philosophy of Unbelief, when he said that “men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil; for whoso doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” No thoughtful man can seriously reflect on his own conscious experience, without discovering, in the disordered state of his moral nature, a reason which sufficiently explains his natural aversion from God; he finds *there* an evidence,

which he can neither overlook nor deny, of his own personal turpitude and guilt; he is self-convinced and self-condemned at the bar of his own conscience; he remembers with remorse and shame many cases of actual transgression in which he resisted the dictates of reason, and resigned himself to the dominion of evil passions; and when, with these convictions and feelings, he is asked to conceive of God as a living, personal Being, everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good, whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," and can discern "the very thoughts and intents of the heart;" when he conceives of such a Being as his Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge, as one who demands the homage of the heart and the obedience of the life, and who has power to enforce His rightful claims by the sanctions of reward and punishment, he will be sensible, in the first instance, of an instinctive disposition to recoil from the contemplation of his character, and a strong desire to deny, or at least to forget, His claims; and just in proportion as the idea of God becomes more vivid, or is more frequently presented to his mind, it will become the more intolerable, insomuch that he will be tempted either to banish the subject altogether from his thoughts, or, if he cannot succeed in this, to alter and modify his view of the Divine character so as to bring it into accordance with his own wishes, and to obtain some relief from the fears and forebodings which it would otherwise awaken in his mind. If he should succeed in this attempt, he will fall into one or other of two opposite states of mind, which, however apparently different, do nevertheless spring from the same latent source,—a state of *security*, or a state of *servitude*. In the former, he either forgets God altogether,—“God is not in all his thoughts;” or he conceives of Him as “one like unto himself,” indulgent to sin, and neither strict to mark nor just to punish it: in the latter, he either “remembers God and is troubled,” or, if he would allay the remorse and forebodings of an uneasy conscience, he has

recourse to penance and mortification, to painful sacrifices and ritual observances, in the hope that by these he may propitiate an offended Deity. In the one case, the conflict ends in practical Atheism, in the other, in abject Superstition. And these two, Atheism and Superstition, however different and even opposite they may seem to be, are really offshoots from the same corrupt root,—“the evil heart of unbelief which departeth from the living God.” In the case of the great majority of mankind, who are little addicted to speculative inquiry, or to serious thought of any kind, it may be safely affirmed that, in the absence of Revelation, they will inevitably fall into one or other of these two extremes, or rather, that they will oscillate alternately between the two,—in seasons of ease and prosperity living “without God in the world,” and in seasons of distress or danger betaking themselves for relief to the rites of a superstitious worship. The apostle describes at once the secret cause and the successive steps of this sad degeneracy, when, speaking of the Gentiles, he says that “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.”—“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”<sup>1</sup> The secret cause of all these evils was a latent “enmity against God,”—“they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge.” From this proceeded, in the first instance, a *practical habit* of Atheism,—“they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;” and from hence proceeded, in the second instance, the gross superstition of *Polytheistic belief and worship*,—“they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an

<sup>1</sup> Romans 1 : 21, 28.

image made like to corruptible man,"—"they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

But, while practical Atheism and blind Superstition are the two extremes which divide among them the great majority of mankind, there have always been some more thoughtful and inquiring spirits, who have sought to penetrate the mysteries of their being, and to account for the present order of things. They have asked, and have attempted to answer, such questions as these: What are we? what was our origin? what is our destination? Whence came this stupendous fabric of Nature? Is it self-existent and eternal? or did it come into being at some definite time? If not eternal, how was it produced? by chance or by design? by inevitable fate or by spontaneous will? Whence the order which pervades it, and the beauty by which it is adorned? Whence, above all, the evil, moral and physical, by which it is disfigured and cursed? And, in reply to these thoughtful questionings, various theories have been invented to account for the existing order of things, while not a few of the most daring thinkers have abandoned the subject in despair, and, holding it to be an insoluble problem, have resigned themselves to the cheerless gloom of Skepticism. In reviewing all these speculations and theories, we must bear in mind that their authors and advocates, although more thoughtful and inquisitive than the great majority of mankind, were equally subject to the same corrupting influence,—“the evil heart of unbelief,”—and that the same cause which produced practical Atheism in some, and abject Superstition in others, may also have operated, but more insidiously, in producing Speculative Infidelity in the minds of those who are more addicted to abstruse philosophical inquiries. We must seek to get down to the root of the evil, if we would suggest or apply an effectual remedy; we must not deal with the symptoms merely, but search for and probe

the seat of the disease ; and if that be the disordered state of our moral nature, which gives rise to fears and forebodings as often as we think of God, no remedy will be effectual which does not remove our distrust, suspicion, and jealousy ; and no argument, however conclusive, will have any practical power which does not present such views of God as to make him an object of confidence, and trust, and love. It is of vast importance that this fundamental truth should be kept steadily in view ; for, as the disordered state of our moral nature is the rudimental source both of practical Atheism and of popular Superstition, so it is also the prolific parent of Speculative Infidelity in every variety of form : and as long as the remedy is not applied to the root of the disease, the Atheist, if forced to relinquish one theory, will only betake himself to another, and after having gone the round of them all, will rather throw himself into the vortex of utter and hopeless skepticism, than acknowledge a God whom he cannot love, a Judge whom he cannot but dread. Christianity alone can supply an effectual remedy, and it is such a remedy as is fitted to cure alike the habitual ungodliness, the abject superstition, and the speculative infidelity, which have all sprung from the same prolific source. It exhibits such a view of the character and will of God as may relieve us from the fears and forebodings of guilt, and, by revealing a divine method of reconciliation, may place us in a position the most favorable for a calm and dispassionate consideration of the natural evidence in favor of His Being, Perfections, and Moral Government.

But, while the grand parent cause of all Atheism—whether practical or speculative, dogmatic or skeptical—is to be found in the disordered state of our own moral nature, there are other subordinate causes in operation, which may be regarded either as *incidental occasions*, or as *plausible pretexts*, for this form of unbelief. The internal causes are the primary and most powerful ; but there are external influences which co-

operate with these, and serve to stimulate and strengthen them. Among the incidental occasions of Atheism, we might mention a defective, because irreligious, education in early life, the influence of ungodly example and profane converse, and the authority of a few great names in literature or science which have become associated with the cause of Infidelity; and among the plausible pretexts for Atheism we might mention the inconsistencies of professed believers and especially of the clergy, the divided state of the religious world, as indicated by the multiplicity of sects, the bitterness of religious controversy, the supposed opposition of the Church to the progress of science and the extension of civil and religious liberty, and the gross superstitions which have been incorporated with Christianity itself in some of the oldest and most powerful states of Europe. These and similar topics may be justly said to be the "loci communes of Atheism," and they are often employed in eloquent declamation or indignant invective, so as to make a much deeper impression, especially on young and ardent minds, than their intrinsic weight or real argumentative value can either justify or explain. Infidel writers have not been slow to avail themselves of these pretexts for unbelief, in regard alike to Natural and Revealed Religion; and have artfully identified Religion with Superstition, and Christianity with Popery, as if there were no consistent or tenable medium between the two. And, perhaps, of all the incidental occasions or external inducements to Atheism, none has exerted so much influence over reflecting minds as the wide-spread prevalence of Superstition; for never was Atheism more general among the cultivated classes in ancient times than in the States of Greece, whose hospitable Pantheon enclosed the gods of all nations, and whose inhabitants were "exceedingly given to idolatry;" and nowhere, in modern times, has Atheism been more explicitly avowed or more zealously propagated than in those countries of Europe

which are most thoroughly subjugated to the superstitions of the Papacy. In the graphic words of Robert Hall, "Infidelity was bred in the stagnant marshes of corrupted Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

Having described the nature, evinced the reality, and referred to the permanent and occasional causes of Atheism, we may briefly advert to *its moral and social influence*. On this point three distinct questions have been raised: *First*, whether Atheism be conducive to personal happiness? *Secondly*, whether it be compatible with pure morality and virtue? and, *thirdly*, whether it be consistent with social well-being, with the authority of the laws, and the safety or comfort of the community? In considering these questions, it is necessary to remember that in no age, and in no region of the world, has Speculative Atheism been universal, or even so prevalent as to exhibit on a large scale a full development of its legitimate results. It has always been in a minority, and has been continually checked, modified and controlled, by the prevailing beliefs of society; and, whether these beliefs were purely religious or grossly superstitious, they have exerted a powerful influence in counteracting the native tendencies of atheistic speculation. "The effects of Atheism," as Mr. Estlin justly observes, "we have not yet in any great degree experienced, as the mental habits of those who hold it in speculation were in general formed, before they had adopted their present principles, by the imperceptible influence of that religion which they now traduce."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the nearest approach to a state of prevailing Atheism which has ever been exhibited in the history of the world, is to be found in France at the era of the first Revolution, when Christianity was publicly abjured, and the goddess of Reason substituted for the God of the Bible. But that even this fearful outburst of impiety did not proceed

<sup>1</sup> HALL'S "Works," I. 128.

<sup>2</sup> ESTLIN'S "Discourse," p. 57.

from the universal prevalence of Speculative Atheism among the great body of the people; that there still existed in the heart of society some germs of religious feeling, and certain instinctive or traditionary beliefs which operated as a restraint and check even during that season of revolutionary frenzy, is sufficiently evinced by the reëction which speedily occurred in the public mind, and which restored Catholicism itself, as if by magic, to its wonted supremacy; while the anti-social tendency of Atheism, in so far as it did prevail, was strikingly attested by the fact, that the leading actors in that fearful drama found themselves compelled to provide for the public safety by restoring at least the forms of religious worship, and to acknowledge that "if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one." — "The true light," says the eloquent Robert Hall, "in which the French Revolution ought to be contemplated is that of a grand experiment on human nature." "God permitted the trial to be made. In one country, and that the centre of Christendom, Revelation underwent a total eclipse, while Atheism, performing on a darkened theatre its strange and fearful tragedy, confounded the first elements of society, blended every age, rank, and sex, in indiscriminate proscription and massacre, and convulsed all Europe to its centre, that the imperishable memorial of these events might teach the last generations of mankind to consider Religion as the pillar of society, the safeguard of nations, the parent of social order, which alone has power to curb the fury of the passions, and secure to every one his rights; to the laborious the reward of their industry, to the rich the enjoyment of their wealth, to nobles the preservation of their honors, and to princes the stability of their thrones." <sup>1</sup>

In the case of individuals holding atheistic opinions, but living in the midst of Christian society, the full influence of

<sup>1</sup> ROBERT HALL, "Modern Infidelity Considered," i. 38, 67.

these opinions cannot be felt, nor their effects fully developed, in the presence of those restraints and checks which are imposed by the religious beliefs and observances of others. We cannot estimate their influence either on the personal happiness, or the moral character, or the social welfare of men, without taking this circumstance into account. To arrive at even a tolerable approximation to a correct judgment, we must endeavor to conceive of Atheism as prevailing universally in the community, as emancipated from all restraint, and free to develop itself without let or hindrance of any kind, as tolerated by law, and sanctioned by public opinion, and unopposed by any remaining forms either of domestic piety or of public worship, as reigning supreme in every heart, and as forming the creed of every household; and thus conceiving of it as an inveterate, universal epidemic, we are then to inquire whether, and on what conditions, society would in such a case be possible, and how far the prevalence of Atheism might be expected to affect the morals and welfare of mankind.

The question has been raised whether Atheism might not be more conducive than religion to *the personal happiness of individuals*; and some, who have confounded Religion with Superstition, have not hesitated to answer that question in the affirmative. The conviction that there is no God, and no moral government, and no state of future retribution, could it only be steadfastly and invariably maintained, might serve, it has been thought, to relieve the mind of many forebodings and fears which disturb its peace, and, if it could not ensure perfect happiness, might act at least as an opiate or sedative to a restless and uneasy conscience. In the opinion of Epicurus and Lucretius, tranquillity of mind was the grand practical benefit of that unbelief which they sought to inculcate respecting the doctrine of Providence and Immortality. They frequently affirmed that *fear* generated superstition, and that superstition, in its turn, deepened and perpetuated the fear

from which it sprung; that the minds of men must necessarily be overcast with anxiety and gloom as long as they continued to believe in a moral government and a future state; and that the only sovereign and effectual antidote to superstitious terror is the spirit of philosophical unbelief. Similar views are perpetually repeated in the eloquent but declamatory pages of "The System of Nature." But the remedy proposed seems to be subject to grave suspicion, as one that may be utterly powerless, or at the best, exceedingly precarious; for, first of all, the fears which are supposed to have generated Religion must have been anterior to it, and must have arisen from some natural cause, which will continue to operate even after Religion has been disowned. They spring, in fact, necessarily out of our present condition as dependent, responsible, and dying creatures; and they can neither be prevented nor cured by the mere negations of Atheism; we can only be raised above their depressing influence by a rational belief and well-grounded trust in the being and character of God. Again, if the denial of a Providence and of a future state might serve, were it associated with a full assurance of certainty, to relieve us from the fear of retribution hereafter, it must equally destroy all hope of immortality, and reduce us to the dreary prospect of annihilation at death,—a prospect from which the soul of man instinctively recoils, and by which his whole life would be embittered just in proportion as he became more thoughtful and reflective. Unbelief can operate as a sedative to fear only in so far as it is habitual, uniform, undisturbed by any inward misgivings or apparent uncertainty; but, in the case of men not utterly thoughtless or insensible, it is rarely, if ever, found to possess this character. It is often shaken, and always liable to be disquieted, by occasional convictions, which no amount of vigilance can ward off, and no strength of resolution repress. It is maintained only by a painful and sustained conflict, which is but ill-concealed by the vehemence of its protestations, and

often significantly indicated by the very extravagance of its zeal. Add to this, that Atheism itself affords no guarantee against future suffering. **I**t may deny a Providence here and a judgment hereafter, it may even deny a future state of conscious existence, and take refuge in the hope of annihilation that it may escape from the dread prospect of retribution; but it cannot affirm the *impossibility*, it can only doubt the *certainly* of these things; and in their bare possibility there is enough at once to impose an obligation to serious inquiry, and to occasion the deepest anxiety, especially in seasons of affliction or danger, which awaken reflective thought. "*Atheism*," said the acute but skeptical Bayle, "*does not shelter us from the fear of eternal suffering.*" But, even if it did, what influence would it exert on our present happiness? Would it not limit our enjoyments, by confining our views within the narrow range of things seen and temporal? Would it not deprive us of the loftiest hopes? Would it not repress our highest aspirations, by interdicting the contemplation of the noblest Object of thought, the Ideal Standard of truth and excellence, the Moral Glory of the Universe? Would it not diminish the pleasure which we derive even from earthly objects, and aggravate the bitterness of every trial? How wretched must be the condition of those who are "proud of being the offspring of chance, in love with universal disorder, whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs, and who are at ease only because they suppose themselves *inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!*"<sup>1</sup> "No one in creation," said Jean Paul, "is so alone as the denier of God: he mourns, with an orphaned heart that has lost its great Father, by the corpse of Nature which no World-Spirit moves and holds together, and which grows in its grave; and he mourns by that corpse till he himself crumble off from it. The

<sup>1</sup> ROBERT HALL on Modern Infidelity, I. 70.

whole world lies before him, like the Egyptian Sphynx of stone, half-buried in the sand; and the All is the cold iron mask of a formless Eternity."<sup>1</sup>

But the malign influence of Atheism on personal happiness will become more apparent, if we consider its tendency to affect the *moral springs of action*, on which happiness mainly depends. The question whether Atheism be compatible with moral virtue, or whether an Atheist may be a virtuous man, is one of those that can only be answered by discriminating aright between the different senses of the same term. In the Christian sense of virtue, which comprehends the duties of both tables of the Law, and includes the love of God as well as of man, it is clear that the Atheist cannot be reputed virtuous, since he wants that which is declared to be the radical principle of obedience, the very spirit and substance of true morality. But, in the worldly sense of the term, as denoting the decent observance of *relative* duty, it is possible that he may be so far influenced by considerations of prudence or policy, or even by certain natural instincts and affections, as to be just in his dealings, faithful to his word, courteous in his manners, and obedient to the laws. But this secular, prudential morality, is as precarious in its practical influence as it is defective in its radical principle. Atheism saps and undermines the very foundation of Ethics. The only law which it can recognize (if that can be called a law in any sense which is not conceived of as the expression of a Supreme Will) is, either the greatest happiness of the individual, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number; but, whether it assumes the form of *Felicitarian* or of *Utilitarian* calculation, it degenerates into a process of arithmetic, and is no longer a code of morals. The fundamental idea of DUTY is wanting, and can only be supplied from a source which the Atheist ignores. By denying

<sup>1</sup> T. CARLYLE, "Essays," II. 142.

the existence of God, he robs the universe of its highest glory, obliterates the idea of perfect wisdom and goodness, and leaves nothing better and holier as an object of thought than the qualities and relations of earthly things. He degrades human nature, by doing what he can to sever the tie which binds man to his Maker, and which connects the earth with Heaven. He circumscribes his prospects within the narrow range of "things seen and temporal," and thus removes every stimulus to dignity of sentiment, and every incentive to elevation of character. His wretched creed (if a series of cold negations may be called a creed) must be fatal to every disinterested and heroic virtue; let it prevail, and the spirit of self-sacrifice will give place to Epicurean indulgence, and the age of martyrdom will return no more. Substitute Nature, or even Humanity, for God, and the eternal standard of truth and holiness and goodness being superseded, every moral sentiment will be blighted and obscured. Conscience has a relation to God similar to that which a chronometer bears to the sun. Blot the sun from the sky, and the chronometer is useless; deny God, and conscience is powerless. And the vices which, if not subdued, were yet curbed and restrained by the over-awing sense of an unseen omnipresent Power, will burst forth with devastating fury, snapping asunder the feebler fetters of human law, and overleaping the barriers of selfish prudence itself; vanity and pride, ambition and covetousness, sensual indulgence and ferocious cruelty, will rise into the ascendancy, and establish their dark throne on the ruins of Religion.

If such be the natural and legitimate effect of Atheism on the personal happiness and moral character of individuals, we can be at no loss to discover what must be its influence on society at large. For society is composed of individuals, and its character and welfare depend on the aggregate sentiments of its constituent members. The question whether Atheism might not be consistent with social well-being, with the

continued authority of the laws, and the general comfort of the community, is answered historically by the fact, that in modern France the Reign of Atheism was the Reign of Terror, and that in ancient Rome its prevalence was followed by such scenes of proscription, confiscation, and blood, as were then unparalleled in the history of the world. The truth is that, wherever Atheism prevails, GOVERNMENT BY LAW must give place to GOVERNMENT BY FORCE; for law needs some auxiliary sanction; and if it be deprived of the sanction of Religion, it must have recourse, for its own preservation, and the prevention of utter anarchy, to the brute power of the temporal sword. It is worse than useless to discuss, in this connection, the question, revived by Bayle,<sup>1</sup> whether Atheism or Superstition should be regarded as the worst enemy to the Commonwealth, for it has no relevancy to our present inquiry; we are not contending for either, we are objecting to both; and we are under no necessity of choosing the least of two evils, when we have the option of "pure and undefiled Religion." But we may observe, in passing, that, historically, it has been found possible to keep society together, and to maintain the authority of law with a greater or less measure of civil liberty, where Superstition has been generally prevalent; whereas there is no instance on record of anything approaching to national Atheism, in which government by law was not speedily superseded by anarchy and despotism. And the reason of this difference may be that in every system of Superstition, whether it be a corruption of Natural or of Revealed Religion, "some faint embers of sacred truth remain unextinguished," some convictions which still connect man with the spiritual and the eternal, and which are sufficient, if not to enlighten and pacify the conscience, yet to keep alive a sense

<sup>1</sup> P. BAYLE, "Pensées diverses Ecrites à un Docteur de Sorbonne a l'Occasion de la Comète," 4 vols. Also his "Reponse aux Questions d'un Provincial," II. 688, IV. 101, 112.

of responsibility and a fear of retribution; "certain sparks," as Hooker calls them, "of the light of truth intermingled with the darkness of error," which may have served a good purpose in maintaining civil virtue and social order, although these would have been far better secured by the prevalence of a purer faith.

There are some circumstances, of a novel and unprecedented nature, which impart a solemn interest to our present inquiry. At the beginning of the present century, Robert Hall, referring to the unbelief which preceded and accompanied the first outburst of the Revolution in France, mentioned *three* circumstances which appeared to him to be "equally new and alarming." He regarded it as the first attempt which had ever been witnessed on an extensive scale to establish the principles of Atheism, as the first attempt to popularize these principles by means of a literature addressed and adapted to the common people, and as the first systematic attempt to undermine the foundations, and to innovate on the very substance of Morals.<sup>1</sup> But if we compare the first with the new *Encyclopedie*,—the former concocted by Voltaire, D'Alembert and Diderot, the latter by Pierre Leroux and his associates,—we shall find that Infidelity has assumed greater hardihood, and has appeared under less restraint in recent than in former times; while the speculations of Comte and Crousse are as thoroughly atheistic as those of D'Holbach himself. For, however irreligious and profane Voltaire and his associates might be, and however devoted to their avowed object of crushing Christ and his cause, so significantly indicated by their motto and watchword, "Ecrasez l'Infame;"<sup>2</sup> yet they continued, as a party, to advocate Deism, and seemed at least to oppose the bolder speculations of the author of the "*Système de la Nature*." Both

<sup>1</sup> HALL on Modern Infidelity, i. 59, 64.

<sup>2</sup> ABBE BARRUEL, "Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire du Jacobinisme," i. 31, 131, 135, 184, 357.

Voltaire and Frederick the Great wrote in reply to its atheistic tenets.<sup>1</sup> But now, in France, these tenets are openly avowed and zealously propagated. Nor is this fatal moral epidemic confined to our continental neighbors: there is too much reason to fear that it has infected, to some extent, the artisans of our own manufacturing towns, and even, in some quarters, the inhabitants of our rural districts. The Communists of France have their analogues in the Socialists of Britain; and the periodical press, although for the most part sound, or at least innocuous, has lent its aid to the dissemination of the grossest infidelity which the Continent has produced. The "Leader" gives forth Lewes's version of Comte's Philosophy; and the "Glasgow Mechanics' Journal," a digest of his Law of Human Progress, which is essentially atheistic.<sup>2</sup> Nor is indigenous Atheism wanting. Mr. Mackay in his "Progress of the Intellect," Atkinson and Martineau in their "Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development," and Mr. G. Holyoake in "The Reasoner," have sufficiently proved that if Atheism be an exotic, it is capable of taking root and growing up in the land of Bacon, Newton, and Boyle.

<sup>1</sup> ABBÉ BARRUEL, "Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire du Jacobinisme," I. 22, II. 190, 193.

<sup>2</sup> "The Leader;" a series of articles on Comte's Philosophy, by G. H. LEWES, April 7, 10, 17, etc., etc., 1852.—"The Glasgow Mechanics' Journal."



## CHAPTER II.

### THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT.

THERE have been various applications of the general principle of Development, by means of which an attempt has been made to explain the origin of all things by Natural Laws, so as to exclude the necessity of any Divine interposition, either for the creation of the world, or for the introduction and establishment of Christianity itself. It has been applied, first, to explain the origin of worlds and planetary systems, by showing that, certain specified conditions being presupposed, there are fixed mechanical laws which might sufficiently account for the production of the earth and of the other planets and satellites of our Solar System, without any special interposition of Divine power at the commencement of the existing order of things. It has been applied, secondly, to explain the origin of the various tribes or races of vegetable and animal life, and especially the production of the human race, by showing that the existing types may have sprung, by a process of gradual development, from inferior races previously existing, and that these again may have been produced by the action of chemical agents in certain favorable conditions. It has been applied, thirdly, to explain all the most important phenomena of Human History, and to illustrate the law which is supposed to determine and regulate the progressive course of civilization, so as to account, on natural principles, for the origin and prevalence of the

various forms of Religion, and even for the introduction, in its appointed season, of Christianity itself, without having recourse to anything so utterly unphilosophical as the idea of a Divine Revelation, or the supposition of supernatural agency. And it has been applied, fourthly, to explain the order, and to vindicate the use, of those additions both to the doctrines and rites of primitive Christianity, which Protestants have denounced as *corruptions*, but which Popish and Tractarian writers defend as *developments*, of the system that was originally deposited, like a prolific germ or seed, in the bosom of the Catholic Church.

It is the more necessary to examine the various forms of this theory, because unquestionably it can appeal to not a few *natural analogies*, which may serve, on a superficial view, to give it the aspect of verisimilitude. For many of the most signal works of God have been manifestly framed on the principle of gradual growth, and matured by a process of progressive development. We see in the natural world a small seed deposited in the earth, which, under the agency of certain suitable influences, germinates and springs up, producing first a tender shoot, then a stem, and branches, and leaves, and blossoms, and fruit; and every herb or tree, "having seed in itself," makes provision for the repetition of the same process, and the perpetuation and indefinite increase of its kind. The same law is observed in the animal kingdom, where a continuous race is produced from a single pair. And even in the supernatural scheme of Revelation itself, the truth was gradually unfolded in a series of successive dispensations; the First Promise being the germ, which expanded as the Church advanced, until it reached its full development in the Scriptures of the New Testament. These and similar instances may suffice to show that, both in the natural and supernatural Providence of God, He has been pleased to act on the principle of *gradual and progressive*, as contradistinguished from that of *instant and perfect* production; and they may seem, at first

sight, to afford some natural analogies in favor of the radical idea on which the various modern Theories of Development are based. In such circumstances it would be an unwise and dangerous course either to overlook the palpable facts which Nature and Revelation equally attest, or to deny that they may afford signal manifestations of the manifold wisdom of God. Nor is it necessary for any enlightened advocate of Theism to betake himself to these expedients; he may freely admit the existence of *such* cases of gradual development, he may even appeal to them as illustrative of the order of Nature, and the design which that order displays; and the only question which he is at all concerned to discuss amounts in substance to this: Whether the method of production which is pursued in the *ordinary course* of Nature can account for the *original commencement* of the present system of things?

But the state of the question, and the right application of the argument, may be best illustrated by considering each of the *four* forms of the theory separately and in succession.

## SECTION I.

THEORY OF COSMICAL DEVELOPMENT, OR OF THE PRODUCTION OF WORLDS AND PLANETARY SYSTEMS BY NATURAL LAW.—  
“THE VESTIGES.”

THE doctrine of a Nebular Cosmogony was first suggested by some observations of the elder Herschell on those cloud-like appearances which may be discerned in various parts of the heavens by the aid of the telescope, or even, in some cases, by the naked eye. It assumed a more definite form in the hands of La Place, although even by him it was offered, not as an ascertained discovery of science, but simply as a hypothetical explanation of the way in which the production of the planets

and their satellites *might* possibly be accounted for by the operation of the known laws of Nature.

The explanation of the whole theory may be best understood by dividing it into two parts: the *first* being that which attempts to account for the formation of planets and satellites, *on the assumption of the existence of a central sun, and of certain other specified conditions*; the *second* being that which undertakes to account for the formation of the sun itself, on the assumption of the existence of *a diffused nebulous matter* in space, or, as it has been aptly called, "a universal Fire-Mist."<sup>1</sup>

When the theory is limited to the explanation of the origin of the planets and their satellites, the original condition of our solar system is assumed to have been widely different from what it now is; the sun is supposed to have existed for a time alone, to have revolved upon his axis, and to have been surrounded with an atmosphere expanded by intense heat, and extending far beyond the limits of our system as it now exists. This solar atmosphere revolved, like the sun itself, around its axis; but its heat, constantly radiated into sidereal space, gradually diminished, and the atmosphere being contracted in proportion as it cooled, the rapidity of its rotation was accelerated, until it reached the point at which the central-attraction was overcome by the centrifugal force, and then a zone of vapor would be detached or thrown off, which might either retain its form as a nebulous ring, like the ring of Saturn, or first breaking into fragments, from some want of continuity in its structure, and afterwards coalescing into one mass, might be condensed into a planet as the vapor continued to cool. These rings or planets, thus detached from the central atmospheric mass, would continue to revolve, in virtue of the force originally impressed upon them, and their motion would be nearly circular, in the same plane and in the same direction with that

<sup>1</sup> "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," p. 17.

of the sun. The first planet, so formed, must have been that at the extreme limit of our solar system; the second the next in point of remoteness from the centre, and so on; each resulting from the operation of the same natural laws, and emerging into distinct existence at that precise point in the gradual cooling and contraction of the atmosphere at which the centrifugal became stronger than the centripetal force. But each planet might also be subjected to the same process of cooling and contracting, and might therefore throw off, under the operation of the same mechanical laws, zones of vapor more or less dense, which might consolidate into moons or satellites, and which should also revolve, like the planets, round their primary. Thus, Uranus has six satellites, and Saturn seven; while the latter has also thrown off two zones so perfectly uniform in their internal structure that they remain unbroken, and constitute a double ring around the planet.

In this *first* form of the theory, which assumes the existence of the sun and its atmosphere, and the rotation of both round an axis, La Place sought to give a scientific form to the speculations of Sir William Herschell on the condensation of Nebulæ, by proving simply the *dynamical possibility* of the formation of a planetary system by such means, according to the known laws of matter and motion; but he did not affirm the scientific certainty of his conjecture, and far less the actual production of the solar system in this way. He has been followed by M. Comte, who has attempted to furnish, if not a complete demonstration, at least a plausible mathematical verification, of the hypothesis.<sup>1</sup> Utterly excluding all supernatural agency in the work of creation, he equally excludes from the problem which

<sup>1</sup> AUGUSTE COMTE, "Cours de Philosophie Positive," II. 363, 376. The merits of this attempt are very differently estimated by two competent authorities; by PROFESSOR SEDGWICK in the "Edinburgh Review," No. 82, p. 22; and by SIR DAVID BREWSTER in the "North British Review," No. 3, p. 476.

he attempts to solve, the origin of the sun and its atmosphere; and confining himself to the task of accounting, in the way not of demonstrative certainty, but merely of plausible hypothesis, for the formation of the planets and satellites of our solar system, he conceives the theory of La Place to be susceptible of such a numerical verification as is sufficient to give it a high degree of verisimilitude. Assuming that the periodic time of each planet must be equal to that of the portion of the solar atmosphere of which it was formed at the era when it was thrown off, and combining the theorems of Huygens on the measure of centrifugal forces with Newton's law of gravitation, he establishes a simple equation between the time of the rotation of each zone or section of the solar atmosphere, and the distance of the corresponding planets. On applying this equation to the various bodies of our system, he found that the periodic time of the moon agrees, at least within the tenth of a day, with the duration of the earth's revolution, when her atmosphere is supposed to have extended to the moon; and that the periodic times of the planets maintain a similar correspondence with what must have been the duration of the solar revolution when they were severally thrown off from its atmosphere. It is the less necessary, however, to enter on a detailed exposition of his argument, because he admits that it can afford at the utmost only a probable proof of an hypothesis; and further, because it is expressly limited to the production of the planets and their satellites, while not only is the existence of the solar atmosphere presupposed, but also its existence in *a certain state*, and with *several determinate conditions*; while no account whatever is given of the origin either of the sun or its atmosphere, and none of the laws or conditions on which the whole process of development is confessedly dependent.

But the author of "The Vestiges" takes a much wider range, and attempts a more arduous task. He seeks to account for the origin both of suns and of solar systems by the agency

of natural laws. Not content with the more limited form of the theory, which M. Comte holds to be the only legitimate or practical object of scientific treatment, he holds that the origin of the sun itself, and the *forms*, the *positions*, the *relations*, and the *motions*, of all the heavenly bodies, may be accounted for by supposing a previous state of matter, fluid or gasiform, subject only to the law of gravitation. The Nebular Cosmogony, which is well characterized by himself as his "version of the *romance of Nature*," is based on the assumption that "the nebulous matter of space, previously to the formation of stellar and planetary bodies, must have been a universal FIRE-MIST,"<sup>1</sup> in other words, a diffused luminous vapor, intensely hot, which might be gradually condensed into a fluid, and then into a solid state, by losing less or more of its heat. The existence of such a luminous matter being assumed, and it being further supposed that it was not entirely uniform or homogeneous, but that it existed in various states of condensation, and that it had "certain nuclei established in it which might become centres of aggregation for the neighboring diffused matter," — the author attempts to show that "on such centres a rotatory motion would be established wherever, as was the most likely case, there was any obliquity in the lines of direction in which the opposing currents met each other; that this motion would increase as the agglomeration proceeded; that at certain intervals the centrifugal force, acting on the remoter part of the rotating mass, would overcome the agglomerating force; and that a series of rings would thus be left apart, each possessing the motion proper to itself at the crisis of separation. These, again, would only continue in their annular form, if they were entirely uniform in their internal structure. There being many chances against this, they would probably break up in the first instance, and be thereafter "agglomerated into one or several masses,

<sup>1</sup> "Vestiges," p. 11, 23.

which would become representatives of the primary mass, and perhaps give rise to a progeny of inferior masses." In support of this theory, reference is made to the existence, at the present moment, of certain cloud-like nebulæ, or masses of diffused luminous matter, exhibiting a variety of appearances, as if they were in various degrees of condensation, and which are described as "solar systems in the process of being formed" out of a previous condition of matter. And the observations of M. Plateau, of Ghent, are adduced as affording an experimental verification of some parts of the theory, and, especially, as serving to explain the spherical form of the planets, the flattening at the poles, and the swelling out at the equator.

It does not belong to our proper province, nor is it necessary for our present purpose, to discuss the merits of this theory, considered as a question of science. This has been already done, with various degrees of ability, but with unwonted unanimity, by some of the ablest men of the age,—by Whewell, Sedgwick and Mason, in England, by Sir David Brewster and Mr. Miller, in Scotland, and by Professor Dod and President Hitchcock, in America.<sup>1</sup> But, viewing it simply in its relation to the Theistic argument, we conceive that the adverse presumption which it may possibly generate in some minds against the evidence of Natural Theology, will be effectually neutralized by establishing the following positions :

That it is *a mere hypothesis*, and one which, from the very nature of the case, is incapable of being proved by such evidence as is necessary to establish *a matter of fact*.

That the progress of scientific discovery, so far from tending

<sup>1</sup> WHEWELL, "Indications of a Creator." SEDGWICK'S "Discourse," 5th edition. "Edinburgh Review," No. 82. SIR D. BREWSTER, "North British Review," No. 3. PROFESSOR DOD, "Princeton Theological Essays," second series. H. MILLER, "Footprints of the Creator." T. MONCK MASON, "Creation by the Immediate Agency of God."

to verify and confirm, has served rather to disprove and invalidate the fundamental assumption on which it rests.

That even were it admitted, either as a possible, or probable, or certain explanation of the origin of the present planetary systems, it would not necessarily destroy the evidence of Theology, nor establish on its ruins the cause of Atheism.

Each of these positions may be conclusively established, and the three combined constitute a complete answer to the theory of Development, in so far as it has been applied in the support or defence of Atheism.

1. That it is a mere hypothesis or conjecture, designed, not to establish the *historical fact*, but to explain merely the *dynamical possibility* of the production of the planetary bodies by the operation of known natural laws, must be admitted, I think, even by its most enthusiastic admirers. It might have seemed, indeed, to have something like a basis of fact to rest upon, had the conception of the elder Herschell been verified, when he announced the existence of a nebulous fluid, capable of being distinguished, by certain well-defined marks, from unresolved clusters of stars; but even then it presupposed so many postulates, which could in no way be established by experimental or historical evidence, that it could scarcely be regarded in any other light than as an ingenious speculation or a splendid conjecture. For, let it be considered, first of all, that the theory proceeds on the assumption of the existence and wide diffusion of a nebulous fluid of whose reality there is no actual proof; secondly, that it necessarily requires, also, the supposed existence of certain favorable conditions; and, thirdly, the operation of certain invariable laws; and it will be manifest at once that it is purely hypothetical throughout, and that it includes a variety of topics which never have been, and never can be made the subjects of experimental verification. For it postulates, in the words of an acute writer, "the establishment of nuclei in the body of the elemental mass, as well as the

action of heat on its substance, and then seeks to explain the concentration of the nebulous particles into these nuclei by the force of gravitation, the rotation of the bodies so produced by the confluence of the nebulous fluid, the separation of a portion of the outer surface of these revolving masses in the form of rings, the disruption of these rings, and the subsequent recombination of their fragments into separate spheres, answering to the planets and satellites of our system.”<sup>1</sup> But even were the existence of a nebulous fluid admitted, we have no access to know what was its internal structure; we cannot determine whether it was uniform and homogeneous throughout, or whether it contained nuclei which might become centres of aggregation; we have no means of estimating the intensity of the heat which belonged to it, or of calculating the process by which it was dispersed, so as to occasion the condensation of successive portions of the mass. No eye ever saw the separation of any part of it in the form of a ring, or the disruption of that ring, or the subsequent recombination of its fragments into a solid sphere. And even had all this been matter, not of mere conjecture, but of actual observation, it would still have left much to be explained which can only be accounted for by ascribing it to a designing Intelligent Cause.

2. The progress of scientific discovery, so far from tending to verify, has served rather to invalidate the fundamental assumption on which the whole theory depends. That assumption was the existence of a Nebulous Fluid or Fire-Mist, capable of being distinguished, by certain characteristic marks, from unresolved nebulae or clusters of stars. The existence of any such fluid has become more and more doubtful, in proportion as astronomers have been enabled, with the aid of larger and better constructed telescopes, to resolve several

<sup>1</sup> THOMAS MONCK MASON, “Creation by the Immediate Agency of God, as opposed to Creation by Natural Law; being a Refutation of ‘The Vestiges,’” &c., p. 34.

nebulae which had previously defied the power of less perfect instruments. We do not affirm that every cluster has been already resolved, nor is it necessary for the purposes of our argument to suppose that, at any future time, this stupendous achievement is likely to be effected; for it is a very obvious consideration, that just in proportion as our telescopic powers are enlarged so as to enable us to resolve many of the nearer nebulae, they must also bring within the range of our extended vision *others* more remote and hitherto unperceived, which may continue to exhibit the same cloud-like appearance as the former, until, by a new improvement of the telescope, we may succeed in separating them into distinct stars; and even then the march of discovery is not ended,—we may reasonably expect that with every fresh increase of telescopic vision, new clusters will be brought into view, and new clouds appear in the utmost verge of the horizon. But, unquestionably, the progress which has already been made in this direction affords a strong presumption in favor of the idea, that the apparent nebulousity of those masses which still appear, even to our best telescopes, as cloud-like vapors, is to be ascribed rather to the imperfection of our instruments than to any difference between them and such as have been already resolved. Sir John Herschell, a high authority in such a case, tells us that “we have every reason to believe, at least in the generality of cases, that a nebula is nothing more than a cluster of stars.”<sup>1</sup> Sir David Brewster is equally explicit: “It was certainly a rash generalization to maintain that nebulae differed essentially from clusters of stars, because existing telescopes could not resolve them. The very first application of Lord Rosse’s telescopes to the heavens overturned the hypothesis; and with such unequivocal facts as that instrument has brought to light, we regard it as a

<sup>1</sup> SIR JOHN HERSCHELL, “Memoir on Nebulae and Clusters of Stars,” London Philosophical Transactions, 1833. “Edinburgh Review,” No. 82, p. 19.

most unwarrantable assumption to suppose that there are in the heavenly spaces any masses of matter different from solid bodies, composing planetary systems.”<sup>1</sup> And Professor Nichol, while he gracefully acknowledges that he has “somewhat altered the views which he formerly gave to the public, as the highest then known and generally entertained, regarding the structure of the heavens,” states, as the result of more mature reflection, that “the supposed distribution of a self-luminous fluid, in separate patches, through the heavens, has, beyond all doubt, been proved fallacious by that most remarkable of telescopic achievements,—the resolution of the great nebula in Orion into a superb cluster of stars; and that this discovery necessitates important changes in previous speculations on Cosmogony.”<sup>2</sup>

In short, Lord Rosse’s observations at Parsonstown have conclusively proved that what appeared to be a nebula was in reality a cluster of stars; and while they still leave many nebulae unresolved, they afford a strong warrant for believing that discoveries in the same direction might be indefinitely extended in proportion to the increase of telescopic power.

3. But even were the Nebular Hypothesis admitted, and were the Theory of Development by Natural Laws conceived to afford a satisfactory explanation of the origin of the planetary systems, it would not follow, as a necessary consequence, that the peculiar evidence of Theism—that on which it mainly depends, and to which it makes its most confident appeal—would be thereby destroyed, or even diminished. The only legitimate result of such a doctrine would seem to be, that we must distinguish aright between a work of *Mediate*, and a work of *Immediate* Creation. In the Bible each of these is distinctly recognized. We have a specimen of the one in the creation

<sup>1</sup> “North British Review,” No. 3, p. 477.

<sup>2</sup> PROFESSOR NICHOL, “The System of the World,” Preface, VI., and 108.

of the first man by the direct agency of Divine power; we have a specimen of the other in the creation, less direct but equally real, of all his natural posterity, through the medium of ordinary generation. Men do not cease to be the *creatures* of God because they are born of their parents, in virtue of that creative word, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" and hence children are admonished "to remember *their Creator* in the days of their youth."<sup>1</sup> The work of creation is equally real and equally Divine, whether it be effected *mediately* or *immediately*, with or without the intervention of means, by the direct and instantaneous exertion of Almighty power, or by the gradual and successive operation of second causes acting according to established laws. In the ordinary course of Providence, the method of mediate production, gradual growth, and progressive development, may be observed in innumerable instances; but it can never be justly held to exclude, or even to obscure, the evidence of a presiding Intelligence and a supernatural Power. On the contrary, it may serve rather to enhance that evidence; since the very arrangements and provisions which have been made with a view to the reproduction of every thing after its kind, may bear on them the legible impress of a designing Mind and an ordaining Will. Thus, year by year continually, the whole inhabitants of the world are supported by the fruits of harvest, which are produced and matured under the action of natural laws; yet every intelligent Theist ascribes the result ultimately to the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, and sees in the very processes by which it is brought to pass some of the most signal proofs of these Divine perfections.

Now, as this method is followed in the work of Providence, which may be, and often has been, described as a *continuous creation*, and yet has no tendency to destroy, or even to

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 12: 1.

diminish, the evidence of a presiding Intelligence in Nature, so no good reason can be assigned why it *might* not also have been adopted in the production of planets and astral systems, if so it had seemed good to Supreme Wisdom. If this method was adopted for the propagation of plants and animals, no reason can be given why it might not also have been adopted for the production of planets and moons; nor would it in the latter case, any more than in the former, impair the evidence of God's creative wisdom and power. For, suppose it be possible that, by a marvellous process of self-evolution, the material elements of Nature might assume new forms, so as to originate a succession of new worlds and new, planetary systems, without the *immediate* or *direct* interposition of a Supernatural Will; suppose that the earth and the other bodies now belonging to our own system, were generated out of a prior condition of matter, existing in a gasiform state and diffused through space as a Fire-Mist, subject to the ordinary action of heat and gravitation; suppose, in short, that there were LAWS FOR THE GENERATION OF WORLDS in the larger cycles of time, just as there ARE LAWS FOR THE GENERATION OF ANIMALS in the short ages of terrestrial life; — would a provision for such a succession of marvellous developments necessarily destroy, or even impair, the evidence for the being and perfections of God? Does the generation of the animated tribes diminish the evidence of design in the actual constitution of the world? And why should a similar provision, if any such were found to exist, for the generation of stars and systems, be regarded in any other light than as an exhibition, on a still larger scale, of "the manifold wisdom of God?"

Let it ever be remembered that the Theistic argument depends, not on *the mode of production*, but on *the character of the resulting product*. The world may have been produced mediately or immediately, with or without the operation of natural laws; but if it exhibit such an arrangement of parts,

such an adaptation of means to ends, or such a combination of collocations and adjustments, as enables us at once to discern the distinctive marks of intelligent design, the evidence cannot be diminished, it may even be possibly enhanced, by the method of production. Provision is made, doubtless, for the growth and development of the eye, the ear, and the hand, in the human fœtus, and the process by which they are gradually formed is regulated by natural laws. But the resulting products are so exquisitely constructed, so admirably adapted to the elements of nature, and so evidently designed for the uses of life, that they irresistibly suggest the idea of wise and benevolent contrivances; and this idea is as strong and clear as it could have been had they been produced instantaneously by the *direct* act of creative power. And so of the planets and astral systems: they may have been generated, that is, produced, in a way of natural development; yet the resulting products are such as to evince the supreme wisdom and beneficence which presided over their formation. But even this is not all. Let us suppose, further, that Philosophy may yet reach its extreme, and, as we humbly conceive, unattainable limit; let us suppose that it may succeed in decomposing all the chemical elements now known, by resolving them into ONE primary basis; let us even suppose that it may succeed in reducing all the subordinate laws of Nature into ONE supreme and universal law; still the development of such a system as we see around us out of such materials, and by such means, would not be necessarily exclusive of the idea of God, but might afford evidence of a Supreme Mind, creating, combining, and controlling all things for the manifestation of His adorable perfections.

We have thus seen that the Theory of Cosmical Development is a mere hypothesis, incapable of experimental or historical proof; that the recent progress of scientific discovery has tended to disprove the fundamental assumption on which it

rests; and that, even were it admitted as a possible, or, still more, as a plausible explanation of the origin of planets and astral systems, it would not serve to destroy, and scarcely, if at all, to diminish the evidence of Theism.

The last of these positions, if well established, might seem to supersede the necessity of discussing the hypothesis at all in connection with our present theme. But such a discussion of it as has been offered may be useful to those — and they are not a few — who, superficially acquainted with Science in its more popular form, are exposed to the danger of being seduced by the authority of a few distinguished names which have unfortunately become identified with the cause of Atheism. For, while the author of “The Vestiges” repudiates the atheistic conclusions which some have deduced from his hypothesis, M. COMTE boldly avows his creed in the following revolting terms: “To minds unacquainted with the study of the heavenly bodies, Astronomy has still the reputation of being a science eminently religious, as if the famous verse, ‘Cœli enarrant gloriam Dei’ (‘The heavens declare the glory OF GOD’), had preserved all its force.” And, he adds, in a note, “At present, to minds that have been early familiarized with the true astronomical philosophy, the heavens declare *no other glory* than that of Hipparchus, Kepler, Newton, and all those who have contributed to the establishment of their laws!” The *reader* of these laws may become illustrious, but the Maker of them must be utterly ignored!

## SECTION II.

THEORY OF *PHYSIOLOGICAL* DEVELOPMENT; OR THE PRODUCTION OF VEGETABLE AND ANIMAL RACES BY NATURAL LAW.  
—“TELLIAMED.”—“PHYSIO-PHILOSOPHY.

THE Theory of Development has been applied not only to explain the origin of worlds and of astral systems in the sky, but also to account for the origin of the various tribes of vegetable and animal life which exist on the earth itself. There is nothing, indeed, in any of the kingdoms of Nature that may not be included in it, since the formation of all material bodies, organic or inorganic, is supposed to be sufficiently accounted for by the sole action of Chemical or Mechanical laws. The wide range of this theory is strikingly illustrated by the words of one whose powers of observation have added some interesting discoveries to Natural History, but whose speculations on the origin of Nature resemble the distempered ravings of lunacy, rather than the mature results of philosophic thought. “Physio-philosophy has to show,” says Dr. Oken, “how, and in accordance indeed with what laws, the Material took its origin, and, therefore, how something took its existence from nothing. It has to portray the first periods of *the world’s development from nothing*; how the elements and heavenly bodies originated; in what method, *by self-evolution* into higher and manifold forms, they separated into minerals, became finally organic, and, in man, attained self-consciousness. . . . Physio-philosophy is, therefore, *the generative history of the world*; or, in general terms, the history of Creation, a name under which it was taught by the most ancient philosophers, namely, as Cosmogony. From its embracing the Universe, it is plainly the Genesis of Moses!”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LORENZ OKEN, M. D., “Elements of Physio-philosophy,”—reprinted (unfortunately) under the auspices of the Ray Society, London, 1847.

It will be observed that this strange speculation goes far beyond the comparatively modest conjecture of La Place. It postulates *nothing*, and undertakes to account for *everything*. In flagrant opposition to the old atheistic maxim, "Ex nihilo, nihil," it boldly affirms, "Ex nihilo, omnia." It speaks, indeed, of "laws in accordance with which the world took its origin;" but these laws must be as abstract as those of Mathematics, since they existed before matter itself; nay, more abstract, or, rather, more inconceivable still, since they existed, it would seem, even before Mind! Dr. Oken attempts to explain the production of the world from nothing by comparing it to the evolution of Arithmetical and Mathematical Science, out of the fundamental conception of *zero*! But, waiving this, we shall direct our attention to the only points in this theory which, in the existing state of speculative thought, can be held to have any practical interest in connection with our great theme.

That theory attempts to account for the production both of the FLORA and the FAUNA of the natural world by *the process of Development* rather than by *the miracle of Creation*. It proceeds on the assumption, akin to that of Epicurus, that atoms or monads alone existed in the first instance; and that from these were derived, under the action of natural law and by a process of gradual development, all existing substances and beings, whether organic or inorganic, mineral, vegetable, or animal. "No organism has been created," says Dr. Oken; "of larger size than an infusorial point. No organism is, nor ever has one been created, which is not microscopic. Whatever is larger has not been created, but developed. Man has not been created, but developed." On this fundamental assumption the whole theory is based. But we must carefully distinguish between the Atomic Theory and the application which is here made of it. The recent discoveries of Chemistry, by which all material compounds have been decomposed into their constit-

uent elements, amounting to little more than fifty substances, which are either the primary or the proximate bases of all existing bodies, and the marvellous transformations which these elementary principles undergo, in respect alike of form, of density, of solidity, and of magnitude, under the action of natural laws, — may serve to make it credible that there is no *a priori* impossibility in the assumption on which the Atomic Theory depends. Had it been the will of God to call into being the various vegetable and animal races in the way of gradual evolution out of these primary monads, no enlightened Theist will presume to say that it was either impossible, or inconsistent with His wisdom to do so. It must be observed, however, that the natural analogies which have sometimes been appealed to in support of this hypothesis, labor under a grievous defect when they are applied to account for the origin of the existing races, and that they are extended far beyond their legitimate limits when they are supposed to prove that these races might begin to be without any direct interposition of creative power. For, while the oak may spring from an acorn, and the largest animal from a microscopic monad, yet within the whole range of our experience both in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, *the seed is produced by the organism*, and necessarily presupposes it; whence it follows, either that there must have been an eternal succession of organisms producing seed, and thereby perpetuating the race, or if this be inconceivable, still more if it can be disproved by geological or historical evidence, then that the analogy of our present experience leads us up, not to “an infusorial point” or “microscopic monad,” but to a primary living organism as the commencement of each existing tribe. In the words of Dr. Barclay, “It will not be easy, on any principles exclusive of the vital, to answer these questions, What was the origin of the first egg, or what was the origin of the first bird? For where is the egg that comes not from a bird, and where is the bird that comes not from an

egg? To the mere materialists, who exclude every species of vitality but that from organism, this problem is nearly as embarrassing as the origin of the Universe itself.”<sup>1</sup>

If these views be correct, all the natural analogies would lead us to acquiesce, as Dr. Barclay did, in the Mosaic narrative as the most philosophical account of the commencement of the present order of things. It traces up every race to a primary organism, endowed with reproductive powers; for it tells us, in regard to the FLORA, that God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, *the herb yielding seed*, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit *after his kind*, whose *seed is in itself*, upon the earth; and it was so.” And it tells us, with regard to the FAUNA, that God said, “Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, *after their kind*, and every winged fowl *after his kind*. And God blessed them, saying, *Be fruitful, and multiply*, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.”

Here the distinction between different genera and species, and the provision that was made for the perpetuation of different races, are prominently presented; while the production, in the first instance, not of an “infusorial point” or “microscopic monad,” but of a living organism capable of multiplying its kind, is expressly declared; and every race is traced up to that primary organism, in perfect consistency with the only law, whether of vegetable or animal reproduction, which is known to be in operation at the present day. And *this* law of reproduction, so far from being exclusive of a primary act of Creation, seems to presuppose and require it; for there must be a living organism before there can be vital transmission.

<sup>1</sup> DR. JOHN BARCLAY, “Inquiry concerning Life and Organization,” pp. 33, 36. See also pp. 177, 235, 413, 526.

But the theory of Physiological Development proceeds on a totally different supposition, — a supposition for the truth of which we have not only no historical evidence, but not even the slightest *analogical presumption*, since we have no instance of development anywhere except from a germ or seed, produced by an organism preëxisting in a state of maturity.

But the exigencies of that theory demand a wide departure from all the familiar lessons of experience; and hence recourse has been had to a series of the wildest and most extravagant conjectures, such as may well justify the opinion of those who have held that the creed of certain philosophers makes a much larger demand on human credulity than that of almost any section of the Christian Church. For, according to that theory, the origin of the FLORA is first accounted for by the action of some element — probably electricity — on a certain *mucus*, which is supposed to be generated at those points where the ocean comes into contact with the earth and air; that is, on the shore of the sea at low water mark. MAILLET had broached the idea of the marine origin of all our present “herbs, plants, roots, and grains,”<sup>1</sup> at a period when the Universal Ocean, of which Leibnitz said so much, was still the creed of some speculative minds; but it has been more recently revived, and exhibited in greater detail, though not with stronger evidence, by some writers of our own age. Thus Dr. Oken tells us that “all life is from the sea;” that “when the sea organism, by self-elevation, succeeds in attaining into form, there issues forth from it a higher organism;” and that “the first organic forms, whether plants or animals, emerged from the shallow parts of the sea.” And so the author of “The Vestiges” attempts to show that new races, both of plants and animals, marine and terrestrial, may be accounted

<sup>1</sup> “Telliamed; ou, Entretiens d’un Philosophe Indien avec un Missionnaire François, sur la Diminution de la Mer, la Formation de la Terre, l’Origine de l’Homme,” 2 vols., 1748.

for, without any act of immediate creation, by a change or transmutation of species resulting from the agency of natural causes. "There is," as he tells us, "another set of phenomena presented in the course of our history; the coming into existence, namely, of a long suite of living things, vegetable and animal, terminating in the families which we still see occupying the surface. The question arises,—In what manner has this set of phenomena originated? Can we touch at, and rest for a moment on, the possibility of plants and animals having likewise been produced in the way of Natural Law, thus assigning but one class of causes for everything revealed to our sensual observation? Or are we at once to reject this idea, and remain content either to suppose that creative power here acted in a different way, or to believe, unexaminingly, that the inquiry is one beyond our powers?"<sup>1</sup> In reply to these questions, he proceeds to show that "there is a balance of probability from actual evidence in favor of *an organic creation by law*," and that "in tracing the actual history of organic beings upon the earth," as revealed by Geology, we find that "these came not at once, as they might have been expected to do if produced by some special act, or even some special interposition of will, on the part of the Deity; they came in a long-continued succession, in the order, as we shall afterwards see more convincingly, of progressive organization, grade following grade, till, from an humble starting-point in both kingdoms, the highest forms were realized." Such is his general principle; and, without entering into the details, we may sum up his general argument by saying, in the words of another,<sup>2</sup> that, according to his theory, "dulse and hen-ware became, through a very wonderful metamorphosis, cabbage and spinach; that kelp-weed and tangle bourgeoned into oaks and willows; and that slack, rope-weed, and green-raw, shot up into mangel-wur-

<sup>1</sup> "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," 6th edition, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> MR. HUGH MILLER, "Footprints of the Creator," p. 226.

zel, rye-grass, and clover." So much for the FLORA; and now for the *Fauna*, and the transition from the one to the other. His views are thus exhibited by Sir David Brewster: "The electric spark, escaping from the wild elements around it, struck life into an elementary and reproductive germ, and sea-plants, the food of animals, first decked the rude pavement of the ocean. The lichen and the moss reared their tiny fronds on the first rocks that emerged from the deep; land-plants, evolving the various forms of fruit and flower, next arose,—the Upas and the bread-fruit tree, the gnarled oak and the lofty cedar. Animal life appeared when the granary of nature was ready with its supplies. A globule, having a new globule forming within itself, which is the fundamental form of organic being, may be produced in albumen by electricity; and as such globules may be identical with living and reproductive cells, we have the earliest germ of organic life, the first cause of all the species of animated nature which people the earth, the ocean, and the air. Born of electricity and albumen, the simple monad is the first living atom; the microscopic animalcules, the snail, the worm, the reptile, the fish, the bird, and the quadruped, all spring from its invisible loins. The human similitude at last appears in the character of the monkey; the monkey rises into the baboon, the baboon is exalted to the ourang-outang, and the chimpanzee, with a more human toe and shorter arms, gives birth to man."<sup>1</sup>

The remarks which were offered, in the previous section, on Cosmical Development, are equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to this other form of the doctrine of Creation by Natural Law. It might be shown, with reference to the supposed generation of plants and animals, just as it was then shown with reference to the generation of planets and astral systems, first, that the theory rests upon a mere hypothesis, which is utterly

<sup>1</sup> "North British Review," 1845, p. 483.

unsupported by experimental evidence; secondly, that the progress of science has hitherto afforded no ground to believe that the transmutation of species is provided for under the established constitution of nature; and, thirdly, that even were the theory admitted, it would not destroy the evidence of Theism, any more than the propagation of plants and animals under the existing system, which, so far from excluding or impairing, serves rather to enhance and illustrate the proof of creative wisdom and power. In support of this last position, we might adduce the testimony of the author of "The Vestiges" himself; for, referring to the idea that "to presume a creation of living beings by the intervention of law" is equivalent to "superseding the whole doctrine of the Divine authorship of organic nature," he takes occasion to say, "Were this true, it would form a most important objection to the Law theory; but I think it is not only not true, but the reverse of the truth. As formerly stated, the whole idea of law relates only to the mode in which the Deity is pleased to manifest His power in the natural world. It leaves the absolute fact of His authorship of and supremacy over Nature precisely where it was." He adds, in the words of Dr. Buckland, "Such an aboriginal constitution, so far from superseding an Intelligent Agent, would only exalt our conceptions of the consummate skill and power that could comprehend such an infinity of future uses under future systems, in the original groundwork of His Creation."<sup>1</sup>

But, without enlarging on those general considerations which were formerly stated, and which admit of an easy and obvious application to this *second* form of the theory, we shall offer a few remarks bearing directly on its distinctive peculiarities, and directed to the exposure of its radical defects.

The theory rests on two very precarious foundations: the assumption of *spontaneous generation*, on the one hand, and the

<sup>1</sup> "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," p. 92.

assumption of a *transmutation of species* on the other. Each of these assumptions is necessarily involved in any attempt to account for the origin of the vegetable and animal races by natural law, without direct Divine interposition. For if, after the first organism was brought into being, the production of every subsequent type may be accounted for simply by a transmutation of species, yet the production of the original organism itself, or the first commencement of life in any form, must necessarily be ascribed either to a creative act or to spontaneous generation. A new product is supposed to have come into being, differing from any that ever existed before it, in the possession of vital and reproductive powers; and this product can only be ascribed, if Creation be denied, to the spontaneous action of some element, such as Electricity, on mucus or albumen. In this sense the doctrine of spontaneous generation seems to be necessarily involved in the first step of the process of Development, and is, indeed, indispensable, if any account is to be given of the origin of vegetable and animal life; but in the subsequent steps of the same process it is superseded by a supposed transmutation of species, whereby a lower form of life is said to rise into a higher, and an inferior passes into a more perfect organism.

But we have no experience either of spontaneous generation on the one hand, or of a transmutation of species on the other. Observation has not discovered, nor has history recorded, an authentic example of either. In regard to the *first*, the author of "The Vestiges" anticipates this objection, and attempts to answer it. The objection is, that "a transition from the inorganic to the organic, such as we must suppose to have taken place in the early geological ages, is no ordinary cognizable fact of the present time upon earth; structure, form, life, *are never seen* to be imparted to the insensate elements; the production of the humblest plant or animalcule, otherwise than as a repetition of some parental form, is not

one of the possibilities of science.”<sup>1</sup> Such is the objection; and how does he attempt to answer it? He endeavors to show, first, that the work of creation having been *for the most part* accomplished thousands of years ago, we have no reason to expect “that the origination of life and species should be *conspicuously exemplified* in the present day; secondly, that the comparative infrequency, or even the entire absence, of such phenomena *now* would be no valid reason for believing that they have *never* been exhibited heretofore, if, on other grounds, the doctrine of ‘natural creation’ or ‘life-creating laws’ can be rendered probable; and, thirdly, that even in our own times there ARE facts which seem to indicate the reality, or at least the possibility, of “the primitive imparting of life and form to inorganic elements.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, to this elaborate argument in favor of *spontaneous generation*, or the production of life by natural law, we answer, in the first place, that the mere fact of its being adduced in connection with the Theory of Development affords a conclusive proof that it is indispensable to the maintenance of that theory, that the hypothesis would be incomplete without it, and that no account can be given of creation by the mere doctrine of a *transmutation of species*. It is the more necessary to make this remark, because not a few who embrace the latter doctrine affect to disown the former, and seek to keep it out of view. But the one is as necessary as the other to a complete theory of Natural Development. The author of “The Vestiges” felt this, and virtually acknowledges it when he undertakes the task of vindicating the credibility of spontaneous generation. But we answer, in the second place, that the method in which he performs his self-imposed task is singularly curious, and not a little instructive. He had, it must be owned, a difficult game to play. The general theory of

<sup>1</sup> “The Vestiges,” p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

"The Vestiges" is founded on the fact that, in the ordinary course of Nature, the races of plants and animals are perpetuated by propagation, according to established Natural Laws, — a fact which might seem to afford a strong analogical argument in favor of the supposition that the same order of Nature is maintained also in the few apparently exceptional cases in which, from our defective knowledge, we are unable to trace the connection between the parent and the product. And yet the author evinces no little anxiety to make out a case in favor of "a non-generative origin of life even at the present day;" and he appeals to a class of facts, confessedly obscure, which have not been, as he thinks, satisfactorily accounted for by the law which usually regulates the production of organic beings. He refers us to the speculations of Dr. Allen Thomson on the primitive production of Infusoria,<sup>1</sup> to the facts which modern science, aided by the microscope, has discovered respecting the Entozoa, or the creatures which live within the bodies of others, and, above all, to the experiments of Mr. Crosse and Mr. Weekes, which seemed to result in the production of a small species of insect (*Acarus Crossii*) from the action of a voltaic battery on a saturated solution of the silicate of potash, or the nitrate of copper, or the ferrocyanate of potassium. The reason of his anxiety to avail himself of these cases is evident. The exigencies of his theory demanded a method of accounting for the primary origin of life different from any that can be found in the common process of propagation. He saw clearly enough that his main argument, founded, as it was, on the law of hereditary transmission, could not account for the production of the first organism; and that, if he would avoid either the doctrine of *Immediate Creation*, which is so offensive to him, or the idea of *Eternal Generation*, which is utterly excluded by the clearest lessons of Fossil Geology, he

<sup>1</sup> TODD, "Cyclopædia of Anatomy and Physiology," article, Generation.

must have recourse to the hypothesis of *Spontaneous Generation*. Hence he attempts to account for the commencement of new species both of plants and animals, in the course of the world's history, by a transmutation of species; while, for the origin of the first species, he has recourse to the same law of Development, but acting in widely different circumstances, and giving rise to what he calls "aboriginal generation," whereby the inorganic passes into the organic, and life, form, and structure, are imparted to hitherto inert materials by the action of Electricity on mucus or albumen. To accomplish this twofold purpose, he felt it necessary to insist, in the first instance, on the ordinary law of generation as the established order of *mediate* creation; while he found it equally necessary, in the second place, to insist on those apparently exceptional cases in which the connection between the germ and the product has hitherto eluded philosophical research,—and this for the purpose of showing that the original production of plants and animals was *not similar* to the ordinary method of their propagation in any other respect than this, that in both cases the result is brought about by Natural Laws, without the direct interposition of any supernatural cause.

Now, in so far as his argument is founded on the principle of analogy,—and it is on this principle that it proceeds throughout,—we submit that it is radically vicious, and utterly inconclusive. For the vast majority of cases in which the commencement of life and organization falls under our notice being confessedly those, not of primary production, but of mediate reproduction, it is reasonable to believe that the same law governs all cases alike, whether we have been able or not to trace the origin of life to the principle of propagation, the few apparent exceptions being sufficiently accounted for by our imperfect knowledge of the causes and conditions on which they depend. Besides, the argument from analogy in favor of a primary production of life by natural causes, in so far as it is

founded on the present law of hereditary transmission, is radically defective, since the two cases are widely different; the one presupposing a *primary organism of the same kind*, from which others are evolved by a law of natural succession, the other exhibiting life as a new product, resulting not from any prior organism, but from the action of *causes of a totally different kind*, which are not known to be capable of giving birth either to vegetable or animal organisms under the actual constitution of Nature.

But suppose, even, that the *Acarus Crossii* were admitted to be a real product of Galvanic action on the silicate of potash, and an undeniable instance of "a non-generative origin of life," how would the illustrative example accord with the author's general theory? It might afford a specimen of aboriginal production; but how would it fit in with his favorite doctrine of a *gradual and progressive advancement* from the lower to the higher forms of organization? The *Acarus*, at first supposed to be a new and hitherto unknown creature, is now acknowledged to be one of a very familiar species,—a species which may have deposited its ova, and propagated its kind, since the commencement of the present order of things, and whose eggs might very well resist the action even of nitrate of copper, since the creature itself could live in that poisonous mixture. Moreover, it belongs, in point of organization, to one of the highest orders of organisms; not to the *radiata*, not to the *mollusca*, but to the highest type of the *articulata*, the nearest to the *vertebrata*. Had it been a monad,—a mere living cell,—which Galvanism evolved from the solution, and had this primary product developed itself afterwards in various forms, according to the ascending scale of a progressively improving organization, it might have accorded admirably with the twofold doctrine of spontaneous generation and transmutation of species; but, unfortunately, the first process is so perfect, in the present instance, as to leave little room for the

second, and we are almost tempted to hope that perhaps the clumsy and troublesome expedient of a transmutation of species may yet be superseded by the discovery of some method,—we know not what,—whereby not only the *articulata*, but the *vertebrata*, and even Man himself, may be immediately produced by some new combination of Nature's elemental laws!<sup>1</sup>

We have given prominence, in the first instance, to the doctrine of "spontaneous" or "aboriginal" production, because it constitutes an indispensable part of the Theory of Development, and because we believe that, were this clearly understood, that theory would soon sink into general discredit or total oblivion, like the kindred speculations of Anaximander and Anaxagoras, of the old Ionic School. The experiments of Ehrenberg, instituted with the view of testing the doctrine of spontaneous generation, may be said to have decided the whole question. They did not succeed, indeed, in explaining every apparently exceptional case, for some of the facts are still obscure, and will probably continue to be so, notwithstanding every extension of microscopic power, just as, in the analogous case of the Nebulæ, the increase of telescopic power has enabled us to resolve not a few of them into clusters of stars, while it has served to bring others yet unresolved within the range of our vision. But they were sufficient, at least, to show that, as far as our clear knowledge extends, the one uniform law, "*Omne vivum ex ovo*," universally prevails, and that the whole analogy of Nature, in so far as its constitution has been ascertained, is adverse to the doctrine of spontaneous generation. Ehrenberg detected the minute germs of vegetable mould, and the ova of some of the smallest animalcules; and when it is considered that these germs and ova are so tenacious

<sup>1</sup> MR. HUGH MILLER, "Footprints of the Creator," p. 233. T. MONCK MASON, "Creation by the Immediate Agency of God." "Princeton Theological Essays," Second Series, p. 422.

of vitality that certain prolific seeds have come down to us from the age of the Pharaohs in the wrappings of the Egyptian mummies,—that they are widely diffused in the air and the waters, insomuch that no sooner does a coral reef appear above the level of the sea than it is forthwith covered with herbage by means of seeds wafted by the winds or deposited by the waves,—and that it is almost impossible to exclude them by any artificial expedient, since they are capable of resisting the action of boiling water and even of alcohol itself,—it cannot, we think, be denied that the few cases which still remain obscure or unexplained may be, at least, *probably* accounted for in accordance with the same natural law which is found to be invariably established in every department to which our clear knowledge extends.

In regard, again, to the supposed “transmutation of species,” we are equally warranted in affirming that it is destitute of all experimental evidence, and unsupported even by any natural analogy. As the doctrine of spontaneous generation stands opposed to the maxim that *organic life can be produced only by organic life*, so the doctrine of a transmutation of species stands opposed to the equally certain maxim that *like produces like, both in the vegetable and animal kingdoms*. Cuvier has demonstrated, with reference to the birds and reptiles preserved in Egypt, an entire fixity and uniformity of species, in every, even the least, particular, for at least three thousand years.<sup>1</sup> In the actual course of Nature we see no tendency to change; nay, a barrier seems to have been erected in the constitution of Nature itself to prevent the possible confusion of races by promiscuous intercourse, through that provision which renders the mule incapable of reproduction. No plant has ever been found in a state of transition from a lower to a higher form; no instance has ever been produced of one of

<sup>1</sup> CUVIER, “Ossemens Fossiles,” p. 61.

the algæ being transmuted into the lowest form of terrestrial vegetation; nor of a small gelatinous body developing itself into a fish, a bird, or a beast; nor of an ourang-outang rising into a man.<sup>1</sup> It is true, indeed, that "there is a capacity in all species to accommodate themselves, to a certain extent, to a change of external circumstances, this extent varying greatly according to the species. There may thus arise changes of appearance or structure, and some of these changes are transmissible to the offspring; but the mutations thus superinduced are *governed by constant laws and confined within certain limits*. Indefinite divergence from the original type is not possible, and the extreme limit of possible variation may usually be reached in a short period of time; in short, species have a real existence in Nature, and a transformation from one to another does not exist."<sup>2</sup>

The whole science of Natural History is based on the existence of distinct species, capable of being discriminated from each other by certain characteristic marks; and the whole art of the agriculturist and the stockbreeder proceeds on the assumption of a law, invariable in its operation, whereby "like produces like in the vegetable and animal worlds." The instances to which the author of "The Vestiges" refers in support of his theory are utterly frivolous when opposed to the copious inductions to which they are opposed; and they may all be explained consistently with the *law of variation within definite limits*, as stated by Dr. Whewell, or by our ignorance of all the conditions involved in each particular case. Nor is his argument founded on the limited range of our observation, even with its singular illustration derived from Mr. Babbage's calculating engine, fitted to diminish, in the slightest degree, our confidence in the general results of

<sup>1</sup> MR. HUGH MILLER, "Footprints," p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> DR. WHEWELL'S "Indications," p. 54.

these inductions ; for, not to mention that it amounts to nothing more than an appeal from what we do know to what we do not know, from knowledge to ignorance, from the certainties of science to the mere possibilities of conjecture, it has been well shown by Mr. Miller, that our range of observation is not so limited as the author of "The Vestiges" would have us to believe, since "*extent of space* is, in a matter of this kind, equivalent to *duration of time*. For, although no man has lived five hundred years, so as to observe the gradual development of the oak from the acorn in its various stages of progress, yet every man who can survey five hundred yards of an English forest, can see the oak in every stage of its growth, and need have no doubt as to the law of its progressive development. And so, had there really been such a transmutation of species as is contended for, we might expect to find, somewhere on the vastly extended sea coasts of our islands and continents, some specimens of plants or animals in a state of transition from the lower to the higher forms."

We are told, indeed, in answer to this argument, that Mr. Babbage's engine produces numbers according to a certain law up to a particular point, and then, most unexpectedly, perhaps even unaccountably, the law of the series is changed, and the next term exhibits a striking departure from the order previously followed ; and so, it is argued, it may be in nature. Each organism may propagate after its kind for immense periods, so as to give the impression of this being an invariable law ; but at a certain stage the order may change, and the next term in the series may differ from all that went before it. The argument — if it can be called an argument — amounts to this : Mr. Babbage's machine produces a *series of numbers, and of numbers only*, but according to different laws of succession ; *ergo*, Nature may produce in the same way, and with similar variations, *different races of plants and animals*. The argument would have been perfect if the engine had produced

*something else than numbers* ; if, as Professor Dod supposes, "while watching Mr. Babbage's machine, presenting to us successive numbers by the revolution of its plates, we should suddenly see one of those plates resolving itself into types, and these types arranging themselves in the order of a page of 'Paradise Lost,' or even of 'The Vestiges of Creation ;'—in such a case, there might have been something in the argument ; but even then, the withering question remains, Is there any man in his senses who would not immediately conclude that *some new cause was now at work ?*"

In short, in so far as the *facts of the case* are concerned, there is not only no known instance either of "spontaneous generation" or of "transmutation of species," but there is not even any natural analogy that can give the theory the slightest aspect of verisimilitude. The author of "The Vestiges" thinks that a presumption in its favor may be derived from "the analogy of the inorganic world,"—in other words, from the supposed conversion of nebulae into planets and astral systems by the operation of natural causes ; but this analogy has been conclusively set aside by disproving the hypothesis on which it depends. He further thinks that a favorable presumption may be derived from "the analogy of the organic world,"—in other words, from the process of propagation by which the races of plants and animals are perpetuated ; but the presumption thence derived, so far from being favorable, is directly opposed to his theory, since all the facts which come under our cognizance in every department of Nature serve only to establish the two great maxims of Natural History,—that *organic life can spring only from organic life*, and that *like produces like, both in the vegetable and animal world*.

If we have succeeded in disposing of *the facts of the case*, we shall have little difficulty in exposing *the fallacy of the principles* which are involved in the author's speculations on this subject. It is of fundamental importance, in this inquiry, to

form a clear and correct conception of the precise point at issue, and of the two alternatives between which we are called to make our choice. It has been well said that "the great antagonist points in the array of the opposite lines are simply the LAW of Development *versus* the MIRACLE of Creation."<sup>1</sup> And the author of "The Vestiges" virtually acknowledges this to be the real state of the question, when he says that "if we can see no *natural* origin for species, a *miraculous* one must be admitted."<sup>2</sup> Now, the grand alternative being Creation by Miracle or Creation by Law, that is, Creation by a Natural or by a Supernatural cause, we affirm that it is utterly presumptuous and unphilosophical to represent the one as less worthy of God, or more derogatory to His infinite perfections, than the other. Yet the author does not hesitate to say that the *natural* ought to be preferred to the *miraculous* method of accounting for the origin both of planets and of their inhabitants, for this among other reasons, that the latter would be derogatory to the wisdom and power of the Most High. His words are remarkable: "The Eternal Sovereign arranges a solar or an astral system by dispositions imparted primordially to matter; He causes, by the same majestic means, vast oceans to form and continents to rise, and all the grand meteoric agencies to proceed in ceaseless alternation, so as to fit the earth for a residence of organic beings. But when, in the course of these operations, fuci and corals are to be for the first time placed in those oceans, a particular interference of the Divine power is required; and this special attention is needed whenever a new family of organisms is to be introduced,—a new fiat for fishes, another for reptiles, a third for birds; nay, taking up the present views of Geologists as to species, such an event as the commencement of a certain cephalopod, one with a few new nodulosites and corrugations upon its shell, would, on

<sup>1</sup> "Footprints of the Creator," p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> "The Vestiges," p. 105.

this theory, require the particular care of that same Almighty who willed at once the whole means by which infinity was replenished with its worlds?" . . . "Is it conceivable, as a fitting mode of exercise for Creative Intelligence, that it should be constantly paying a special attention to the creation of species, as they may be required in each situation throughout those worlds at particular times? Is such an idea accordant with our general conception of the dignity, not to speak of the power, of the Great Author?" . . . "It would be distressing to be compelled to picture the power of God as put forth *in any other manner* than in those slow, mysterious, universal laws which have so plainly an eternity to work in."<sup>1</sup>

Such is the author's presumptuous decision on a matter which is far "too high for him." We offer the following remarks upon it:

*First* of all, let it be observed that, unless on the principle of absolute Atheism, which he professes to repudiate, he cannot but acknowledge that *once*, at least, the power of God must have been put forth *in another manner* than "in those slow, mysterious, universal laws" of which he speaks; and that, even if he could succeed in disproving "repeated interferences of creative power," he could in nowise dispense with a primitive act of direct, immediate, supernatural creation, since he does not profess to believe in the eternal existence of matter and its laws. We find, indeed, that even in the subsequent acts of a continuous, but mediate creation, he is compelled to acknowledge a supernatural power as acting, in each individual case, according to established natural laws; for he says expressly, "There cannot be *an inherent intelligence in these laws*; the intelligence appears *external to the laws*, something of which the laws are but as the expression of the will and power. If this be admitted, the laws cannot be regarded as primary or

<sup>1</sup> "The Vestiges," pp. 91, 96.

independent causes of the phenomena of the physical world. We come, in short, to a being beyond Nature, — its Author, its God." . . . "When we speak of Natural Law, we only speak of *the mode in which the Divine power is exercised*; it is but another phrase for *the action of the ever-present and sustaining God.*"<sup>1</sup> It is admitted, then, *first*, that there must have been a primary act of creation, in the highest and strictest sense, by a direct and immediate interposition of Divine power, at the commencement of created existence; and, *secondly*, that, even in the continuous work of creation, which is supposed to have been subsequently carried on after the method of development by established natural laws, Divine agency is still equally real, although it is differently manifested, and is indispensably necessary to account for the resulting products. Now, can it be reasonably asserted that the direct and immediate creation of such a being as Man would be more derogatory to the wisdom and power of God than the primordial production of "a universal Fire-Mist," or even of "electricity and albumen?" or, will it be pretended that immediate creation of molluscs as molluscs, of fishes as fishes, of reptiles as reptiles, would be less worthy of the great Author of Nature than the establishment of a system which *must* in due time give them birth, and that, too, not-without the concurrence and coöperation of the Divine will; for "natural law is but another phrase for *the action of the ever-present and sustaining God?*"

But, while we hold that there is no good ground for an affirmative answer to these questions, we would carefully guard against rushing to the opposite extreme, and affirming, either that the production of new races by the method of natural law was, on *a priori* grounds, impossible, or that God might not have adopted that method, had He so pleased, in perfect consistency with the manifestation of His wisdom and power. We

<sup>1</sup> "The Vestiges," p. 9.

see that He has done so, under the actual constitution of Nature, so far as the production of *individuals* is concerned; we see not why a similar provision might not have been made for the production of *genera and species*. In either way His power and His wisdom might have been displayed. But, when we are told that the one is derogatory to the Divine Majesty, and the other alone consistent with the loftiest views of His perfections, we denounce the whole speculation as one that is alike presumptuous and unphilosophical, on the simple but conclusive ground that we are in no degree competent judges of the best method either of creating or of governing the world. Had we been asked to say whether it was likely that, under the rule of infinite wisdom and almighty power, certain insects, reptiles, and fishes, that are unattractive to the eye, and loathsome to the fastidious taste of many, could find a place at all among the works of God, we might have thought it improbable that they should be created; but they exist notwithstanding, and the fact of their existence is enough to silence all our presumptive reasonings. And surely it is not less—it is much more—presumptuous to affirm that, existing as they do, they could not have been brought into being, without disparagement to Divine wisdom, otherwise than by the action of established laws, or by a process of natural development; as if it were unworthy of God to *produce* that for whose production He confessedly did make *provision*.

But, further, we see here very strikingly exemplified the tendency of such speculations to *exclude God from all real, active, and direct connection with His works*. The dominion of Natural Law, which, as we shall afterwards see, is held by M. Comte and Mr. Combe to exclude the doctrine of a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer, is here extended, by the author of “*The Vestiges*,” so as to be exclusive also of any direct Divine interposition in the work of Creation itself, other than what may have been implied in the aboriginal production

of matter and its laws, or in the subsequent concurrence of His will with the action of these laws in the established order of Nature.

We have said that the Theory of Development, as expounded in "The Vestiges," is not necessarily atheistic, partly because the author professedly disclaims Atheism, and partly also because, in strict logic, it might still be possible, even on the basis of that theory, considered simply in itself and apart from the speculations with which it has been associated, to construct, from the actual phenomena of Nature, a valid proof for the being and attributes of God. And yet we have thought it necessary to advert to it as one of the recent speculations of science, because, whatever may be its *professed aim*, its *practical tendency* is unquestionably hostile to the influence of religious truth. It will be found, in the great majority of cases, and especially in the case of ardent youthful minds, that this theory, when it is embraced as an article of their philosophic creed, is, to all practical purposes, tantamount to Atheism. For not to insist on the consideration, so forcibly stated by others,<sup>1</sup> that the natural argument for the Immortality of Man, or for the doctrine of a Future Life, as implying distinct individuality and continued self-consciousness, must be materially weakened, if not entirely neutralized, by a theory of development which traces the human lineage up through the monkeys and fishes to albumen impregnated by electricity, or, further still, to a diffused Nebula or universal Fire-Mist,—we think that the Sensational and Materialistic speculations with which the work abounds have a tendency to weaken the evidence for a living, personal, spiritual God, as the Creator and Moral Governor of the world, and to diminish that reverence, confidence, and love, which these aspects of His character

<sup>1</sup> HUGH MILLER, "Footprints," pp. 13, 15. PROFESSOR DOD, "Princeton Theological Essays," II. 432.

alone can inspire. The system of Epicurus, although it contained a formal recognition of a First Cause, has always been held to be practically atheistic, simply because it removed God from the active superintendence of the affairs of the world, and excluded the doctrine of a special providence and of a moral government. It was held, in the words of Cicero, "*Epicurum verbis reliquisse Deos,—re sustulisse.*"<sup>1</sup> And so, in "*The Vestiges*," Natural Law is substituted for Supernatural Interposition, not only in the common course of Providence, but in the stupendous work of Creation itself.

### SECTION III.

#### THEORY OF SOCIAL OR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT.—

##### AUGUSTE COMTE.

It might have been thought that the principle of Development had exhausted its powers, and achieved its highest triumphs, when it had been applied successively to account, first, for the creation of planets and astral systems, and, secondly, for the production of vegetable and animal life; and that little could remain for it to do after it had succeeded in tracing the genealogy of MAN back, in a direct line through many generations, to the nebulous matter or luminous Fire-Mist which was diffused at the beginning of time throughout the Universe. But, on a more careful study of its last and highest product,—MAN, with his intellectual and moral nature, his religious beliefs, his social history, and his immortal hopes,—it seemed as if there were still some phenomena which remained to be accounted for, some facts of palpable reality and great magnitude which had not yet been adequately explained. The

<sup>1</sup> CICERO, "*De Naturâ Deorum*," L. II.

mental faculties and their operations, the moral laws that are universally recognized and appealed to, the social institutions which have been established, the religious beliefs and feelings which have generally prevailed, and the rites of worship which have been observed in all ages and climes, were so widely different from the phenomena of mere vegetable or animal life, that they seemed to demand a distinct account of their origin; and it might not be apparent, at first sight, how they could be reduced under the same all-pervading law by which the planets were formed, so as to exclude all idea of Divine supernatural interposition. This Herculean task was fearlessly undertaken, however, by M. AUGUSTE COMTE, and it has been elaborated with singular ability in his ponderous work, the "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*."

M. Comte's Course of Positive Philosophy began to be delivered at Paris in the winter of 1829-30, and was completed in its published form in 1842-43. It comprehends a general outline of all the branches of Inductive Science, and of the relations which they bear to each other; and they are expounded in a style singularly copious, clear, and forcible. He has acquired, in consequence, a high reputation as a philosophical thinker, and has already found, in our own country, some able allies, and not a few enthusiastic admirers. The "*System of Logic*," by John Stuart Mill, and "*The Biographical History of Philosophy*," by G. H. Lewes, are avowedly indebted to his speculations for some of their most characteristic contents; while the outline of his theory has been presented to the more popular class of readers in England through the columns of "*The Leader*," and in Scotland through those of "*The Glasgow Mechanics' Journal*."

It is not my intention, nor is it necessary for my present purpose, to offer any remarks on the strictly scientific portion of his voluminous work. I shall confine myself exclusively to those speculations which bear, more or less directly, on the

great cause of Natural and Revealed Religion, selecting them from all the various parts of his work, and exhibiting them, in one comprehensive view, as a compact theory of absolute and avowed Atheism.

The fundamental idea of his system is a supposed "law of the development of human thought," which regulates and determines the whole progress of the species in the acquisition of knowledge. This law is announced with the air of a man who has made a great discovery, and who is entitled, in consequence, to be regarded both as an original thinker, and as a benefactor to the world. "I believe," he says, "that I have discovered a grand fundamental law,"—"the fundamental law of the development of the human mind;" . . . . "the grand law which I have indicated in the first part of my system of Positive Politics, . . . . where I have divulged, for the first time, the discovery of this law."<sup>1</sup> Now, what, it may be asked, is this marvellous discovery, which bids so fair both to immortalize its author and to enlighten the world? It is stated briefly in the *first*, and illustrated at greater length in the *fourth* and following volumes of his work. The general outline of his theory is thus sketched: "That law consists in this,—that each one of our leading conceptions, every branch of our knowledge, passes successively through *three different theoretic states*: the state theological or fictitious, the state metaphysical or abstract, and the state scientific or positive. In other words, the human mind, by its nature, employs successively, in each of its researches, three methods of philosophizing, whose character is essentially different, and even *radically opposed*: first, the Theological method; then, the Metaphysical; and, last of all, the Positive. Hence three systems of Philosophies, which *mutually exclude each other*. The first

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours de Philosophie Positive," I. 3, 6, 14; IV. viii., 653, 656, 708, 711, 723; V. 1, 9.

is the necessary starting-point of the human mind ; the third is its fixed, ultimate state ; the second is purely provisional, and destined merely to serve as an intermediate stage.”<sup>1</sup>

These are the *three* great stages through which the collective mind of Humanity must necessarily pass in its progressive advancement towards a perfect knowledge of truth ; but of these three, the *first*, or the Theological Epoch, is again subdivided, and exhibited as commencing with Fetishism, then advancing to Polytheism, and finally consummated in Monotheism.

FETISHISM is supposed to have been the first form of the Theological Philosophy ; and it is described as consisting in the ascription of a life and intelligence essentially analogous to our own to every existing object, of whatever kind, whether organic or inorganic, natural or artificial. It is traced to a primitive tendency, supposed to exist equally in man and in the lower animals, to conceive of all external objects as animated, and to ascribe to them the same, or similar, powers and feelings with those which belong to the living tribes themselves.<sup>2</sup> “Let an infant, for example, or a savage, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a dog or a monkey, behold a watch for the first time, there will doubtless be no immediate profound difference, unless in respect to the manner of representing it, between the spontaneous conception which will represent to the one and the other that admirable product of human industry as a sort of veritable animal, having its own peculiar tastes and inclinations ; whence results, consequentially, in this respect, a Fetishism fundamentally common to both, the former only having the exclusive privilege of being able ultimately to get out of it.” This instinctive and spontaneous belief—the natural, and, indeed, the necessary result of a

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, “Cours de la Philosophie Positive,” I. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, v. 30, 42, 50, 96, 98, 101.

tendency inherent in living beings — is conceived to have been an indispensable and a most useful provision for the primeval state of man, and to have exerted a highly salutary influence on the progressive development of human thought. It is contrasted with the subsequent but more advanced stage of Polytheism;<sup>1</sup> and the latter is held to denote a spontaneous belief in supernatural beings, distinct from and even independent of matter, since it is passively subject to their will; while the former considers matter itself as animated, and has no idea of any higher or more spiritual form of being. It is further supposed that idolatry, properly so called, belongs to Fetishism only, and not at all to Polytheism, for this singular, but not very conclusive reason, among others, that if Polytheism be justly chargeable with idolatry because it recognizes many wills superior to Nature and having power over it, Catholicism would be equally liable to the same charge in respect of the homage which it renders to saints and angels!<sup>2</sup>

But Fetishism is only the initial step in the process of our intellectual development; and it passes into Polytheism, not suddenly and *per saltum*, but slowly and gradually, through the intermediate stage of "*Astrolatrie*," or the worship of the heavenly bodies. The mind is imperceptibly divested of the idea that everything around it is animated, and, by a process of real, but as yet imperfect generalization, it rises from Fetishism to Polytheism; in which latter system of belief an order of powers superior to Nature is recognized, while as yet there is no conception of a supreme and all-perfect Mind. The Polytheistic system, which prevailed so universally in the ancient world, and which still prevails among Heathen nations, is supposed to have been, not a *declension* from a purer and better state, not a *corruption* either of natural or revealed religion, but a *step in advance* of the primary faith of mankind, a

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 37, 75, 91, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v. 58, 87, 94, 105, 125, 278.

result of growing intelligence, a vast and most beneficial change in the right direction. It was the first great product of the metaphysical spirit, the result of an early but imperfect generalization; it constituted the principal era of the theological history of mankind; it was admirably adapted, and, indeed, indispensably necessary, to the exigencies of society at the time when it prevailed; it was more intensely religious than Monotheism itself, since it brought man habitually into contact with a multitude of gods, whose symbols were always present and visible to the eye, while it exerted a wholesome influence on Science, on Poetry, on Industry, on Morals, and, indeed, on the whole process of man's mental and social development.<sup>1</sup>

But Polytheism, although indispensable and salutary as a provisional belief, was not destined to be permanent; it was to be superseded in due time, at least in the case of the *élite* of humanity, by the higher and still more abstract system of Monotheism, which is regarded as the natural and inevitable product of human intelligence, independently of all supernatural teaching, at a certain stage of its development. But here, as in the former instance, the change is not effected suddenly; the human mind advances gradually from Polytheism to Monotheism, through the intermediate stage of the idea of Immutability or Destiny, — an idea suggested partly by the study of the invariable order of Nature, and partly by the irresistible domination of one great temporal power, such as the iron empire of Rome.<sup>2</sup> Historically, indeed, Monotheism is said to have spread in Europe through the Jews, who derived it from Egypt; but it is added that, had there been no Jews, others would have given birth to a system so necessary for the development of human thought. The prevalence of Monotheism, for a limited time, was useful, and even necessary, as

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 107, 115, 119, 124, 136, 148, 162, 167, 207, 224, 229.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v. 128, 164, 268, 279, 284, 290.

the natural result of the great law of human progress, and the indispensable precursor of a new and brighter era; but it was temporary and provisional merely,—a stage in the onward march of development, not the ultimate landing-place of human thought. It is conceived to be radically incompatible with the recognition of invariable natural laws, and even with the exercise of the industrial arts.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, the last and highest form of the Theological Philosophy; and, having reached this stage, the human mind necessarily advances beyond it, until it arrives at a point where all theology disappears, and where it is entirely and forever emancipated from all the beliefs, the hopes, and the fears which have any reference to an invisible spiritual world.

The ultimate goal of speculative thought is “the Positive Philosophy,” which treats only of the Facts of Nature, and of their coördination under general laws, to the utter exclusion of all supernatural powers, and of all knowledge of causes, whether *efficient* or *final*. But this goal cannot be reached, it seems, by a sudden or abrupt transition from the Theological to the Atheistic creed. There must be an intermediate stage,—the era, in short, of Metaphysics,—during which the process of Criticism will operate as a solvent on all previous beliefs, and by producing Skepticism, in the first instance, in regard to all other systems, will tend at length to concentrate the attention of mankind exclusively on the truths of Inductive Science. The Metaphysical Philosophy is held to be the necessary, but temporary stage of transition from the theological to the positive method in science. It is destined to supersede the one, and to introduce the other. It is conceived to be equally at variance with both; and the era of its ascendancy is described as a critical, destructive, revolutionary age, useful only as it delivers mankind from the shackles of former beliefs, and

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, “Cours,” v. 297, 325, 461, 470; vi. 231.

prepares them for the adoption of a new and purely natural system of thought. During this era of decomposition there will commence the reconstruction of human opinion on new and more solid foundations; and the transition from Monotheism to Positive Science will be the greatest achievement of the race, greater far than the advancement from Fetishism to Polytheism, or even from Polytheism to Monotheism itself. The culminating point of human progress is absolute and universal Atheism.<sup>1</sup>

Surely such a prospect may well arrest the most thoughtless, and prompt them to inquire, with some measure of moral earnestness, What *is* this Positive Philosophy, this ultimate landing-place of human thought, this final goal of human progress? Is it nothing else than the Inductive Science of Bacon, but under a new and less attractive name? or is it a philosophy radically different from it, and entitled, therefore, to be regarded as an original method? The author tells us that he might have called it "Natural Science," or "the Philosophy of Nature," since it treats of Facts and their Laws; but that he had been induced to prefer the distinctive title of *positive*, as one better fitted to mark the contrast between it and the *negative* character of those metaphysical and theological systems which it is destined to supersede. And yet it will be found that, in so far as it differs at all from the Inductive Science of Bacon, it is purely *negative*, since its chief characteristic is the negation of all Theology, and the entire exclusion from the domain of human knowledge, of Causes, whether efficient or final. It *adds* nothing to the sum of human thought which might not be reached by Bacon's method; it only *subtracts* whatever has reference to the Divine and Supernatural, and especially everything connected with the theory of Causation. It makes no new contribution to the general stock,

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 479, 487, 496, 505; vi. 2.

unless, indeed, it be the hitherto unknown law of development which is supposed to regulate and determine the progress of humanity from primeval Fetishism to ultimate Atheism; and it takes away Theology, with all its ennobling beliefs and blessed hopes, not by grappling with and solving, but by merely discarding the problem both of the origin and end of the world.

That this is a correct account of the new theory is evident from his own words: "The fundamental character of the Positive Philosophy is, to regard all phenomena as subjected to invariable natural *laws*, the precise discovery of which, and their reduction to the least possible number, is the end of all our efforts; while we regard the investigation of what are called *causes*, whether first or final, as absolutely *inaccessible and void of sense for us*." . . . . "We have no pretension to expound the producing causes of the phenomena, for in that we can never do more than push back the difficulty; we seek only to analyze with exactitude the circumstances of their production, and to connect them with one another by the normal relations of *succession and similitude*."—"In the positive state of science, the human mind, acknowledging the impossibility of obtaining absolute knowledge, abandons the search after the *origin and destination* of the universe, and the knowledge of the secret *causes* of phenomena."<sup>1</sup>

It is thus plainly announced that the Positive Philosophy is the science of facts and their laws, exclusive of all reference to causes, efficient or final; and it is even admitted that Theology could not be excluded, were it deemed legitimate or possible for the human mind to investigate the causes of phenomena.

Viewing the theory in this light, we submit the following remarks as a sufficient antidote to this daring but impotent

<sup>1</sup> COMTE, "Cours," I. 4, 10; IV. 664, 669, 676, 702.

attempt to exclude Theology from the domain of human knowledge.

1. It is worthy of notice how completely the Infidel party have shifted their ground and changed their tactics since the era of the first French Revolution; and how utterly inconsistent are the arguments of M. Comte and the Positive School with those of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists. Formerly, Religion was wont to be ascribed to priestcraft; it was supposed to have been invented by fraud, supported by falsehood, and professed in hypocrisy; and the Church, but especially the hierarchy of Rome, was the object of incessant ridicule or malignant abuse. But now, Religion is discovered to be the natural, necessary, and salutary result of the legitimate action of the human faculties in the earlier stages of their development, the initial impellent of social progress, the indispensable condition of advancing civilization; and, on the broad, general principle that sincerity of conviction is essential to wide-spread success, the theory which ascribes its origin to the fraud or the policy, whether of kings, or priests, or fanatics, is scouted as a mere delirium of Voltaire, or as one of those revolutionary prejudices of his disastrous era which were alike irrational and injurious. And the Church, so far from being ridiculed or maligned, is lauded above measure as the highest extant product of *human* wisdom; Catholicism is even preferred to Christianity itself, as a manifest improvement on the more primitive form of faith and worship; it is declared to be the indispensable basis of the future reorganization of society, which, when it shall have been freed from all theological influence, its only point of weakness, will still survive, with its separate speculative class, its imposing public forms, and its splendid hierarchy, — an Atheistic society, but still Catholic and One.<sup>1</sup> The change, in this respect, between the opinions

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 299, 326, 345; vi. 62, 72, 157, 234, 503, 864.

which prevailed, respectively, at the era of the *first* and that of the *second* Revolution, is at once striking and instructive. It shows how variable and vacillating is the wretched creed of Infidelity, and how the firm maintenance of truth will eventually compel the homage, even where it may not succeed in carrying the convictions, of speculative minds. That Religion in all its successive forms, from the rudest Fetishism up to the sublimest Christian Monotheism, has been the natural and genuine product of human intelligence, working ever onward and upward to a still higher stage of development,—that its existence was inevitable, and its influence, on the whole, highly beneficial,—and that, even when it shall have passed away, society will still be largely indebted to it for the impulse, yet unspent, which it has imparted to the cause of civilization and progress,—all this is admitted and even maintained by M. Comte, in direct and often derisive opposition to the theorists who once ascribed its origin to fraud, and its prevalence to priestcraft; nay, he elevates it to the rank of a primordial and indispensable element of human progress, a necessary and legitimate result of the great law of human development. We know of no parallel instance of a change of opinion so great and sudden, unless it be the marvellous transition of certain modern Rationalists who were wont to ridicule the doctrine of the Trinity as absurd and incomprehensible, but who have now arrived at the conclusion that it is the fundamental law of human thought!<sup>1</sup> -

Still, with all this outward homage to Religion, considered as a mere matter of history, the theory of M. Comte is essentially and even avowedly Atheistic. It is mainly designed to account for the origin of all Religion, whether Natural or Revealed, without having recourse to the supposition either of the existence of God, or of his interposition at any time in the

<sup>1</sup> ABBÉ MARET, "Theodicée Chretienne," p. 218.

affairs of men. He seems to have proposed to himself a two-fold object: *first*, to account for the prevalence of the various forms of natural religion and superstition, without recognizing any valid evidence for the existence of supernatural powers; and, *secondly*, to account for the origin of Judaism and Christianity, or, as he calls it, of Monotheism, without recognizing the reality of any Divine Revelation. And he attempts to accomplish *both* objects by means of the same law — a law of development which, in primitive times, produced Fetishism — which then produced Polytheism; then Monotheism; then the Metaphysical transition era, during which all Theology is undergoing a process of disintegration and decay; and, last of all (the noblest, because the latest, birth of time), the Positive Philosophy, under whose predicted ascendancy all Theology must die and be buried in everlasting oblivion. His theory is not merely Anti-Protestant, although it is bitterly so;<sup>1</sup> nor merely Anti-Christian, as opposed to all Revelation; but it is Anti-Theological, as opposed to all Religion. It proposes to eliminate Theology from the scheme of our knowledge, by showing that it is utterly inaccessible to our faculties, and neither necessary to society nor useful to morals.<sup>2</sup> It anticipates the time, as being near at hand, when it shall have no existence, save on the historic page.

2. This Atheistic theory rests entirely on a supposed discovery of M. Comte,—the discovery of *a law of human development*, which serves at once to account for the origin and prevalence of Theological beliefs in the past, and to insure their utter disappearance in the future; a law which, like the magician's wand, can raise the apparition, and then lay it again! Now, of this law we affirm and undertake to prove that it is *utterly groundless*; that it has no solid basis of evidence on which it can be established; that it is contradicted by the

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 327, 344, 369, 538, 582, 684; VI. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v. 428, 597, 684, 836; VI. 419, 521, 860.

history of the world, and opposed to our own experience at the present day.

It can scarcely be imagined that a man accustomed, as M. Comte has been, to the severe pursuits of Science, could give publicity to a law of this kind, and claim the credit of a great original discovery, without having some plausible reasons to plead for it; and he does assign certain reasons for his belief, which are, it may be safely affirmed, as frivolous and inconclusive as any that have ever been offered in support of the most baseless revery. They may be reduced to THREE; the *first*, derived from our cerebral organization; the *second*, from the history of a certain portion of our species; the *third*, from the analogy of our individual experience.<sup>1</sup>

He founds, in the first instance, on our *cerebral organization*. He is an ardent admirer of Drs. Gall and Spurzheim, and has no scruple in avowing himself a decided Materialist. It is unnecessary here to enter on a discussion of Materialism, or even of Phrenology,—that will be done hereafter; in the mean time it is enough merely to indicate the fact that the theory proceeds on that ground, and then to inquire *how the fundamental law of Development is deduced from it*. How does the theory of Materialism, or even of Phrenology, were it assumed on the one side and admitted on the other, contribute to the establishment or verification of that law? Suppose it to be conceded that every mental faculty or propensity has a distinct cerebral organ, or, more generally, that the brain may be divided into three parts, representing, respectively, the animal propensities, the more elevated sentiments, and the intellectual faculties; could it be rationally inferred from this concession that human nature must necessarily develop itself after a certain order or method, and especially in the precise way that is indicated in M. Comte's law? Would it prove that Man must

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," I. 44, 141; IV. 673; V. 45, 303.

needs pass, in the process of his mental and social development, through *three* distinct and successive stages,—the preparatory Theological state, the transitory Metaphysical state, and the final Positive state? Would it prove that Religion must first exist as Fetishism, then as Polytheism, then as Monotheism, and thereafter disappear from the earth altogether on the advent of M. Comte? He seems to think that there is a real connection between the cerebral theory and his great fundamental law; but it is not easy for a common reader to discern or to explain it. Considering the cranium, according to what he conceives to be the true anatomical theory, as simply a prolongation of the vertebral column,—the primitive centre of the whole nervous system,—he argues that the functions, intellectual and emotional, which are proper to the upper and anterior parts of it, are less energetic than the animal propensities, whose organs lie in the lower and posterior region, just in proportion as they are further removed from the spine; and that, for this reason, the latter must first come into action, then the intermediate organs of sentiment, and, last of all, the intellectual powers. And this doctrine he applies to the verification both of his otherwise admirable classification of the Sciences, and of his far more doubtful law of human development. We conceive that if it were applicable at all to the problem of human progress, it might possibly be applied to indicate the probable development of an *individual mind*, in the successive stages of infancy, youth, and manhood; but that it does not admit of the same application to *the history of the race*, otherwise than by the aid of a very fanciful analogy. We have no faith in the *a priori* methods of constructing the chart of human history, and tracing the necessary course of social progress, which have recently become so popular in Germany and France. We cannot, with M. Comte, undertake to solve the problem,—Given three lobes of the brain, representing the propensities, affections, and intellectual powers, but

differing from each other in size and situation, what will be the future history of the race, — religious, æsthetic, industrial, metaphysical, social? We cannot, with M. Cousin, undertake to solve the problem, — Given three terms, the finite, the infinite, and the relation between the two, what will be the development of human thought, first, in the experience of individuals, and, secondly, in the history of society?<sup>1</sup> All such problems are too high for us. The history of the human race must be ascertained from the authentic records and extant monuments of the past, not constructed by theories, or divined by *a priori* speculations.

But M. Comte does appeal, in the second instance, to history in confirmation of his views. He is far from affirming, however, that the progress of the race, under the operation of his great law of development, has been either uniform or invariable; on the contrary, he admits, with regard to India, China, and other nations, comprising probably the majority of mankind, whose state, intellectually and socially, has been stationary for ages, that they afford little or no evidence in support of his theory; and for this, among other reasons, he confines himself to the history of what he calls the *élite*, or advanced guard of humanity, and in this way makes it a very "*abstract*" history indeed!<sup>2</sup> Beginning with Greece, as the representative of ancient civilization, and surveying the history of the Roman empire, and of its successors in Western Europe, he endeavors to show that the actual progress of humanity has been, on the whole, in conformity with his general law. He gives no historical evidence, however, of the prevalence of Fetishism in primitive times; *that* is an inference merely, depending partly on his theory of cerebral organization, and partly on the assumption that in the savage state, which is gra-

<sup>1</sup> VICTOR COUSIN, "Introduction à l'Histoire de la Philosophie," I. 121. Ibid., "Cours de la Philosophie," III. 2, 464.

<sup>2</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," V. 3, 5, 22; VI. 32, 481.

tuitously supposed to have been the primitive condition of man, there must have been a tendency to regard every object, natural or artificial, as endowed with life and intelligence. Polytheism, again, he conceives to have been a step in advance, an improvement on the preëxisting state of things, instead of being, as it really was, a declension from a purer and better faith, an aberration from the light of Nature, not less than from the lessons of Revelation. He conceives Monotheism, whether as taught to the Jews by Moses, or to the world at large by Christ and his apostles, to have been the natural product of man's unaided intelligence; and he assumes this, without making a single reference to the supernatural events by which its publication, in either instance, is said to have been accompanied, or to the sacred books in which they are recorded; nay, he does not even name the Founder of the Christian faith, otherwise than by describing him as "the founder, real or imaginary, of this great religious system."<sup>1</sup>

In treating, again, of the Critical or destructive system of Metaphysics, and of the Positive or reconstructive system of the New Philosophy, he adduces no evidence to show that *the same element* is negated by the one and restored by the other; on the contrary, were his statement true in all respects, it would only serve to prove that the Theological element, which is slowly dissipated by Metaphysics, is formally and finally abjured by Positivism. He assumes and asserts, on very insufficient grounds, that there is a real, radical, and necessary contrariety between the facts and laws of Science and the first principles of Theology, whether natural or revealed; and he anticipates, therefore, that in proportion as Science advances, Theology must recede, and ultimately quit the field. He ought to have known that there are minds in every part of Europe as thoroughly scientific as his own, and as deeply imbued with

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," v. 382, "Premier fondateur, réel ou idéal, de ce grand système religieux."

the spirit of modern Inductive Philosophy, who, so far from seeing any discordance between the results of scientific inquiry and the fundamental truths of Theology, are in the habit of appealing to the former in proof or illustration of the latter; and who, the further they advance in the study of the works of Nature, are only the more confirmed in their belief of a Creative Intelligence and a Governing Power. It may be that, in his own immediate circle at Paris, there is a tendency towards Atheism; but, assuredly, no such tendency exists in the highest and most scientific minds of modern Europe. The faith of Bacon, Newton, and Boyle, of Descartes, Leibnitz, and Pascal, in regard to the first principles of Theology, is still the prevailing creed of the Sedgwicks, the Whewells, the Herschells, and the Brewsters of the present day.

The only plausible part of his Historical Survey, and that which, in our apprehension, is the most likely to make some transient impression on the popular mind, is his elaborate attempt to show, with regard to each branch of Science, in detail, that it was enveloped during its infancy in a cloud of superstition; and that just in proportion as the light shone more clearly, or was more distinctly discerned, the cloud was gradually dissipated and dispersed, until, one after another, they were all emancipated from their supposed connection with supernatural causes, and reduced under fixed natural laws. Confounding Theology with Superstition, or failing, at least, to discriminate duly between the two, M. Comte draws a vivid picture of the successive inroads which Science has made on the consecrated domain of Religion, and represents the one as receding just in proportion as the other advances. For as the darkness disappears before the rising sun, whose earliest rays gild only the loftier mountain peaks, but whose growing brightness spreads over the lowly valleys and penetrates the deepest recesses of nature, so Theology gradually retires before the advance of Science, which first conquers and brings

under the rule of natural law the simplest and least complicated branches, such as Mechanics and Astronomy; then attacks the more complex, such as Chemistry and Physiology; and, last of all, advances to the assault of the most difficult, such as Ethics and Sociology; until, having emancipated each of them successively from their previous connection with supernatural beliefs, it effects the entire elimination of Theology, first from the philosophic, and afterwards from the popular creed of mankind. M. Comte conceives that the religious spirit has been steadily decreasing throughout the whole course of human development, from the time when it was universal, in the form of Fetichism, till it reached its most abstract, but least influential form in Monotheism; and that now the period of its decline and fall has arrived, when it is subjected to the powerful solvent of a Metaphysical and Skeptical Philosophy, and when its ultimate extinction is certain under the action of Positive Science.

We deem this by far the most dangerous, because it is the most plausible part of his speculations; so plausible that, even where his reasonings in support of it may fail to carry the full conviction of the understanding, they may yet leave behind them a certain impression unfavorable to faith in Divine things, since they appeal to many palpable facts in the history of Science, too well attested to be doubted, and too important to be overlooked. The theory itself—whatever may be thought of the peculiar form which it has assumed in the hands of M. Comte—cannot be regarded, in its main and essential features, as one of his original discoveries; for the general idea on which it rests had been announced with equal brevity and precision by the celebrated LA PLACE: “Let us survey the history of the progress of the human mind and of its errors; we shall there see *final causes constantly pushed back to the boundaries of its knowledge*. These causes, which Newton pushed back to the limits of the solar system, were, even in his

time, placed in the atmosphere to explain meteoric appearances. They are nothing else, therefore, in the eyes of a philosopher, than *the expression of our ignorance of the true causes.*" Supposing this to be a correct account of the fact, the inference which M. Comte deduces from it might seem to follow very much as a matter of course,—the inference, viz., that in proportion as Science advances and succeeds in subjecting one department of Nature after another to fixed and invariable laws, Theology, or the doctrine of Final Causes, must necessarily recede before it, and, at length, disappear altogether, when human knowledge has reached its highest ultimate perfection. But is it a correct account of the fact? Is it true that the doctrine of Final Causes is less generally admitted, or more dubiously maintained, in regard to those sciences which have already reached their maturity, than in regard to those other sciences which are still comparatively in their infancy? Or is it true that it has lost instead of gaining ground by the progress of scientific discovery, so as to occupy a narrower space and to hold a more precarious footing, *now*, than it did in the earlier ages of ignorance and superstition? Did Final Causes disappear from the view of Newton when he discovered the law which regulates the movements of the heavenly bodies? Did Galen or did Paley discard them when they surveyed the human frame in the light of scientific anatomy? or Harvey, when, impelled and guided by this doctrine as his governing principle, he discovered the circulation of the blood? In what departments of Nature, and in what branches of Science, does the Theistic philosopher or the Christian divine find the clearest and strongest proofs of order, adaptation, and adjustment? Is it not in those very departments of Nature whose laws have been most fully ascertained? in those very branches of Science which have been most thoroughly matured? Did we believe Comte and La Place,

we should expect to find that the doctrine of Final Causes and the science of Theology could now find no footing in the domain of Astronomy, of Physics, or of Chemistry, since in these departments the phenomena have been reduced, by many successive discoveries, to rigorous general laws; and that they could only survive for a brief time by taking refuge in the yet unconquered territory of Meteorology, Biology, and Social Science. But is it so? Examine the Series of Bridgewater Treatises, or any other recent philosophical exposition of the Evidence of Natural Theology, and it will be apparent, on the most cursory review, that in point of fact the arguments and illustrations are derived almost entirely from *the more advanced sciences*; and that, so far from receding or threatening to disappear, Final Causes have only become more prominent and more striking in proportion as inquiring men have succeeded in removing the vail from any department of Nature.

It were easy, indeed, to cull from the records of the past many facts which might seem to give a plausible aspect to the theory of M. Comte. We might be told of the early history of Astronomy, when the astrologer gazed upon the heavens with a superstitious eye, and spoke of the mystic influence of the planets, and constructed the horoscope for the calculation of nativities and the prediction of future events. We might be told of the early history of Anatomy, when, from the entrails of birds and animals, the *haruspex* prognosticated the fate of empires and the fortunes of battle. We might be told of the early history of Chemistry, when alchemists sought in their concoctions a panacea for all human evils, and in their crucibles an alkalest or universal menstruum. We might be told of the early history of Zoölogy, when the augur watched the flight, the singing, the feeding of birds, and applied them to the purposes of divination. We might be told of Aëromancy as the earliest form of Meteorology, and of Geomancy as the earliest

form of Geology.<sup>1</sup> And we might be told of the popular superstitions which lingered, till a very recent period, among the peasantry of our own country, and which are now gradually disappearing in proportion as the light of Religion and Science is diffused.<sup>2</sup> These facts, which appear on the surface of human history, do unquestionably prove that *there has been a process of gradual advancement*, by which each of the sciences has been, in succession, purged of its earlier errors, and placed on a more solid and enduring basis. But they prove nothing more than this: they do *not* prove that these sciences must ultimately supersede Theology, or that they have a necessary tendency towards Atheism. On the contrary, we hold that they afford a valid presumption from analogy on the other side. For suppose, even, that Religion, following the same law of development which determines the progress of every other branch of human knowledge, had become incorporated, in its earlier stages, with many fond and foolish superstitions, the analogy of the other sciences would lead us to conclude that, just as the reveries of Astrology had passed away and given place to a solid system of Astronomy,—and as the vain speculations of Alchemy had been superseded by the useful discoveries of Chemistry,—and as the arts of Augury and Divination had finally issued in the inductive science of true Natural History,—so Theology might also purge itself from the fond conceits which had been for a time incorporated with it, and still survive, after all superstition had passed away, as a sound and fruitful branch of the tree of knowledge.

This is not the precise light, however, in which M. Comte regards Theology. He does not speak of it as *a distinct and independent science*, but rather as *a method of Philosophy*, which has been applied to the explanation of *all* the depart-

<sup>1</sup> "Encyc. Britan.," articles "Augury" and "Divination." DR. THOMSON'S "History of Chemistry."

<sup>2</sup> MR. H. MILLER'S "Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland."

ments of Nature ; and, viewed in this light, he objects to it on the ground that Positive Science peremptorily demands the elimination of all causes, efficient and final, and, consequently, the exclusion of all reference to God, or to any supernatural power, in connection with the laws either of the material or moral world. This is the fundamental basis of his theory. It is assumed that the recognition of natural laws is incompatible with the belief in supernatural powers, and that these laws must be invariable and independent of any superior will. Hence the supposed antagonism between Theology and Physical Science, which is strongly affirmed by M. Comte<sup>1</sup> ; as if the laws of Nature could not exist unless they were independent of the Divine will, or as if the arts of industry could not be pursued, on the supposition of a Providence, without sacrilegious presumption. The laws for which he contends must have had no author to establish, and can have no superior will to control them ; they had no beginning, and can have no end ; they cannot be reversed, suspended, or interfered with ; they are necessary, immutable, and eternal, not subordinate to God, but independent of Him ; they are, in short, nothing less than Destiny or Fate, the same that Cudworth describes as the Democritic, Physiological, or Atheistic Fate, which consists in "the material necessity of all things without a God."<sup>2</sup> Now, we have no jealousy of natural laws. We believe in their existence ; we believe, also, in their regular operation in the ordinary course of Nature ; but we deny that they must needs be *independent* of a supreme will, and affirm that, being subordinate to that will, they are not necessarily *invariable*. They are expressly recognized and cordially maintained by divines, not less than by men of science ; but in such a sense as to be perfectly compatible both with the doctrine of a primitive creation, and also with the possibility of a subsequent

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," I. 13 ; v. 461, 470 ; vi. 86, 126, 148.

<sup>2</sup> DR. CUDWORTH, "Intellectual System," I. 33.

miraculous interposition. The Westminster Divines explicitly declare that "God, the First Cause, by His providence, ordereth all things to fall out *according to the nature of second causes*, either necessarily, freely, or contingently;" and that "in His ordinary providence, He maketh use of means, but is free to act without, above, and against them at His pleasure."<sup>1</sup> But M. Comte will have no laws, however regular, unless they be also invariable, and independent of any superior will. And, doubtless, if this were the sense in which Science has established the doctrine of natural laws, it would be at direct variance with Theology, both Natural and Revealed; and the antagonism between the two might afford some ground for the belief that, sooner or later, Theology must quit the field. But it is not the existence of these natural laws, nor even their regular operation in the common course of Providence, that is hostile to our religious beliefs,—it is only the supposition that they are unoriginated, independent, and invariable; and to assume this without proof, as if it were a self-evident or axiomatic truth, or to apply it in a process of historical deduction respecting either the past development or the future prospects of the race, is such a shameless begging of the whole question,—that we know of no parallel to it except in the kindred speculations of Strauss, who assumes the same radical principle, and gravely tells us that whatever is supernatural must needs be unhistorical.<sup>2</sup>

There is absolutely no evidence, properly historical, that there is any necessary tendency in the recognition of established natural laws to supersede Theology, or to introduce an era of universal Atheism. Some such tendency might exist were these laws conceived of as necessary, independent, and invariable. But this hypothesis, equally unphilosophical and

<sup>1</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith," chap. v. § 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> STRAUSS, "Life of Jesus," I. 88. HENRY ROGERS, "Reason and Faith," Appendix, p. 96.

irreligious, is not and never has been maintained by the great body of Inductive inquirers, who see no contradiction either between the established order of Nature and the supposition of its Divine origin, or between the operation of natural laws and the recognition of a supreme, superintending Providence. Nor should it be forgotten, in this connection, that the evidence in favor of Theism depends not so much on *the mere laws* as on *the dispositions and adjustments* that are observable in Nature.<sup>1</sup> There is, therefore, no historical proof to establish the supposed law of human development, and no rational ground to expect that the progress of Inductive Science will ever supplant or supersede Theology. It is true that Theology, although a distinct and independent science, is so comprehensive in its range that it gathers its proofs and illustrations from *every* department of Nature, and that, were it excluded from any one of these, it might, for the same reason, be excluded from all the rest; but it is not true that there is any real or necessary antagonism between the laws of Nature and the prerogatives of God. On the contrary, let our knowledge advance until *all* the phenomena both of the Material and Moral worlds shall be reduced under so many general laws, even then - Superstition might disappear, but Theology would remain, and would only receive fresh accessions of evidence and strength, in proportion as the wise order of Nature is more fully unfolded, and its most hidden mysteries disclosed.

We scarcely know whether it is needful to advert at all to the argument in favor of his theory which M. Comte founds on *the analogy of individual experience*. It is a transparent fallacy. He tells us that the race is, like an individual man, Religious in infancy, Metaphysical in youth, and Positive — that is, Scientific, without being Religious — in mature manhood.<sup>2</sup> Now, this analogical argument, to have any legitimate

<sup>1</sup> DR. CHALMERS' Works, I. "Natural Theology."

<sup>2</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," I. 7.

weight, must proceed on the assumption of two facts. The first is, that the law of individual development commences, in the case, at least, of all who belong to the *élite* of humanity, with Theology, and terminates in Atheism; and the second is, that the individual is, in this respect, the type or pattern of his race, and that the experience of the one is only an outline in miniature of the history of the other. It would be difficult, we think, to establish the truth of either of these positions by evidence, that could be satisfactory to any reflecting mind. We cannot doubt, indeed, for experience amply attests, that the religious sensibilities of childhood have often been sadly impaired in the progress from youth to manhood, and that, after the tumultuous excitements, whether of speculation or of passion, not a few have sought a refuge from their fears in the cold negations of Atheism. But is this the law of development and progress? Is it a law that is uniform and invariable in its operation? Are there no instances of an opposite kind? Are there no instances of men whose early religious culture had been neglected, and who passed through youth without one serious thought of God and their relation to Him, but who, as they advanced in years, began to reflect and inquire, and ultimately attained to a firm religious faith? If such diversities of individual experience are known to exist, then clearly the result is not determined by any necessary or invariable law of intellectual development; but must be ascribed to other causes, chiefly of a moral and practical kind, which exert a powerful influence, for good or evil, on every human mind. Montaigne speaks of an error maintained by Plato, "that children and old people were most susceptible of Religion, as if it sprung and derived its credit from our weakness."<sup>1</sup> And we find M. Comte himself complaining, somewhat bitterly, that his *quondam* friend, the celebrated St. Simon, had exhibited, as he advanced in years (*cette*

<sup>1</sup> MONTAIGNE, "Apology for Raimond de Sebonde," Essays, II. 148.

*tendance banale vers une vague religiosité*), a tendency towards something like Religion.<sup>1</sup> Cases of this kind are utterly fatal to his supposed law of individual development, and they must be equally fatal to his theory of the progress of the human race.

Hitherto we have considered merely the reasons which M. Comte urges in support of his theory, and have endeavored to show that they are utterly incapable of establishing it as a valid scientific doctrine. It may be useful, however, to advert, in conclusion, to some considerations which afford decisive objections against it, arising from the testimony of authentic history and the plainest principles of reason.

In so far as the testimony of history and tradition is concerned, nothing can be more certain than that the progress of the race has followed a very different course from that which M. Comte has traced out for it by his grand fundamental law. The theory of a primitive state of ignorance and barbarism, in which a rude Theology existed, in the form of Fetishism, is opposed not more to the authority of Scripture, the earliest record of our race, than to the unanimous voice of antiquity, which attests the general belief of mankind in a primeval state of light and innocence. There is a sad but striking contrast between the views which are generally held by the Christian Theist, and those which are avowed by M. Comte on this subject. The Christian Theist admits the doctrine of a primeval Revelation and a pristine state of purity and peace; M. Comte maintains the doctrine of a primitive barbarism and a natural aboriginal Superstition. The Christian Theist believes in a fall subsequent to the creation of man, and ascribes the ignorance and error, the superstition and idolatry which ensued, to the perversion and abuse of his intellectual and moral powers; M. Comte affirms that man did not *fall*,

that he did actually *rise* by a process of slow but progressive self-elevation, and that, in *advancing* from Fetishism to Polytheism, and from Polytheism to Monotheism, and from Monotheism to Atheism, he has all along been determined by the law of his normal development. In the view of the Christian Theist, Revelation was the sun which shed its cheering rays on the first fathers of mankind, and which, after having been obscured, for a time, by the clouds and darkness of Superstition, shines out again, clear and strong, under the dispensation of the Gospel; in the view of M. Comte, Science is the only sun that is destined to enlighten the world, — a sun which has not yet fully risen, but which has sent before, as the harbingers of its speedy advent, a few scattered rays to gild the lofty mountain peaks, while all beneath is still buried in Cimmerian darkness. The Christian Theist anticipates the time when the true light which now shineth shall cover the whole earth; M. Comte predicts its utter and final extinction, when Positive Science shall have risen into the ascendant. His theory is contradicted by the history of the past; let us hope that the events of the future will equally belie his prediction. For Christianity is the only hope of the world. The prospects of man would be dark indeed on the supposition of its being abolished. “There might remain among a few of the more enlightened some occasional glimpses of religious truth, as we find to have been the case in the Pagan world; but the degradation of the great mass of the people to that ignorance, and idolatry, and superstition, out of which the Gospel had emancipated them, would be certain and complete. This retrograde movement might be retarded by the advantages which we have derived from that system, whose influence we should continue to feel long after we had ceased to acknowledge the divinity of its source. But these advantages would by degrees lose their efficacy, even as mere matters of speculation, and give place to the workings of fancy, and credulity,

and corruption. A radiance might still glow on the high places of the earth after the sun of Revelation had gone down; and the brighter and the longer it had shone, the more gradual would be the decay of that light and warmth which it had left behind it. But every where there would be the sad tokens of a departed glory and of a coming night. Twilight might be protracted through the course of many generations, and still our unhappy race might be able to read, though dimly, many of the wonders of the eternal Godhead, and to wind a dubious way through the perils of the wilderness. But it would be twilight still; shade would thicken after shade; every succeeding age would come wrapped in a deeper and a deeper gloom; till, at last, that flood of glory which the Gospel is now pouring upon the world would be lost and buried in impenetrable darkness."<sup>1</sup>

M. Comte's theory is liable to another objection, the force of which he seems, in some measure, although inadequately, to have felt and acknowledged. The three states or stages, which he describes as necessarily *successive*, are, in point of fact, *simultaneous*. They do not mark so many different eras in the course of human progress,—they denote the natural products of man's intelligence, the constituent elements of his knowledge in *all* states of society. The Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Scientific elements have always coëxisted. Diverse as they may be in other respects, they resemble each other in this,—they are all the natural and spontaneous products of man's intelligent activity. That they were, to a certain extent, *simultaneous* at first, and that they are *simultaneous* still, is actually admitted by M. Comte, while he conceives, nevertheless, that they are radically incompatible with each other;<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DR. ANDREW THOMSON, "Sermons on Infidelity," p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," IV. 709: "Je puis affirmer n'avoir jamais trouvé d'argumentation sérieuse en opposition à cette loi, depuis dix-sept ans que j'ai eu le bonheur de la découvrir, si ce n'est celle que l'on fondait sur la

and their coexistence hitherto is felt by him to be a serious objection to his fundamental law, which represents them not only as *necessarily successive*, but also as *mutually exclusive*. The fact is admitted, and that fact is fatal to his whole theory. For if the three methods have coexisted hitherto, why may they not equally coexist hereafter? And what ground is left for the reckless prediction that Theology is doomed, and *must* fall before the onward march of Positive Science? If man was able from the beginning to observe, to compare, to abstract, and to generalize, and if the fundamental laws of human thought have been ever the same, it follows that there must have been a tendency, coeval with the origin of the race, towards Theological, Metaphysical, and Inductive Speculation, and that the same tendency must continue as long as his powers remain unchanged. It can only, therefore, be a *preponderance*, more or less complete, of one of the three methods over the other two, that we should be warranted in expecting, *even under the operation of M. Comte's favorite law*; and yet he boldly proclaims the utter exclusion of Metaphysics, and the entire and everlasting elimination of Theology, as branches of human knowledge!

M. Comte's theory is still more vulnerable at another point. The fundamental assumption on which it is based is utterly groundless. It amounts to this, that all knowledge of causes, whether efficient or final, is interdicted to man, and incapable of being reached by any exertion of his faculties.<sup>1</sup> He tells us that Theology is impossible, for this reason, that, in the view

consideration de la *simultanéité* jusqu'ici nécessairement très commune, des trois philosophies chez les mêmes intelligences." "Cours," I. 27, 50, 10 : "L'emploi *simultané* des trois philosophies radicalement incompatibles," — "la *coëxistence* de ces trois philosophies opposées." See also IV. 683, 694; V. 28, 39, 41, 57, 171; VI. 26, 31, 34, 155.

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," I. 14 : "En considerant comme *absolument inaccessible et vide de sens* pour nous la recherche de ce qu'on appelle les *causes*, soit premières, soit finales."

of the Positive Philosophy, all knowledge of causes is absolutely excluded; nay, he admits that Theology is inevitable if we inquire into causes at all. We know of no simpler or more effectual method of dealing with his specious sophistry on this subject, than by showing that, if his general principle be conclusive against the knowledge of God, it is equally conclusive against the knowledge of any other being or cause; just as Sir James Mackintosh dealt with the skeptical philosophy of Hume, when, with admirable practical sagacity, he said: "As those dictates of experience which regulate conduct must be the objects of belief, all objections which attack them, in common with the principles of reasoning, must be utterly ineffectual. Whatever attacks every principle of belief, can destroy none. As long as the foundations of knowledge are allowed to remain on the same level with the maxims of life, the whole system of human conviction must continue undisturbed. . . . Skepticism has practical consequences of a very mischievous nature. This is because its *universality* is not steadily kept in view and constantly borne in mind. If it were, the above short and plain remark would be an effectual antidote to the poison. But, in practice, it is an armory from which weapons are taken to be employed against *some* opinions, while it is hidden from notice that the same weapons would equally cut down *every other* conviction. It is thus that Mr. Hume's *theory of causation* is used as an answer to arguments for the existence of the Deity, without warning the reader that it would equally lead him to expect—that *the sun will not rise to-morrow.*"<sup>1</sup>

The exclusion of all knowledge of causes is so indispensable to M. Comte's theory that he admits "the inevitable tendency of our intelligence towards a philosophy radically Theological, as often as we seek to penetrate, on whatever pretext, into the

<sup>1</sup> SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH, "Encyc., Britan.," Preliminary Dissertation, p. 354.

intimate nature of the phenomena.”<sup>1</sup> The exclusion of such knowledge would, of course, be fatal to Theology, since, without taking some account of causes, efficient and final, we cannot rise to God as the author of the universe. But did it never occur to M. Comte that the self-same principle may possibly be destructive of his present, or, at least, of his posthumous fame, as the author of the Positive Philosophy? For, if we can know nothing of *efficient causes*, in what sense, or on what ground, shall any one presume to ascribe the authorship of this system to M. Comte? True, it may be said,—Here is an effect which exhibits manifest signs of intelligence, order, and scientific skill; its parts are regularly adjusted and all directed to a common end; and, reasoning after the *teleological* method, we must infer that it proceeded from a very clever, but somewhat eccentric mind; but, unfortunately, *final causes* are as expressly interdicted as efficient ones; and, on the principles of his own theory, the “Course of Positive Philosophy” can never be warrantably ascribed to the authorship of M. Comte.

A still more serious objection to M. Comte’s theory respecting the law of human development arises from the false view which it exhibits of *the nature and history of Truth*, considered as the object of human knowledge. It is a favorite opinion with him, that man can have no *absolute* knowledge; that truth is not fixed, but fluctuating; that what was believed in one age, and believed *necessarily*, according to the fundamental laws of thought, is as necessarily disbelieved in the next; and that there is no standard of truth at any time better or surer than the public opinion, or general consent, of the most advanced classes of society.<sup>2</sup> This theory of Truth, as necessarily mobile and fluctuating, has a tendency, we think, to engender universal skepticism, even when it is stated, with various important modifications, by such writers as Lamennais and Morell;

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, “Cours,” IV. 664.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., VI. 728, 730, 760, 826, 835, 866.

but, in the hands of M. Comte, it becomes more dangerous still, since it represents the human race as having been from the beginning, through a long series of ages, subject to a law of development which not only *permitted*, but actually *compelled* them to believe a lie; and thus casts a dark shade of suspicion both on the constitution of man and on the government of God.

Such a theory would seem also to preclude all rational calculations respecting the future progress and prospects of the race. For what ground can exist for any prognostication in regard to the ulterior advancement or ultimate destiny of man, if it be true that, in his past history, Fetishism has passed into Polytheism, and Polytheism into Monotheism, without any extraneous instruction, and by the mere action of those inherent laws to which humanity is subject? And, still more, if it be further true that even now the human mind is in a state of transition, passing through the crisis of Metaphysical doubt towards the goal of Positive Atheism, who shall assure us that this will be its last and final metamorphosis? It does appear to us to be one of the most singular and perplexing anomalies of his elaborate system, that he can dogmatize so confidently on the *terminus ad quem* of human progress, when from the *terminus a quo* there has been, according to his own account, a series of variations so wonderful, and a succession of states so diverse and opposite, as those which he describes. And yet he pronounces oracularly that Positive Science is the ultimate landing-place of human thought, and that universal Atheism is the final barrier which must needs close and terminate the long series of developments.

We have spoken sternly of his system; we have no wish to speak harshly of the man. Had we any disposition to do so, there is more than enough in the personal explanation, prefixed to the closing volume of his work, effectually to disarm us. We have too much sympathy with the trials of a vigorous

but eccentric mind, struggling in untoward circumstances, and against an adverse tide, to maintain a position of honorable independence, to say a word that could wound the feelings or injure the prospects of a man of science. But it is not unkind to add that his life might have been a more prosperous one had he devoted himself to the pursuits of Science, without assailing the truths of Religion; and that his fame would have been at once more extensive and more enduring had it been left to repose on his Classification or Hierarchy of the Sciences, without being associated with the more doubtful merits of his fundamental law of Man's Development.

#### SECTION IV.

THEORY OF ECCLESIASTICAL DEVELOPMENT.—J. H. NEWMAN.

This particular phase of the general theory bears less directly on the subject of our present inquiry than either of the *three* which have already passed under review, and yet it has recently been applied in such a way as may entitle it to a passing notice.

For while the theory of Ecclesiastical Development has a *direct* relation only to the question in regard to the Rule of Faith, it has also an *indirect* or *collateral* relation to the truths of Natural as well as of Revealed Religion; and this relation demands for it, especially in the existing state of theological speculation, the earnest attention of all who are concerned for the maintenance even of the simplest and most elementary articles of Divine truth.

The most elaborate and systematic exposition of this theory is exhibited in the "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, by JOHN HENRY NEWMAN;" an Essay primarily directed to the discussion of the points of difference between

the Popish and the Protestant Churches, but which will be found to have an important bearing, also, on some doctrines which are common to both, and especially on the fundamental articles of Natural Religion itself.

It is thus stated by Mr. Newman:<sup>1</sup> "That the increase and expansion of the Christian Creed and Ritual, and the variations which have attended the process in the case of individual writers and churches, are the necessary attendants on any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart, and has had any wide or extended dominion; that, from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as received and transmitted by minds not inspired, and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation. This may be called *the Theory of Developments*."

It is further illustrated as follows: "It is sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the history of a philosophy or sect, which, on the contrary, is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full. It necessarily rises out of an existing state of things, and, for a time, savors of the soil. Its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom, more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measures of its capabilities, nor of its scope. At first, no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains, perhaps, for a time, quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves

<sup>1</sup> NEWMAN'S "Essay on Development," p. 27.

the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are, in consequence, abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and, at length, strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and fall about it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations, and old principles reappear under new forms; it changes with them, in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise; but here below *to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.*"<sup>1</sup>

In answer to the objection, "that inspired documents, such as the Holy Scriptures, at once determine the doctrines which we should believe," it is replied, "that they were intended to create an idea, and that idea is not in the sacred text, but in the mind of the reader; and the question is, whether that idea is communicated to him, in its completeness and minute accuracy, on its first apprehension, or expands in his heart and intellect, and comes to perfection in the course of time. Nor could it be maintained without extravagance that the letter of the New Testament, or of any assignable number of books, comprises a delineation of all possible forms which a Divine message will assume when submitted to a multitude of minds."<sup>2</sup>

What relation, it may be asked, can this theory respecting the development of revealed or Christian truth bear to the question of the being and perfections of God? We answer, that it is founded on a general philosophical principle which may affect the truths of natural as well as those of revealed Religion; and that it is applied in such a way as to show that, as it has already led to the worship of angels and saints, so it may hereafter issue in the deification of Nature, which is Pantheism, or in the separate worship of its component parts, which is Polytheism; and, in either case, the personality and

<sup>1</sup> NEWMAN'S "Essay on Development," p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

supremacy of the one only, the living and the true God, would be effectually superseded, if not explicitly denied.

But, is there any real danger of such a disastrous consummation? We answer, that the mere coexistence of the theory of Ecclesiastical Development with the infidel speculations on the doctrine of Human Progress is of itself an ominous symptom; and, further, that the mutual interchange of complimentary acknowledgments between the Infidel and Popish parties is another, especially when both are found to coincide in some of the main grounds of their opposition to Scripture as the supreme rule of faith, and when the homage which the advocates of Development render to the theory of progress is responded to by glowing eulogiums from the infidel camp on the genius of Catholicism as the masterpiece of human policy. But there are other grounds of apprehension, arising more directly out of the very nature of the theory of Development itself.

That theory has been described by Dr. Brownson — himself a convert to Catholicism — as the product of “a school formed, at first, outside of the Church, but now brought within her communion,” and compared, in regard to its dangerousness, with the speculations of Hermes and Lamennais.<sup>1</sup> And a still more competent judge — Professor Sedgwick, of Cambridge<sup>2</sup> — has characterized it as “a monstrous compound of Popery and Pantheism,” according to which “the Catholic faith is not a religion revealed to us in the Sacred Books we call canonical, and in the works of the Fathers which are supposed to contain the oral traditions of the Apostles and their followers; but a new Pantheistic element is to be fastened on the faith of men, — a principle of Development which may overshadow both the *verbum Dei scriptum* and the *verbum Dei*

<sup>1</sup> BROWNSON'S “Quarterly Review,” No. 1, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> SEDGWICK'S “Discourse,” Fourth Edition. Preface, CCCXCIII.

*non scriptum* of the Romish Church, and change both the form and substance of primitive Christianity."

It is only justice to Mr. Newman to say that he appears to have been aware of this possible objection to his theory, and that he makes an attempt to obviate it. Speaking of the difficulty which the Church experienced in keeping "Paganism out of her pale," he adverts to "the *hazard which attended on the development* of the Catholic ritual,—such as the honors publicly assigned to saints and martyrs, the formal veneration of their relics, and the usages and observances which followed." And he asks: "What was to hinder the rise of a sort of refined Pantheism, and the overthrow of Dogmatism *pari passu* with the multiplication of heavenly intercessors and patrons? If what is called in reproach 'Saint-worship' resembled the Polytheism which it supplanted, or was a corruption, how did Dogmatism survive? Dogmatism is a religious profession of its own reality as contrasted with other systems; but Polytheists are liberals, and hold that one religion is as good as another. Yet the theological system was developing and strengthening, as well as the monastic rule, all the while the ritual was assimilating itself, as Protestants say, to the Paganism of former ages."<sup>1</sup>

It seems to be admitted in these words, that, in the *past* history of the Church, the development of the Catholic ritual *was* attended with some danger of infection from Paganism or Pantheism; and there may be equal reason to fear that, in the *future* history of the Church, still working on the principle of development, that danger may be very considerably aggravated by the general prevalence of theories utterly inconsistent with the faith of primitive times. What the Church has already done in the exercise of her developing power may be only a specimen of what she may hereafter accomplish. She has

<sup>1</sup> NEWMAN'S "Essay," p. 447.

already developed Christianity into a system which bears a striking resemblance to Polytheism; she may yet develop it more fully, so as to bring it into accordance with philosophical Pantheism; or, retaining both forms,—for they are not necessarily exclusive of each other,—she may use the first in dealing with the ignorant, and reserve the second as a sort of esoteric doctrine for minds of higher culture. Nor let it be said that we are either unjust or uncharitable towards the Romish Church, in suggesting the possibility of some such development; for what she has already done, and what she still claims the power of doing, afford very sufficient ground for our remarks. When Dr. Conyers Middleton published his celebrated “Letter from Rome,” showing an exact conformity between Popery and Paganism, and that “the religion of the present Romans is derived from that of their Heathen ancestors,” many liberal Catholics resented the imputation as an insult to their faith; but now Mr. Newman not only admits the fact that the Church did *assimilate* its ritual to the Paganism of former ages, but vindicates her right to do so, and ascribes to her *a power of assimilation* to which it seems impossible to assign any limits. “There is, in truth,” says this writer, “a certain virtue or grace in the Gospel, which changes the quality of doctrines, opinions, usages, actions, and personal characters, which become incorporated with it, and makes them right and acceptable to its Divine Author, when before they were either contrary to truth, or, at best, but shadows of it.”—“Confiding, then, in the power of Christianity to resist the infection of evil, and to *transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon worship to an Evangelical use*, . . . the rulers of the Church from early times were prepared, should the occasion arise, to adopt, or imitate, or sanction *the existing rites and customs of the populace*, as well as *the philosophy of the educated class*.”—“The Church can extract good from evil, or, at least, gets no harm from it. She inherits the promise made to

the disciples, that they should take up serpents, and, if they drank any deadly thing, it should not hurt them.”—“It has borne, and can bear, principles or doctrines which, in other systems of religion, quickly degenerate into *fanaticism or infidelity*.” This marvellous power of assimilation, which made “those observances pious in Christianity” that were “superstitions in Paganism,” advanced rapidly in its work, and successively introduced the deification of man, the *cultus* of angels and saints, and the beatification of Mary as Queen of heaven and earth. The sanctification, or rather *the deification of the nature of Man*, is one of these developments. Christ “is in them, because He is in human nature; and He communicates to them that nature, deified by becoming His, that it may *deify* them.” The worship of saints is another of these developments: “Those who are known to be God’s adopted sons in Christ are fit objects of worship on account of Him who is in them. . . . Worship is the necessary correlative of glory; and, in the same sense in which created nature can share in the Creator’s incommunicable glory, do they also share in that worship which is His property alone.” But a “new sphere” was yet to be discovered in the realms of light, to which the Church had not yet assigned its inhabitant. “There was ‘a wonder in heaven;’ a throne was seen, far above all created powers, mediatorial, intercessory; a title archetypal; a crown bright as the morning star; a glory issuing from the Eternal Throne; robes pure as the heavens; and a sceptre over all. And who was the predestined heir of that Majesty? Who was that Wisdom, and what was her name?—‘the Mother of fair love, and fear, and holy hope,’ exalted like a palm-tree in Engaddi and a rose-plant in Jericho, created from the beginning before the world in God’s counsels, and ‘in Jerusalem was her power.’ The vision is found in the Apocalypse, a Woman clothed with the Sun, and the Moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” The DEIFICATION of Mary

is decreed. The doctrine of her Immaculate Conception is a further *development* at the present moment, and who can tell what other developments may be in store for the future?

We advert to this form of the theory only in so far as it stands related to our great theme, — the existence, perfections, and prerogatives of the one only, the living and the true God; and it can scarcely be questioned, we think, that it has already introduced doctrines and practices into the Church which have a manifest tendency to obscure the lustre and impair the evidence of some of the most fundamental articles of Natural Religion. Let it still advance in the same direction, and who shall assure us that it may not develop into still grosser idolatry, or even into Pantheism? Why should it not develop, for example, into Sun worship? “On the new system,” says Professor Butler, “a modern growth of Christian Guebres might make out no feeble case; the public religious recognition of this great visible type of the True Light is but a fair development of ‘the typical principle;’ the justifiable imitation of the guilt of heathens in its adoration is but an instance of the transforming powers of ‘the sacramental principle;’ while it requires but the most moderate use of the great instrument of orthodoxy, ‘mystical interpretation,’ to find the duty hinted (clearly enough for watchful faith, though obscurely to the blinded or undevout) in those passages that speak of a ‘tabernacle for the Sun,’ or Deity itself being ‘a Sun,’ or the rising of ‘the Sun of righteousness.’ . . . Indeed, the whole body of the righteous are promised to ‘shine as the Sun’ in the heavenly kingdom, — an expression which, though it appear superficially to refer to a period not yet arrived, the Church has correctively developed into an assurance of their present beatification, and consequent right to worship; while it must be at once manifest that, if any representative emblem of the Deity may demand religious prostration in our Churches, the analogous emblem of the ‘deified,’ in the great temple of the Material Universe, may

fairly expect a participation in that honor. It is true there is an express command, 'Take heed lest, when thou seest the Sun, . . . thou shouldst be driven to worship them;' but so there is a command, at least as distinct and imperative, against the worship of *Images*, which, Mr. Newman instructs us, has been repealed under the Gospel, and was never more than a mere Judaic prohibition, 'intended for mere temporary observance in the letter.'"<sup>1</sup>

If it be said that, in the case of the Church of Rome, there is not only a process of development, but an infallible developing power, and that this affords a guaranty, strong as the Divine promise itself, against that risk of error which is attendant on the ordinary methods of human teaching, — we answer, that this is a mere assumption, which requires to be proved, and that it cannot be proved in the face of the facts which attest the historical variations of the Romish Creed, as these are admitted and defended by Mr. Newman himself. For some of these variations are not consistent developments of the primitive articles of faith, but involve either a corruption or a contradiction of these very principles; and if her infallibility has not preserved her from the deification of saints, what security have we that it will preserve her from the deification of Nature? If it has already introduced a Christian Polytheism, why may it not issue in a Christian Pantheism?

Admit the principle of development, and it may lead to the deification of man, as well as to the worship of Mary; to a sacred Calendar of Heroes, as well as of Saints.<sup>2</sup> It may terminate either in Infidelity or in Superstition, according to the mental temperament of the individual by whom it is adopted

<sup>1</sup> Letters of REV. W. A. BUTLER on the "Development of Christian Doctrine," p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> PIERRE LEROUX, "Sur l'Humanité." AUGUSTUS COMTE, "Positive Calendar." The author gave some account of this in an article contributed to the "North British Review," May, 1851.

and applied. "An organ of investigation being introduced, which may be employed for any purpose indifferently, the tendency of such a theory of religious inquiry will just tell according to the spirit in which it acts. A skeptic will develop the principle into Infidelity, a believer into Superstition; but the principle itself remains accurately the same in both."<sup>1</sup> The connection between the theory of Ecclesiastical Development and the infidel theory of Progress has not escaped the notice of many acute and profound thinkers in recent times, nor the danger resulting from it to the most fundamental articles of faith. "Modern Spiritualists tell us that Christianity is a development, as the Papists also assert, and the New Testament is its first and rudimentary product; only, unhappily, as the development, it seems, may be things so different as Popery and Infidelity, we are as far as ever from any criterium as to which, out of the ten thousand possible developments, is the true; but it is a matter of the less consequence, since it will, on such reasoning, be *always something future*."<sup>2</sup> One of the most pernicious tenets of the Neologists beyond the Rhine is thus expressed by themselves: "Christianity renews itself in the human heart, and follows *the development* of the human mind, and invests itself with new forms of thought and language, and adopts new systems of Church organization, to which it gives expression and life." . . . . "But are these teachers the *only* destroyers of Faith and Morals? Are not *they* also chargeable with precisely the same offence who command us to submit implicitly to the so-called divinely-inspired Spirit of 'one living Infallible Judge' or 'Developing Power'? Can we have *fixed* articles of faith and morals in this system, any more than in the other? No. '*Unus utrisque error, sed variis illūdet partibus.*' There is the same evil in both, but it operates in different ways; in the former, every one develops

<sup>1</sup> PROFESSOR BUTLER'S "Letters," p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> "Eclipse of Faith," p. 13.

for himself; in the latter, the Pope develops for every one. You look with fear on the progress of Rationalism; and what hope can any man derive from that of Romanism?"<sup>1</sup>

We have examined, each on its own peculiar merits, the various forms of the Theory of Development which have been propounded in modern times, and applied to account for the origin of planets and astral systems, of vegetable and animal races, and of the different successive systems of human opinion and belief. We have found that, imposing as it may seem to be, and high as its pretensions are, that theory has no claim to the character of a scientific doctrine; that it is a mere hypothesis, and nothing more; a speculative figment, which may be injurious to those who thoughtlessly dally with it, but which can have no power to hurt any one who will resolutely lay hold of it, and examine its claims.

“Gently, softly, touch a nettle,  
And it stings you for your pains;  
Grasp it, like a man of mettle,  
And it soft as silk remains.”

It is only necessary to add, that *the same general principle* seems to be involved in *all* the forms of this theory,—the principle, namely, that we are bound to account for the past *only* by causes known to be in actual operation at the present day. M. Comte lays it down in the following terms: “Our conjectures on the origin or formation of our world should evidently be subjected to this indispensable condition,—not to allow of the interposition of any other natural agents than those whose influence we clearly discern in our ordinary phenomena, and whose operations, *then*, would only be on a greater scale. Without this rule, our work can have no truly scientific

<sup>1</sup> DR. WORDSWORTH, “Letters to M. Gondon,” p. 153.

character, and we shall fall into the inconvenience, so justly made a ground of reproach to the greater number of geological hypotheses,—that of introducing, for the purpose of explaining the ancient revolutions of the globe, agencies which do not exist at the present day, and whose influence it is impossible, for that very reason, to verify or even to comprehend.” The same principle is strongly stated, but with due limitation, by Sir Charles Lyell, who insists on the explanation of all terrestrial changes by *means of causes and according to laws known to be in operation at the present day*: “During the progress of Geology, there have been great fluctuations of opinion respecting the nature of the causes to which all former changes in the earth’s surface are referable. The first observers conceived that the monuments which the Geologist endeavors to decipher relate to a period when the physical constitution of the earth differed entirely from the present, and that, even after the creation of living beings, there have been causes in action distinct in kind or degree from these now forming part of the economy of nature. These views have been gradually modified, and some of them entirely abandoned.”<sup>1</sup>

The general principle which is involved in these and similar statements may be perfectly sound, when it is applied merely to *natural events*, occurring in the ordinary course, and according to the established constitution of the material and moral world; but it is manifestly inapplicable to *supernatural events*, such as the creation of the world, or the revelation of Divine truth, since these events cannot be accounted for by any known natural cause, and must be ascribed to the immediate agency of a Higher Power. Without some such limitation, the general principle cannot be admitted, since it would involve an egregious fallacy. We must not limit Omnipotence by circumscribing the range of its possible exercise within the narrow

<sup>1</sup> LYELL, “Principles of Geology,” I. 75.

bounds of the existing economy, or of our actual experience. We are not warranted to assume that the origin of the world, on the one hand, or the establishment of Christianity on the other, may be accounted for by *natural causes* still known to be in actual operation. In regard to *natural events* the principle is sound, and it is rigorously adhered to by the expounder of Natural Theology; in regard to *supernatural events* it can have no legitimate application, except in so far as it is combined with the doctrine of efficient and final causes, which leads us up to the recognition of a Higher Power. It might be safe and legitimate enough, when we find a fossil organism imbedded in the earth, to ascribe its production to the ordinary law of generation, even although we had not witnessed the fact of its birth, provided the same species is known to have existed previously; but when we find *new races* coming into being, for which the ordinary law of derivation cannot account, we are not at liberty to apply the same rule to a case so essentially different, and still less to postulate a *spontaneous generation*, or a *transmutation of species*, for which we have no experience at all. In such a case, we can only reason on the principle that *like effects must have like causes*, that marks of *design* imply a *designing* cause, and that events which cannot be accounted for by *natural causes* must be ascribed to a Power distinct from nature, and superior to it. It is manifestly unreasonable to assume that nothing can be brought to pass in the Universe otherwise than by the operation of the same natural laws which are now in action; or that, in the course of our limited and partial experience, we must necessarily know all the agencies that may have been at work during the long flow of time. And, in accordance with these views, Sir Charles Lyell expressly limits the general principle to *natural events*, and shows that "Geology differs as widely from Cosmogony as speculations concerning the *Creation of Man* differ from his *History*."

## CHAPTER III.

### THEORIES OF PANTHEISM.

AT the commencement of the present century, Pantheism might have been justly regarded and safely treated as an obsolete and exploded error,—an error which still prevailed, indeed, in the East as one of the hereditary beliefs of Indian superstition, but which, when transplanted to Western Europe by the daring genius of Spinoza, was found to be an exotic too sickly to take root and grow amidst the fresh and bracing air of modern civilization.

But no one who has marked the recent tendencies of speculative thought, and who is acquainted, however slightly, with the character of modern literature, can have failed to discern a remarkable change in this respect within the last fifty years. German philosophy, always prolific, and often productive of monstrous births, has given to the world many elaborate systems, physical and metaphysical, whose most prominent feature is the deification of Nature or of Man. France, always alert and lively, has appropriated the ideas of her more ponderous neighbors, and has given them currency through educated Europe on the wings of her lighter literature. And even in England and America there are not wanting some significant tokens of a disposition to cherish a kind of speculation which, if it be not formally and avowedly Pantheistic, has much of the same dreamy and mystic character, and little, if any, harmony

with definite views of God, or of the relations which He bears to man.

One of the most significant symptoms of a reaction in favor of Pantheism may be seen in the numerous republications and versions of the writings of Spinoza which have recently appeared, in the public homage which has been paid to his character and genius, and in the more than philosophic tolerance—the kindly indulgence—which has been shown to his most characteristic principles. He is now recognized by many as the real founder both of the Philosophic and of the Exegetic Rationalism, which has been applied, with such disastrous effect, to the interpretation alike of the volume of Nature and of the records of Revelation. In Germany his works have been edited by Paulus (1803) and by Gfrörer (1830); in France they have been translated by Emile Saisset, Professor of Philosophy in the Royal College; while a copious account of his life and writings has been published by Amand Saintes, the historian of Rationalism in Germany.<sup>1</sup> All this might be accounted for by ascribing it simply to the admiration of philosophical thinkers for the extraordinary talents of the man; and it might be said that his writings have been reprinted, just as those of Hobbes have been recently reproduced in England, more as a historical monument of the past than as a mirror that reflects the sentiments of the present age. But it is more difficult to explain the eulogiums with which the reappearance of Spinoza has been greeted, and the cordiality with which his daring speculations have been received. He has not only been exculpated from the charge of Atheism, but even panegyrized as a saint and martyr! “That holy and yet outcast man,” exclaimed Schleiermacher,—“he who was fully penetrated by the universal Spirit,—for whom the Infinite was the beginning and the end, and the Universe his only and ever-

<sup>1</sup> AMAND SAINTES, “Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de Spinoza, Fondateur de l’Exégèse et de la Philosophie, Modernes.”

lasting love,—he who, in holy innocence and profound peace, delighted to contemplate himself in the mirror of an eternal world, where, doubtless, he saw himself reflected as its most lovely image,—he who was full of the sentiment of religion, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit!” “Instead of accusing Spinoza of Atheism,” says M. Cousin, “he should rather be subjected to the opposite reproach.”<sup>1</sup> “He has been loudly accused,” says Professor Saisset, “of Atheism and impiety. . . . The truth is that never did a man believe in God with a faith more profound, with a soul more sincere, than Spinoza. Take God from him, and you take from him his system, his thought, his life.” “Spinoza, although a Jew,” says the Abbé Sabatier, a member of the Catholic clergy, “always lived as a Christian, and was as well versed in our divine Testament as in the books of the ancient Law. If he ended, as we cannot doubt he did, in embracing Christianity, he ought to be *enrolled in the rank of saints*, instead of being placed at the head of the enemies of God.”

Contrast the language in which Spinoza is now compared to Thomas á Kempis, and proposed as a fit subject for canonization itself, with the terms in which he was wont to be spoken of by men of former times; and the startling difference will sufficiently indicate a great change in the current of European thought. And if we add to this the contemporaneous reappearance of such writers as Bruno and Vanini, whose works have been reprinted by the active philosophical press of Paris, we may be well assured that it is not by overlooking or despising such speculations, but by boldly confronting and closely grappling with them, that we shall best protect the mind of the thinking community from their insidious and pestilent influence.

<sup>1</sup> M. COUSIN, “Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie,” I. 403. See also “Fragmens Philosophiques,” Preface, second edition, p. xxvii.; “Nouveaux Fragments,” pp. 9, 160.

But we are not left to *infer* the existence, in many quarters, of a prevailing tendency towards Pantheism, from such facts as have been stated, significant as they are; we have explicit testimonies on the point, in a multitude of writings, philosophical and popular, which have recently issued from the Continental press. In a report presented to the Academy of Sciences, M. Franck, a member of the Institute, represents Pantheism as the last and greatest of all the Metaphysical systems which have come into collision with Revelation; and describes it as a theory, "according to which spirit and matter, thought and extension, the phenomena of the soul and of the body, are all equally related, either as attributes or modes, to the same substance or being, at once *one* and *many*, finite and infinite, — Humanity, Nature, God." Conceiving that the older forms of error — Dualism and Materialism — have all but disappeared; and that Atheism, in its gross mechanical form, cannot now, as Broussais himself said, "find entrance into a well-made head which has seriously meditated on nature," M. Franck concludes that Pantheism alone, such as has been conceived and developed in Germany, is likely to have the power of seducing serious minds, and that it may for a season exert considerable influence as an antagonist to Christianity.<sup>1</sup> M. Javari gives a similar testimony. He tells us that "that great lie, which is called Pantheism (*ce grand mensonge qu'on appelle le Pantheisme*), has dragged German philosophy into an abyss;" that it is fascinating a large number of minds among his own countrymen; and that it is this doctrine, rather than any other, which will soon gather around it all those who do not know or who reject the truth."<sup>2</sup> The Biographer of Spinoza, referring to the recent progress and prospective prevalence of these views, affirms that "the tendency of the age, in matters of Philosophy, Morals, and

<sup>1</sup> M. AD. FRANCK, "De la Certitude," Preface, p. XXI.

<sup>2</sup> M. A. JAVARI, "De la Certitude," p. 509.

Religion, seems to incline towards Pantheism ;” that “the time is come when every one who will not frankly embrace the pure and simple Christianity of the Gospel will be obliged to acknowledge Spinoza as his chief, unless he be willing to expose himself to ridicule ;” that “Germany is already saturated with his principles ;” that “his philosophy domineers over all the contemporary systems, and will continue to govern them until men are brought to believe that word, ‘No man hath seen God at any time, but He who was in the bosom of the Father hath revealed Him ;’” that it is this “Pantheistic philosophy, boldly avowed, towards which the majority of those writers who have the talent of commanding public interest are gravitating at the present day ;” and that “the ultimate struggle will be, not between Christianity and Philosophy, but between Christianity and Spinozism, its strongest and most inveterate antagonist.”<sup>1</sup> And the critical reviewer of Pantheism, whose Essay is said to have been the first effective check to its progress in the philosophical schools of Paris, gives a similar testimony. He tells us that it was his main object to point out “the Pantheistic tendencies of the age ;” to show that Germany and France are deeply imbued with its spirit ; that both Philosophy and Poetry have been infected by it ; that this is “the veritable heresy of the nineteenth century ; and that, when the most current beliefs are analyzed, they resolve themselves into Pantheism, avowed or disguised.”<sup>2</sup>

A few *specimens* of this mode of thinking may be added in confirmation of these statements. Lessing, as reported by Jacobi, expressed his satisfaction with the poem “Prometheus,” saying : “This poet’s point of view is my own ; the orthodox ideas on the Divinity no longer suit me ; I derive no

<sup>1</sup> AMAND SAINTES, “Histoire de la Vie et des Ouvrages de Spinoza,” pp. 208, 210.

<sup>2</sup> ABBÉ MARET, “Essai sur le Panthéisme dans les Sociétés Modernes,” pp. 6, 11, 31. Ibid., “Theodicée Chrétienne,” pp. 437, 444, 449.

profit from them : *ἐν καὶ παν*,— (*un et tout, the one and the all*),—I know no other.” Schelling, in his earlier writings, while he was Professor at Jena, and before the change of sentiment which he avowed at Berlin, represented God as the one only true and really absolute existence ; as nothing more or less than Being, filling the whole sphere of reality ; as the infinite Being (*Seyn*) which is the essence of the Universe, and evolves all things from itself by self-development. Hegel seeks unity in every thing and every where. This unity he discovers in the identity of existence and thought, in the one substance which exists and thinks, in God who manifests and develops himself in many forms. “The Absolute produces all and absorbs all ; it is the essence of all things. The life of the Absolute is never consummated or complete. God does not properly exist, but comes into being : ‘Gott ist in werden.’—*Deus est in fieri*. With him God is not a Person, but Personality, which realizes itself in every human consciousness as so many thoughts of one eternal Mind. . . . Apart from, and out of the world, therefore, there is no God ; and so, also, apart from the universal consciousness of man, there is no Divine consciousness or personality. God is with him the whole process of thought, combining in itself the objective movement, as seen in Nature, with the subjective, as seen in Logic ; and fully realizing itself only in—the universal spirit of Humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

We select only two specimens from the recent literature of France ; they might be multiplied indefinitely. Pierre Leroux, the editor of the “*Encyclopedie Nouvelle*,” says, in his “*Essay on Humanity*,” dedicated to the poet Beranger : “It is the God immanent in the Universe, in Humanity, in each Man, that I adore.”—“The worship of Humanity was the worship of Voltaire.”—“What, is Humanity considered as comprehending all

<sup>1</sup> MR. MORELL'S “*Historical and Critical View*,” II. 104, 153.

men? Is it something, or is it nothing but an abstraction of our mind? Is Humanity a collective being, or is it nothing but a series of individual men?"—"Being, or the soul, is eternal by its nature. Being, or the soul, is infinite by its nature. Being, or the soul, is permanent and unchangeable by its nature. Being, or the soul, is one by its nature. Being, or the soul, is God by its nature."—"Socrates has proved our eternity and the divinity of our nature."<sup>1</sup> The next specimen is a singular but very instructive one. It is derived from the treatise of M. Crousse, who holds that "intelligence is a property or an effect of matter;" "that the world is a great body, which has sense, spirit, and reason;" that "matter, in appearance the most cold and insensible, is in reality animated, and capable of engendering thought." It might be amusing, were it not melancholy, to refer to one of his proofs of this position: "Une horologe mesure le temps; certes, c'est là un effet intellectuel produit par une cause physique!"<sup>2</sup> His grand principle is the doctrine of what he calls "Unisubstancisme," and it is applied equally to the nature of God and the soul of man. God is admitted, but it is the God of Pantheism,—Nature, including matter and mind, but excluding any higher power. "God is the self-existent Being, which includes all, and beyond which no other can be imagined. The Infinite is identical with the Universe."—"God is and can only be the whole of that which exists. Let us proclaim it aloud, that the echoes may repeat it, God, the Great Being, is the All, and the All is One. God is every thing that exists; the Universe, that is the supreme Being. In it are life eternal, power, wisdom, knowledge, perfect organization, all the qualities, in a word, that are inseparable from the Divinity. Beyond the universe,

<sup>1</sup> PIERRE LEROUX, "De l'Humanité," I. vi. 3, 295.

<sup>2</sup> L. D. CROUSSE, "Des Principes, ou Philosophie Première," 2d Edition, Paris, 1846.

or apart from it, there is nothing (*neant*); above the visible world and its laws there is for man — *nullité*."

It is deeply humbling to think that, in the light of the nineteenth century, and in the very centre of European civilization, speculations such as these should have found authors to publish, and readers to purchase them. Need we wonder that several Catholic writers on the continent, conversant with the works which are daily issuing from the press, and familiar with the state of society in which they live, have publicly expressed their apprehension that, unless some seasonable and effective check can be given to the progress of this fearful system, we may yet witness the restoration of Polytheistic worship and the revival of Paganism in Europe?<sup>1</sup>

The most cursory review of *the history of Pantheism*<sup>2</sup> will serve to convince every reflecting reader that it must have its origin in some natural but strangely perverted principle of the human mind; and that its recent reappearance in Europe affords an additional and very unexpected proof that, like the weeds which spring up, year after year, in the best cultivated field, it must have its roots or seeds deep in the soil. In the annals of our race, we find it exhibited in two distinct forms; *first*, as a Religious doctrine, and, *secondly*, as a Philosophical system. It had its birthplace in the East, where the gorgeous magnificence of Nature was fitted to arrest the attention and to stimulate the imagination of a subtle, dreamy, and speculative people. The primitive doctrine of Creation was soon supplanted by the pagan theory of Emanation. The Indian Brahm is the first and only Substance, infinite, absolute, indeterminate Being, from which all is evolved, manifested, developed, and to which all returns and is reabsorbed. The Vedanta philosophy is based on this fundamental principle, and it has

<sup>1</sup> ABBÉ MARET, "Theodicée Chretienne," p. 94. -

<sup>2</sup> ABBÉ GOSCHLER, sur "l'Histoire du Pantheisme." ABBÉ MARET, "Essai," chap. iv.

been well described as "the most rigorous system of Pantheism which has ever appeared."

We learn from the writings of Greece that a similar system prevailed in Egypt, different, indeed, in form, and expressed in other terms, but resting on the same ultimate ground; and we know that Christianity found one of its earliest and most formidable antagonists in the philosophical school of Alexandria, which was deeply imbued with a Pantheistic spirit, and which, perhaps for that reason, has recently become an object of much interest to speculative minds in France and Germany. The Gnostic and the Neoplatonic sects maintained, and the writings of Plotinus and Proclus still exhibit, many principles the same in substance with those which have been recently revived in Continental Europe. In the earlier as well as the later literature of Greece we find traces of Pantheism, while the Polytheistic worship, which universally prevailed, was its natural product and appropriate manifestation. The ancient Orphic doctrines, which were taught in the Mysteries, seem to have been based on the oriental idea of Emanation. Even in the masculine literature of Rome we find numerous passages which are still quoted, with glowing admiration, by the Pantheists of modern times.<sup>1</sup> There is, indeed, but too much reason to believe that the numerous references which occur in the Classics to the existence of one absolute and supreme Being, and which Dr. Cudworth has so zealously collected, with the view of proving "the naturality of the idea of God," must be interpreted, at least in many instances, in a Pantheistic sense, and that they imply nothing more than the recognition of one parent Substance, from which all other beings have been successively developed.

<sup>1</sup> PIERRE LEROUX, "De l'Humanité," I. 249. M. CROUSSE, "Des Principes," pp. 199, 211, 296. BAYLE, "Pensées," III. 67. The well-known lines of the sixth Æneid, "Principio cœlum, ac terras, camposque liquentes," &c. are thus applied.

We find some lingering remains of Pantheism in the writings of the middle age. Scot Erigena, in his work, "De Divisione Naturæ," sums up his theory by saying: "All is God, and God is all." Amaury de Chartres made use of similar language. And it must have been more widely diffused in these times than many may be ready to believe, if it be true, as the Abbé Maret affirms, and as M. de Hammer offers to prove, that the Knights of the Order of the Temple were affiliated to secret societies in which the doctrines of Gnosticism and the spirit of Pantheism were maintained and cherished.<sup>1</sup> It reappeared in the philosophical schools of Italy before the dawn, and during the early progress, of the revival of letters and the Reformation of Religion;<sup>2</sup> and even now, after three centuries of scientific progress and social advancement, it is once more rising into formidable strength, and aspiring to universal ascendancy.

From this rapid survey of the history of the past, it is clear that Pantheism is one of the oldest and most inveterate forms of error; that in its twofold character, as at once a *philosophy* and a *faith*, it possesses peculiar attractions for that class of minds which delight to luxuriate in mystic speculation; and that, in the existing state of society, it may be reasonably regarded as the most formidable rival to Natural and Revealed Religion. We are far from thinking, indeed, that the old mechanical and materialistic Atheism is so completely worn out or so utterly exploded as some recent writers would have us to believe;<sup>3</sup> for M. Comte and his school still avow that wretched creed, while they profess to despise Pantheism, as a system of empty abstractions. We do think, however, that the grand ultimate struggle between Christianity and Atheism will resolve itself into a contest between Christianity and Pantheism. For, in the Christian sense, Pantheism is itself Athe-

<sup>1</sup> ABBÉ MARET, "Essai," pp. 152, 156, 221.

<sup>2</sup> DR. MERLE D'AUBIGNÉ, "History of Reformation," v. 84

<sup>3</sup> ABBÉ MARET, "Essai," p. 89; "Theodicée," p. 368.

istic, since it denies the Divine personality, and ascribes to the universe those attributes which belong only to the living God; but then it is a distinct and very peculiar form of Atheism, much more plausible in its pretensions, more fascinating to the imagination, and less revolting to the reason, than those colder and coarser theories which ascribed the origin of the world to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or to the mere mechanical laws of matter and motion. It admits much which the Atheism of a former age would have denied; it recognizes the principle of causality, and gives a reason, such as it is, for the existing order of Nature; it adopts the very language of Theism, and speaks of the Infinite, the Eternal, the Unchangeable One; it may even generate a certain mystic piety, in which elevation of thought may be blended with sensibility of emotion, springing from a warm admiration of Nature; and it admits of being embellished with the charms of a seductive eloquence, and the graces of a sentimental poetry. It may be regarded, therefore, not indeed as the only, but as the most formidable rival of Christian Theism at the present day.

We have sometimes thought that the recent discoveries of Chemical Science might have a tendency, at least in the case of superficial minds, to create a prepossession in favor of Pantheism; for what does modern Chemistry exhibit, but the spectacle of Nature passing through a series of successive transmutations?—the same substance appearing in different forms, and assuming in every change different properties, but never annihilated, never destroyed; now existing in the form of solid matter, again in the form of a yielding fluid, again in the form of an elastic gas; now nourishing a plant, and entering into its very substance; now incorporated with an animal, and forming its sinews or its bones; now reduced again to dust and ashes, but only to appear anew, and enter once more into other combinations. The facts are certain, and they are sufficiently striking to suggest the question, May not Nature itself be the

one Being whose endless transformations constitute the history of the universe? This question may be naturally suggested, and it may even be lawfully entertained; but it cannot be satisfactorily determined by any theory which leaves the evident marks of Intelligence and Design in the whole constitution and course of Nature unaccounted for or unexplained.

Influenced by these and similar considerations, many thoughtful men have recently avowed their belief that the two grand alternatives in modern times are, Christianity and Pantheism. The Abbé Maret and Amand Saintes differ only in this: that by Christianity the former means Catholicism, the latter means the Gospel, or the religion of the primitive church; but both agree that Pantheism is the only other alternative. Schlegel contrasts the same alternatives in the following impressive terms: "Here is the decisive point; two distinct, opposite, or diverging paths lie before us, and man must choose between them. The clear-seeing spirit, which, in its sentiments, thoughts, and views of life, would be in accordance with itself, and would act consistently with them, must, in any case, take one or the other. Either there is a living God, full of love, even such a One as love seeks and yearns after, to whom faith clings, and in whom all our hopes are centred (and such is the personal God of Revelation),—and on this hypothesis the world is not God, but is distinct from Him, having had a beginning, and being created out of nothing,—or there is only one supreme form of existence, and the world is eternal, and not distinct from God; there is absolutely but One, and this eternal One comprehends all, and is itself all in all; so that there is no where any real and essential distinction, and even that which is alleged to exist between evil and good is only a delusion of a narrow-minded system of Ethics. . . . Now, the necessity of this choice and determination *presses urgently upon our own time*, which stands midway between two worlds.

Generally, it is between *these two paths alone* that the decision is to be made.”<sup>1</sup>

We have made the preceding remarks on purpose to show that the distinctive doctrines of Pantheism, as a system different, in some respects, from the colder forms of Atheism, demand the careful study of the Divines and the Philosophers of the present age; and that any statement of the evidence in favor of the being and perfections of God, which overlooks the prevalence of these doctrines, or makes only a cursory reference to them, must be alike defective in itself, and ill adapted to the real exigencies of European society. Let this be our apology for attempting, as we now propose, to exhibit an outline of the Pantheistic system, to resolve it into its constituent elements and ultimate grounds, to examine the validity of the reasons on which it rests, and to contrast it with the doctrine of Christian Theism, which speaks of a living, personal God, and of a distinct but dependent Creation, the product of His supreme wisdom and almighty power. The task is one of considerable difficulty, — difficulty arising not so much from the nature of the subject, as from the metaphysical and abstruse manner in which it has been treated. We must follow Spinoza through the labyrinth of his Theological Politics and his Geometrical Ethics; we must follow Schelling and Hegel into the still darker recesses of their Transcendental Philosophy; for a philosophy of one kind can only be met and neutralized by a higher and a better, and the first firm step towards the refutation of error is a thorough comprehension of it. But having an assured faith in those stable laws of thought which are inwoven with the very texture of the human mind, and in the validity and force of that natural evidence to which Theology appeals, we have no fear of the profoundest Metaphysics that

<sup>1</sup> FRED. VON SCHLEGEL, “Philosophy of Life,” p. 417. See, also, DR. THOLUCK’s remarks on the same point in the “Princeton Theological Essays,” I. 555.

can be brought to bear on the question at issue, provided only they be not altogether unintelligible.

Pantheism has appeared in several different forms; and it may conduce both to the fullness and the clearness of our exposition if we offer, in the first instance, a comprehensive outline of the theory of Spinoza, with a brief criticism on its leading principles, and thereafter advance to the consideration of the twofold development of Pantheism in the hands of Materialists and Idealists, respectively.

## SECTION I.

### THE SYSTEM OF SPINOZA.

The Pantheistic speculations which have been revived in modern times can scarcely be understood, and still less accounted for or answered, without reference to the system of Spinoza. That system met with little favor from any, and with vigorous opposition from not a few, of the divines and philosophers of the times immediately subsequent to its publication. It was denounced and refuted by Musæus, a judicious and learned professor of divinity at Jena; by Mansvelt, a young but promising professor of philosophy at Utrecht; by Cuyper of Rotterdam; by Wittichius of Leyden; by Pierre Poiret of Reinsburg; by Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray; by Huet, Bishop of Avranches; by John Howe, and Dr. Samuel Clarke, as well as by many others,<sup>1</sup> whose writings

<sup>1</sup> MUSÆUS, "Tractatus Theologico-politicus ad veritatis lumen examinatus," 1674. REGNERI A MANSVELT, "Adversus anonymum Theologico-politicum, Liber singularis," 1674. FRANÇOIS CUYPER, "Arcana Atheismi Revelata," 1676. JOHN BREDENBOURG, "Enervatio Tractatus Theol.-polit." CHRIST. WITTICHII, "Anti-Spinoza, sive Examen," 1690. PIERRE POIRET, "Fundamenta Atheismi Eversa, sive Specimen Absurditatis Spinozianæ." FENELON, "De l'Existence de Dieu," p. II., c. III.,

served for a time to preserve the Church from the infection of his most dangerous errors. But gradually these views became an object of speculative interest to Metaphysical inquirers, and found favor even with a growing class of Philosophical Divines;<sup>1</sup> partly by reason of the strong intellectual energy with which they were conceived and announced, and partly, also, there is reason to fear, on account of a prevailing tendency to lower the authority of Scripture, and to exalt the prerogatives of reason, in matters of faith. The system of Spinoza, as developed in his "*Tractatus Theologico-politicus*," and, still more, in his "*Ethica*,"—a posthumous publication,—may be said to contain the germs of the whole system both of Theological and Philosophical Rationalism which was subsequently unfolded,—in the Church, by Paulus, Wegscheider, and Strauss,—and, in the Schools, by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

Theological Rationalism consists in making Reason the sole arbiter and the supreme judge in matters of faith; in setting aside or undermining the authority of Revelation, partly by denying or questioning the plenary inspiration of Scripture, partly by explaining or accounting for miracles on natural principles, partly by assuming, as Strauss assumes, that whatever is supernatural must necessarily be unhistorical; in reducing every article of the creed, by a new method of critical exegesis, to a mere statement of some natural fact or some moral doctrine, embellished, in the one case, by mythical legends, and accommodated, in the other, to local and temporary prejudices, but amounting substantially to nothing more than a natural development of human thought. The prolific germs of this Neologian method of the interpretation of Scripture are to be found every where in the writings of Spinoza.

"*Refutation du Spinozisme*." HUET, "*La Conformité de la Raison avec la Foi*," 1692. HOWE, "*Living Temple*," I. 262. S. CLARKE, "*Discourse on the Being and Attributes of God*," pp. 25, 44, 58, 80.

<sup>1</sup> JEAN COLERUS, "*Vie de Spinoza*," reprinted by Saisset, p. 4.

Philosophical Rationalism, again, although often, or rather generally, blended with the Theological, is yet, in some respects, distinct from it. The one has been developed in the Church, the other in the Schools. The former, cultivated by divines who acknowledged more or less explicitly the authority of Scripture, has directed its efforts mainly to the establishment of a new method of Biblical exegesis and criticism, by which all that is peculiar to Revelation, as a supernatural scheme, might be enervated or explained away. The latter, cultivated by Philosophic speculators who were not bound by any authority, nor fettered by any subscription to articles of faith, has sought, without reference to Revelation, to solve the great problems relating to God, Man, and the Universe, on purely natural principles; and, after many fruitless efforts, has taken refuge, at last, in the Faith of Pantheism and the Philosophy of the Absolute. The prolific germs of this method of the interpretation of Nature are also to be found in the writings of Spinoza.

The circumstance, indeed, which, more than any other, seems to have commended his system to some of the most inquisitive minds in Europe, is *its apparent completeness*. It is not a mere theory of Pantheism, nor a mere method of Exegesis, nor a mere code of Ethics, nor a mere scheme of Politics, although all these are comprehended under it; but it is a system founded on a few radical principles, which are exhibited in the shape of axioms and definitions, and unfolded, by rigorous logical deduction, in a series of propositions, with occasional scholia and corollaries, after the method of Geometry; a system which undertakes to explain the rationale of *every* part of human knowledge, to interpret alike the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation, to determine the character of prophetic inspiration, and to account for apparent miracles on natural principles, to establish the real foundations of moral duty, and the ultimate grounds of state policy; and all this

on the strength of a few simple definitions, and a series of necessary deductions from them. It is important to mark this characteristic feature of his system; for while we have directly nothing to do with by far the larger part of his speculations, which relate to questions foreign to our present inquiry, yet the fact that his ethical and political conclusions are deduced from the same principles on which his Pantheistic theory is founded, serves at once to account for the extensive influence which his writings have exerted on every department of modern speculation, and also to show that, in opposing that system, we are entitled to found on the conclusions which he has himself deduced from it, for the purpose of disproving the fundamental principles on which it rests. For if, on the one hand, the principles which he assumes in his definitions and axioms do necessarily involve the conclusions which are propounded in his *Ethics* and *Politics*; and if, on the other hand, these conclusions are found to be at variance with the highest views of *Morality* and *Government*, then the more logical the process by which they have been deduced, the more certain will it be that there is some fundamental flaw in the basis on which the whole superstructure is reared. In other cases, it might be doubtful how far the consequences that may seem to be deducible from a theory could be legitimately urged in argument, especially when these consequences are disavowed by the author of it; but, in the present case, the consequences are explicitly declared, not less than the principles,—they are even exhibited as corollaries rigorously deduced from them; and thus the very comprehensiveness of the system, which gives it so much of the aspect of completeness, and which has fascinated the minds of speculative men, always fond of bold and sweeping generalizations, may be found to afford the most conclusive proof of its inherent weakness, and to show that it comes into fatal collision, at all points, not only with the

doctrines of Natural and Revealed Religion, but also with the practical duties and political rights of mankind.

We may present, in brief compass, a comprehensive summary of the doctrine of Spinoza. The fundamental principle of his whole theory is contained in the assumption with which he sets out,—that the entire system of Being consists only of *three* elements, “Substance, Attributes, and Modes,” and in the *definitions* which are given of these terms respectively. With him, Substance is Being; not this or that particular being, nor even being in general, considered in the abstract, but absolute Being,—Being in its plentitude, which comprehends all existences that can be conceived without requiring the concept of any other thing, and without which no other thing can either exist or be conceived.<sup>1</sup> By an “Attribute” he means, not substance, but a manifestation of substance, yet such a manifestation as belongs to its very essence; and, by a “Mode,” he means an affection of substance, or that which exists in another thing, and is conceived by means of that thing. These are the three fundamental ideas of his system.<sup>2</sup>

The “Substance” of which he speaks is God, the infinite, self-existent, eternal Being, whose essential nature is defined in terms which might seem to be expressive of a great truth, for he says: “I understand by God an absolutely infinite Being, that is to say, a Substance constituted by an infinity of Attributes, each of which expresses an eternal and infinite essence.” But, on closer inspection, we find that the God of whom he speaks is not the Creator and Governor of the world, not a living, personal Being, distinct from Nature and superior to it, not the Holy One and the Just, possessing infinite moral perfections, and exercising a supreme dominion over

<sup>1</sup> SPINOZA, “Ethica,” Definitions III., IV., V.

<sup>2</sup> “Il construit le système entière des êtres avec ces trois seuls elements; la substance, l’attribut, et le mode.”—“Voilà l’idée mere de la metaphysique de Spinoza.”—SAISSET.

His works; but, simply, absolute Being, the necessary self-existent Substance, whose known "Attributes" are *extension* and *thought*, and whose affections, or "Modes," comprehend all the varieties of finite existence; in short, it is Nature that is God, for every possible existence may be included under the twofold expression of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*. Accordingly, the principle of *Unisubstancisme* is broadly avowed, and the very possibility of creation denied. He affirms, and, indeed, according to his definition, he is entitled to affirm, that there is not and cannot be more than *one substance*; for by "Substance" he means a self-existent, necessary, and eternal Being. And, on the same ground, he affirms that the creation of *such* a substance is impossible; for, having excluded every finite thing—everything that does not exist of itself—from his definition of Substance, he is warranted in saying that anything called into being by a creative act of Divine power could not be a "substance," *in his sense of that term*. He sets himself to prove, by a series of propositions whose logical correctness, as deductions from his fundamental assumption, may be freely and most safely admitted, that the production of a "substance" is absolutely impossible; that between two "substances," having different "attributes," there is nothing in common; that where two things have nothing in common, the one cannot be the cause of the other; that two or more distinct things can only be discriminated from each other by the difference of the "attributes" or "affections" of their "substance;" and that, in the nature of things, there cannot be two or more substances of the same kind, or possessing the same attributes. He holds, of course, that Nature is as necessary as God, or, rather, that God and Nature are one; there being but one Substance, appearing only in different aspects, as cause and effect, as substance and mode, as infinite and yet finite, as one and yet many, as ever the same and yet infinitely variable.

It is only necessary to add, that the sole attributes of this Substance which are capable of being known by our limited intelligence, and which are discerned by an immediate "intuition of reason," are two, namely, *extension* and *thought*. We know nothing, and can know nothing, of God beyond this: He has no will, or his will is mere intelligence or thought; He has no law, or His law is merely His thought embodied in the arrangements of nature; He has no moral properties that are cognizable by the human faculties. It follows that God is not the creator of the world, for creation implies an act of will, and God has no will; that He is not the Lawgiver or Governor of the world, for there is no law emanating from a superior, but such only as is created by *human compact or agreement*, and there is "no natural obligation to obey God," no invariable standard of right and wrong. The principles which are thus assumed in regard to the nature of God are afterwards applied to many important questions, relating, first, to the soul of man; secondly, to the science of Ethics; thirdly, to the doctrine of political right and liberty; and, fourthly, to the supposed claims of Revelation. And they are carried out, with inexorable logic, into all their most revolting results.

Such is a concise, but, as we believe, a correct outline of the leading principles of the system of Spinoza. We shall now offer a few remarks upon it, directed to the object of showing wherein consists the radical fallacy on which it rests, and what are the considerations by which thoughtful men may be most effectually secured against its pernicious influence.

It has been well said by Professor Saisset, that the fallacy of this system does not lie in any one proposition of the series, but that it is a vicious circle throughout; that the paralogism is not in this or that part of the "Ethics,"—it is everywhere; and that the germ of the whole is contained in the *definitions*, which are assumed, but not proved.<sup>1</sup> Our attention, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> SAISSET, "Introduction," p. xxxix.

must be given, in the first instance, to the fundamental assumptions on which the whole superstructure is built.

1. It is assumed, without proof, that the entire system of Being may be ranked under the three categories of Substance, Attributes, and Modes. It is assumed, equally without proof, that there can be no substance which is not self-existent, necessary, and eternal, and that every being which does not possess these properties must be only a "mode" or affection of another being to whom they belong. It is further assumed, also without proof, that *extension* and *thought* are necessary "attributes" of the one self-existent "substance," each of the two exhibiting only a different aspect of his eternal essence, while both are equally essential and equally infinite. And, finally, it is assumed, still without proof, that Nature comprehends a two-fold series of existences, distinct from each other, but developed, as it were, in parallel lines, — Corporeal and Intellectual beings, which correspond respectively to the Divine attributes of extension and thought, — which partake of the essential nature of these attributes, but exhibit them in finite and transient forms, as mere modes or manifestations of the one infinite "substance." These are some of the fundamental assumptions on which he proceeds; they are not proved, nor even attempted to be proved; for, although several are stated in the form of distinct propositions, and accompanied with a formal demonstration, the most cursory inspection of the pretended proof is sufficient to show that it consists entirely in a series of *deductions from principles previously assumed*, and that its validity must ultimately rest on the *definitions* in which these principles are embodied.

Now, let any one examine these "definitions," and he will find that they are wholly arbitrary, and that he is not bound by any law of his intellectual nature to admit them, still less entitled, on any ground of experience, to assume and found upon them, as if they were self-evident or axiomatic truths.

It is possible, and it may even be legitimate and useful for the purposes of philosophical speculation, to classify the various objects of human knowledge by ranging them under the categories of Substance, Attributes, and Modes. But is it a self-evident truth, that there can be no substance in nature excepting such as is self-existent and eternal? Is it a self-evident truth that man, with his distinct personality and individual consciousness, is a mere "mode" or affection of another being? Is it a self-evident truth that the ape, the lizard, and the worm are equally "modes" of the same substance with the angel and the seraph? Is it a self-evident truth that *extension* and *thought* are equally expressive of the uncreated Essence and necessary "attributes" of the Eternal? Is it a self-evident truth that no being can exist in nature otherwise than by *development out of the Divine substance*, and that the *creation* of a distinct but dependent being is impossible? In regard to questions such as these, the appeal must lie to that common sense, or those laws of thought, which are the heritage of every thinking mind, and which cannot be cramped or fettered by the arbitrary definitions of any philosophical system whatever. These definitions must commend themselves *as true*, either by their own self-evidencing light, or by their manifest conformity with experience, before they can be assumed and founded on in any process of reasoning; and we are very sure that those which have been specified cannot be candidly examined without appearing to be, as they really are, the grossest instances of a *petitio principii* that have ever been offered to the world. For these "definitions" constitute the foundation of the whole superstructure; they contain the germ, which is subsequently expanded and developed in a long series of propositions; and, as they are assumed without proof, while they are far from being self-evident, no amount of logical power and no effort of dialectic skill can possibly extract from them any doctrinal

results, whether theological, ethical, or political, possessing greater evidence than what belongs to themselves. This is our *first* objection.

2. The philosophical method of Spinoza, as applied to our special subject, is radically vicious. It is not the inductive or experimental method; it is an argument *a priori*, a deductive process of reasoning. Now, this method, suitable as it is to a certain class of subjects, such as those of Geometry, in which clear and precise definitions are attainable, is either utterly inapplicable to another class of subjects, such as most of those of which Spinoza treats, or it is peculiarly dangerous, especially in the hands of a daring speculator, since, in the absence of adequate definitions, he may be tempted to have recourse to such as are purely arbitrary. All the possible properties of a circle may be deduced from the simple definition of it; but it will not follow that all the possible forms of being in nature may be deduced from the definition of "substance." The reason is clear; we cannot have such a definition of substance as we may have of a circle. We do not object merely to the *geometrical form* of his reasoning,—that is a mere accessory, and one which renders the "Ethica" much more dry and less attractive than the "Tractatus," in which he gives free scope to his subtle intellect, unfettered by any such artificial plan,—but we object to the essential nature of his system, to the *a priori* and deductive method by which he attempts to solve some of the highest problems of philosophy respecting God, Nature, and Man. Here, if anywhere, is a field of inquiry which demands for its due cultivation an enlarged experience and a patient spirit of induction. Yet, with him, the starting-point of philosophy is the highest object of human thought. He begins with the idea of self-existent Being, without which, as he imagines, nothing else can be conceived; and then, following the line of a descending series, he attempts to deduce

from it the philosophy of the whole system of the universe!<sup>1</sup> His Metaphysics must borrow nothing from experience; his very Psychology must be purely deductive. From the intuitive idea of "substance" he deduces the nature and existence of God; from the nature of God, the necessity of a Divine development; from the necessity of a Divine development, the existence of a universe comprising souls and bodies; and nowhere does he condescend to take notice of the facts of experience, except in two of his axioms, in which he assumes that "man thinks," and that "he feels his body to be affected in various ways." His whole philosophy resolves itself ultimately into an intellectual intuition, whose object is Substance or Being, with its infinite attributes of extension and thought, — an intuition which discerns its object directly and immediately, in the light of its own self-evidence, without the aid of any intermediate sign, and which is as superior, in a philosophical point of view, to the intimations of sense, as its objects are superior to the fleeting phenomena of Nature.

Now, we submit that this method of constructing a philosophy of Nature is radically vicious, and diametrically opposed to the only legitimate, the only possible way of attaining to sound knowledge. He is not content to tell us *what is* the order of things; he aspires, forsooth, to show what the order of things *must be*. We have no wish to disparage Metaphysical Science; it has a natural root in human reason, and a legitimate domain in the ample territory of human thought; but we protest against any attempt to extend it beyond its proper boundaries, or to apply it to subjects which belong to the province of experience and observation. The schemes which have been recently broached in Germany, and imitated in France, for constructing, at one time, a deductive Psychology, at another a deductive Physics, at a third a deductive

<sup>1</sup> SPINOZA, "De Intellectûs Emendatione." This treatise contains the exposition of his method.

Ethics, at a fourth a deductive Theory of Progress, at a fifth a deductive History of Religion, afford more than sufficient evidence that hitherto the spirit of the Baconian philosophy has been little understood, and still less appreciated, by our continental neighbors; and that the efforts of the highest genius have been sadly frustrated, in attempting the impracticable task of extracting from mere reason that knowledge which can only be acquired in the school of experience. This is our *second* objection.

3. The system of Spinoza is vicious, because it applies a mere abstraction of the human mind to account for whatever is real and concrete in the universe. We have no sympathy with those who rail at all abstract ideas, as if they were imaginary essences or mere illusions; we recognize the faculty of abstraction as one of the wisest provisions of Nature, and one of the most useful powers belonging to the mind of man,—a power which comes into action with the first dawn of infant intelligence, and is only matured as reason rises into manhood, till it becomes the internal spring of all Philosophy and Science. Nor do we hold that an abstract idea is necessarily an unreality, or a mere negation; for, without reviving the controversy between the Nominalists and Realists, or pronouncing any decision on the intricate questions which that controversy involved, we may say, in general terms, that the idea of a circle, of a square, or of a triangle, is neither unreal nor negative, but a very positive, and, withal, intelligible thing. It is the idea of that which is essential to the nature of each of these figures respectively, and common to all possible figures of the same class, whatever may be their accidental varieties, whether in point of dimension or form. And so the idea of Being or Substance, although it be highly abstract, is not necessarily unreal or negative; it is the idea of *existence*, or of that which is common to everything that *is*, abstraction being made of every diversity by which one being is distinguished

from another. Conscious that we ourselves exist, and observing that other beings exist around us, we strike off the peculiarities which belong to individuals, and form the general idea which includes nothing but what is common to all, and yet contains a positive element, which is the object of one of the strongest convictions of the human mind.<sup>1</sup> The conception of Infinite Being contains the positive element of *being*, abstraction being made of all *limitation* or *bounds*. That this is a real, legitimate, and useful conception, we have no disposition to deny; we cannot divest ourselves of it; it springs up spontaneously from the innermost fountain of thought. But we cannot accept the account which Spinoza has given of its nature and origin, and still less can we assent to the application which he has made of it. He describes it as the idea of absolute, necessary, self-existent, eternal Being; and he traces its origin, not to the combined influence of experience and abstraction, acting under the great primitive law of *causality*, but to an immediate perception, or direct *intuition, of reason*. Now, we submit that the concept of *being*, and the concept of absolute *self-existent being*, are perfectly distinct from each other, and that they spring from different laws of thought. The concept of *being* applies to everything that exists, without reference to the cause or manner of its existence; and this springs simply from experience and abstraction. The concept of *self-existent being*, which is equally suggested by the laws of our mental constitution, does not apply to everything that exists, but only to that whose existence is not originated or determined by any other being; and this concept springs also from experience and abstraction, combined, however, with the law or principle of *causality*, which teaches us that no change can occur in Nature, and that nothing can ever come into being, *without a cause*, and prompts us to infer from *the fact of existence*

<sup>1</sup> M. F. PERRON, "Essai d'une Nouvelle Theorie sur les Idées Fondamentales," 1843.

now, the conclusion that *something must have existed from all eternity*. The origin of each of these concepts may thus be naturally accounted for by the known laws of our mental constitution, without having recourse to any faculty of *intellectual intuition* such as Spinoza describes, — a faculty independent of experience, and superior to it, — a faculty which gazes direct on Absolute Being, and penetrates, without the aid of any intermediate sign or manifestation, into the very essence of God. Spinoza has not discriminated aright between these two concepts, in respect either of their nature or their origin. He has not overlooked, indeed, the distinction between *abstract ideas* and the *intellectual intuitions*, of which he speaks; but he confounds the concept of *being* with the concept of *self-existent being*, as if the two were identical, or as if *being* could not be predicated of anything, otherwise than as it is a “mode” or affection of the one only “substance.” A sounder Psychology has taught us that our conception of existence arises, in the first instance, from our own conscious experience; and that, when this conception subsequently expands into the idea of Absolute Being, and results in the belief of a necessary, self-existent, and eternal Cause, the new element which is thus added to it may be accounted for by the *principle of causality*, which constitutes one of the fundamental laws of human thought, and which, if it may be said to resemble *intuition* in the rapidity and clearness with which it enables us to discern the truth, differs essentially from that *immediate intuition* of which Spinoza speaks, since it is dependent on experience, and, instead of gazing direct on Absolute Being, makes use of intermediate signs and manifestations, by which it rises to the knowledge of “the unseen and eternal.”

We submit, further, that a system which rests on the mere idea of Being as its sole support, cannot afford any satisfactory explanation of real and concrete existences. The idea of Being is one of our most abstract conceptions; it is associated, indeed,

with an invincible belief in the reality of Being,—a belief which springs up spontaneously, along with the idea itself, from our own conscious experience. It is even associated with an invincible belief in necessary, self-existent, and eternal Being,—a belief which springs from *the principle of causality*, or that law of thought whereby, from the fact that something exists now, we instinctively conclude that something *must* have existed from all eternity. But neither the simple concept of Being, which is derived from experience and framed by abstraction, nor the additional concept of self-existent Being, which springs from the action of our rational faculties on the data furnished by experience, can afford any explanation of the nature and origin of the real, concrete existences in the universe. These must be studied in the light of their own appropriate evidence; they must be interpreted, and not divined; they cannot be inferred deductively from any, even the highest and most abstract, conception of the human mind. Yet the philosophy of Spinoza attempts to explain all the phenomena of the universe by the idea of Absolute Being; it accounts for the concrete by the abstract; it represents all individual beings as mere modes or affections of one universal substance; in other words, it *realizes* the abstract idea of thought and extension, but *denies the existence* of bodies and souls, otherwise than as manifestations of these eternal essences.

4. The system of Spinoza is vicious, because his whole reasoning on the subject of Creation is pervaded by a transparent fallacy. He affirms the impossibility of Creation, and attempts to demonstrate his position. But how? By proving that a “substance” cannot be produced. And why may not “a substance” be produced? Because, *by the definition*, “a substance” is that which is “self-existent.” In other words, a self-existent substance cannot be created,—a truism which scarcely required the apparatus of a geometrical proof by means of propositions, scholia, and corollaries, or, as Professor

Saisset says, with laconic naïveté, "*ce qui a à peine besoin d'être démontré.*" But, while the only proof that is offered extends no further than to self-existent or uncreated substance, it is afterwards applied to everything that exists, so as to exclude the creation even of that which is *not* self-existent; and this on the convenient assumption that whatever exists must be either a "substance," or an "attribute," or a "mode." And thus, partly by an ambiguity of language, partly by an arbitrary and gratuitous assumption, he excludes the possibility of Creation altogether. Surely it might have occurred to him that by proving the necessary existence of an uncreated Being — a doctrine held by every Christian Theist — he did not advance one step towards the disproof of the possibility of creation, nor even towards the establishment of his favorite theory of *unisubstantisme*; for, grant that there is an uncreated and self-existent Being; grant, even, that there can be no more than *one*, — would it follow that there can be no created and dependent beings, or that they can only exist as "modes" or "affections" of that absolute Essence? Might they not exist as *creatures*, as *products*, as *effects*, without partaking of the nature of their cause? <sup>1</sup> Yet, if there be one idea more than another which Spinoza is anxious to extirpate, it is that of creation, and he summons the whole strength, both of his logic and sarcasm, when he has to deal with the argument from "final causes." And no marvel; for the doctrine of a creation would cut up his system by the roots. The radical difference, in fact, between Theism and Pantheism mainly consists in this: that the former regards creation as distinct from the Creator, as the product of His omnipotent and free will, as the object of His

<sup>1</sup> "Ici, a prendre les mots dans le sens ordinaire, il semble qu'il soit démontré que la *Creation est impossible*, principe justement cher au Pantheisme; tandis qu'au fond, tout ce qui est démontré, c'est que l'*Être en soi est nécessairement incréé*, — vérité incontestable, dont le *Pantheisme n'a rien à tirer.*" — PROF. SAISET, Introduction, p. XLII.

constant providential care, as the subject of His supreme control and government; whereas the latter represents it as a necessary *emanation* from the Divine substance, as an eternal *development* of the uncreated Essence; the finite, in all its forms, being a "mode" of the infinite, and the temporary phases of nature so many transient but ever-renewed manifestations of the unchangeable and eternal. These two conceptions are diametrically opposed; they cannot admit of conciliation or compromise; and hence the daring attempt of Spinoza to prove the impossibility of creation, even when he admits the existence of an Infinite and Eternal Being.

5. The system of Spinoza is vicious, because it involves erroneous conclusions respecting both the *body* and the *soul*. He denies that they are "substances." And why? Because, *by the definition*, "a substance" is that which is self-existent, and may be conceived without reference to any other being. Be it so. What does this argument amount to? Why, simply to this, that they are not gods. What, then, are they? Created beings? No. And why? Because creation is impossible, and, also, because whatever exists must be either a "substance," or an "attribute," or a "mode." What then? Clearly not an "attribute," for the only attributes known to us are extension and thought, and these attributes are as infinite as "the substance" to which they belong; they must therefore be "modes" or "affections" of that "substance." But in what sense? In the sense of being created, and therefore dependent, existences, whose nature and origin cannot be conceived of or accounted for without reference to the Being who produced them at first, and still continues to maintain them? No; for in that sense all Theists admit the derivation and dependence of every finite being; but they must be "modes" or "affections" of the one uncreated essence, mere phenomenal manifestations of it. The soul, whose essence is thought, is a mere succession of ideas. The body is a mere "mode" of the Divine "attribute" of

extension; and neither the one nor the other can be described as a *distinct being*. They are affections, and nothing more, of the one infinite "substance."

It is important to remark that, according to this theory, *the distinct personality of man* is excluded, not less than *the distinct personality of God*. It is not easy, indeed, to explain this part of Spinoza's theory; for he has a subtle disquisition on the relation subsisting between the soul and the body, by means of which he attempts to explain the phenomena of self-consciousness, and to show that individual personality is not necessarily inconsistent with the doctrine which represents man as a mere "mode" of the Divine "substance." But one thing is clear: there is no room in the system of Spinoza for the distinct personality of man, in the ordinary acceptation of that expression. The unity, especially of the human soul, its individuality, its self-consciousness, its identity, as a being, dependent, indeed, on God, but really distinct from Him, must be sacrificed, if the system is to be saved; and no other being can be recognized but the absolute "substance," with its infinite "attributes" and its finite "modes." This consideration appears to us to be fatal to the whole theory. For it shows that the Pantheistic speculations, which are directed against *the personality of God*, are equally conclusive, if they be conclusive at all, against *the personality of Man*; that they run counter to the intuitive knowledge of the human mind; and that they cannot be embraced without doing violence to some of our clearest and surest convictions. For what clearer or surer conviction can there be than that of my own personal existence, as a distinct, self-conscious, intelligent, active, and responsible being? And yet the existence of our own bodies and souls is denied, except in so far as they are mere "modes" or affections of the one uncreated "substance," which is known, not by experience or observation, but by a transcendental faculty of intuition.

And, *finally*, the system of Spinoza is vicious, because the

exposition of it is replete with the most manifest and glaring self-contradictions. His logical power has been so much admired, and his rigorous geometrical method so highly extolled, that his Philosophy has acquired a certain *prestige*, which commends it to many ardent, speculative minds. Yet there are few philosophical writers who have made a larger number of gratuitous assumptions, or who have abounded more in contradictory statements. The "Antinomies" of Spinoza might make the subject of an amusing, and even instructive, dissertation. Thus, by way of specimen, take the following:

God is extended; but, nevertheless, incorporeal.

God thinks; but, nevertheless, has no intelligence.

God is active; but, nevertheless, has no will.

The soul is a "mode" of the Divine thought; but, nevertheless, there is no analogy between God's thought and man's thought.

The love of God is the supreme law of man; but, nevertheless, it is equally lawful for man to live according to appetite or to reason.

The will of man, is, in no sense, free; but, nevertheless, there is a science of human ethics.

Man is under no natural obligation to obey God; but, nevertheless, God is his highest good.

God is neither a Lawgiver nor a Governor; but, nevertheless, a future state is necessary, that every man may have his due.

Might is Right, and Government has power to restrain "the liberty of Prophesying;" but, nevertheless, has no power to restrain "the liberty of Philosophizing."

These are only a few specimens of the gratuitous assumptions and flagrant contradictions with which his writings abound; but they afford a sufficient proof of the reckless character of his genius, and of the utter fallacy of the system

which he promulgated as a rival, or as a substitute, for Natural and Revealed Religion.

On a review of what has been advanced, it must be manifest that the Pantheistic system of Spinoza is founded on principles assumed without proof, and embodied in his "definitions;" that it is constructed according to a philosophical method which is radically vicious; that it abounds in self-contradictory statements; and that it is opposed, at many points, to some of the clearest lessons of experience, and to some of the surest convictions of reason. It is a system which is not demonstrated, but merely developed. The germ of it exists in the "definitions;" deny these, and you destroy his whole philosophy. It cannot, therefore, be held sufficient to foreclose the question respecting the existence of a living, personal God, distinct from Nature and independent of it; nor can Pantheism, in this form, become the successful rival of Christian Theism, until the human mind has lost the power of discriminating between the different kinds of evidence to which they respectively appeal.

## SECTION II.

### MATERIAL OR HYLOZOIC PANTHEISM.

In the system of Spinoza, the two "attributes of *extension* and *thought*," and the corresponding "modes" of *body* and *soul*, were equally recognized, and were employed jointly, in connection with his favorite doctrine of Unisubstancisme. They constituted the opposite poles of his theory, but were both essential to its completeness. But most of his followers, influenced by an excessive desire for simplification, have attempted to blend the two into one; and have either merged the spiritual in the corporeal, or virtually annihilated the material by resolving it into the mental. Hence two distinct,

and even opposite forms of Pantheism,—the *material* or *hylozoic*, and the *ideal* or *spiritual*.

The former was the first in the order of historical development, so far as modern Europe is concerned. It was most in accordance with the Sensational Philosophy which prevailed in the school of Condillac,<sup>1</sup> and which continued to maintain its ascendancy until it was assailed by the reviving spirit of Idealism. It was the characteristic feature of the Atheism of the last century, and was fully exhibited in the “*Système de la Nature*.” The recent revival of Idealism has done much to check its progress, but it has not effected its destruction; on the contrary, the theory of Material or Hylozoic Pantheism is an error as inveterate as it is ancient, and it is continually reappearing even in the light of the intellectual and spiritual Psychology of the nineteenth century.

This theory, although it has been propounded as a religious creed, rests mainly on a philosophical dogma. It is based ultimately on the supposition that nothing exists in the universe except *matter* and its laws; that *mind* is the product of material organization; and that all the phenomena of thought, of feeling, of conscience, and even of religion, may be accounted for by ascribing them to certain powers inherent in matter, and evolved by certain peculiarities of cerebral structure. This fundamental assumption, on which the whole theory of Hylozoic Pantheism ultimately rests, will be subjected to examination in the sequel. We think that it may be best discussed separately and apart, for this among other reasons, that it stands equally related to the old mechanical Atheism and the new material Pantheism, and that, in point of fact, it has been applied indifferently to the support of both. Our remarks at present, therefore, will be directed, not to the refutation of Materialism, but to the exposition and exposure of the Pantheism which has been founded upon it.

<sup>1</sup> M. L'ABBÉ DE CONDILLAC, “*Traité des Sensations*,” 2 vols.

It is not easy — perhaps it might be found, on trial, to be impossible — to show that there is any real difference, except in name, between mechanical Atheism and material Pantheism. Both equally affirm the self-existence and eternity of the Universe; both equally deny the fact of creation, and the doctrine of a living, personal God, distinct from nature, and superior to it. The only apparent difference between the two consists in this, — that the former speaks more of the rude materials, and the cold, hard, unbending laws, which exist in Nature; the latter speaks more of the vital powers, the subtle and ethereal forces, which are at work in her bosom, and which may seem to impart warmth and animation to a system that would otherwise be felt to be cold, inert, and deathlike. But the mechanical Atheist never denied the vital powers of Nature, he only attempted to account for them without an intelligent first Cause; and the material Pantheist has little, if any, advantage over him, except in this, that he has combined Chemistry with Mechanics in attempting to account for the phenomena of the universe, and has drawn his analogies from the laboratory and the crucible, the process of vegetation, and the laws of reproduction and growth, not less than from the formulæ of Physical Science.

The theory of Material Pantheism runs insensibly into one or other of the forms of naked Atheism to which we have already referred. Ignoring the existence of mind, or of any spiritual Power distinct from Nature and superior to it, it must necessarily hold the eternal existence of matter; and, in this respect, it coincides entirely with the Atheistic hypothesis. It may, or it may not, hold also the eternal existence of the present *order of Nature*, including all the varieties of vegetable and animal life. In the one case, it harmonizes with the ancient theory of Atheism, as maintained by Ocellus Lucanus; in the other, it must run into the modern theory of Development, if it makes any attempt to account for the origin of new races, as

made known by the researches of Geologists. In either case, it is equivalent to Atheism, and dependent on one or other of the various theories which have been applied to the defence of the Atheist's creed.

It is worthy of remark, in this connection, how frequently those who are the most daring and decided advocates of Atheism or Pantheism do nevertheless ascribe to Nature many of the attributes which belong to God only. This fact is admirably illustrated by the distinguished founder of the Boyle Lectureship;<sup>1</sup> and it is abundantly confirmed by examples which have been furnished by more recent times. The author of the "System of Nature," which appeared before the first French Revolution, was an avowed and most reckless Atheist;<sup>2</sup> yet he ascribes to Nature most of the attributes which are usually supposed to belong to God, such as self-existence, eternity, immutability, infinitude, and unity; and if the *intellectual* and *moral* attributes may seem to be omitted, as they must be, to some extent, in any system of Atheism, yet *thought*, *design*, and *will*, are expressly ascribed to Nature.<sup>3</sup> And the only difference between the Theist and the Atheist is said to be, that the latter ascribes all the phenomena of Nature "to material, natural, sensible, and known causes," while the former ascribes them to "spiritual, supernatural, unintelligible, and unknown causes;" or, in other words, "to an *occult cause*."<sup>4</sup> It is manifestly a matter of indifference whether this

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, "Theological Works," II. 79.—"A Free Inquiry into the Received Notion of Nature."

<sup>2</sup> "Système de la Nature," II. 75, 110, 115.

<sup>3</sup> "Tout est toujours dans l'ordre relativement à la Nature, où tous les êtres ne font que suivre les loix qui leur sont imposées. Il est entré dans son plans que de certaines terres produiroient des fruits délicieux, tandis que d'autres ne fourniroient que des épines, des vegetaux dangereux. Elle a voulu que puelques societés produise des sages," &c. — Vol. I. 265, also 267.

<sup>4</sup> "Système de la Nature," II. 102.

method of accounting for the phenomena of Nature be called Atheism or Pantheism; in either aspect it is essentially the same.

The more recent advocates of Atheism or Pantheism have often made use of similar language. M. Crousse affirms that "all nature is *animated* by an internal force which moves it;" that this is the true *spontaneity*, the *causality*, which is the origin of all sensible manifestations, for "*mens agit molem et magno se corpore miscet*;" that "matter, the most cold and indifferent, is full of life, capable of engendering thought, and containing mind in it, at least *potentially*;" and that, to every man who has true insight, "the world feels, moves, speaks, and thinks."<sup>1</sup> The author of "The Purpose of Existence" makes it his grand object to show that "the evolvment of mind out of matter" is the primary law and final cause of the universe; that "this process commences with vegetation, extracting from matter the spirit of vitality;" that "this spirit is preserved amid the decay of vegetables, and transfused into animals, thus establishing the great working-principle of Nature, that spirit is extracted from matter by organized bodies, and survives their dissolution."<sup>2</sup> Of course, if matter have the power of evolving intelligent and even immortal minds by its own inherent properties and established laws, it will not be difficult to find in Nature a sufficient substitute for God.

But the most revolting specimen of that material Pantheism, which is only another name for absolute Atheism, that has recently appeared, occurs in the Letters of Atkinson and Martineau: "We require no supernatural causes, when we can recognize adequate natural causes, *inherent in the constitution of Nature*;" "nor are more causes to be admitted than are sufficient to produce any particular change or effect."—"Man has

<sup>1</sup> M. CROUSSE, "Des Principes," Paris, 1846, pp. 81, 93: "Pour qui sait voir, le Monde sent, se meut, parle, et pense."

<sup>2</sup> "The Purpose of Existence," pp. 85, 89. London, 1850.

his place in Natural History; his nature does not essentially differ from that of the lower animals; he is but a fuller development, and varied condition, of the same fundamental nature or cause, — of *that which we contemplate as matter*, and its changes, relations, and properties. Mind is the consequence or product of the material man, its existence depending on the action of the brain.” — “Its highest object seems to be, a sense of the infinite and abstract power, — *the inherent force and principle of Nature.*”<sup>1</sup>

From these specimens it must be evident that whatever nominal distinction may exist between Material Pantheism and avowed Atheism, they are radically identical, and that, for all practical purposes, they may be treated as one and the same. From the same specimens we may derive some useful hints respecting the essential conditions and the right conduct of the Theistic argument. It is not enough to show that there must be a self-existent, eternal, and infinite First Cause, for this is admitted by the advocate of Material Pantheism, who substitutes Nature for God. It is further necessary to show that the actual phenomena of the Universe cannot be accounted for by means of any properties or powers inherent in itself; and that they must be ascribed to a living, intelligent, and powerful Being, distinct from Nature and superior to it. The theory of Materialism must be discussed on its own proper and peculiar merits, and if we find good cause to reject it, the main pillar of Material Pantheism will fall to the ground. In the mean time we shall only further observe, that this form of Pantheism cannot be maintained without the help either of the doctrine of the Eternity of Matter or of the Theory of Development, or, rather, without the aid of both; and that, if it could be established, Polytheism would be its natural product, if not its inevitable result.

<sup>1</sup> “Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development.” By H. G. ATKINSON and HARRIET MARTINEAU. London, 1852.

## SECTION III.

## IDEAL PANTHEISM.

We have already seen that the system of Spinoza equally recognized the two "attributes" of extension and thought, and the two corresponding "modes" of body and soul, in connection with the one infinite and eternal "Substance." We have also seen that most of his followers have taken a one-sided view of the subject, and have either merged the spiritual into the corporeal, so as to educe a Material or Hylozoic Pantheism, or have virtually annihilated the material by resolving it into the mental, so as to educe a system of Ideal or Spiritual Pantheism.

"In Spinoza," says Mr. Morell, "we see the model upon which the modern Idealists of Germany have renewed their search into the absolute ground of all phenomena;" and there can be no doubt that his speculations contain the germ of Ideal as well as of Material Pantheism. The historical filiation of modern Pantheism cannot be satisfactorily explained, in either of its two forms, without reference to his writings; and yet its precise character, as it is developed in more recent systems, demands for its full elucidation some knowledge of the course and progress of philosophical speculation in the interval which elapsed between the death of Spinoza and the subsequent developments of his theory.

We cannot here attempt to trace the history of German Idealism, from its source in the writings of Leibnitz, through the logical school of Wolfius and his successors, till it reached its culminating point in the philosophy of Hegel:—we shall content ourselves with a brief reference to the fundamental principles of Kant's system, which may be justly said to have contained the prolific germs, or, at least, to have determined

the prevailing character, of all the subsequent speculations of the German schools. For if modern Pantheism be indebted to Spinoza for its *substance*, it is equally indebted to Kant for its *form*; and no intelligible account can be given of the phases which it has successively assumed, without reference to the powerful influence which his Philosophy, in one or other of its constituent elements, has exerted on all his successors in the same field of inquiry.

The Philosophy of Kant has a most important bearing on the whole question as to the validity of the natural evidence for the being and perfections of God. We shall confine our attention to those parts of his system which give rise to the speculations that have issued in the recent theories of Ideal or Spiritual Pantheism.

In attempting to explain the nature and origin of the whole system of human knowledge, Kant divides our intellectual being into *three* distinct faculties,—sensation, understanding, and reason. He supposes that from sensation we derive the whole *matter* of our knowledge; that from the understanding we derive its *form*, or the manner in which it is conceived of by us; and that from reason we derive certain general or abstract notions, which are highly useful, since they give a systematic unity to human thought, but which have no *objective validity*, that is, either no reality in nature that corresponds to them, or none, at least, that can be scientifically demonstrated. From this fundamental principle of his system it follows, that the only part of our knowledge which has any objective reality is that which is derived from our sense-perceptions, all else being purely *formal* or *subjective*, and arising solely from the laws of our own mental nature, which determine us to conceive of things in a particular way; and that even that part of our knowledge which is derived from sense-perception is purely phenomenal, since we know nothing of any object around us beyond the bare fact that it exists, and that it

appears to us to be as our senses represent it. Hence the *skeptical* tendency of Kant's speculations, in so far as the scientific certainty of our knowledge is concerned. The *practical utility* of that knowledge is not disputed, but its *objective reality*, or the possibility of proving it, is, to a large extent, denied. Still he admits a primitive *dualism*, and a radical distinction between *the subject and the object*, between the mind which thinks and the matter of its thoughts. The *matter* comes from without, the *form* from within; and the senses are the channels through which the phenomena of nature are poured into the mould of the human mind. All knowledge implies this combination of *matter* with *form*, and is possible only on the supposition of the concurrent action both of the *object* and *subject*; not that either of the two is known to us in its essence, or that their real existence can be scientifically demonstrated, for we know the subject only in its relation to the object, and the object only in its relation to the subject; but that this *relation* necessarily requires the joint action of both, by which alone we can acquire the only knowledge of which we are capable, and which is supposed to be purely phenomenal, relative, and subjective. It is true that we are capable of forming certain grand ideas, such as that of God, the universe, and the soul; but these are the pure products of Reason, the mere personifications of our own modes of thinking, and have no objective reality, at least none that can be scientifically demonstrated. But, while "the Speculative Reason" is held to be incompetent to prove the existence of God, "the Practical Reason" is appealed to; and in the conscious liberty of the soul, and its sense of incumbent moral duty,—"the Categorical Imperative,"—Kant finds materials for reconstructing the basis and fabric of a true Theology, not scientifically perfect, but practically sufficient for all the purposes of life.

It was scarcely possible that Philosophy could find a permanent resting-place in such a theory as this; for, while it

recognized both the "object" and the "subject" as equally indispensable, the one for the *matter*, the other for the *form*, of human knowledge, it did not hold the balance even between the two. It assigned so much to the "subject," and so little to the "object," and made so large a part of our knowledge merely formal and subjective, that it could neither be regarded as a self-consistent system of Skepticism, nor yet as a satisfactory basis for Scientific Belief. It was almost inevitable that speculative minds, starting from this point, should diverge into one or other of *three* courses; either following the line of the "subject" exclusively, and treating the "object" as a superfluous incumbrance, so as to reach, as Schulz and Maimon did, a pure Subjective Idealism, akin to utter Skepticism; or following the line of the "object," and giving it greater prominence than it had in the system of Kant, so as to lay the foundation, as Jacobi and Herbart did, of a system of Objective Certitude; or keeping *both* in view, and attempting, as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel did, to blend the two into one, so as to reduce them to systematic unity.<sup>1</sup>

In Kant's system a *dualism* was admitted, a real distinction between the "subject" and "object" of thought; but he had ascribed so much to the subject, and so little to the object, that Fichte conceived the idea of dispensing with the latter altogether, and constructing his whole philosophy on a purely subjective basis. Since Kant had taught that all objects are conceived of either according to the forms of our sensational faculty, or the categories of our understanding, or the ideas of pure reason, it seemed to be unnecessary to suppose the existence of any object distinct from the mind itself. For if it be the mind which furnishes the form of Space, and gives us the idea of Substance, of Cause, of Being, the mind alone might suffice to account for the whole sum of human knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> MR. MORELL, "History of Philosophy," II. 71.

Fichte was followed by Schelling, and Schelling by Hegel, each differing from his predecessor, but all concurring in the attempt to identify "*Seyn*," or *absolute Being*, with *Thought*, and to represent everything in the universe as a mere mode or manifestation of one Infinite Essence. The *identity* of Existence and Thought is the fundamental principle of Hegel's doctrine. With him, Being and the Idea of being, are the same; and Being and Thought are combined in the "Absolute," which is at once ideal and real (*l'être* and *l'idée*). With him, the idea of God is that of a *logical process of thought*, "ever unfolding itself, but never unfolded,"—a dialectic movement rather than a Divine Being, which realizes itself, and reaches a state of self-consciousness in man. God, nature, and man, are but one process of thought, considered in different aspects; all finite personalities are only so many thoughts of one eternal mind; God is in man, and man is in God, and the progress of humanity, in all its stages, is a Divine development.

This bare outline of these systems must suffice for our present purpose, and we now proceed to offer a few remarks on the doctrine of Ideal as distinguished from Material Pantheism.

1. The whole system of "Idealism," as propounded in the German schools, is utterly baseless, and contradicts the intuitive, the universal convictions of the human mind. For what is Idealism? Reduced to its utmost simplicity, and expressed in the briefest formula, it amounts, in substance, to this: *that the whole universe is to us a mere process of thought*, and that nothing exists, or, at least, can be known by us, beyond *the ideas of our own minds*. And what is the ground on which it rests? It rests entirely on the assumption, that, since we can know nothing otherwise than through the exercise of our mental faculties, these faculties must be the sole sources of all our knowledge, and altogether independent of any external object. According to this theory, the mind is not informed or instructed by the universe, but the universe is created by the mind; the

objective is developed from the subjective; and there is no reality anywhere except in the region of consciousness. Nature is seen only as it is imaged in the mirror within; and to us it is a mere phantasmagoria, a series of phenomena, a succession of thoughts. "The sum total," says Fichte, "is this; there is absolutely nothing permanent, either without me or within me, but only an unceasing change. I know absolutely nothing of any existence, not even of my own. I myself know nothing, and am nothing. Images there are; they constitute all that apparently exists; and what they know of themselves is after the manner of images; images that pass and vanish without there being aught to witness their transition; that consist, in fact, of the images of images, without significance and without an aim. I myself am one of these images; nay, I am not even thus much, but only a confused image of images. All reality is converted into a marvellous dream, without a life to dream of, and without a mind to dream,—into a dream made up only of a dream itself. Perception is a dream; thought—the source of all existence, and all the reality which I imagine to myself of *my* existence, of my power, of my destination—is the dream of that dream."<sup>1</sup>

The tendency of such speculations as these towards universal Skepticism, or even absolute Nihilism, with the exception only of certain fleeting phenomena of Consciousness, is too apparent to require any formal proof; and it must be equally evident that they contradict some of the most universal and deeply-rooted convictions of the human mind. The ultimate ground of every system of Idealism which excludes the knowledge of an external world must be one or other of these two assumptions, or a combination of both: either, that our knowledge cannot extend beyond the range of consciousness, which takes cognizance only of ideas, or of subjective mental

<sup>1</sup> SIR WM. HAMILTON'S Edition of DR. REID'S "Works," p. 129.

states ; or that any attempt to extend it beyond these limits, so as to embrace external objects as really existing, can only be successful on this condition,—that we *prove*, by reasoning from the subjective to the objective, that there is a necessary *logical* connection between the state of the one and the reality of the other. Each of these assumptions is equally groundless. It is true that consciousness, strictly so called, takes cognizance only of what passes within ; it is not true that consciousness, in this restricted sense, is commensurate with our entire knowledge. It is true that we acquire our knowledge only through the exercise of our mental faculties ; it is not true that our mental faculties are the only sources of our knowledge, nor even that, without the concurrence of certain objects, they could give us any knowledge at all. It is true that there must be a connection between the subjective and the objective ; it is not true that this connection must be established by *reasoning*, or that we must *prove* the existence of an external world distinct from the thinking mind, before we are entitled to believe in it. For a great part of our knowledge is *presentative*, and we directly perceive the objects of Nature not less than the phenomena of Consciousness.

When it is said, in the jargon of the modern German philosophy, that “the Ego has no immediate consciousness of the Non-Ego as existing, but that the Non-Ego is only represented to us in a modification of the self-conscious Ego, and is, in fact, only a phenomenon of the Ego,”—a plain, practical Englishman, little tolerant of these subtle distinctions, might be ready, if not deterred by the mere sound of the words, to test them by a particular example. What am I to think, he might say, of my own father and mother ? They are familiarly known to me. I have seen them, and talked with them, and loved them as my own soul. I have hitherto believed that they existed, and that they were really a father and mother to me. But now I am taught that they are—mere modifications of my

own mind ; that they are nothing more than simple phenomena of the self-conscious Ego ; and that, so far from being the earthly authors of my existence, they are themselves—the creation and offspring of my own thought. And on what ground am I asked to receive this astonishing discovery ? Why, simply because I can be sure of nothing but the facts of consciousness. But how are *these facts proved* ? They “need no proof ; they are self-evident ; they are immediately and irresistibly believed.” Be it so. I can just as little doubt of the existence of my body, of the distinct personality of my parents, and the reality of an external universe, as of any fact of consciousness. May it not be, whether we can explain it or not, that the one set of facts is as directly *presented*, and needs as little to be *proved*, as the other ?

2. The doctrine of “Identity” constitutes a prominent and indispensable part of the theory of Idealism, and is the ground-principle of Philosophical Pantheism. It amounts, in substance, to the proposition, that Existence and Thought are *one*, that the “subject” and “object” of knowledge are *one*. “If the doctrine of Identity means anything, it means that Thought and Being are essentially one ; that the process of *thinking* is virtually the same as the process of *creating* ; that in constructing the universe by logical deduction, we do virtually the same thing as Deity accomplishes in developing himself in all the forms and regions of creation ; that every man’s reason, therefore, is really God ; in fine, that Deity is the whole sum of consciousness immanent in the world.”<sup>1</sup> It is through the medium of this doctrine of Identity that Idealism passes into Pantheism,—not, indeed, the Idealism of Berkeley, which recognized, consistently or otherwise, the existence of the human mind and of the Divine Spirit, while it denied the

<sup>1</sup> MR. MORELL, “History of Philosophy,” II. 127. M. MARET, “Essai sur le Pantheisme,” pp. 129, 133, 143, 192, 276. Ibid., “Theodicée,” pp. 5, 123, 192, 199.

independent existence of matter,—but the Idealism of Fichte and others, which resolved mind into a mere process of thought, a continuous stream or succession of ideas. To *such* a theory the doctrine of Identity was indispensable. Its advocates were bound to show that nothing existed, or could be proved to exist, in the universe but *thought*, and that, in every case, the *subject* and *object* of thought might be identified as one. We find, accordingly, that from the earliest ages down to the present time, the idea of “absolute unity,” or “universal identity,” has been frequently exhibited in connection with the speculations of philosophical Idealists. The disciples of the Eleatic school in ancient Greece, not less than those of the modern schools of Germany, insisted on the identity of thought and its object, and regarded everything that might seem to be external to the mind as a mere illusion.

It may be difficult for the British mind, familiarized from infancy with the philosophy of common sense, to grasp the idea which this doctrine involves; but, on the principles of absolute Idealism, it may be easily explained, and may even seem to have some foundation in facts that must be acknowledged by all. There are *two* cases, particularly, which may serve to illustrate, if they cannot suffice to prove, it. The first is that of the Supreme Intelligence, conceived as existing before the production of a created universe, when He was himself the sole “subject” and the sole “object” of thought; in other words, the absolute “Subject-Object.” The second is that of the human consciousness, conceived as occupied solely with certain subjective mental states, when the mind may be said to be at once the “subject” and the “object” of its own thought. There are cases, then, in which mind may be regarded as a “subject-object;” the case of human consciousness, when the mind takes cognizance of its own states or acts, and the case of the Divine consciousness, while as yet the created universe had not been called into being. But the

question is, whether, *in all cases*, the "subject" and "object" of thought are the same? or, whether existence and thought are *universally* identical? An affirmative answer to this question would imply, that nothing whatever exists except only in the mind that perceives it; that, according to Bishop Berkeley, "the existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived" is an absurd or impossible supposition; that "their *esse* is *percipi*," that is, that their being consists in their being perceived or known; whence it would follow, as Berkeley himself admits, that we have no reason to believe in the continued existence of the desk at which we write, after we have left the room in which we see it, excepting such as may arise from the supposition, that if we returned to that room we might still see it, or that in our absence it may still be perceived by some other mind. Existence is identified with thought, and nothing exists save only as it is thought of. Why? Simply because it can become known to us only through the medium of consciousness, and that, too, in no other character than as *a phenomenon of our own minds*.

That this doctrine is at direct variance with the universal convictions of mankind, is too evident to require the slightest proof. That it is *unphilosophical*, as well as *unpopular*, may be made apparent by two very simple considerations. The *first* is, that it assumes without proof the only point in question, namely, that the objects of our knowledge are nothing but the ideas of our own minds; whereas it is affirmed, on the other side, and surely with at least an equal amount of apparent reason, that we are so constituted as to have a direct perception of external objects as well as of internal mental states. The *second* is, that the very formula of Idealism, which represents the "Non-ego" as a mere modification of the conscious "Ego," seems to involve a palpable contradiction; since it recognizes, in a certain sense, *the difference between the "Ego and the Non-ego,"* and yet, in the same breath, annihilates

that difference, and proclaims their "identity." Fichte admits, indeed, that we have the idea of something which is *not-self*; but instead of ascribing it to an external object, he accounts for it by a law of our mental nature, which constrains us to *create a limit*, so as to give a determinate character to our thought. The three technical formulæ, therefore, which are said<sup>2</sup> to express, respectively, — the affirmation of self, — the affirmation of not-self, — and the determination of the one by the other, — are all equally the products of our own mental laws, and do not necessarily require the supposition of any external object; and hence it follows that Self is the one only absolute principle, and that everything else that is conceived of is constructed out of purely subjective materials. The question whether the "object" be the generative principle of the "idea," or *vice versâ*, is thus superseded; for there is no longer any distinction between "object" and "subject;" existence is identified with thought; the *Ego* and the *Non-ego* unite in one absolute existence; and Self becomes the sole Subject-object, the percipient and the perceived, the knowing and the known.

Of course, on this theory, there is no knowledge of God, just as there can be no knowledge of Nature, and no knowledge of our fellow-men, as distinct objective realities; it is a system of pure Idealism, which, if consistently followed out, must terminate in utter *skepticism* in regard to many of the most familiar objects of human knowledge; or, rather, in the hands of a thoroughly consequent reasoner, it must issue, as Jacobi endeavored to show, in absolute *Nihilism*; since we can have no better reason for believing in the existence of Self than

<sup>1</sup> SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S edition of REID'S "Works," p. 281. Sir William does not seem to admit that there is a contradiction such as I have noted.

<sup>2</sup> 1. "The *ego* or *moi* affirms itself." 2. "The *ego* or *moi* affirms a *non-ego* or *non-moi*." 3. "The *ego* or *moi* affirms itself to be determined by the *non-ego* or *non-moi*."

we have for believing in the reality of an external world, and the coexistence of our fellow-men. Each of these beliefs is equally the spontaneous product of certain mental laws, which are just as trustworthy, and need as little to be proved, in the one case as in the other.

Fichte seems to have become aware of this fundamental defect of his system; and, at a later period, he attempted to give it a firmer basis by representing *self*, not as individual, but as Divine, that is, as the Absolute manifesting itself in Man. He now admitted what, if he had not denied, he had overlooked before, an essential reality as the substratum both of the *Ego* and *Non-ego*; a reality of which all things, whether within or without, are only so many "modes" or manifestations. And it is at this point that his subjective Idealism passes into Pantheism, and that we mark the close affinity between his speculations and those of Spinoza. There is, in some respects, a wide difference between the two; Spinoza assumed, Fichte denied, the existence of matter; the former affirmed Substance to be the absolute and infinite Essence; the latter proclaimed a spiritual universe, whose essence was the infinite reason, or the Divine idea: but still, with these and other points of difference, there existed a real, radical affinity between the two systems, that of Fichte, not less than that of Spinoza, being based on *the identity of existence and thought*; and both systems being directed to show that there is but one Absolute Being, of which all phenomena, whether material or mental, are only so many modes or manifestations.

3. The philosophy of "the absolute," as applied in support of German Pantheism, depends on the doctrine of "Identity," and must stand or fall along with it.<sup>1</sup> The "absolute" is

<sup>1</sup> M. MARET, "Essai," pp. 129, 142, 146, 175, 192, 225, 276. Ibid., "Theodicée," pp. 193, 366, 378, 386, 394. MR. MORELL, "History," II. 127, 138.

described as being at once *ideal* and *real*, pure *being* and pure *thought*, and as developing itself in a great variety of forms. The philosophy of the "absolute" is represented as the *only science*, properly so called: it is assumed that there can be no science of the finite, the variable, the contingent, the relative, but only of the absolute, the unchangeable, and the infinite. To constitute *this science*, the doctrine of "identity" is indispensable; the subject and the object of thought, knowledge and being, must be reduced to scientific unity. Realism and Idealism are thus blended together, or rather identified in the philosophy of the "absolute." The idea of the "absolute," in which *being* and *thought* are identical, is the only foundation of science, and the ultimate ground of all certitude. And Pantheism is inferred from this idea; for the "absolute," in which *being* and *thought* are identified, is properly *the sole existence*, which develops and manifests itself in a great variety of finite forms.

We are not disposed to treat the philosophy of the "absolute" either with levity or with scorn. We feel that it brings us into contact with some of the most profound and most deeply mysterious problems of human thought. Finite as we are, we are so constituted that we cannot avoid framing the *idea*, although we can never attain to a *comprehension*, of the Infinite. There are absolute truths, and necessary truths, among the elements of human knowledge. Account for them as we may, their reality cannot be reasonably denied, nor their importance disparaged. There is a tendency—and a most useful one—in the human mind, to seek unity in all things, to trace effects to causes, to reduce phenomena to laws, to resolve the complex into the simple, and to rise from the contingent to the absolute, from the finite to the infinite. There are few more interesting inquiries in the department of Psychology than that which seeks to investigate the nature, the origin, and the validity of those ideas which introduce us into the region

of absolute, eternal, and immutable Truth; and it were a lamentable result of the erratic speculations of Germany did they serve to cast discredit on this inquiry, or even to excite a prejudice against it, in the more sober, but not less profound, minds of our own countrymen. But there need be little apprehension on this score, if it be clearly understood and carefully remembered, that the philosophy of the absolute, as taught in Germany and applied in support of Pantheism, rests ultimately on the theory of Idealism and the doctrine of Identity, by which all is resolved into one absolute "subject-object," and *existence* is identified with *thought*. This system may be discarded, and yet there may still remain a sound, wholesome, and innocuous philosophy of the "absolute;" a philosophy which does not seek to identify things so generically different as *existence* and *thought*, or to reduce mind and matter, the finite and the infinite, to the same category; but which, recognizing the differences subsisting between the various objects of thought, seeks merely to investigate the nature and sources of that part of human knowledge which relates to absolute or necessary truths. The former of these rival systems may be favorable to Pantheism, the latter will be found to be in entire accordance with Christian Theism.

The fundamental principle of philosophical Pantheism is either *the unity of substance*, as taught by Spinoza, or *the identity of existence and thought*, as taught, with some important variations, by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The Absolute is conceived of, not as a living Being to whom a proper personality and certain intelligible attributes may be ascribed, but as a vague, indeterminate *somewhat*, which has no distinctive character, and of which, in the first instance, or prior to its development, almost nothing can be either affirmed or denied. But this absolute existence, by some unknown, inherent necessity, develops, determines, and limits itself: it becomes being, and constitutes all being: the infinite passes into the finite, the

absolute into the relative, the necessary into the contingent, the one into the many; all other existences are only so many modes or forms of its manifestation. Here is a theory which, to say the very least, is neither more intelligible, nor less mysterious, than any article of the Christian faith. And what are the proofs to which it appeals, what the principles on which it rests? Its two fundamental positions are these; that finite things have no distinct existence as realities in nature, and that there exists only one Absolute Being, manifesting itself in a variety of forms. And how are they demonstrated? Simply by the affirmation of universal "Identity." But what if this affirmation be denied? What if, founding on the clearest data of consciousness, we refuse to acknowledge that *existence* is identical with *thought*?<sup>1</sup> What if we continue to believe that there are objects of thought which are distinct from thought itself, and which must be *presented* to the mind before they can be *represented* by the mind? What if, while we recognize the idea both of the finite and the infinite, the relative and the absolute, the contingent and the necessary, we cannot, by the utmost effort of our reason, obliterate the difference between them, so as to reduce them to one absolute essence? Then the whole superstructure of Pantheism falls along with the Idealism on which it depends; and it is found to be, not a solid and enduring system of truth, but a frail edifice, ingeniously constructed out of the mere abstractions of the human mind.

The advocates of this system assume that the relations which subsist between *beings* are the same as the relations which subsist between our *ideas*, and infer that *logic* is sufficient to construct a system of *metaphysic*. But Professor Nicolas has well said, that "while it is certain we cannot know things but by the notions which we have of them, and a certain parallelism may thus be established between *what exists* and *what we think*

<sup>1</sup> PROFESSOR NICOLAS, "Quelques Considerations sur le Pantheisme," pp. 29-31.

of that which exists, yet from this to the *identity of being and thought*, such as Pantheism requires, there is a vast distance, and we have no ground for believing that the *logical relations* of our ideas are identical with the *real relations* of beings. Speculative Pantheism is wholly built on this assumption. It describes the relations of being according to the logical relations of our thought; and it takes *logic* for a kind of *metaphysic*. It confounds the laws of thought with the laws of being. It seeks to solve the question, What is the first Being, and what are its relations to other beings? That Being must necessarily be the condition of all other beings, and must virtually contain them all; nay, it must be capable of becoming all things. It must therefore be simple, indeterminate, indifferent, possessing no essential character, resembling nothing that we actually know. All this is true of our *ideas*, but not of *beings*. The highest idea, — that which is the logical condition of all others, and also the most general, the most abstract, the most indeterminate, — this idea contains all others, and by receiving this or that determination, it becomes this or that particular idea. But what is true of the *idea* is not true of the *being*; no such vague, indeterminate, indifferent being exists; and yet Pantheism confounds the *idea* with the *being*, and rests entirely on that confusion of thought."

In bringing our review of Modern Pantheism to a close, we may offer a few remarks illustrative of its *nature and tendency*, whether considered as a system of speculative thought, or as a substitute for religious belief.

In this view, it is important to observe, first of all, that the theory of "Idealism," and the doctrine of "Identity," which constitute the groundwork of the more spiritual form of Pantheism, are not more adverse to our belief in the existence and personality of God, than they are to our belief in the reality of an external world, or in the existence and personality of man

himself. They stand equally related to each of these *three* topics ; and, if they be accepted at all, they must be impartially applied, and consistently carried out into all their legitimate consequences, as the only philosophical solution of the whole question of Ontology. Perhaps this is not understood ; certainly it has not been duly considered by the more superficial *litterateurs*, who have been slightly tinctured with Pantheism ; but it will be acknowledged at once by every consistent Idealist, who understands his own philosophy, and who is honest or bold enough to carry it out into all its practical applications. He knows very well, and, if sufficiently candid, he will frankly confess, that the principles on which he founds, if they be conclusive against the existence of a living, personal God, are equally conclusive against the reality of an external world, and against the doctrine of our own personality or that of our fellow-men. With most minds, this consideration would be of itself a powerful counteractive to all that is most dangerous in the theory of Idealism, were it only clearly apprehended and steadily kept in view ; for an argument which proves too much is justly held to prove nothing, and that theory which leaves us no right to believe in the existence of Nature, or in the distinct personality of our fellow-men, can scarcely be held sufficient to disprove the existence of God.

It may be observed, further, that Ideal Pantheism has a strong tendency to engender a spirit either of Mysticism, on the one hand, or of Skepticism on the other. It terminates in Mysticism when, seeking to avoid Skepticism, it takes refuge in the doctrine of an "intellectual intuition," such as gives an immediate knowledge of the Absolute : and it terminates in Skepticism when, seeking to avoid Mysticism, it rejects the doctrine of "intellectual intuition," and discovers that it has no other and no higher claims to our confidence than such as are equally possessed by any one of our common faculties, whose testimony the Idealist has been taught to distrust and doubt.

It is further worthy of remark, that the philosophy of the Absolute, as taught in the German schools, has been applied to the whole circle of the Sciences, not less than to Theology, and that it has given birth to numerous speculative systems, in Physics, in Chemistry, in Ethics, in History, and in Politics, all strongly marked by the same characteristic feature—the substitution of *à priori and deductive* speculation for the more sober and legitimate method of Inductive inquiry. The province of Natural Science, in which, if anywhere, we should be guided by the light of experience and observation, has been rudely invaded by this transcendental philosophy, which offers to construct a theory of universal knowledge on the basis of a certain self-development of the Absolute. We are indebted to Mr. Morell for a specimen,<sup>1</sup> alike amusing and instructive, of Schelling's speculations on this subject. We shall not attempt to interpret its meaning, for, in sooth, we do not pretend to understand it: but one thing is clear, the laws of Matter, of Dynamics, of Organic structure and life, the laws of Knowledge, of Action, and of Art, are all exhibited as mere deductions or corollaries from the "idea of the Absolute;" and in the name of Natural Science, not less than on behalf of Theology, we protest against this vicious method of Philosophy, and do most earnestly deprecate the substitution of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, in the place of our own Bacon, and Boyle, and Newton, as models of scientific thought.

The *practical influence* of Pantheism, in so far as its peculiar tendencies are not restrained or counteracted by more salutary beliefs, must be deeply injurious, both to the individual and social welfare of mankind. In its Ideal or Spiritual form it may be seductive to some ardent, imaginative minds; but it is a wretched creed notwithstanding; and it will be found, when calmly examined, to be fraught with the most serious evils. It

<sup>1</sup> MR. MORELL, "History of Philosophy," II. 129.

has been commended, indeed, in glowing terms, as a creed alike beautiful and beneficent,—as a source of religious life nobler and purer than any that can ever spring from the more gloomy system of Theism: for, on the theory of Pantheism, God is manifest to all, everywhere, and at all times; Nature, too, is aggrandized and glorified, and everything in Nature is invested with a new dignity and interest; above all, Man is conclusively freed from all fantastic hopes and superstitious fears, so that his mind can now repose, with tranquil satisfaction, on the bosom of the Absolute, unmoved by the vicissitudes of life, and unscared even by the prospect of death. For what is death? The dissolution of any living organism is but one stage in the process of its further development; and whether it passes into a new form of self-conscious life, or is reabsorbed into the infinite, it still forms an indestructible element in the vast sum of Being. We may, therefore, or, rather, we must, leave our future state to be determined by Nature's inexorable laws, and we need, at least, fear no Being higher than Nature, to whose justice we are amenable, or whose frown we should dread.<sup>1</sup> But, even as it is thus exhibited by some of its warmest partisans, it appears to us, we own, to be a dreary and cheerless creed, when compared with that faith which teaches us to regard God as our "Father in heaven," and that "hope which is full of immortality." It is worse, however, than dreary; it is destructive of all religion and of all morality. If it be an avowed antagonist to Christianity, it is not less hostile to Natural Theology and to Ethical Science. It consecrates error and vice, as being, equally with truth and virtue, necessary and beneficial manifestations of the "infinite." It is a system of Syncretism, founded on the idea that error is only an

<sup>1</sup> M. CROUSSE, "Des Principes." M. MARET, "Essai," pp. 69, 86, 150; "Theodicée," pp. 311, 314. VALROGER, "Etudes Critiques," pp. 97, 101, 115, 151, 412.

incomplete truth, and maintaining that truth must necessarily be developed by error, and virtue by vice. According to this fundamental law of "human progress," Atheism itself may be providential; and the axiom of a Fatalistic Optimism—"Whatever is, is best"—must be admitted equally in regard to truth and error, to virtue and vice.

It may be further observed, that modern Pantheism, whether in its Material or Ideal form, is nothing else than the revival of some of the earliest and most inveterate Principles of Paganism,—the same Paganism which still flourishes among the "theosophic" dreamers of India, and which exhibits its practical fruits in the horrors of Hindoo superstition. For Pantheism, although repeatedly revived and exhibited in new forms, has made no real progress since the time when it was first taught in the Vedanta system, and sublimed in the schools of Alexandria. Christianity, which encountered and triumphed over it in her youth, can have nothing to fear from it in her mature age,<sup>1</sup> provided only that she be faithful to herself, and spurn every offered compromise. But there must be no truce, and no attempt at conciliation between the two. The Pantheists of Germany have made the most impudent claims to the virtual sanction of Christianity; they have even dared to make use of Bible terms in a new sense, and have spoken of Revelation, Inspiration, Incarnation, Redemption, Atonement, and Regeneration, in such a way as to adapt them to the Pantheistic hypothesis. Common honesty is outraged, and the conscience of universal humanity offended, by the conduct of individuals—some of them wearing the robes of the holy ministry—who have substituted the dreams of Pantheism for the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and assailed, both from the pulpit and the press, the sacred cause which they had solemnly vowed to

<sup>1</sup> M. MARET, "Essai sur Pantheisme," p. 107. "Le Christianisme saura vaincre dans son âge mûr l'ennemi qu'il a terrassé en naissant."

maintain. But even in Germany itself a powerful reaction has commenced; and the learning and labors of such men as Olshausen, and Tholuck, and Hengstenberg, may be hailed as the dawn of a better and brighter day.

It may be observed, *finally*, that Pantheism stands directly opposed to Christian Theism in several distinct respects. The following are the principal points of collision between the two:

1. Pantheism denies, — Christian Theism affirms, the existence of *a living, personal God*, distinct from Nature, and superior to it.

2. Pantheism supersedes, — Christian Theism reveals, the doctrine of a real creation.

3. Pantheism contests, — Christian Theism confirms, the doctrine of the constant providence and moral government of God.

4. Pantheism disowns, — Christian Theism declares, the doctrine of *a conscious, personal immortality*.

5. Pantheism rejects, — Christian Theism receives, the whole scheme of Revelation, considered as a supernatural code of Divine truth. The one accounts for its origin on the principle of natural development, the other on that of supernatural interposition.

6. Pantheism has no living, self-conscious, personal God, no loving Father, no watchful Providence, no Hearer of Prayer, no Object of confiding trust, no Redeemer, no Sanctifier, no Comforter: it leaves us with nothing higher than Nature as our portion here, and nothing beyond its eternal vicissitudes as our prospect hereafter.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THEORIES OF MATERIALISM.

THE doctrine of Materialism stands equally related to the "mechanical" form of Atheism, and to the "hylozoic" form of Pantheism. It is subsumed in both, and is the fundamental postulate on which they respectively depend.

It has no natural affinity with the more "ideal" or "spiritual" form of Pantheism. We must not conclude, however, that it has no historical connection with it. For it is instructive to mark, in tracing the history of philosophic speculation, that its course resembles not so much the uniform current of a stream, as the alternate flowing and ebbing of the tide; or, if we may change the figure, that its movement may be likened to the oscillation of a pendulum, which no sooner reaches its highest elevation on the one side, than it acquires a tendency to rush to the opposite extreme on the other. There can be little doubt that the recent revival of speculative "Idealism" was the result, at least in part, of a strong reaction against the "sensational" philosophy, which had degenerated in the school of Priestley at home, and in that of Condillac abroad, into a system of gross and revolting Materialism. For the same reason, we may now, I think, anticipate a speedy reaction the other way,—a reaction against the extravagances of "idealistic" and "transcendental" speculation, and a tendency towards a more practical and matter-of-fact philosophy. This tendency,

if guided by the true spirit of the Baconian method, may give a powerful impulse to Inductive Science in all its departments; but, if biased by partial and one-sided views, may issue either in the temporary ascendancy of the Positive School, or the partial revival of some other form of Materialism.

Some such tendency might have been expected to arise as soon as Idealism should have reached its culminating point. For, on a comprehensive view of the whole history of speculative thought, we find that there are just *four* great systems of Metaphysics, which are perpetually recurring, as it were, in cycles. The first is the system of Dualism,—not the Dualism of Christian Theology, which speaks of God and nature, the Creator and the creature,—but the Dualism of ancient Paganism, which held Matter and Spirit to be equally uncreated and eternal: the second is Materialism, which resolves all into Matter and its laws: the third is Idealism, which resolves all into Mind and its modifications: and the fourth is Pantheism, which identifies Existence with Thought, and resolves all into the Absolute.<sup>1</sup> In the present age, Idealism is in the ascendant, and has risen to the height of Pantheism; but, by a natural reaction, many are beginning to desiderate a more substantial and practical philosophy, while the rapid progress of physical science is directing their thoughts more and more to the wonders of the material world. In these circumstances, there may be a tendency to relapse into the Materialism of the last century, which attempted to explain the whole theory of the universe by the laws of *matter* and *motion*; or at least to embrace some modification of the Positive Philosophy, which excludes all *causes*, whether efficient or final, from the field of human knowledge, and confines our inquiries to the mere phenomena and laws of material nature.

There are not wanting various significant indications of the

<sup>1</sup> M. AD. FRANCK, "Rapport a l'Academie," Preface, p. xxi.

existence of this tendency at the present day. It is sufficiently indicated, in some quarters, by the mere omission of all reference to Mind or Spirit as distinct from Matter; and, in others, by elaborate attempts to explain all the phenomena of life and thought by means of physical agencies and organic laws. The writings of Comte, Crousse, Cabanis, and Broussais,<sup>1</sup> afford ample evidence of its growing prevalence in France; and although it has been said by a recent historian of Philosophy that in England there has been no formal avowal, or at least no recognized school, of Materialism, since the publication of Dr. Thomas Brown's reply to Darwin's *Zoönomia*, yet there is too much reason to believe that it was all along cherished by not a few private thinkers, who had imbibed the spirit of Hobbes and Priestley; and now it is beginning to speak out, in terms too unambiguous to be misunderstood, in such works as "The Purpose of Existence" and the "Letters" of Atkinson and Martineau. But apart from the opinions of individual inquirers, it must be remembered that there is a tendency in certain studies, when exclusively pursued, to generate a frame of mind which will tempt men either to adopt the theory of Materialism, or at least to attach undue importance to physical agencies and organic laws. This tendency may be observed in the study of Physiology, especially when it is combined with that of Phrenology and Animal Magnetism; not that there is any necessary or strictly logical connection between these studies and Materialism, for some of their ablest expounders, including Cabanis, Gall, and Spurzheim, have explicitly disavowed that theory; but simply that, in prosecuting such inquiries, the mind is insensibly led to bestow an undue, if not exclusive, attention on the phenomena and laws

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," I. 44, 89, 141; IV. 675; V. 45, 303. M. CROSSE, "Des Principes," pp. 16, 20, 84, 88. M. CABANIS, "Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme," 3 vols. M. BROUSSAIS, "Traité de Physiologie appliquée à la Pathologie," 1828.

of our material organization, so as to become comparatively unmindful of what is mental, moral, and spiritual in the constitution of man. For these reasons, and considering, especially, the close connection of Materialism both with the mechanical Atheism of the past, and the hylozoic Pantheism of the present age, we deem it necessary to subject its claims to a rigorous scrutiny, in connection with the subject of our present inquiry.

What, then, is the doctrine of Materialism? What are the forms in which it has appeared, and what the ground on which it rests? How does it stand related to the question concerning the nature and existence of God, or the constitution and destiny of Man? A brief answer to these questions will be sufficient to show that this theory cannot be safely disregarded in any attempt to construct a comprehensive and conclusive argument on the first principles of Natural Theology.

## SECTION I.

### DISTINCT FORMS OF MATERIALISM.

The doctrine of Materialism has assumed several distinct phases or forms in the hands of its different advocates; and these must be carefully discriminated from each other, if we would either estimate aright their respective merits, or do justice to the parties by whom they have been severally maintained.

The grossest and most revolting form of Materialism is that which *identifies mind with matter, and thought with motion*. It denies that there is any real or radical difference between physical and moral phenomena, and affirms that life and thought are so entirely dependent on material organization, that the dissolution of the body must necessarily be the destruction of conscious existence, and that death can only be an

eternal sleep. This is the doctrine of Materialism which was taught in a former age, by the author of the "*Système de la Nature*," and which has recently been revived by M. Comte in France, and by Atkinson and Martineau in England. A few extracts will sufficiently illustrate its character and tendency. "Men have evidently abused the distinction," says Baron D'Holbach, "which is so often made between *man physical* and *man moral*: man moral is nothing else than that physical being considered in a certain point of view, that is, with reference to some modes of action which belong to his peculiar organization." — "The universe — that vast assemblage of everything that exists — exhibits nowhere anything else than *matter and motion*." — "If we are asked, what is man? we reply, that he is a material being, organized or framed so as to feel, to think, and to be affected in certain ways peculiar to himself, according to his organization."<sup>1</sup> More recently, M. Comte has affirmed that "the subject of all our researches is *one*," and that "all natural phenomena are the necessary results either of the laws of extension or of the laws of motion;" while M. Crousse is quite clear that "intelligence is a property or effect of matter," and that "body and spirit together constitute matter." In our own country, Atkinson and Martineau have not shrunk from the avowal of the same doctrine, or the adoption of the most revolting consequences that can be deduced from it. "Instinct, passion, thought, are effects of organized substances." — "Mind is the consequence or product of the material man; it is not a thing having a seat or home in the brain, but it is the manifestation or expression of *the brain in action*, as heat and light are of fire, and fragrance of the flower."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "*Système de la Nature*," I. 2, 10, 86, 101, and *passim*. This eloquent text-book of the Atheism of the last century is dissected and refuted by M. BERGIER in his "*Examen du Materialisme*," 2 vols. Paris, 1771.

<sup>2</sup> M. COMTE, "*Cours*," I. 44, 141. M. CROUSSE, "*Des Principes*," pp.

The doctrine of Materialism, as formerly taught by Dr. Priestley and his followers, is in some respects similar to that which we have just noticed, but in other respects differs from it, if not in its essential nature, at least in its collateral adjuncts and its practical applications. It resembles the theory of D'Holbach and Comte, in so far as it affirms the doctrine of *unisubstancisme*, and rejects the idea of a *dualism* such as is implied in the common doctrine of Matter and Spirit. But it differs from that theory, inasmuch as it is combined, whether consistently or otherwise, with the recognition of a personal God, a resurrection from the dead, and a future state of reward and punishment. Dr. Priestley seems to have fluctuated for a time between two opposite extremes,—that of *spiritualizing* Matter, and that of *materializing* Mind; for, in a very remarkable passage, we find him saying, "This scheme of the *immateriality of Matter*, as it may be called, or rather, *the mutual penetration of Matter*, first occurred to my friend Mr. Mitchell on reading 'Baxter on the Immateriality of the Soul.'"<sup>1</sup> But at length he settled down in the fixed belief of Materialism, as he had always held the principle of *unisubstancisme*. He held throughout that "Man does not consist of two principles so essentially different from each other as Matter and Spirit, but the whole man is of *one uniform composition*; and that either the material or the immaterial part of the universal system is superfluous."<sup>2</sup> He attempts, therefore, to show, that sensation, perception, and thought,—the common properties of *mind*,—are not incompatible with extension, attraction, and repulsion,

84, 86. ATKINSON and MARTINEAU, "Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development."

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, "Discoveries relating to Vision, Light, and Colors." MR. DUGALD STEWART, "Philosoph. Essays," p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, "Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit;" "Free Discussion of the Doctrine of Materialism;" "Correspondence between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price."

which he conceives to be the only essential properties of *matter*; that both classes of properties may possibly belong to the same subject; and that hence no second substance is necessary to account for and explain any of the phenomena of human nature. In this respect, his theory is precisely the same with that which has been already noticed; but the peculiarity by which it is distinguished from the Atheistic and Antichristian speculations of D'Holbach and Comte is twofold. In the *first* place, while he ascribes to mere matter the power of sensation, thought, and volition, he admits that these powers, and all others belonging to matter, were communicated to it at the first, and are still continued, by the Divine will, thus recognizing the doctrine both of Creation and Providence; and in the *second* place, while he denies the natural immortality of the soul, and even the possibility of its conscious existence in a state of separation from the body, he does not deny the immortality of man, but receives it, as well as the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, on the authority of that Divine Revelation which speaks of "the resurrection of the dead," and of "a judgment to come." In these respects, his theory is widely different from that of the "*Système de la Nature*," while the two are substantially the same in so far as they relate simply to the constitution of human nature. He is not an Atheist, but a Theist, and a Theist, too, who, believing in Revelation, admits the immortality of man, and a future state of retribution. But it must be evident that as in these respects he founds entirely on the authority of Scripture, so he may be confronted with the same authority when he denies the spirituality of the soul; and in that case the question would resolve itself into one of Biblical exegesis, and would fall to be decided, not by metaphysical reasoning, but by Scriptural proofs.

Another variety of the theory is presented by Dr. Good in his "*Life of Lucretius*." It agrees with the doctrine of Priestley in representing the soul as material; but differs from it in

holding the possible existence of the soul in a separate state, during the interval between the dissolution and resurrection of the body. It speaks of the body as being composed of gross material particles ; and of the soul as consisting of more subtle, refined, and ethereal matter. This modification of the theory may be illustrated by the following extract : " Perception, consciousness, cognition, we continue to be told, are qualities which cannot appertain to matter ; there must hence be a thinking and an immaterial principle ; and man must still be a compound being. Yet, why thus degrade matter, the plastic and prolific creature of the Deity, beyond what we are authorized to do ? Why may it not perceive, why not think, why not become conscious ? What eternal and necessary impediment prevents ? or what self-contradiction and absurdity is hereby implied ? Let us examine Nature as she presents herself to us in her most simple and inorganized forms ; let us trace her through her gradual and ascending stages of power and perfection. In its simplest form, matter evinces the desire of reciprocal union, or, as it is commonly called, the attraction of gravitation. Increase its mass, arrange it in other modifications, and it immediately evinces other powers or attractions ; and these will be perpetually, and almost infinitely, varied, in proportion as we vary its combinations. If arranged, therefore, in one mode, it discloses the power of magnetism ; in another, that of electricity or galvanism ; in a third, that of chemical affinities ; in a fourth, that of mineral assimilations. Pursue its modifications into classes of a more complex, or rather, perhaps, of a more gaseous or attenuate nature, and it will evince the power of vegetable or fibrous irritability : ascend through the classes of vegetables, and you will at length reach the strong stimulative perfection, the palpable vitality of the *mimosa pudica*, or the *hedysarum gyrans*, the former of which shrinks from the touch with the most bashful coyness, while the latter perpetually dances beneath

the jocund rays of the sun. And when we have thus attained the summit of vegetable powers and vegetable life, it will require, I think, no great stretch of the imagination to conceive that the fibrous irritability of animals, as well as vegetables, is the mere result of a peculiar arrangement of simple and unirritable material atoms."—"Hence, then, animal sensation, and hence, necessarily and consequently, ideas, and a material soul or spirit, rude and confined, indeed, in its first and simplest mode of existence, but, like every other production of Nature, beautifully and progressively advancing from power to power, from faculty to faculty, from excellence to excellence, till at length it terminate in the perfection of the human mind."<sup>1</sup>

According to this theory, the mind is supposed to have a real existence, as a substance distinct from the grosser forms of matter, and capable even of surviving its separation from them. It is supposed to be "a combination of the most volatile auras or gases, diffused over the whole body, though traced in a more concentrate form in some organs than in others;" and it is described as "the very texture of that separate state of existence which the infallible page of Revelation clearly indicates will be ours."

A form of the theory very nearly resembling this has been recently reproduced. It consists in representing the Mind or Spirit of man, not as a mere fleeting phenomenon of the brain, or an evanescent effect of its organization, but as a distinct substantive product, generated, indeed, from matter, and partaking, therefore, of its nature, but so exquisitely subtle and ethereal that it has no resemblance to the grosser materials of the body, and admits only of being compared with the Dynamides—the imponderable elements and forces of Nature. This "spirit" is generated in man by his peculiar organization, and especially by the action of the brain; it is capable of surviving

<sup>1</sup> DR. JOHN MASON GOOD, "Life of Lucretius," prefixed to his poetical version of "The Nature of Things," I. XXXVIII.

the dissolution of the body, of retaining its individual consciousness after death, of passing into new spheres of being, and of rising from lower to higher states, according to a law of eternal progression. Such is the theory of Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer;" and such also, with some variations, is that of the author of "The Purpose of Existence."

"Matter and Spirit," says Davis, "have heretofore been supposed to constitute two distinct and independent substances, the latter not having any material origin." . . . "Instead of making material and spiritual existence totally disconnected, the object and intention of the foregoing has been to prove, by acknowledged laws and principles of matter, *the production of intelligence*, the perfection of which is *spirit*;" to show that "the Organizer uses Nature and all things therein as an effect, to produce *spirit* as an end and designed ultimate." The author of "The Purpose of Existence" adopts a similar view. He tells us, indeed, that "the first simple forms or states of existence are admitted to be *two*, spirit and matter,—the first the moving power, the second the moved substance;" that of the positive essence of either we can arrive at no knowledge; and that "whether spirit be a refined, etherealized portion of matter, or a distinct dynamic principle, we cannot ascertain." And yet, one of the leading objects of his work is to account for "the origin and development of the human mind;" and this he does by ascribing it to "a self-dynamic spirit which is resident in matter," and which he denominates "the spirit of vitality." The spirit exists in vegetables, and is extracted by means of the organs of the animals which feed upon them, and then, "by a delicate work of distillation, it is converted into *spirit*!"—"Nature proclaims one of her great working principles to be, that *spirit is evolved out of matter, and outlives the body in which it is educated*."—"Matter is full of spirit. This spirit is brought out of matter by vegetation. By means of vegetation, it is conveyed into animal frames, in which its

purest essence centres in the brain. . . . This is no idle theory," he adds, "no vain hypothesis, for making matter think. It is a clear proposition, showing how matter is employed by the Supreme Intelligence for evolving, training, and educating spirit."—"We conclude that Progression is the great law of the universe, the purpose for which its present arrangement was ordained; and that the object of this progression is *the evolvment of mind out of matter.*"

This is a new and very singular phase of Materialism. It is widely different from the doctrine which was taught by the infidel writers of the last century. They had recourse to the theory of Materialism chiefly with the view of excluding a world of spirits, and of undermining the doctrine of a future state: here it is applied to prove the constant development and indestructible existence of minds generated from matter, but destined to survive the dissolution of the body; nay, every particle of matter in the universe is supposed to be advancing, in one magnificent progression, towards the spiritual state. The danger now is, not that Religion may be undermined by Materialism, but that it may be supplanted by a fond and foolish superstition, in which the facts of Mesmerism and the fictions of Clairvoyance are blended into one ghostly system, fitted to exert a powerful but pernicious influence on over-credulous minds.<sup>1</sup>

On a review of the various forms which the theory of Materialism has assumed, it must be evident that we should be

<sup>1</sup> The "fictions of Clairvoyance" may be studied at large in "The Principles of Nature and her Divine Revelations," by AND. J. DAVIS, the Poughkeepsie Seer, 2 vols.; and in "The Celestial Telegraph," by M. CAHAGNET. An attempt has been made to popularize the doctrine by introducing it into the light literature of the Continent. See "Memoirs of a Physician, Joseph Balsamo," by ALEXANDER DUMAS, I. 15, 21, 82; II. 50, 62, 70. Whether the cases reported by Dr. Gregory deserve to be ranked as facts or fictions is a question which we need not wait to solve, before we reject the "Revelations" of Davis.

doing great injustice to their respective advocates, did we place them all on the same level in relation to Theology, or pronounce upon them one indiscriminate censure. In the hands of D'Holbach and Comte, it was associated with the avowal of Atheism, and the denial of a future state: in the hands of Priestley, it was associated with the recognition of a God, and the Christian doctrine of a resurrection: in the hands of Dr. Good, it was combined with the principles of Theism, and even with the revealed doctrine of the separate existence of the soul during the interval between death and the resurrection: and in the hands of Davis and the author of the "Purpose of Existence," it is exhibited in connection with a theory of Progression, widely different, indeed, from the doctrine of Scripture, but equally different from the infidel speculations of the last century. Still, with all these shades of difference, there is *that common to all* the forms in which it can be presented which shows that they are radically one and the same: *they all deny the existence of any generic difference between Matter and Mind.*

Confining our attention to this common element, and omitting the consideration of minor diversities, we may now inquire into the grounds on which the theory rests, and the most plausible reasons which have been urged in support of it.

To some minds it has been recommended by its *apparent simplicity*. It speaks only of *one* substance as existing in Nature under various modifications. It represents the universe, so far as created being is concerned, as entirely composed of *matter*, more or less refined; and thus excludes the complication which must necessarily arise from the supposition of two substances, generically different, yet intimately and indissolubly related. The principle, therefore, which prompts us to seek unity in diversity, and to reduce, by some comprehensive generalization, a multitude of phenomena under one general law, has led some to adopt the theory of *unisubstancisme* in preference to the opposite doctrine of *dualism*. Not content with the

generalization, alike safe and legitimate, which ranks both mind and matter under the generic head of *substance*, they have sought to reduce them to the same category, and to give to matter a monopoly of the universe, at least of created being. In support of their views, they remind us of the fundamental principle of philosophy as laid down by Sir Isaac Newton, that "we are to admit no more causes of things than are sufficient to explain appearances."<sup>1</sup> The principle is a sound one; and the only question is, whether matter alone is sufficient to account for mental phenomena? On *this* question the two parties are at irreconcilable variance; and the controversy cannot be determined, *brevi manu*, by the mere assumption of the simplicity and uniform composition of everything in Nature; it can be settled only by an appeal to the facts as they are known to exist. It is the aim of science, undoubtedly, to reduce all compound substances to the smallest possible number of constituent elements, and all complex phenomena to the smallest possible number of general laws. But we feel that, desirable as this simplification may be, we are not warranted in identifying light with heat, or even electricity with magnetism, however closely connected with each other, simply because there are certain observed differences between them, which could not be explained, in the present state of our knowledge, consistently with any such theory of their absolute identity: and so, there are such manifest differences between Mental and Material phenomena, that we cannot yield to the temptation of ascribing them to one cause or origin, until it has been satisfactorily proved that the same cause is sufficient to account for appearances so diverse. It should be considered, too, in connection with this pretence of greater simplicity, that even if we could succeed in getting rid of the *dualism* of Mind and Matter in the constitution of man, we never can get rid of it with

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, "Disquisitions," p. 2.

reference to the universe at large, otherwise than by denying *the spirituality of God himself*: for the grand, the indestructible, the eternal *dualism* would still remain,—the distinction between God and His works,—between the Creator and the universe which He has called into being,—between the finite, contingent, and transitory, and the infinite, necessary, and eternal. And this is a distinction that cannot be obliterated, although it may be obscured, by the speculations of Pantheism.

Another reason which has induced some to adopt, or at least to regard with favor, the theory of Materialism, is—the difficulty of conceiving of the union of two substances so incongruous as Mind and Matter are supposed to be,—and still more the difficulty of explaining how they could have any mutual action on each other. Dr. Priestley largely insists on this, as well as on the former reason, as one of the main inducements which led him to abandon the commonly-received doctrine. “Many doubts occurred to me,” he says, “on the subject of *the intimate union of two substances so entirely heterogeneous* as the soul and body were represented to be.” And he was led to conclude, that “man does not consist of two principles so essentially different from one another as matter and spirit, which are always described as having *no one common property* by means of which they can affect or act upon each other.” In the “*Système de la Nature*,” the same argument is often urged. It is boldly and repeatedly affirmed that “an immaterial cause cannot produce motion;” and this is applied equally to the soul and to God. “How can we form an idea of a substance destitute of extension, and yet acting on our senses, that is, on material organs which are extended? How can a being without extension be capable of motion, and of putting matter into motion?”—“It is as impossible that spirit or thought should produce matter, as that matter should produce spirit or thought.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “*Système de la Nature*,” I. 97, 108.

Now, it is not denied by any, — it is admitted on all hands, — that the union between the soul and the body is a great mystery, and that we are not able, in the present state of our knowledge, to explain either the action of matter on mind, or the action of mind on matter. The mode of the union between them, and the nature of the influence which they mutually exercise, are to us inscrutable: but *the facts* of our most familiar experience are not the less certain, because they depend on causes to us unknown, or stand connected with mysteries which we cannot solve. Besides, the theory of *unisubstancisme* itself, were it adopted, would still leave many facts unexplained, and the inmost nature of man would continue to be as inscrutable as before. There is nothing inconceivable, impossible, or self-contradictory in the supposition of a non-material or spiritual substance; nor is there any reason *a priori* to conclude that such a substance could not be united to a material frame, although the nature of their union, and the mode of their reciprocal action, might be to us inexplicable.

There is still another reason which is urged by some, derived from *the dependence of the mind on the body*, and its liability to be affected, beneficially or injuriously, by mere physical influences. “The faculty of thinking,” says Dr. Priestley, “in general ripens and comes to maturity with the body; it is also observed to decay with it.” — “If the brain be affected, as by a blow on the head, by actual pressure within the skull, by sleep, or by inflammation, the mental faculties are universally affected in proportion. Likewise, as the mind is affected in consequence of the affections of the body and brain, so the body is liable to be reciprocally affected by the affections of the mind, as is evident in the visible effects of all strong passions, — hope or fear, love or anger, joy or sorrow, exultation or despair. These are certainly irrefragable arguments that it is properly no other than *one and the same thing* that is subject to these affections.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, “Disquisitions,” pp. 27, 38, 60.

Mr. Atkinson urges the same reason. "The proof that mind holds the same relation to the body that all other phenomena do to material conditions, may be found," he tells us, "in the whole circumstances of man's existence, his origin and growth; the faculties following the development of the body in man and other animals; the direction of the faculties being influenced by surrounding circumstances; the desires, the will, the hopes, the fears, the habits, and the opinions, being effects traceable to causes,—to natural causes,—and becoming the facts of History and Statistics. We observe the influence of climate, of sunshine and damp, of wine and opium and poison, of health and disease." . . . . "When a glass of wine turns a wise man into a fool, is it not clear that the result is the consequence of a change in the material conditions?"<sup>1</sup>

Now, these facts are sufficient to show that, in the present life, there is a very close and intimate union between the soul and the body, and that they exert a reciprocal and very powerful influence. This is admitted by the firmest advocates of *Spiritualism*; nay, it is necessarily involved in the doctrine which they maintain, relative to *the union* of two distinct, but mutually dependent, principles in the present constitution of human nature. But it is far, very far, from affording any ground or warrant for the idea, that Matter may be identified with Mind, or Thought with Motion.

There are certain Theological considerations which, if they have not been pleaded as reasons, may yet have been felt as inducements, to the adoption of the theory of Materialism. Not to speak of the difficulty which has been felt in explaining "the traduction or propagation of human souls," occasionally referred to in this controversy, it is plain that many Deists in the last century, and that not a few Atheists still, have been induced to embrace and avow Materialism, with the view of undermining

<sup>1</sup> MR. ATKINSON, "Laws of Man's Nature," p. 17.

the doctrine of man's immortality, and of a future state of rewards and punishments. It is equally certain that Dr. Priestley was influenced by his peculiar views as a Socinian; for he tells us himself that the doctrine of Materialism commended itself to his mind as a sure and effectual means of disproving the *preëxistence of Christ*. "The consideration," he says with singular candor, "that biases me as a Christian, exclusive of philosophical considerations, against the doctrine of a separate soul, is, that it has been the foundation of what appears to me to be the very grossest corruptions of Christianity, and even of that very Antichristianism that began to work in the apostles' times, and which extended itself so amazingly and dreadfully afterwards. I mean the Oriental philosophy of the 'preëxistence of souls,' which drew after it the belief of the preëxistence and divinity of Christ, the worship of Christ and of dead men, and the doctrine of Purgatory, with all the Popish doctrines and practices that are connected with them, and supported by them." — "This doctrine (of the preëxistence of Christ) is the point to which all that I have written tends, it being the capital inference that I make from the doctrine of Materialism." There is also abundant reason to believe that both Atheists and Pantheists have had recourse to the theory of Materialism with the view of excluding the doctrine of a living, personal God, and explaining all the phenomena of Nature by the eternal laws of matter and motion. Now, if the question stands related in any way to such themes as these,—the immortality of man, the preëxistence and divinity of Christ, and the personality and spirituality of God,—it must be confessed to have at least a very high *relative* importance, as it bears on some of the most momentous articles of our *religious faith*; and the question naturally arises, What relation it bears to the fundamental principles of Theism, and how far it comports with right views of God, as the Creator and Governor of the world?

We cannot, in the face of direct evidence to the contrary, bring an indiscriminate charge of Atheism, or even of irreligion, against all the advocates of Materialism. It is true that it has often, perhaps most generally, been associated with infidel opinions, and that in the hands of D'Holbach, Comte, and Atkinson, it has been applied in support of Atheism; but it is equally true, that in the hands of Dr. Priestley and Dr. Good, it is combined with the professed, and, as we believe, the sincere recognition of a personal God and of a future state. In point of fact, then, all Materialists have not been Atheists; and even were we convinced that Materialists professing religion were illogical or inconsequent reasoners, we should not be justified in ascribing to them those consequences of their system which they explicitly disclaim and disavow. Still it is competent, and it may be highly useful, to entertain the question, What are the grounds on which the theory of Materialism rests? And whether, if these grounds be valid, they would not lead, in strict logic, to conclusions at variance with some of the most vital and fundamental articles of the Christian faith?

In attempting to discuss the merits of that theory, we propose to state, confirm, and illustrate a few propositions which are sufficient, in our opinion, to show that the grounds on which it rests, and the reasons to which it appeals, are not such as to warrant or justify any prejudice against the articles of Natural or Revealed Religion.

## SECTION II.

## PROPOSITIONS ON MATERIALISM.

I. Our *first* proposition is, that the recent progress of Natural Science, great and rapid as it has been, has not materially altered "the state of the question" respecting the distinction between Mind and Matter, however much it may have extended our knowledge respecting the properties of both, and of the relation subsisting between the two.

We place this proposition on the foreground, because we have reason to believe that a very different impression prevails in certain quarters, associated in some cases with the hope, in others with the apprehension, that the advances which have been made in physical science may ultimately lead to the obliteration of the old distinction between Mind and Matter. This impression has been deepened by every successive addition to the doctrines of Physiology; and especially by the recent speculations on Phrenology, Animal Magnetism, and Clairvoyance. Now, we think that these speculations, even if they were admitted into the rank of true sciences, would not materially alter the "state of the question" respecting the distinction between Mind and Matter, as that question was discussed in former times.

Take the case of Phrenology. It had always been admitted that the mind has certain *external organs*, through which it receives various impressions from without, and holds communication with the sensible universe. The existence and use of these organs were held to be perfectly compatible with the doctrine that the soul itself is immaterial. Phrenology appears, and professes to have discovered *certain other organs*, certain cerebral developments, which stand connected with the various

functions of thought and feeling ; in other words, to the *five senses* which are universally recognized, it adds *thirty or forty* organs in the brain, not hitherto known to exist. But how does this discovery, even supposing it to be fully established, affect the state of the question respecting the radical distinction betwixt Mind and Matter ? A material organization, in the case of man, was always admitted ; and the only difference which that discovery could be supposed to make, must arise from the addition of certain organs to those which were previously established. But why should the spirituality of the soul be more affected by the one set of organs than it was by the other ? The ablest advocates of Phrenology have repudiated Materialism. Dr. Spurzheim expressly disclaims it. "I incessantly repeat," says he, "that the aim of Phrenology is never to attempt pointing out *what the mind is in itself*. I do not say that the organization produces the affective and intellectual faculties of man's mind, as a tree brings forth fruit or an animal procreates its kind ; I only say that organic conditions are necessary to every manifestation of mind." — "If the manifestation of the faculties of the mind depend on organization, Materialism, it is said, will be established. . . . When our antagonists, however, maintain that we are Materialists, they ought to show where we teach *that there is nothing but matter*. The entire falsehood of the accusation is made obvious by a review of the following considerations. The expression 'organ' designates an instrument by means of which some faculty proclaims itself. The muscles, for example, are the organs of voluntary motion, but they are not the moving power ; the eyes are the organ of sight, but they are not the faculty of seeing. We separate the faculties of the soul, or of the mind, from the organs ; and consider the cerebral parts as the instruments by means of which they manifest themselves. Now, even the adversaries of Phrenology must, to a certain extent, admit the dependence of the soul on the body. . . . We are,

therefore, no more Materialists than our predecessors, whether anatomists, physiologists, or physicians, or the great number of philosophers and moralists, who have admitted the dependence of the soul on the body. For the Materialism is essentially the same, whether the faculties of the mind be said to depend on the whole body, on the whole brain, or individual powers on particular parts of the brain; the faculties still depend on organization for their exhibition."<sup>1</sup> We conclude, therefore, that Phrenology, even supposing it to be fully established, could not materially affect the state of the question respecting the radical distinction between Mind and Matter.

Similar remarks apply to the case of Mesmerism or Animal Magnetism. It had always been known and admitted that the soul is liable, by reason of its connection with the body in the present state, to be affected by *certain influences*,—from light, from heat, from electricity, from the atmosphere, and from other sources. Mesmerism appears, and professes to have discovered *another influence* by which the nervous system is peculiarly affected; in other words, it merely adds a new influence to the number of those which were universally acknowledged before, it matters little whether it be the Magnetism of Mesmer, or the Odyle of Reichenbach, or the Dia-magnetism of Faraday. But how could this discovery, even supposing it to be fully established, affect the state of the question respecting the radical distinction between Mind and Matter? If we were Immaterialists before, while we acknowledged the influence of the atmosphere, of light, of heat, and of electricity, may we not be Immaterialists still, notwithstanding the addition of Odyle to the class of *dynamides*? May we not admit the stranger, with the strange name, if suitably attested, without the slightest apprehension of thereby weakening the grounds on which

<sup>1</sup> DR. SPURZHEIM, "Philosophical Principles of Phrenology," pp. vi., 86, 100. PROFESSOR DOD, "Princeton Theological Essays," II. 376.

we hold Mind to be essentially different from Matter, and incapable of being identified with it? It were a foolish and dangerous expedient, and one to which no enlightened advocate of Immaterialism will have recourse, to denounce the professed discoveries either of Phrenology or of Mesmerism, on the ground of their supposed tendency to obliterate the distinction between Mind and Matter. For the fact, that certain "organs" exist, by means of which the mind acquires a large portion of its knowledge, and that certain "influences" are known to affect it from without, is too well established to be called in question; and the mere extension of that fact by the discovery of *other organs and other influences*, hitherto unknown, could have no tendency to shut us up, more than before, to the adoption of the theory of Materialism. It is the part of wisdom, then, to leave ample scope and verge for the progress of Physiological research in this as in every other department, and to rest in the confident persuasion that whatever discoveries may yet be made in regard to the *connection* between mind and body, they can have no effect in disproving a *radical distinction* between the two. And this we deem a much safer ground than that which Professor Gregory has adopted, when he first of all denies the possibility of defining either matter or spirit, and then leaves the existence of "a thinking principle or soul distinct from the body" to rest merely on "our instinctive consciousness."<sup>1</sup> We think it, in every point of view, a safer course to meet all objections by saying, that the admission of the *oddylic* or any other influence of a similar kind, would not in the least affect the grounds of our belief in the existence of an immaterial mind.

We are disposed to pursue the same line of argument a step further, and to apply it to the case of "Hypnotism" or "Clairvoyance." It had always been known that the mind, in its

<sup>1</sup> DR. GREGORY, "Letters on Animal Magnetism," p. 57.

present state of connection with the body, is liable to be affected by *sleep* and by *dreams*; and the phenomena of natural sleep and of ordinary dreams were never supposed to be incompatible with the distinction between mind and body. But the Hypnotist or the Clairvoyant appears, and announces a state of *magnetic sleep*, with a new set of phenomena dependent on it, resembling the dreams and visions of the night. The facts are strange and startling; but, after recovering from our first surprise, we may calmly ask, what effect these facts, if established, should have in modifying our convictions respecting the essential nature of mind and matter; and we shall find that they afford no sufficient reason for relinquishing the doctrine of an "immaterial spirit," but that, on the contrary, these very facts, were they sufficiently verified, would open up a new view of the powers and activities of "spirit," such as might well fill us with wonder and awe. "I have heard, times innumerable," says Professor Gregory, "religious persons declare, on seeing these phenomena, that nothing could more clearly demonstrate the immateriality, and consequently the immortality of the soul. 'In *clairvoyance*,' say these persons, 'we observe the mind acting separate from the body, and entirely independent of it. How beautiful a proof of the infinite difference between *spirit* and *matter*.'" It is a proof that we would be slow to adduce, for the facts are doubtful as well as obscure; but, for our present purpose, it is not necessary either to admit or to deny the truth of these facts; it is sufficient to say that the phenomena of Mesmeric sleep and the visions of Clairvoyance are not more inconsistent with the doctrine of an immaterial soul than the more familiar, but scarcely less mysterious, phenomena of natural sleep and common dreams. It is, indeed, not a little remarkable that the profound and sagacious Butler expressed himself in the following terms, long before the phenomena of Magnetism and Clairvoyance were spoken of as subjects of scientific study: "That we have no reason to think

our *organs* of sense *percipients* . . . . is confirmed by the experience of dreams, by which we find we are at present possessed of a latent, and what would otherwise be an unimagined, unknown power of perceiving sensible objects, in as strong and lively a manner, *without our external organs of sense as with them.*"<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, we think it clear that neither by Phrenology, which adds merely to the number of our material "organs," nor by Mesmerism, which adds *one* to the number of the "influences" by which we are affected, nor by Clairvoyance, which adds the phenomena of *magnetic* to those of *natural* sleep, is the state of the question materially altered from what it was before these additions were made to Physiological speculation. And hence those who are well versed in our older writers on the doctrine of "spirit" and "matter," will be sufficiently furnished with weapons for repelling the more recent assaults of Materialism. If any one has read and digested the Treatises of Dr. Samuel Clarke, in his replies to Dodwell, Collins, and Leibnitz; the "Free Discussion" between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Price; the "Examen du Materialisme" by Bergier, in reply to the "Système de la Nature;" and the writings of Andrew Baxter, Drew, Ditton, and others, on the same subject, he will find little difficulty in grappling with the arguments of Comte, Atkinson, and Martineau. He will see at once that the main, the fundamental question, is not materially affected by the advances which have been made in Physiological discovery. These discoveries may have extended our knowledge respecting *the relations* which subsist between the "mind" and the "body;" they have in no degree served to obliterate the *distinction betwixt the two*.

In perfect consistency, however, with this conviction, we may frankly avow our opinion, that some of the older opponents of

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP BUTLER, "Analogy," p. i. c. 1, p. 170.

Materialism adopted a method of stating their argument which appears to us to be liable to just exception, and which the progress of Physical, and especially of Chemical science, has tended greatly to discredit. They seem to have been apprehensive that by ascribing any peculiar properties or active powers to matter, they might incur the hazard of weakening the grounds on which they contended for the spirituality of man and the supremacy of God. Thus, in the "Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul," by Andrew Baxter, the existence of any active property or power in matter is explicitly denied, and the only property which is ascribed to it is a certain passive power, or "*vis inertiae*," by which it is incapable of changing its state, whether of rest or of motion. This "*vis inertiae*" is not only supposed to be the sole property of matter, but is even held to be inconsistent with, and exclusive of, any active power whatever; and all the effects which are usually said to be produced by it are ascribed to the power of an immaterial Being. We are told that "*vis inertiae*," or "a resistance to any change of its present state, is essential to matter, and inconsistent with any active power in it;" that "all gravity, attraction, elasticity, repulsion, or whatever other tendencies to motion are observed in matter (commonly called natural powers of matter), are not powers implanted in matter or possible to be made inherent in it, but impulse or force impressed upon it *ab extra*;" and that "the cause of its motion must be sought for in something not matter, in some *immaterial cause or being*."—"Gravity," for instance, "is not the action of matter upon matter, but the virtue or power of an immaterial cause or being, constantly impressed upon it." Nor has this doctrine been confined to such metaphysical reasoners as Andrew Baxter. Professor Playfair tells us, that when he was introduced to Dr. Horsley, the Bishop "expressed great respect for Lord Monboddo, for his learning and his acuteness, and (what was more surprising) for the soundness of his judgment. He

talked very seriously of the notion of *mind being united to all the parts of matter and being the cause of motion*. So far as I could gather, Dr. Horsley supposes that *every atom of matter has a soul*, which is the cause of its motion, its gravitation, &c. What has made him adopt this strange unphilosophical notion I cannot tell, unless it be the fear that his study of natural philosophy should make him suspected of Atheism, or at least of Materialism. For it is certain that there is at present a prejudice among the English clergy that natural philosophy has a tendency to make men Atheists or Materialists. This absurd prejudice was first introduced, I think, by that illiberal, though learned, prelate, Dr. Warburton.<sup>1</sup> A similar opinion has been recently reproduced by Dr. Burnett in his "Philosophy of Spirits in relation to Matter," in which he attempts to show that the forces and laws of Nature cannot be proved to be *the result of anything inherent in matter alone*, and that they ought to be ascribed to some substantive and distinct, but immaterial and dependent *spirits*, called "the spirit of life," "the spirit of electricity," "the spirit of heat."<sup>2</sup>

All these statements are only so many modifications of the same theory, and they agree in denying the existence of any active powers in matter, while they ascribe the phenomena of motion, life, and thought to an immaterial principle. There is, as it seems to us, a mixture of truth and error in this theory. It affirms a great truth, in so far as it declares the impossibility of accounting for the phenomena of motion, life, and thought, without ascribing them ultimately to a spiritual, intelligent, and voluntary cause; but it adopts a dangerous, and, as we conceive, a perfectly gratuitous assumption, when it denies that matter is capable of possessing any other properties or powers than those of extension, solidity, and "vis inertiae." We know

<sup>1</sup> DR. JOHN PLAYFAIR, "Works," I., Preface, xxix.

<sup>2</sup> C. M. BURNETT, M. D., "Philosophy," &c. London, 1850.

little of the nature of those fluids, forces, or powers, which have been denominated “dynamides” or “imponderables;” but, unquestionably, they possess properties and produce phenomena very different from any that can be reasonably ascribed to mere “vis inertię.” Nor is their possession of these properties incompatible with that law, when it is correctly understood. For what is the real import of the law of “vis inertię?” It amounts simply to this, as stated by Baxter himself, “that a resistance to any change of its present state,—whether of motion or rest,—is essential to ‘matter,’” he adds, indeed, “and inconsistent with any active power in it;” but this is an assumption which is true only in a sense that would make it inconclusive with reference to the point at issue. It is true, if it means merely that matter is destitute of spontaneity and self-motion, such as belongs to living, voluntary agents; but it is not true, if it means that matter is destitute of all inherent properties and powers. Indeed, the “vis inertię” which is ascribed to matter is itself a power, and a very formidable one; it is described by Baxter himself as “a kind of positive or stubborn inactivity,” as “something receding further from action than bare inactivity,” for “*matter is so powerfully inactive a thing!*” Now, if such a power as this may be ascribed to matter, why may it not be admitted with equal safety that God has bestowed on it certain other properties and powers, not inconsistent with this, but additional to it; and that He has established such relations and affinities between different substances as that they may act and react—mechanically or chemically—on one another? The phenomena of chemical affinity, the motions, and other changes, produced by the contact, or even the juxtaposition, of certain substances, and the variety of the resulting products, do certainly evince the operation of other powers besides that of “vis inertię;” and we cannot see why these powers should be ascribed to “immaterial spirits,” any more than that of “vis inertię” itself, or why it would be a whit more dangerous to

ascribe them to matter than to created *spirits*. All that is required, as it appears to us, to establish the dependence of the creature on the Creator and to vindicate the truth of Christian Theism, is to maintain these two positions: *first*, that whatever properties or powers belong either to "matter" or to "mind," were originally conferred on them, respectively, at the time of their creation by the will of God; and, *secondly*, that by the same will, these properties and powers are continually sustained, governed, and controlled. These two positions are held by all enlightened Theists, and are abundantly sufficient, if proved, to vindicate their doctrine against every assault; but we think it unwarrantable and dangerous to go further, and to ascribe, on the strength of mere gratuitous assumptions, all the activity, motion, and change which occur in the universe to created spirits or immaterial causes. These assumptions are extremely different from the common-sense notions of men, and they are utterly unnecessary for the support of any doctrine which we are concerned to defend.

On the whole, we venture to conclude that the radical distinction between Mind and Matter has not been materially affected by the recent progress of Physiological research, and that the old arguments against Materialism are still available, except in so far as they were founded on a too limited view of the properties of matter, which the advancing Science of Chemistry has done so much to unfold and to illustrate.

II. Our *second* proposition may be thus stated: That were we reduced to the necessity of embracing any form of the theory of "unisubstancisme," there could not be less,—there might even be greater,—reason for *spiritualizing matter*, than for *materializing mind*.

On the supposition that one or other of the two must be dispensed with, the question still remains, which of them can be most easily spared? or, which of them can be most conclusively proved? Mankind have generally thought that they had

equally good evidence for the existence of both; that in the direct and irresistible evidence of Consciousness, they had proof sufficient of a thinking, voluntary, and active spirit, and in the less direct, but not less irresistible, evidence of Perception, proof sufficient of the existence of a material world. But each of these convictions has been in its turn assailed by the cavils of skepticism; and men have been asked to prove *by reasoning* what needed, and, indeed, admitted of no *such* proof, — the existence of Matter as distinct from Mind, and the existence of Mind as distinct from Matter. The latter is denied by Materialists, the former is equally denied by Idealists; and what we affirm is, that each of these opposite theories is one-sided and partial, and that, on the supposition of our being reduced to the necessity of adopting the idea of “unsubstantism,” we should still have greater reason to reduce all to the category of “spirit,” than to reduce all to the category of “matter.” Many seem to think that it is more easy, or, perhaps, that it is less necessary, to prove the distinct existence of matter, than to prove the distinct existence of mind. They are so familiar with matter, and so continually surrounded by it, that they cannot conceive of its non-existence as possible, and scarcely think it necessary to inquire after any evidence in the case. But can it be justly said that they are more familiar with matter and its movements than they are with a living spirit within them, which feels, and thinks, and wills, and by means of which alone the phenomena of external nature itself can become known to them? If they receive the testimony of Perception as a sufficient proof of the existence of Matter, why should they not also receive the still more direct and immediate testimony of Consciousness as a sufficient proof of the existence of Mind? Or, if they refuse the latter, and admit the former, are they quite sure that, on their own partial principles, they could offer any conclusive answer to the “Idealism” of Berkeley? That ingenious and amiable prelate will tell them that

"the objects of sense cannot exist otherwise than *in a mind perceiving them*;" that "their *esse* is *percipi*," nor is it possible that they should have any existence out of the minds, or thinking things, which perceive them;" and that "all the choir of heaven and the furniture of the earth,—in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind."<sup>1</sup> Nay, others who are not Idealists, but who believe equally in the existence of "mind" and "matter," will tell them that Berkeley's arguments are conclusive, at least to the extent of showing that the existence of "matter," as a thing external to us, cannot be proved without presupposing the existence of "mind." "For what," says Lord Brougham, "is this matter? Whence do we derive any knowledge of it? How do we assure ourselves of its existence? What evidence have we at all respecting either its being or its qualities? We feel, or taste, or smell something; that is, we have certain sensations, which make us conclude that something exists beyond ourselves." . . . "But what are our sensations? The feelings or thoughts of our own minds. Then what we do is this: from certain ideas in our minds, produced no doubt by, and connected with, our bodily senses, but independent of and separate from them, we draw certain conclusions by reasoning; and these conclusions are in favor of the existence of something other than our sensations and our reasonings, and other than that which experiences the sensations and makes the reasonings, passive in the one case, active in the other. That something is what we call—Mind. But plainly, whatever it is, we owe to it the knowledge that matter exists; for that knowledge is gained by means of a sensation or feeling, followed by a process of reasoning; it is gained by the mind having first suffered something, and then done something. Therefore, to say *there is no such thing as matter* would

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP BERKELEY, "Works," I. 89.

be a much less absurd inference than to say *there is no such thing as mind.*" . . . . "The truth is, that we believe in the existence of 'matter,' because we cannot help it. The inferences of our reason from our sensations impel us to this conclusion, and the steps are few and short by which we reach it. But the steps are fewer, and shorter, and of the self-same nature, which lead us to believe in the existence of Mind, for of that we have the evidence within ourselves."<sup>1</sup>

It follows that were we reduced, as we are not, to the necessity of adopting the theory of "unisubstancisme," we might with at least as good reason dispense with the existence of "matter" as with the existence of "mind;" for, in the words of Dugald Stewart, "it would no more be proper to say of 'mind' that it is *material*, than to say of 'body' that it is *spiritual*."<sup>2</sup>

III. Our *third* proposition is, That we are *not* reduced to the necessity of adopting any theory of "unisubstancisme," since there is nothing inconceivable or self-contradictory in the supposition of two distinct substantive beings, possessing diverse properties, such as "mind" and "body," or "spirit" and "matter," are usually held to be.

Let any one endeavor to assign a reason for the sole, exclusive existence either of "matter" or of "spirit," or a distinct, specific ground for the opinion that they are necessarily incompatible with each other, and he will be compelled to own that the theory of "unisubstancisme," however plausible by reason of its apparent simplicity, is really nothing more than a gratuitous assumption. It cannot be admitted with reference even to *nature* and *man* without confounding the simplest elements of human knowledge; and with reference to *God* and the *universe*, it is attended with still more fatal consequences, since it

<sup>1</sup> LORD BROUGHAM, "Discourse of Natural Theology," p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> STEWART, "Elements of Philosophy," I. 5.

must lead, if consistently followed out, to undisguised Pantheism. Why should it be supposed that there is, or can only be, *one* substance in Nature? one substance invested with all those properties and powers which exist, in such manifold diversity, in the organic and inorganic kingdoms? The wonder might rather seem to be that any *two* substances should be capable of accounting for such a variety of phenomena as the universe exhibits. A "dualism" is unavoidable, unless we are to materialize God as well as man; and why may there not be a "dualism" in the case of created *mind* and *matter*, as there must be, on any supposition except that of Pantheism, in the case of the uncreated mind and the material universe? We see variety and gradation in all the works of God; we see thousands of substances, simple and compound, possessing various properties, even in the inorganic world; we see different forms of life, vegetable and animal, ascending by steps of regular gradation, from the lowest to the highest; we see, in the animal kingdom, various propensities, instincts, and powers, which constitute the characteristics of distinct species; at length we rise to Man, with his rational, responsible, and immortal nature. Why may not Man be the *nexus* between a world of "matter" and a world of "spirits,"—Man, who is equally connected with the material world by his body, and with the spiritual by his soul,—who is, as it were, "mind incarnate," spirit in flesh? And why may there not be higher spirits still, whether embodied in subtler and more refined vehicles, or existing apart from all material forms, in those other worlds which Astronomy has brought to light? No reason can be assigned for a negative answer to these and similar queries, unless it be that *we cannot conceive of pure spirit without bodily form*; and this may be true, if it be meant merely to affirm that we can find no sensible image for it, nothing by which it can be represented to our sight, or pictured in our imagination, as visible things may be; but it is not true, if it be meant to imply

that we have no distinct notion of "mind" or "spirit," for it is as clearly known by its properties, of thought, feeling, volition, and consciousness, as matter itself can be; and who will venture to define, or to depict, or to form any image of *the substance of matter*, apart from the properties which belong to it?

We are under no necessity, then, of adopting the theory of "unisubstancisme," and we cannot found upon it in argument without building on a mere gratuitous assumption.

IV. Our *fourth* proposition is, That the same reason which warrants us in ascribing certain properties and phenomena to a distinct substance called "matter," equally warrants us in ascribing certain other properties and phenomena to a distinct substance called "mind;" and that the difference between their respective properties and phenomena is so great as to justify the belief that the *substances* are different and ought to be denominated by distinctive names.

When Materialists affirm, as they do, the existence of one only substantive being in Nature, and represent all our mental phenomena as the mere results of physical organization, they assume that "matter," at least, is a real *entity*; that it is a *substance* or *substratum* in which certain powers or qualities inhere; and that its existence, as such, is evident and undeniable. We are entirely relieved, therefore, by their own admission or assumption, from the necessity of discussing the more general problem of Ontology; the problem, whether we can prove the existence of *any* being, properly so called, from a mere series of phenomena, a succession of appearances. They virtually admit, since they evidently assume, that the phenomena must have a substance under them, the qualities a substratum in which they inhere. Now, the very same reason which warrants, or rather obliges them to recognize "matter" as a substance and not as a shadow,—as an *entity* which really exists and manifests itself by its properties and effects,—must equally warrant, or rather oblige them to recognize "mind" or "spirit"

also as a distinct substantive being, unless it can be shown either that its properties are the same with those of matter, or that they may be accounted for by some peculiar modification of matter, some law of physical organization. There can be no reason for admitting the existence of "matter" as a substance, which does not apply also to the existence of "mind" as a distinct substance, if it shall be found that their properties are essentially different. We know, and can know, nothing of *substance* otherwise than by its properties or powers: we know nothing of "matter,"—it would, in fact, be to us non-existent, but for its extension, solidity, and other properties; we know nothing of "mind,"—it would equally be to us non-existent, but for its consciousness, its thoughts, feelings, and desires; and if it be right to ascribe the one set of properties to a substantive being, called "matter," it cannot be wrong to ascribe the other set of properties also to a substantive being, called "mind."

If it could be shown, indeed, that the properties of the one substance might either be identified with, or accounted for, by those of the other; if animal feeling could be identified with or derived from, mere physical impulse; if intellectual thought could be reduced to material motion; if desire and aversion, hope and fear could be explained by the natural laws of attraction and repulsion, then we might blend the two substances into one, and speak of "mind" as a mere modification of "matter." But as long as the properties or powers by which alone any substance can be known are seen to be generically different, we cannot confound the substances themselves, or reduce them to one category, without violating the plainest rules of philosophical inquiry.

And yet to these rules Dr. Priestley refers, as if they warranted the conclusions at which he had arrived. He desires his readers "to recur to the universally received rules of philosophizing, such as are laid down by Sir Isaac Newton at the

beginning of his third book of "Principia." "The first of these rules, as laid down by him, is that we are to *admit no more causes than are sufficient to explain appearances*; and the second is, that to *the same effect* we must, as far as possible, assign *the same cause*." We cheerfully accept these canons of philosophical inquiry; and it is just because no one substance is sufficient, in our estimation, to account for *all* the appearances, that we equally reject the "spiritualism" of Berkeley, who would resolve all phenomena into "mind," and the "materialism" of Priestley, who would resolve all phenomena into "matter." Matter and Mind may, indeed, be said to resemble each other in some respects,—in their being equally existent, equally created, and equally dependent; but their essential properties are generically different, for there is no identity, but a manifest and undeniable diversity, between thought, feeling, desire, volition, and conscience, and the various qualities or powers belonging to matter, such as extension, solidity, and *vis inertię*, or even the powers of attraction and repulsion. On the ground of this manifest difference between the properties by which alone any substance makes itself known, we hold ourselves warranted to affirm that the "mind" is immaterial, and to ascribe mental phenomena to a *distinct substantive being*, not less than the material phenomena of Nature.

Some ingenious thinkers, on both sides of the question, have not been fully satisfied with this method of stating the grounds of our opinion. It has been said by our opponents, that if we found merely on the acknowledged difference between two sets of properties or phenomena, while we admit that the substance or substratum is in itself entirely unknown to us, or known only through the medium of the properties to which we refer,—then the dispute becomes a purely *verbal* one, and can amount to nothing more than this, whether a *substance* of whose essence we are entirely ignorant should be called by the name of "matter" or by the name of "spirit." But the dispute

is not a purely *verbal* one, even on the suppositions which have been stated. For it is essential to a right "philosophy of nature," that every substance possessing peculiar properties should have a distinctive name. Thus, even in the material world itself, we distinguish sulphur from soda, gold from granite, and magnesia from electricity or *odyle*. Why? Because, while they have some properties in common, in virtue of which we rank them in the same category as "material substances," they have, severally, certain distinctive or peculiar characteristics, which forbid us to call the one by the same name as the other. And for precisely the same reason, when we find another class of properties and powers existing in certain beings, which are totally different from those belonging to mere material substances,—incapable not only of being identified with them, but also of being accounted for by means of them,—we are equally warranted in ascribing these properties to a *substance*, and in affirming that this substance, of which we know nothing except through its properties, is radically different from "matter." That there is something more than a mere *verbal* difference between us and our opponents might seem to be admitted by themselves, when they evince so much zeal in assailing our position and defending their own; but it becomes strikingly apparent as soon as we extend our inquiry so as to embrace the grand question respecting the distinction, if any, between God and the material universe.

Some, again, who are substantially, at least in all important respects, on our side of the question, have not been satisfied with showing that the two sets of properties are generically different, and that the same reason exists for ascribing the one to a distinct substantive being called "mind," as for ascribing the other to a substantive being called "matter." They have been anxious to advance a step further; and to show that the two sets of properties are *mutually exclusive*, and that they could not possibly *coexist* in the same subject. This is the

declared object of Baxter's Work on the Soul, which professes to prove that the only power belonging to "matter," namely, its *vis inertiae*, or resistance to any change in its present state, is inconsistent with its possession of any active power. It is not held sufficient to show that the properties are generically different, and that the substances in which these properties inhere may and should be designated by distinct names, as matter and spirit, soul and body; but it must be further proved that they are so heterogeneous and inconsistent as to be mutually exclusive, and incapable of coexisting in the same substance. To a certain extent, we think this mode of reasoning may be admitted. We do not conceive that "*vis inertiae*" is the only property belonging to matter, or that it is necessarily exclusive of attraction and repulsion, and the other powers which may belong to its specific varieties; but we do conceive that the "*vis inertiae*" of mere matter is utterly inconsistent with the self-activity, the self-moving power, which belongs to "mind:" and we are confirmed in this conviction by the anxiety which our opponents have evinced to explain the phenomena of mind by purely mechanical laws, and to establish a system, not of *moral*, but of *material* necessity, in opposition to the doctrine of man's spontaneity and freedom. We are further of opinion, that *extension* cannot be predicated of "mind," without also being predicated of "thought;" and that to ascribe it to either would lead to ridiculous absurdities, such as have been noted, and perhaps caricatured, by Dr. Thomas Brown. We think, too, that the unity and continuity of consciousness, with the intimate sense of personal identity, that belongs to all rational and responsible beings, are utterly irreconcilable with the continual flux and mutation that are incident to matter, and that they cannot be accounted for without the supposition of a distinct substance, existing the same throughout all the changes that occur in the material receptacle in which it dwells. To this extent we think that the argument

is alike legitimate and valid ; but when it goes beyond this, and attempts either to divest matter of all active properties, or to demonstrate that, in the very nature of things, sensation and thought could not possibly be annexed to a material substance, we think that it advances beyond the real exigencies of the case, and that it undertakes a task which is somewhat too arduous for our present powers,—a task which many of the ablest advocates of Immaterialism would humbly, but firmly, decline.

In this connection, it may be useful to remark that it is only with reference to this advanced and more arduous part of the general argument, that such writers as Locke and Bonnet, whose authority is often pleaded in opposition to our views, ever felt the slightest difficulty. They were both “Immaterialists,” because they both discerned the radical difference between mental and material phenomena, and because they both admitted the reasonableness of ascribing them, respectively, to a *distinct substance*. But they were not convinced by the more metaphysical arguments of those who professed to show that none of the phenomena of “mind” could possibly be exhibited by matter, or, at least, they declined to take that ground. That Locke was an Immaterialist is evident from many passages in his writings. “By putting together,” he says, “the ideas of thinking, perceiving, liberty and power of moving themselves and other things, we have as clear a perception and notion of immaterial substances as we have of material. For putting together the ideas of thinking and willing, &c., joined to *substance*, of which we have no distinct idea, we have the idea of an immaterial spirit ; and by putting together the ideas of coherent solid parts and a power of being moved, joined with *substance*, of which likewise we have no positive idea, we have the idea of matter : the one is as clear and distinct an idea as the other.”<sup>1</sup> But notwithstanding this

<sup>1</sup> LOCKE’S “Essay,” b. II. c. 23, § 15. Ibid., b. IV. c. 3, § 6.

explicit statement, he demurred to the doctrine of those who maintained that the power of thinking could not possibly be superadded to matter, and this because he deemed it presumptuous to set limits to the Divine omnipotence, or to pronounce any judgment on a question of that kind. "We have the ideas of matter and thinking, but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without Revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter, fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think. . . . I see *no contradiction* in it that the first eternal thinking Being should, if He pleased, give to certain systems of created senseless matter, put together as He sees fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought."<sup>1</sup>

In these and similar passages, Locke did not mean, we think, to retract or modify the doctrine which he had taught respecting the radical distinction betwixt mind and matter; he intended merely to intimate that, in adopting that doctrine, he proceeded on grounds different from those which had been assumed by some other writers; that his belief rested mainly on the essential difference between the properties belonging to the two substances, and not on the mere metaphysical arguments by which some had attempted to prove that God himself could not impart to matter the power of thinking. He shrunk from pronouncing a positive decision on *this* one point; and yet his words have ever since been quoted with triumph by the advocates of Materialism as affording a virtual sanction to *the possibility* at least of that for which they contend. And on the same account, Locke has been severely blamed by some modern "spiritualists." Mr. Carlyle, speaking of "Hartley's and Darwin's, and all the possible forms of Materialism,—the grand Idolatry, as we may rightly call it, by which at all times

<sup>1</sup> LOCKE, "Letter to Bishop of Worcester," Works, iv. 31.

the true worship, that of the invisible, has been polluted and withstood"—adds the following characteristic remarks: "Locke, himself a clear, humble-minded, patient, reverent, nay religious man, had paved the way for banishing religion from the world. Mind, by being modelled in men's imaginations into a Shape, a Visibility, and reasoned of as if it had been some composite, divisible, and reunifiable substance, some finer chemical salt, or curious piece of logical joinery, began to lose its immaterial, mysterious, divine, though invisible character: it was tacitly figured as something that might, were our organs fine enough, be *seen*. Yet who had ever seen it? who could ever see it? Thus, by degrees, it passed into a Doubt, a Relation, some faint Possibility, and, at last, into a highly probably Nonentity. Following Locke's footsteps, the French had discovered that 'as the stomach secretes chyle, so does the brain secrete thought.'"<sup>1</sup>

The sentiments of Bonnet of Geneva, as stated in his "*Palingenesie*," are substantially in accordance with those of Locke, and have met with similar treatment. He is not a Materialist; he admits a real distinction, as well as a close union, between the soul and the body; he speaks even of the possible existence of disembodied souls or pure spirits; he affirms the immateriality of the thinking principle; and expressly assigns his reasons for *not* being a Materialist.<sup>2</sup> But he appears to have thought, as Locke did, that possibly the power of thinking might be superadded to matter, by the Creator's omnipotent will, and that there is nothing in this supposition which could seriously affect either the doctrine of Theism or the "immortality" of man. And hence he affirmed, in words which Dr. Priestley selected for the motto of his "*Disquisitions*," that "if any one should ever demonstrate the

<sup>1</sup> THOMAS CARLYLE, "*Essays*," I. 77, 214.

<sup>2</sup> C. BONNET, "*Palingenesie Philosophique*," 4 vols., I. 7, 47, 52.

soul to be material, far from being alarmed at this, we should only admire the power which could give to *matter* the power of *thinking*."

We conceive that the language both of Locke and Bonnet on this particular point amounts to a dangerous and very unnecessary concession. Were it meant merely to affirm that God could so unite a thinking spiritual being with a material organism, as to make the two mutually dependent and subservient, this is no more than is admitted by all the advocates of Immaterialism, and it is actually exhibited in the constitution of human nature. But if it were meant to admit that the power of "thinking" and "willing" might be superadded as a property or quality to matter itself, *without any substantive being other than matter as a substratum*, then we conceive it to be at variance with the grounds on which Locke and Bonnet themselves had previously declared their belief in the distinct existence both of matter and spirit. We shall only add, that the prejudice against our doctrine, which is founded on the union of two *substances* apparently so heterogeneous as mind and matter in *the same person*, is, to say the least, fully counterbalanced by the difficulty, incident to the theory, of demonstrating the coexistence of *two sets of properties*, apparently so diverse and disparate as thought and extension, "*vis inertiae*" and spontaneity, in *the same substance*.

On the whole, we conclude that the same reason which warrants us in ascribing certain properties or phenomena to a distinct substance called "matter," equally warrants us in ascribing certain other properties or phenomena to a distinct substance called "mind;" and that the difference between their properties and phenomena is so great as to justify the belief that the substances are different, and ought to be denominated by distinctive names.

V. Our *fifth* proposition is, That it is impossible to account for the phenomena of thought, feeling, desire, volition, and

self-consciousness, by ascribing them, as Materialists do, either to the *substance* of "matter," or to its *form*; that is, either to the *atomic particles* of which it consists, or to the *peculiar organization* in which these particles are arranged.

It is too manifest to admit either of doubt or denial, that the power of thinking, feeling, and willing, does not belong to every form of matter. It is not, therefore, one of its essential properties; and if it belong to it at all, it must be either a *quality superadded* to the ordinary powers of matter, or a *product resulting* from its configuration in an organized form.

If it be a quality superadded merely to the ordinary powers of matter, then it must exist equally in every part of the mass to which it is attached; every particle of the matter in which it inheres must be sentient, intelligent, voluntary, and active; and, on this supposition, it will remain a difficult, if not desperate problem, to account for the *unity* of consciousness by such a diversity of parts, and especially for the *continuity* of consciousness, when the material elements are confessedly in a state of constant flux and mutation. It would seem, too, that if thought be thus connected with an extended, divisible, and mutable substance, it must be itself extended, and, of course, divisible; and, accordingly, Dr. Priestley does not hesitate to affirm that our *ideas*, as well as our *minds*, possess these characters. "Whatever ideas," he says, "are in themselves, they are evidently produced by external objects, and must therefore correspond to them; and since many of the objects or archetypes of ideas are *divisible*, it necessarily follows that *the ideas themselves are divisible also*." . . . "If the archetypes of ideas have *extension*, the ideas which are expressive of them, and are actually produced by them according to certain mechanical laws, must have extension likewise; and, therefore, the mind in which they exist, whether it be material or immaterial, must have extension also. . . . I am, therefore, obliged to conclude that the sentient principle in man, containing ideas

which certainly have parts, and are divisible, and consequently must have extension, cannot be that simple, indivisible, and immaterial substance that some have imagined it to be, but something that has real extension, and therefore may have the other properties of matter.”<sup>1</sup> He argues that *ideas* must be extended and divisible because their objects or archetypes are so; and, further, that the *mind* itself must be material, because these properties belong to the ideas which inhere in it as their subject or seat. Now, *this* argument is fairly met by the reasoning, or the ridicule, call it which you will, of Dr. Thomas Brown: “In saying of mind that it is matter, we must mean, if we mean anything, that the principle which thinks is hard and divisible; and that it will be not more absurd to talk of the *twentieth* part of an affirmation, or the *quarter* of a hope, of the *top* of a remembrance, and the north and east corners of a comparison, than of the twentieth part of a pound, or of the different points of the compass, in reference to any part of the globe. The true answer to the statement of the Materialist, — the answer which we feel in our hearts, on the very expression of the plurality and divisibility of feeling, — is that it assumes what, far from admitting, we cannot even understand, and that, with every effort of attention which we can give to our mental analysis, we are as incapable of forming any conception of what is meant by the quarter of a doubt, or the half of a belief, as of forming to ourselves an image of a circle without a central point, or of a square without a single angle.”<sup>2</sup>

But the theory which supposes the soul to be extended and divisible, and its ideas, feelings, and volitions to be extended and divisible also, has given place to another, which does not represent the mental qualities as inhering in every particle of the matter with which they are associated, but rather as *the*

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, “Disquisitions,” pp. 37, 38.

<sup>2</sup> DR. THOMAS BROWN, “Lectures,” No. xcvi.

*products of organization*, the results, not of the atomic elements, but of the form, or figure, into which they are cast. It seems to have been felt that it would be unsafe to ascribe the power of thinking to every particle of the brain, and it is now represented as the result or product of "the brain in action, as light and heat are of fire, and fragrance of the flower."<sup>1</sup> This idea is illustrated by a great variety of natural examples, in which certain effects are produced by the *arrangement of matter*, which could not be produced by its individual particles, existing separate and apart, or combined in other forms. Nor is this a new phase of the theory, or an original discovery of the present age; it was familiarly known and fully discussed<sup>2</sup> in the days of Clarke and Collins, and every similitude which is now employed to illustrate it may be found dissected in their writings. Collins had undertaken to prove that "an individual power may reside in a material system which consists of separate and distinct parts,"—"an individual power which is *not* in every one, nor in any one, of the particles that compose it, when taken apart and considered singly:" and he had adduced as an example the very similitude which Atkinson employs, namely, "fragrance from the flower;" for he adds, "a rose, for example, consists of several particles, which, separately and singly, want a power to produce that agreeable sensation we experience in them when united." Other instances are given; such as "the power of the eye to contribute to the act of seeing, the power of a clock to show the hour of the day, the power of a musical instrument to produce in us harmonious sounds;" these, he says, "are powers not at all resulting from any powers of *the same kind* inhering in the parts of the system;" and he infers that "in the same manner the power of thinking, without being an aggregate of powers of the same

<sup>1</sup> ATKINSON, "Letters," p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> DR. SAM. CLARKE'S "Third Defence," in reply to Collins, pp. 5, 8, 17.

kind, may yet inhere in a system of matter." But these examples, so far from confirming, serve rather to confute, the theory in whose support they are adduced. Could it be shown, indeed, that the eye possesses *in itself* the power of vision, and that sight results solely from its peculiar texture; or, that a clock is really an "intellectual machine," and produces an "intellectual effect;" or, that a musical instrument possesses in itself the soul of melody, and is conscious of its own sweet sounds, — then it might be possible to entertain the supposition that, *in like manner*, an organized brain may have the power of producing thought, and feeling, and will. But what is the matter of fact? Let Dr. Clarke's answer with reference to the case of a timepiece suffice for all: "That which you call the power of a clock to show the time of the day is evidently *nothing in the clock itself*, but the figure and motion of its parts, and, consequently, not anything of a different sort or kind from the powers inherent in the parts. Whereas 'thinking,' if it was the result of the powers of the different parts of the machine of the body, or of the brain in particular, would be something really inhering in the machine itself, specifically different from all and every one of the powers of the several parts out of which it resulted; which is an express contradiction, a supposing the effect to have more in it than the cause." . . . "That particular and determinate *degree of velocity* in a wheel, whereby it turns once round precisely in twelve hours, is that which you call *the power of a clock* to show the time of the day; and because such a determinate velocity of motion is *made use of by us* for the measure of time, is it therefore really a new quality or power distinct from the motion itself?" The same answer is equally applicable to all the other examples, and it may be stated generally as amounting to this, that "it is absolutely false in fact, and impossible in the nature of things, that any power whatsoever should inhere or reside in any

system or composition of matter, different from the powers residing in the single parts.”<sup>1</sup>

The two great difficulties which adhere to the theory of Materialism, and which must ever prove insurmountable, are these: first, to account for the power of thinking by means of material atoms, which are individually destitute of it; and secondly, to account for the unity and continuity of human consciousness by means of material atoms which are constantly undergoing flux and mutation. For the first end, recourse has been had to the theory which ascribes the power of thinking, not to the particles of matter, but to their order, arrangement, or organization; and for the second, the continuous sense of personal identity is supposed to be sufficiently accounted for by supposing that, as the particles which compose the brain are changed, the retiring atoms leave their share of the general consciousness as a legacy to their successors. And both these expedients for surmounting the difficulty are exquisitely caricatured in the “Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus,” in a chapter which is justly described as “an inimitable ridicule on Collins’ argument against Clarke, to prove the soul only a quality.” The Society of Freethinkers, addressing Martinus, propose to send him an answer to the ill-grounded sophisms of their opponents, and likewise “an easy mechanical explanation of perception or thinking.”—“One of their chief arguments,” say they, “is that self-consciousness cannot inhere in any system of matter, because all matter is made up of several distinct beings which never can make up one individual thinking being. This is easily answered by a familiar instance. In every *jack* there is a *meat-roasting* quality, which neither resides in the fly, nor in the weight, nor in any particular wheel, of the jack, but is the result of the whole composition. . . . And as the

<sup>1</sup> DR. SAM. CLARKE, “First Defence,” pp. 11, 16; “Second Defence,” pp. 4, 10.

general quality of meat-roasting, with its several modifications, does not inhere in any one part of the jack, so neither does consciousness, with its several modes of sensation, intellection, volition, &c., inhere in any one, but is the result from the mechanical composition of the whole animal." And then, in regard to the *second* difficulty: "The parts," say they, "of an animal body are perpetually changed, . . . from whence it will follow that the idea of individual consciousness must be constantly translated from one particle of matter to another. . . . We answer, this is only a fallacy of the imagination. They make a great noise about this *individuality*, how a man is conscious to himself that he is the same individual he was twenty years ago, notwithstanding the flux state of the particles of matter that compose his body. We think this is capable of a very plain answer, and may be easily illustrated by a familiar example. Sir John Cutler had a pair of black worsted stockings, which his maid darned so often with silk, that they became at last a pair of silk stockings. Now, supposing those stockings of Sir John's endued with some degree of consciousness at every particular darning, they would have been sensible that they were the same individual pair of stockings, both before and after the darning!"

The subject is here presented in a ludicrous point of view, and some may doubt whether this is a legitimate method of treating it. But it should not be forgotten that while *ridicule is no safe test of truth, it may be the most effective exposure of nonsense and folly.*

## SECTION III.

## THE RELATIONS OF MATERIALISM TO THEOLOGY.

It has been generally felt and acknowledged, that the doctrine which preserves the distinction between matter and spirit, body and soul, is more in accordance with the truths of Natural and Revealed Religion, than the opposite theory which identifies them; and that, on the other hand, a profound and serious study of these truths has a tendency to raise our thoughts above the low level of Materialism, and to direct them to the contemplation of a higher and nobler world,—the world of spirits.

There are many distinct points at which the theory of Materialism comes into contact and collision with the truths both of Natural and Revealed Religion. By a brief enumeration of these, the practical importance of the subject may be clearly evinced.

1. The doctrine of "the immortality of the soul" is seriously affected by the theory of Materialism. That there is *some* connection between the two is apparent from the very anxiety with which infidels have labored to undermine the doctrine of "spirit," on purpose to get rid of the doctrine of "immortality." But in stating the connection between them, we must exercise the utmost caution, lest we should unwarily place the truth on a precarious or questionable basis. In arguing for the future life of the soul, as a doctrine of Natural Religion, some writers have spoken as if they supposed that nothing more was needful to demonstrate its "immortality" than the bare fact of its being "immaterial," and that, by its very nature as "spirit," it is indestructible by God Himself. Now, we do not hold that the mere proof of its being an immaterial substance would necessarily infer its being also immortal. For ought we know,

the principle of life, sensation, memory, and volition *may* belong to an immaterial substance even in the lower animals, who are not supposed to be immortal; and the only use which we would make of its "immateriality" in connection with its "immortality," is simply this,—that not being material, *its destruction is not necessarily implied in the dissolution of the body*. It is not in the metaphysical doctrine of its immaterial nature, but in the practical evidence of its moral responsibilities and religious capacities, that we find the most satisfactory natural proof of its immortality. It is perfectly possible to hold, on the one hand, that all "immaterial substances" are not necessarily indestructible; and yet to hold, on the other hand, that *such* an immaterial substance as the soul of man is known to be,—endowed with conscience, with intelligence, with affections and aspirations, with hopes and fears such as can find no suitable object and no adequate range within the limits of the present life,—must be destined to an immortal existence. The "immortality," for which alone we ought to contend, is such as implies neither a necessity of existence in the creature, nor its independence on the will of the Creator. The *power* of God to annihilate the soul is not called in question, but the *purpose* of God to make the soul immortal is inferred from its nature and capacities, its aspirations and hopes and fears. And all that is necessarily implied in the doctrine of what has been called "the natural immortality of the soul" is well stated by Dr. S. Clarke, when he says that, "the soul may be such a substance as is able to continue its own duration forever, by the powers given to it at its first production, and the continuance of those general influences which are requisite for the support of created beings in general." Mr. Baxter, acute and metaphysical as he was, placed the argument substantially on the same ground. "It appears," he says, "that all substance equally, as well material as immaterial, cannot cease to exist but by an effect of infinite power. . . . The human soul,

having no parts, must be indissoluble in its nature by anything that hath not power to destroy or annihilate it. And, since it hath not a natural tendency to annihilation, nor a power to annihilate itself, nor can be annihilated by any being finitely powerful only, without an immediate act of the omnipotent Creator to annihilate it, it must endlessly abide an active perceptive substance, without either fear or hopes of dying through all eternity, which is, in other words, to be immortal as to the agency of all natural or second causes, that is, 'naturally immortal.'"<sup>1</sup>

When thus stated and limited, the argument is at once safe and valid. It is first proved that the Mind is a "substance," living, perceptive, and active, which is simple and indivisible, and not capable, like matter, of being separated into parts possessing the same properties or powers; and then this distinction betwixt mind and matter is applied to prove that it cannot be *destroyed by dissolution*, as the body may be, but that if it be destroyed at all, it must be by *annihilation*. But no substance, material or immaterial, can be annihilated by any *finite or second cause*; it can be annihilated only by the will of him who created it; and the question respecting the soul of man remains, What are the indications of God's will concerning it? When this question is seriously entertained, we can hardly fail to see in the structure of its powers, in the grandeur of its capacities, in the moral and responsible consciousness which belongs to it, a strong presumptive proof of its being His purpose that it should continue to live after the dissolution of the body. The Metaphysical argument is sufficient to remove preliminary objections, the Moral argument furnishes a presumptive proof.

The theory of Materialism, as it assumes different forms, so it admits of being associated with different views respecting the

<sup>1</sup> DR. CLARKE'S "Letter to Mr. Dodwell," pp. 34, 69, 72. ANDREW BAXTER, "On the Soul," I. 227, 233.

future prospects of the soul. When it is held in its grossest form, it stands in a relation of direct antagonism to the doctrine of "immortality," as is apparent in the speculations of D'Holbach, Comte, and Atkinson, who insist at large on the proof of Materialism on purpose to undermine and overthrow the doctrine of Immortality. The theory of Materialism has been maintained by Dr. Priestley and others, in conjunction with a professed, and, as we believe, sincere belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. The sleep of the soul during the interval between death and the resurrection, and its ultimate awakening by an immediate and miraculous interposition of Divine power, are equally held to be true,—the one on the ground of a natural evidence, the other on that of the authority of Revelation. But the natural evidence is defective, since it depends entirely on the assumption that "thought" is produced by and dependent on a certain material organization, without which it could not exist; and the supernatural authority is still less to be relied on, since it *seems*, at least, to recognize the existence of disembodied spirits, and unequivocally declares that the soul cannot be killed as the body may. If the soul be material, as Dr. Priestley says it is; it must be, equally with the body, affected by the stroke of death; yet our Lord says,—and His authority cannot be declined when the doctrine of a future resurrection is made to depend on the mere testimony of Scripture,—“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”<sup>1</sup> And the soul is represented as existing in a state of conscious happiness or misery, even during the interval between death and the resurrection, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as well as in the statement of the apostle that “he was in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10: 28.

better.”<sup>1</sup> In its most recent and refined form, the theory of Materialism represents “mind” as a subtle product, evolved out of matter, and destined to an endless existence,—an ever-ascending progression; and in this form of it, the doctrine of a distinct, personal immortality is, no doubt, far better preserved than in its earlier and grosser forms, which spoke of the utter destruction of individual consciousness at the hour of death, and of our material particles passing merely into other kinds of organic or inorganic being. But then, it is placed on a very precarious ground,—the mere supposition of a material product, which can never be established by proof, and which, if there were no other objection to it, might well seem to be sufficiently discredited by the mere fact that it ascribes to *the effect* properties and powers, of a very high and peculiar order, which do not exist in *the cause*.

2. The doctrine of “future rewards and punishments,” or of “man’s responsibility” as a subject of the Divine government, is also materially affected by the theory of Materialism, in some, at least, of its forms. When it is connected, as it often has been, with the doctrine of “Mechanical Necessity,” which represents every thought, opinion, emotion, desire, and habit, as the unavoidable result of mere physical influences acting on the brain, and makes no account of the spontaneity or freedom which belongs to man as an intelligent, moral, and responsible agent, it is manifestly impossible to discover any ground for the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. And accordingly, D’Holbach, Comte, and Atkinson describe man as if he were the mere creature of circumstances, and deny that his character could possibly have been different from what it is. But even when it is not associated with fatalism, the theory, which denies the distinct existence of the soul as a substantive being, has a tendency to shake our belief in the doctrine of a

<sup>1</sup> Luke 16: 22; Phil. 1: 23.

"future retribution," properly so called, since that doctrine rests on the assumption of our continued personal identity, or the unity and continuity of our consciousness, as dying yet immortal beings; whereas, if there be no "soul," or substantive spiritual being, and if the "body" be in a state of perpetual flux and mutation, it is difficult to see how *the same being that sinned can suffer*, or how the doctrine of "retribution," properly so called, can be consistently maintained.

3. The doctrine of "the spirituality" of the Divine nature must be seriously affected, in different ways, by the theory of Materialism.

It is said in Scripture that "God made man in His own image," and that He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Deny the existence of "spirit" or "soul," as God's living image on earth, and what ground of evidence, or what help of analogy, remains for either conceiving or proving aright the existence of Him who is "a Spirit" and "the Father of the spirits of all flesh?" And if the "spirituality" of the Divine nature be called in question, many of the Divine attributes must also suffer; for it is only as "a spirit" that God can be *omnipresent*, and his omnipresence is presupposed in his *omniscience* and *omnipotence*. For these reasons, we incur the greatest risk of entertaining limited and false conceptions of God, by obliterating the distinction between "matter" and "spirit."

It is, no doubt, competent, and it may even be highly useful, to entertain the question, how far the theory of Materialism should be held to affect the grounds on which we believe in a living, personal, spiritual God? In answer to this question, we have no hesitation in avowing our conviction that the theory of Materialism, however it may be modified, has a tendency to impair the evidence of that fundamental article of faith. God is "a Spirit," and man was made "in the image of God." Take away all spiritual essences; reduce every known object

in nature to matter, gross or refined; let mental and moral phenomena be blended with the physical, and what remains to constitute the groundwork of a "spiritual" system, or to conduct us to the recognition of a supreme, immaterial Mind? If the material body, with its peculiar organization, be capable of producing human thought, and sufficient to account for the intelligence of man, why may not the material universe, with its mysterious laws and manifold forces, be held sufficient to explain whatever marks of a higher intelligence may appear in Nature? and why may we not at once embrace Pantheism, and conceive of God only as "the soul of the world?" Dr. Priestley's reply to this question appears to us to be a mere evasion of the difficulty. In treating of "the objection to the system of Materialism derived from the consideration of the Divine essence," he first of all premises that "in fact we have no proper idea of any essence whatever; that our ideas concerning 'matter' do not go beyond the powers of which it is possessed, and much less can our ideas go beyond powers, properties, or attributes with respect to the Divine Being;" and then adds, "Now, the powers and properties of the Divine mind, as clearly deduced from the works of God, are not only so infinitely superior to those of the human mind, when there is some analogy between them, but so essentially different from them in other respects, that whatever term we make use of to denote the one, it must be improperly applied to the other." He specifies several points of "essential difference" between the human and the Divine mind: the *first* is, the limited intelligence of the one as contrasted with the all-comprehensive omniscience of the other; the *second* is, the omnipotence which belongs to God, and in virtue of which He can produce, or annihilate, anything at His pleasure: the *third* is, that "the Divine essence cannot be the object of any of our senses, as everything else that we call 'matter' is." And on these grounds he concludes that "as the Divine powers, so the Divine nature,

must be essentially different from ours, and, consequently, no common term, except such comprehensive terms as *being, nature, &c.*, can be properly used to express both." He further argues that "no proof of the materiality of man can be extended, by any just analogy, to a proof or evidence of a similar materiality of the Divine nature; for the properties or powers being different, the 'substance' or 'essence' (if it be any convenience to us to use such terms at all) must be different also."<sup>1</sup>

Now, we conceive this to be a mere evasion of the real difficulty: *first*, because the same mode of reasoning, if applied to the case of the human mind, would equally serve to prove that *it* should be distinguished from matter: and, *secondly*, because the alleged *differences* between the human and the Divine mind, great and real as we admit them to be, afford no better reason for calling God a "spirit," than that which may be found in the *resemblance or analogy* between created and uncreated intelligence. It is as true of the human as it is of the Divine mind, that we know nothing of its essence, except what we learn through its properties and powers, that "it cannot be the object of any of our senses, as everything that we call 'matter' is," and that if it be right to give different and distinctive names to substances, expressive of their properties in so far as these are known to us, we are warranted in calling the human soul a "spirit" and distinguishing it from "matter," until it can be shown that the properties of both are identical. If this be denied, we cannot see on what ground the distinction between "matter" and "spirit" can be maintained with reference to God Himself. Dr. Priestley founds, not on the *resemblance or analogy*, but on the *essential difference*, between created and uncreated intelligence; but, in point of fact, the *difference*, great and real as it is, has no bearing on the only question at issue; it is the *resemblance or analogy* between all thinking beings and

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRIESTLEY, "Disquisitions," p. 103; "Free Discussion," pp. 66, 237.

the Supreme Mind that suggests the reason for classing them under the same category as "spirits," and that enables us to rise from the spiritual nature of man to the spiritual nature of God.

The personality of God, as a living, self-conscious, and active Being, distinct from the created universe and superior to it, is dependent on the "spirituality" of His nature; and in so far as the latter is affected by the theory of Materialism, the evidence of the former must also be proportionally weakened. We find, accordingly, that many Materialists have exhibited a tendency towards a Pantheistic theory of nature, in which the material universe is conceived of as the "body," of which God is the "soul." Some Materialists, indeed, have stopped short of Pantheism; but this may have arisen from their being less consequent reasoners, or more timid thinkers, than others who were prepared to follow out their principles fearlessly to all their logical results; for, assuredly, if there be no evidence sufficient to show that the "mind" is distinct from the "body," it will require a very high kind of evidence to make it certain that "God" is distinct from "Nature."

4. The theory of Materialism comes into direct collision, at several points, with the doctrines of Revealed Religion.

The doctrine of Scripture in regard to the "human soul" is manifestly at variance with that theory. In the earliest pages of Genesis, we have an account of its creation, which, when compared with other statements and forms of expression occurring elsewhere, seems very clearly to imply that the "soul" is a distinct substantive being, possessing properties and powers peculiar to itself, and, although now united to the "body," yet capable of existing apart from it, and destined to an immortal existence hereafter.<sup>1</sup> That it is a distinct substantive being,

<sup>1</sup> FLAVEL, "Pneumatologia; or, Treatise of the Soul," I. 290. SIR M. HALE, "Primitive Origination of Mankind," p. 309.

connected with the body, but not dependent on it, at least in the sense of being incapable of existing apart from it, appears from various testimonies of the inspired Word. God is there pleased to call Himself "the Father of our spirits," and that, too, in contradistinction to "the fathers of our flesh." "We have had fathers of our 'flesh' which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of 'spirits' and live?" He is called "the God of the 'spirits' of all flesh," and "the Lord who formeth the 'spirit' of man within him." The historical narrative, too, of man's creation, which declares that he was "made in the image of God," and that his "soul" was infused by an immediate Divine afflatus, seems to imply that there is another and a higher relation subsisting between God and the "soul" than any that subsists between God and "matter." In other passages, the soul is expressly represented as distinct and different from the body:—"Fear not them which can kill the 'body,' but are not able to kill the 'soul.'" "Into thy hands I commit my 'spirit,'" said our Lord, just as his proto-martyr Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my 'spirit.'" There are other passages still which affirm the separate existence of disembodied spirits: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and 'the spirit,' shall return unto God who gave it." "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Nay, *spiritual life*, such as clearly presupposes the continuance of conscious existence, without interruption and without end, is said to be imparted by Christ to his people:—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me *shall never die*."—"Whoso believeth in me . . . is passed from death unto life."<sup>1</sup> Life is said to be

<sup>1</sup> Compare Heb. 12: 9; Num. 16: 22; 27: 16; Zech. 12: 1; Luke 23: 43, 46; Acts 7: 59; Eccles. 12: 7; 2 Cor. 5: 8; James 2: 26; Luke 24: 39; John 10: 25; John 5: 24.

already imparted, such a life as shall survive death, and continue without interruption and without end; and surely this is utterly inconsistent with that theory of Materialism which affirms, either the annihilation of the "soul" at death, or even the cessation of its conscious existence during the interval between death and the resurrection.

The revealed doctrine of "angels," or spiritual intelligences existing in other parts of the universe, is also opposed to the theory of Materialism. According to the common belief, the "soul" of man is the *nexus* between two worlds or states of being,—the world of "matter" and the world of "mind." In man the elements of both worlds are united; by his body he is connected with the world of matter, by his soul with the world of mind. Death, which dissolves the union between the two, consigns the one to the dust, and introduces the other into the world of spirits. On this view, there is no difficulty in rising to the conception of higher spiritual intelligences; and the variety and gradation that are observable in all the works of God on earth may impart to that sublime conception such a measure of verisimilitude as to make it easily credible on the authority of Revelation. But the theory of Materialism, especially as advocated by Dr. Priestley, plainly excludes the existence of any order of "spiritual beings" other than the uncreated Mind; for if that only is to be termed "spirit" which possesses omniscience and the power of producing anything at pleasure, it is clear that the highest angels and seraphims are no more "spirits" than the souls of men.

Such being the relation which subsists between the theory of Materialism, and some of the most important doctrines of Natural and Revealed Religion, it is not wonderful that a serious consideration of the latter should lead reflective men to abjure the former, or that their aversion to it should increase in proportion as their views of Divine truth are extended and enlarged. Not a few have yielded, in early youth, to the

charm of speculative inquiry, and fondly embraced the idea of "unisubstancisme," who have lived to exchange it for a more Scriptural faith. For just in proportion as men are brought under the influence of serious views of God, of the soul, and of an eternal world, in the same proportion will they become alienated, and even averse, from a theory which confounds "spirit" with "matter," obscures their conceptions of God and of the world of spirits, and degrades men to the level of the beasts that perish. This effect of new, or, at least, more vivid views of "things unseen and eternal" was instructively exemplified in the case of the late Robert Hall. Like many an ardent speculatist, he had embraced in early life the system of Materialism; and even after he had entered on the work of the ministry, he could write to a professedly Christian congregation in the following terms: "I am, and have been for a long time, a Materialist, though I have never drawn your attention to this subject in my preaching, because I have always considered it myself, and wished you to consider it, as a *mere metaphysical speculation*. My opinion, however, on this head, is, that the nature of man is simple and uniform, that the thinking powers and faculties are the result of a certain organization of matter, — and that after death he ceases to be conscious until the resurrection."<sup>1</sup> But speculative inquiry was soon to give place to spiritual faith. The death of his revered and pious father brought his mind into realizing contact with an unseen and eternal world; and, in the words of his biographer, distinguished alike for profound science and deep practical piety, "The death of Mr. Hall's father tended greatly to bring his mind to the state of serious thought with which he entered on the pastoral office. Meditating with the deepest veneration upon the unusual excellences of a parent now forever lost to him, he was led to investigate, with renewed

<sup>1</sup> DR. OLINTHUS GREGORY, "Life of Hall," Works, vi. 26.

earnestness, the truth as well as the value of those high and sacred principles from which his eminent piety and admirable consistency so evidently flowed. He called to mind, too, several occasions on which his father, partly by the force of reason, partly by that of tender expostulation, had exhorted him to abandon the vague and dangerous speculations to which he was prone. Some important changes in Mr. Hall's sentiments resulted from an inquiry conducted under such solemn impressions, and among these may be mentioned his renunciation of Materialism, which, he often declared, he *buried in his father's grave.*"

## CHAPTER V.

### THEORY OF GOVERNMENT BY NATURAL LAWS.—VOLNEY.—COMBE.

THE theory of "natural laws" has been applied to disprove or supersede the doctrine of Creation, by means of the principle of Development. It has been further applied to the *government*, as well as to the *creation*, of the world; and in this connection, it has been urged as a reason for disbelieving the doctrine of God's special PROVIDENCE, and employed to discredit the efficacy of PRAYER.

When thus applied, it is often associated with the recognition of the Divine existence, and cannot, therefore, be ranked among systems avowedly Atheistic. But from the earliest times, it has been the belief of seriously reflecting men, that a system which professedly recognizes the Divine Being as the Creator of the world, but practically excludes Him from the government of its affairs, however *theoretically* different from Atheism, is substantially the same with it.<sup>1</sup> It was against this Epicurean Atheism that Howe contended in his "Living Temple;" an Atheism which acknowledged gods, but "accounted that they were such as between whom and man there could be no conversation,—on *their* part by providence, on *man's* by religion." And it was against the same Epicurean Atheism that Cudworth contended in his "Intellectual System of the Universe," when he grappled with the objections which had

<sup>1</sup> CICERO, "De Naturâ Deorum," lib. I. c. 44.

been urged against the doctrine of Providence and the practice of prayer.<sup>1</sup>

It is not wonderful that either Atheists or Pantheists should discard the doctrine of Providence, or deny the efficacy of Prayer. On their principles, there is no room for the recognition of a supreme intelligent Power governing the world, or of a Will capable of controlling the course of human affairs.<sup>2</sup> But while neither Atheism nor Pantheism could be expected to recognize a presiding Providence, since they equally exclude a personal God, it may well seem strange that any system of Theism, whether natural or revealed, should omit or oppose this fundamental truth. For the doctrine of Providence may be established, *inductively*, by the very same kind of evidence to which every Theist has recourse in proving the existence and perfections of the Divine Being; and, His existence and perfections being proved, the doctrine of Providence may be inferred, *deductively*, from His character, and from the relations which He sustains towards His creatures, since it cannot be supposed that He who brought them into being, as the products of His own wisdom, goodness, and power, and endowed them with all their various properties for some great and noble end, will ever cease to care for them, or deem them unworthy of His regard. Yet, strong as is the proof arising from these and similar sources, there have occasionally appeared in all ages, and especially at a certain stage in the progress of philosophical speculation, men who admitted, and even maintained, the existence of the Supreme Being, while they denied, nevertheless, the doctrine of Providence and the efficacy of Prayer.

In certain stages of philosophic inquiry, there is a natural

<sup>1</sup> HOWE, "Works," I. 104. CUDWORTH, "Intellectual System," I. 120, 144.

<sup>2</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," VI. 149, 247, 295. SPINOZA, "Tractatus Theologico-politicus," pp. 57, 102, 122, 144, 150, 319.

tendency, we think, or at least a strong temptation, to substitute the laws of Nature in the place of God, or to conceive of him as somehow removed to a greater distance from us by means of these laws. Every one must be conscious, to some extent, of this tendency in his own personal experience; he must have felt that when he first began to apprehend any one of the great laws of Nature, and still more when he advanced far enough to see that every department of the physical world is subject to them, so as to exhibit a constant order, an all-pervading harmony, his views of God and Providence became less impressive in proportion as the domain of "law" was extended, and that he was in imminent danger of sinking, if not into *theoretical*, at least into *practical* Atheism. "It is a fact," says Dr. Channing, "that Science has not made Nature *as expressive of God* in the first instance or, to the beginner in religion, as it was in earlier times. Science reveals a rigid, immutable *order*; and this to common minds looks much like self-subsistence, and does not manifest intelligence, which is full of life, variety, and progressive operation. Men in the days of their ignorance saw an immediate Divinity accomplishing an immediate purpose, or expressing an immediate feeling, in every sudden, striking change of Nature, . . . and Nature, thus interpreted, became the sign of a present, deeply-interested Deity."<sup>1</sup> That the scientific study of Nature, and especially of certain departments of physical inquiry, has often had the effect of deadening our sense of a present and presiding Deity, of obscuring or perplexing our views of the connection of God with His works, and of virtually removing Him from all efficient control over the creatures of His hands, is attested, not only by the published speculations of some, but also by the inward consciousness of many more, who have never avowed infidel sentiments

<sup>1</sup> DR. CHANNING, "Memoirs," II. 439. ROBT. BOYLE, "Free Inquiry into the Notion of Nature," p. 7.

to others, nor even, at least articulately, to themselves. It may be useful, therefore, to inquire somewhat particularly, whether, and how far, the existence of "natural laws" and the operation of "second causes" should affect our views of the Providence which God exercises over us, or of the Prayers which we address to Him.

## SECTION I.

### THE DOCTRINE OF NATURAL LAWS AND SECOND CAUSES.

The existence of "natural laws," and the operation of "second causes," are often explicitly recognized, and always obviously implied, in Scripture. Revelation is not designed to explain the nature or the action of either; but it assumes the reality of both.<sup>1</sup> It is plainly implied in the very *first* chapter of Genesis, that, at the era of creation, God gave a *definite constitution*, implying peculiar properties and powers, to all the various classes of objects which were then called into being. He created light, with its peculiar properties; He created water, with its peculiar properties. He created everything "after its kind." The distinction between one created thing and another, such as light and water, and the distinction also between "genera" and "species," especially in the case of plants, trees, fish, fowl, cattle, and reptiles, are very strongly marked in the sacred narrative: and this distinction implies the existence of certain properties peculiar to each of these objects or classes,—properties not common to them all, but distinctive and characteristic, which made them to be, severally, what they are, and which amount to a *distinct definite constitution*. These properties, account for them as we may, are

<sup>1</sup> PROFESSOR SEDGWICK, "Discourse," fifth edition, p. CLIII. MR. COMBE, "Constitution of Man," p. 417.

essential to their existence as distinct objects in nature, and cannot be separated from them as long as the objects themselves exist. Light has certain properties, and so has water, and so has every distinct order of vegetable or animal life, which make them to be what they severally are, and which cannot be severed from them otherwise than by the destruction of their very nature. These properties are known to us by their *effects*; and hence the substances or beings to which they respectively belong are regarded by us as *causes*; and their operation as causes is regulated by certain "laws," imposed upon them by the same Omnipotent Will which called them into being and endowed them with all their peculiar properties and powers. The operation of these "natural causes," and the existence of certain "established laws" by which they are regulated, are explicitly recognized or obviously assumed in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth; they continue this day *according to thine ordinances*, for all are *thy servants*."

The established constitution and settled order of Nature, as well as the "laws," "decrees," or "ordinances" by which it is regulated, are thus explicitly recognized in Scripture itself; and there are several reasons why this fact should be deliberately considered. First, because it seems to have been assumed by our opponents, that the discovery of "natural laws," and the admission of "second causes," must necessarily be adverse, and may ultimately prove fatal, to the cause of Religion; or, in other words, that Faith must recede just in proportion as Science advances; whereas the Bible speaks both of natural objects, possessing peculiar properties and powers, and also of natural laws, as God's "ordinances" both in the heavens and the earth, but speaks nevertheless of a presiding Providence or

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 6 : 27; Psalm 68 : 2; 83 : 14; James 3 : 12; Matthew 7 : 16; Proverbs 8 : 29; Job 38 : 11, 33; Psalm 119 : 90; Jeremiah 31 : 35; 33 : 25.

governing Will, without ever supposing that the two are incompatible or mutually exclusive. Secondly, because some of the less intelligent members of the Christian community itself seem to be influenced, to a certain extent, by the very same error which we ascribe to our opponents; and evince a very groundless jealousy of Science, as if they feared that the progress of physical research might have the effect of weakening the grounds on which they believe in the care of Providence and the efficacy of Prayer; whereas the Bible gives no countenance to any jealousies or fears of this kind, but affirms God's providential government and encourages man's believing prayer, at the very time when it founds upon and appeals to the established constitution and course of Nature.<sup>1</sup> And thirdly, because a right apprehension of the properties and powers belonging to created beings, and of the laws to which they are severally subject, will be found to conduce largely to a clear and comprehensive view of the relation which God sustains to His works. His Providence, as it is declared and exemplified in Scripture, has *a necessary reference to the natural constitution of things*; and hence the Westminster Confession, in the spirit of the highest philosophy, and with admirable discrimination and accuracy, affirms that "God, the Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern, all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy Providence;" that "by the same Providence, He ordereth all things to fall out *according to the nature of second causes*, either necessarily, freely, or contingently;" and that "God in His ordinary Providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure."<sup>2</sup>

"Natural laws" and "second causes" are thus established by experience, and explicitly recognized in Scripture. It is

<sup>1</sup> DR. M'COSH, "On the Divine Government," pp. 126, 129, 149.

<sup>2</sup> "Westminster Confession," c. v., § II., III.

necessary, however, especially with reference to certain modern speculations, to discriminate between the two; and to show that while they are closely related and equally legitimate objects of philosophical inquiry, they are nevertheless radically different, as well as easily distinguishable, from each other. It is the favorite doctrine of the Positive school in France that the knowledge of "causes" is utterly interdicted to man, and that the only science to which he should aspire consists exclusively in the knowledge of "phenomena," and their coördination under "general laws." M. Comte explicitly avows this doctrine, and Mr. Mill and Mr. Lewes give it their implied sanction.<sup>1</sup> According to their theory, all Science is limited to "the laws of the coexistence and succession of phenomena," and "causes" are not only unknown, but incapable of being known. And to such an extent is this doctrine carried that M. Comte anticipates the possible ultimate reduction of *all* "phenomena" to *one* all-comprehensive, all-pervading "law," as the highest perfection of Science and the decisive extinction of Religion; while Mr. Mill, doubtful of this being possible, thinks it conceivable, at least, that there may be worlds, different from our own, in which events occur *without causes* of any kind, and even without any *fixed law*.

In regard to this theory it might well be asked, how it comes to pass that human language, which is the natural exponent of human thought, should contain, in every one of its multifarious dialects, so many expressions which denote or imply "causation," if it be true that all knowledge of causes is utterly inaccessible to the human faculties? Nay, why is it that the axiom of causation needs only to be announced to command the immediate assent of the whole human race?

It will be found, we believe, that even in the case of those

<sup>1</sup> M. COMTE, "Cours," IV. 663, 669; V. 259, 277; VI. 702, 780. J. S. MILL, "Logic," I. 397, 417, 422; II. 109, 471. LEWES, "Biographical History," I. 14; III. 55; IV. 9, 42.

who contend for this theory, the instinctive and spontaneous belief in "causation" is not extinguished nor even impaired; but that they seek merely to *substitute* "*laws*" for "*causes*," or rather to represent *the laws of nature* as the only *efficient causes* of all natural phenomena. They thus identify or confound two things which it is of the utmost consequence to discriminate and keep distinct. There is an ambiguity, however, in the common usage of the term "law," which may seem to give a plausible appearance to their theory, or at least to veil over and conceal its radical fallacy. It denotes sometimes the mere statement of a *general fact*, or the result of a comprehensive generalization, founded on the observation and comparison of many particular facts; it denotes at other times *the force or power*, whatever that may be, which produces any given set of phenomena. The "law" of gravitation, for example, is often used to denote nothing more than the *general fact*, ascertained by experience, that all bodies near the surface of the earth tend to its centre with a velocity proportioned directly to their mass, and inversely to the square of their distance; and when it is employed in *this* sense, it determines nothing as to the "cause" which is in operation,—it affirms merely a fact, or a fact reduced to a formula, and confirmed by universal experience. But it is often transferred, at least mentally and almost perhaps unconsciously, to denote some "power" which is instinctively supposed to be in operation when any change is observed,—a "power" which may be conceived of, either as a *property* inherent in mind or in matter, or as a *force*, such as the Divine volition, acting upon it *ab extra*; and it is only in the latter of these two senses, as denoting a "cause," properly so called, and not a mere fact or law, that it can be applied to account for any phenomenon. In like manner, the "laws of motion" are merely the generalized results of our experience and observation relative to the direction, velocity, and other phenomena of moving bodies; but "motion," although it is

regulated, is not produced, by these laws; it depends on a "cause," whatever that may be, which is not only distinguishable, but different from them all. Yet when we speak of the "laws of motion," we may imperceptibly include, in our conception of them, that *force* or *power* which impels the body, as well as the mere *law* or *rule* which regulates its movements. It were a mere unprofitable dispute about words, did we entertain and discuss the question, whether the import of the term "law" might not be so extended as to include under it *powers*, *properties*, and *causes*, as well as the *rules* and *conditions* of their operation: for, even were this question answered in the affirmative, there would still be room for a real distinction between the two, and there could be no reason for saying that the knowledge of "causes," as distinguished from "laws," is wholly inaccessible to the human faculties. There is thus a real and important distinction between "laws" considered simply as general facts, and "causes" considered as efficient agents; and the two cannot be reduced to the same category, otherwise than by giving such an extension to the term "law" as shall make it comprehensive of *causation*; and even then, the distinction remains between the mere formulas of Science and the actual forces of Nature. "The laws of Nature," says the sagacious Dr. Reid, "are the *rules* according to which the effects are produced, but there must be a *cause* which operates according to these rules. The rules of navigation never navigated a ship; the rules of architecture never built a house."<sup>1</sup>

It might be shown, were it needful for our present purpose, that the object of Science is *threefold*: *first*, to ascertain particular facts; *secondly*, to reduce these facts under general laws; and, *thirdly*, to investigate the "causes" by which both *facts* and *laws* may be accounted for. The exclusion of any

<sup>1</sup> DR. REID, "Essays," III. 44. DR. M'COSH, "Divine Government," 88, 91, 111, 114.

one of the three would be fatal to Philosophy as well as Religion; and it is prohibited by the "natural laws" of the human mind, which has the capacity not only of observing particular facts, but of comparing and contrasting them so as to deduce from them a knowledge of general laws, and which is also imbued with an instinctive and spontaneous tendency to ascribe every change that is observed to some "power" or "cause" capable of producing such an effect. It might further be shown, that in every instance a "cause," properly so called, is a *substance* or *being* possessing certain properties or powers, — properties which may be called, if you will, the "laws" of that substance, but which necessarily include the idea of *causation* or *efficiency*; that in the case of mere physical agency, there must be a plurality of substances so related as that the one shall act on the other in certain conditions which are indispensable to their mutual action; and that these requirements leave ample room for those manifold adjustments and adaptations on which the argument from "design," in favor of the Perfections and Providence of God, is founded. The mere recognition of "general laws," considered simply as the "co-ordination of facts," and especially as exclusive of the idea of causation or efficiency, can never satisfy the demands of reason, nor exhaust the legitimate functions of Science. For, in the expressive words of Sir John Herschell, "It is high time that philosophers, both physical and others, should come to some nearer agreement than seems to prevail, as to the meaning they intend to convey in speaking of causes and causation. On the one hand, we are told that the grand object of physical inquiry is to explain the nature of phenomena by referring them to their *causes*; on the other, that the inquiry into 'causes' is altogether vain and futile, and that Science has no concern but with the discovery of 'laws.' Which of these is the truth? Or are both views of the matter true *on a different interpretation of the terms*? Whichever view we may take, or whichever

interpretation we may adopt, there is one thing certain,—the extreme inconvenience of such a state of language. This can only be reformed by a careful analysis of the widest of all human generalizations, disentangling from one another the innumerable shades of meaning which have got confounded together in its progress, and establishing among them a rational classification and nomenclature. . . . A ‘law’ may be a *rule of action*, but it is not *action*. The great First Agent may lay down a rule of action for himself, and that rule may become known to man by observation of its uniformity; but, constituted as our minds are, and having that conscious knowledge of *causation* which is forced upon us by the reality of the distinction between *intending* a thing, and *doing* it, we can never substitute the ‘rule’ for the ‘act.’”<sup>1</sup>

But while the existence of “natural laws” and the operation of “second causes” are equally admitted, and yet duly discriminated, large room is still left for diversities of opinion or of statement in regard to *the precise relation which God sustains to His works*, and especially in regard to *the nature and method of His agency in connection with the use of “second causes.”* Hence have arisen the various theories which have appeared successively in the history of Philosophy, and which have had for their avowed object the explanation of the *connection between God and Nature*, or the conciliation of Theology with Science.<sup>2</sup> Hence, first of all, the theory of “occasional causes,” as taught by Father Malebranche, with the laudable, but, as we think, mistaken, design of vindicating the Divine agency in Providence by virtually superseding every other power in Nature;—a theory which represents physical agencies as the mere *occasions*, and God as the sole *cause* of all changes, which teaches that a healthy eye, with the presence

<sup>1</sup> SIR JOHN HERSCHELL, “Address to the British Association,” 1845.

<sup>2</sup> DR. THOS. BROWN, “Essay on Cause and Effect,” p. 86. DR. THOS. REID, “Essays,” i. 136. PIERRE POIRET, “De Deo, Anima, et Malo.”

of light, is not the cause of vision, but the occasion only of that Divine interposition by which alone we are enabled to see, and that a man's desire or volition to walk is not the cause of his walking, but the occasion merely of that Divine interposition which alone puts the proper muscles in motion. Hence, secondly, the theory of "preëstablished harmony" as taught by Leibnitz; — a theory which was mainly designed to explain the relation subsisting between the soul and the body, but which involves principles bearing on the general doctrine of cause and effect, and applicable to the relation subsisting between God and His works. This theory teaches that mind and body, although closely united, have no real influence on each other, that each of them acts by its own properties and powers, and that their respective operations exactly correspond to each other by virtue of a "preëstablished harmony" between the two, just as one clock may be so adjusted as to keep time with another, although each has its own moving power, and neither receives any part of its motions from the other. This theory, therefore, denies everything like causal action between mind and matter; and when it is extended, as it may legitimately be, to the relation between God and the world, it would seem to imply the coequal existence and independence of both, and the impossibility of any causal relation between the two. The manifest defects of these theories have given rise to a *third*, which, in one of its forms, has been generally adopted by Divines, — the theory of "instrumental causes."

This theory has assumed two distinct and very different forms. In the first, all natural effects are ascribed to powers *imparted* to created beings, and *inherent* in them; that is, to powers which are supposed to have been conferred at the era of Creation, and to be still sustained by God's will in Providence, subject, however, to be suspended or revoked according to His pleasure. In the second, which resembles in some respects the doctrine of "occasional causes," all natural effects

are ascribed to powers not *imparted*, but *impressed*, not belonging to the natural agent, but communicated by impulse *ab extra*; and God's will is represented as the only efficient cause in Nature. In both forms of the theory, the agency of God and the instrumentality of natural means are, in a certain sense, acknowledged; but in the *former*, second causes are apt to be regarded as if they were self-existent and independent of God; in the *latter*, second causes are apt to be virtually annulled, and all events to be regarded as the immediate effects of Divine volition. Both extremes are dangerous. For, on the one hand, the operation of second causes cannot be regarded as necessary and independent, without severing the tie which connects the created universe with the will of the Supreme; and, on the other hand, the operation of second causes cannot be excluded or denied, without virtually making God's will *the only efficient cause*, and thereby charging directly and immediately on Him, not only all the physical changes which occur in Nature, but also all the volitions and actions of His creatures. In order to guard against these opposite and equally dangerous extremes, we must hold the real existence and actual operation of "second causes;" while we are careful, at the same time, to show both that whatever powers belong to any created being were originally conferred by God, and also that they are still preserved and perpetuated by Him, subject to his control, and liable to be suspended or revoked, according to the pleasure of His will. We would thus have *one First*, and *MANY SECOND CAUSES*; the former *supreme*, the latter *subordinate*; really distinct, but not equally independent, since "second causes" are, from their very nature, subject to the dominion and control of that Omniscient Mind which called them into being, and which knows how to overrule them all for the accomplishment of His great designs.

We are aware that some are unwilling to acknowledge the *efficiency* of any "second causes," and seek to resolve all events,

even such as are brought about by the volitions of men, into the will of God, as the only Agent in Nature. Others, again, admitting the existence of created spirits, and their operation as real causes, are unwilling to acknowledge any active powers in *matter*, and are anxious to show that *mind*, and *mind only*, can be an efficient cause. We see no reason for this extreme jealousy of "second causes" either in the mental or the material world. In the mental world, they cannot be denied, as distinct, although subordinate and dependent, agencies, without virtually making God's will *the only cause* in Nature, and thereby representing Him as the *cause of sin*, if sin, indeed, could exist on that supposition, or without destroying the distinct individuality and personal responsibility of man. Man must be regarded as a distinct, though dependent, *agent*, and, as such, a real, though subordinate, *cause*; otherwise every action, whether good or evil, must be ascribed directly and immediately to the efficiency of the Divine will, and *to that alone*. And in the material world, "second causes" can as little be dispensed with; for every theory, even the most meagre, must acknowledge the existence of *some* power or property in matter, were it only the passive power or *vis inertie* on which all the laws of motion depend. And if *this* can be admitted as a power inherent in matter and inseparable from it, we cannot see why the existence of *other* powers, not incompatible with this, should be deemed a whit more derogatory to the dominion and providence of God. In a certain sense, indeed, God's will may be said to be the First, the Supreme Cause of all, since nothing can happen without His permission or appointment: but, in this sense, the existence of "natural laws" and the operation of "second causes" are by no means excluded; they are only held to have been originated at first, and ever afterwards sustained by the Divine Will, the latter being *supreme*, the former *subordinate*. It may also be said, in a

certain sense, that Mind only is active:<sup>1</sup> for all the properties and powers of matter are the results of the Divine volition, and their mode of action is regulated and determined by "laws" which God has imposed; but it were unphilosophical, as well as unscriptural, to infer from this that He is the only Agent in the Universe; it is enough to say that He created the system of Nature, and that He still upholds and governs it by His Providence.

It must be evident that the speculations to which we have referred have a close connection with the argument, founded on natural evidence, for the being, perfections, and providence of God. That argument, in so far as it depends on the mutual adaptations between natural objects and the nice adjustments of natural laws, might be seriously impaired by supposing that there is really only one cause in Nature; whereas the ascription of certain properties and powers to created beings, whether mental or material, can have no effect in diminishing its force, since the evidence depends not so much on the phenomena of *physical*, as on those of *moral* causation.

On the whole, we conclude that the existence of "natural laws" and the operation of "second causes" are recognized alike by the sacred writers and by sound philosophy; and that neither the one nor the other ought to be regarded as adverse to any doctrine which, as Christian Theists, we are concerned to defend.

<sup>1</sup> DR. THOMAS BROWN, "Essay on Cause and Effect," pp. 74, 83, 93, 108, 191.

## SECTION II.

THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN CONSIDERED IN ITS RELATION TO  
THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

"The Constitution of Man considered in Relation to External Objects,"<sup>1</sup>—such is the title of a popular, and, in some respects, instructive work, which has obtained, partly through the aid of an endowment, extensive circulation among the reading class of artisans and tradesmen. Written in a lucid style, and illustrated by numerous facts in Natural History and Philosophy, it is skilfully adapted to the capacities and tastes of common readers, and it is not wonderful that it should have exerted considerable influence on the public mind. The character of that influence, and its tendency to induce a religious or irreligious frame of spirit, has been made a matter of controversial discussion. On the one hand, Mr. Combe tells us that "'The Constitution of Man' not only admits the existence of God, but is throughout devoted to the object of expounding and proving that He exercises a real, practical, and intelligible government of this world, rewarding virtue with physical and moral well-being, and punishing vice with want and suffering." On the other hand, it is manifest, beyond the possibility of doubt or denial, that if his professed Theism has subjected him to the charge of being an inconsequent thinker in some of the organs of avowed Atheism,<sup>2</sup> his favorite arguments in support of "government by natural law" have been applied by himself, and eagerly welcomed by others, as conclusive objections to the doctrine of a special Providence and the efficacy of Prayer.

We do not object to the limitation of his inquiry to the one

<sup>1</sup> GEORGE COMBE, ESQ.

"Reasoner," XII. 21, 23.

point of the relation subsisting between "the Constitution of Man and External Objects,"—that is a perfectly legitimate, and might be a highly instructive field of investigation; but we do object to his utter forgetfulness of that limitation in the progress of his work, and to his attempt to introduce a variety of other topics which are manifestly alien from his professed design. If he meant to discuss merely the relation between the constitution of man and external objects, he had nothing whatever to do with the far higher and more comprehensive doctrine respecting the relation between the constitution of man and the government of God, and, least of all, with the *revealed* doctrines of a special Providence, of a fall into a state of sin, of death as its wages, and of "spiritual influences" by which the ruin occasioned by the fall may be redressed; and yet these topics, foreign as they are to the professed design of his work, are all introduced, and treated, too, in a way that is fitted, if not designed, to shake the confidence of his readers in what have hitherto been regarded as important articles of the Christian faith. It has received this significant testimony, "Combe's Constitution of Man' would be worth a hundred New Testaments on the banks of the Ganges."<sup>1</sup>

There are *two points*, especially, on which he comes more directly into collision with our present argument:

1. He speaks as if God governed the universe *only* by "natural laws," so as to exclude any other dispensation of Providence.

2. He speaks as if the "physical and organic" laws of Nature possessed the same authority and imposed the same obligation as the "moral" laws of Conscience and Revelation; and as if the breach or neglect of the former were *punishable* in the same sense, and for the same reason, as the transgression of the latter.

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Grant and Holyoake's Discussion," p. 40.

Next to the omission of all reference to a future state, and the total exclusion of the connection which subsists between the temporal and the eternal under the Divine government, we hold these *two* to be the capital defects of his treatise ; and it may be useful, in the present state of public opinion, to offer a few remarks upon each of them.

In regard to the *first*, we need not repeat what we have already explicitly declared, that God does govern the world *in part* by means of "natural laws" and "second causes;" but, not content with this concession, Mr. Combe speaks as if He governed the world *only* by these means, to the exclusion of everything like a "special Providence," or "Divine influences." It is not so much in his dogmatic statements as in his illustrative examples that the real tendency of his theory becomes apparent. Thus he speaks of "the most pious and benevolent missionaries sailing to civilize and Christianize the heathen, but, embarking in an unsound ship, they are drowned by their disobeying a physical law, without their destruction being averted by their morality;" and, on the other hand, of "the greatest monsters of iniquity" embarking in a staunch and strong ship, and escaping drowning "in circumstances exactly similar to those which would send the missionaries to the bottom." Thus, again, he speaks of plague, fever, and ague, as resulting from the neglect of "organic laws," and as resulting from it so necessarily that they could be averted neither by Providence nor by Prayer; and he illustrates his views by the mental distress of the wife of Ebenezer Erskine, and the recorded experience of Mrs. Hannah More.<sup>1</sup> It cannot be doubted, we think, that in all these cases he speaks as if God governed the world *only* by natural laws; and that he does not recognize any special Providence or any answer to Prayer, but resolves all events into the operation of these "laws."

<sup>1</sup> GEORGE COMBE, "Constitution of Man," pp. 150, 155, 163, 165, 234, 343, 358.

Now, there are evidently *two* suppositions that may be entertained on this subject: either, that God orders *all* events to fall out according to “natural laws” and by means of “second causes;” or, that while He *generally* makes use of means in the ordinary course of His Providence, He reserves the liberty and the power of interposing directly and immediately, when He sees cause, for the accomplishment of His sovereign will. These two suppositions seem to exhaust the only possible alternatives in a question of this kind; and, strange as it may at first sight appear to be, it is nevertheless true that neither the one nor the other is necessarily adverse to the doctrine for which we now contend. Even on the first supposition,—that God orders *all* events to fall out according to “natural laws” and by means of “second causes,”—there might still be room, not, indeed, for miraculous interposition, but for the exercise of a special Providence and even for an answer to prayer; for it should never be forgotten that, among the “second causes” created and governed by the Supreme Will, there are other agencies besides those that are purely physical,—there are intelligent beings, belonging both to the visible and invisible worlds, who may be employed, for ought we know to the contrary, as “ministers in fulfilling His will,” and whose agency may, without any miraculous interference with the established order of Nature, bring about important practical results, just as man’s own agency is admitted to have the power of arranging, modifying, and directing the elements of Nature, while it has no power to suspend or reverse any “natural law.” And if God is ordinarily pleased to make use of means, why should it be thought incredible that He may make use of the ministry of intelligent beings, whether they be men or angels, for the accomplishment of His designs? But on the second supposition,—that while He generally makes use of means in the ordinary course of His Providence, He reserves the liberty and the power of interposing directly and

immediately when He sees cause,—the doctrine of a special Providence, including every interposition, natural or supernatural, is at once established; and we cannot see how Mr. Combe, as a professed believer in Revelation, which must of course be regarded as a supernatural effect of “Divine influence,” can consistently deny God’s direct and immediate agency in Providence, since he is compelled to admit it at least on *two* great occasions, namely, the Creation of the world, and the promulgation of His revealed will.

In regard, again, to the second capital defect or error of his system, it may be conclusively shown that he confounds, or fails at least duly to discriminate, two things which are radically different, when he speaks as if the “physical and organic laws” of Nature had the same *authority*, and imposed the same obligations, as the “moral laws” of Conscience and Revelation, and as if the breach or neglect of the former were *punishable*, in the same sense, and for the same reason, as the transgression of the latter.

The declared object of his treatise is twofold: first, to illustrate the relation subsisting between the “natural laws” and the “constitution of man;” and, secondly, to prove the *independent operation* of these laws, as *a key to the explanation of the Divine government*. In illustrating the relation between the “natural laws” and the “constitution of man,” he attempts to show that the natural laws require obedience not less than the moral, and that they inflict punishment on disobedience: “The peculiarity of the new doctrine is that these (the physical, organic, and moral laws) operate independently of each other; that each requires obedience to itself; that each, in its own specific way, rewards obedience and punishes disobedience; and that human beings are happy in proportion to the extent to which they place themselves in accordance with *all* of these Divine institutions.” In regard to these “natural laws,”—including the physical, the organic, the intellectual, and the

moral,—*four* positions are laid down: first, that they are independent of each other; secondly, that obedience or disobedience to each of them is followed by reward or punishment; thirdly, that they are universal and invariable; and, fourthly, that they are in harmony with the “constitution of man.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, in this theory of “natural laws,” especially as it is applied to the doctrines of Providence and Prayer, there seem to be *three* radical defects:

1. Mr. Combe speaks of *obedience* and *disobedience* to the “physical and organic” laws, as if they *could* be obeyed or disobeyed in the same sense and in the same way as the “moral” laws, and as if they imposed an obligation on man which it would be sinful to disregard. He has not duly considered that the moral law differs from the physical and organic laws of Nature in two important respects: first, that while the former *may*, the latter *cannot*, be broken or violated by man; and secondly, that while the former does impose an imperative obligation which is felt by every conscience, the latter have either no relation to the conscience at all, or, if they have, it is collateral and indirect only, and arises not from the mere existence of such laws, but from the felt obligation of *a moral law belonging to our own nature*, which prescribes *prudence* as a duty with reference to our personal conduct in the circumstances in which we are placed.

That the “physical and organic” laws cannot be broken or violated in the same sense in which the “moral law” may be transgressed, is evident from the simple consideration that the violation of a natural law, were it possible, *would be not a sin, but a miracle!* And that these laws impose no real obligation on the conscience is further manifest, because we hold it to be perfectly lawful to counteract, so far as we can, the operation

<sup>1</sup> MR. COMBE, “Constitution of Man,” VI., IX., 25, 39, 41.

of one physical or organic law by employing the agency of another, as in the appliances of Mechanics, the experiments of Chemistry, and the art of Navigation. When the aëronaut inflates his balloon with a gas specifically lighter than atmospheric air, or the ship-builder constructs vessels of wood or iron, so that when filled with air they shall be lighter than water, and float with their cargo on its surface, each is attempting to counteract the law of gravitation by the application of certain other related laws: but no one ever dreams of their *disobeying* God in thus availing themselves of one physical agent to counterpoise another. The "moral law," however, cannot be treated in the same way, and that simply because it is generically different.

It is true, that *indirectly* the laws of Nature, when known, may and ought to regulate our practical conduct; not, however, by virtue of any obligation imposed *by them* on our conscience, but solely by virtue of that law of *moral prudence* which springs from conscience itself, and which teaches us that we *ought* so to act with reference to outward objects as to secure, so far as we can, our own safety and happiness, and the welfare of our fellow-men. But there can be no greater blunder than to confound *the laws of natural objects* with *the law of human conduct*; and into this deplorable blunder Mr. Combe has allowed himself to fall. Throughout the whole of his statements respecting the "natural laws," there are two things included under one name, which are perfectly distinct and separate from each other. In the first place, there are the laws which belong to the constitution of natural objects, and which regulate their mutual action on one another: in the second place, there are, in the words of a late sagacious layman, "*rules* which the intellect of man is able to deduce for the regulation of his own conduct, by means of his knowledge of those laws which govern the phenomena of Nature. These last are perfectly distinct from the former; and it is a monstrous confusion of ideas to

mix them up together. . . . The true state of the case is this, — it is for our interest to study these natural arrangements, and to accommodate our conduct to them, as far as we know them; and in doing so, we *obey*, not those laws of Nature, physical and organic, but the laws of *prudence and good sense*, arising from a due use of our moral and intellectual faculties.”<sup>1</sup> Another acute writer,<sup>2</sup> who states the substance of the argument in very few words, has shown that the theory of “natural laws,” as taught by Mr. Combe, is true in one sense and false in another: “It is *true*, first, that the Creator has bestowed constitutions on physical objects; in other words, the constitutions which physical objects possess were *given* them, given during His pleasure; secondly, that the constitutions of physical objects are *definite*, — that is, they are distinct, individual, and incapable of transmutation *by natural causes*; thirdly, that no power but the power of the Creator can vary their constitutions. But it is *not true*, first, that any mode of action of a physical object is otherwise inherent in it, than as it is the will of God that that object should *now* present that mode of action. Nor is it true, secondly, that it is beyond the power of God to vary, when He pleases, either temporarily or permanently, the constitution of physical objects.” He further shows that, on Mr. Combe’s principle of “natural laws” being all equally Divine institutions which must be *obeyed*, “human obedience is a very complicated and perplexing affair, so complicated and so perplexing as to involve positive contradictions;” that “the very same act is required by one law, and forbidden by another, both laws being equally Divine;” and that “we sometimes cannot obey both the ‘organic’ and the ‘moral’ laws.” He concludes that “physical laws ought not to be confounded with laws of human conduct;” that “these we always must obey,

<sup>1</sup> MR. SCOTT, “Harmony of Phrenology with Scripture,” pp. 82, 97.

<sup>2</sup> CITIZEN KENNEDY, “Nature and Revelation Harmonious,” pp. 70, 122, 124, 131.

and those we may often, without deserving blame, boldly disregard ;” and that “by commingling distinct classes of ‘natural laws,’ Mr. Combe introduces into his system dangerous error and gross absurdity.”

2. Another radical defect in this theory of “natural laws” consists in its representing the consequences of our ignorance or neglect of them as *punishments* in the same sense in which moral delinquencies are said to be followed by penal inflictions. There is something here which is totally at variance with the instinctive feelings and moral convictions of mankind. Mr. Combe affirms that each of the three great classes of “natural laws” requires *obedience* to itself, and that each, in its own specific way, rewards obedience and punishes disobedience. And he gives, as one example, the case of the most pious and benevolent missionaries sailing to civilize and Christianize the heathen, but embarking in an unsound ship, and being drowned *by disobeying a “natural law ;”* as another, the case of “a child or an aged person, stumbling into the fire, through mere lack of physical strength to keep out of it ;” as another, the case of “an ignorant child, groping about for something to eat and drink, and stumbling on a phial of laudanum, drinking it and dying ;” and as another, the case of “a slater slipping from the roof of a high building, in consequence of a stone of the ridge having given way as he walked upright along it.”<sup>1</sup> In all these cases, the accident or misfortune which befalls the individual is represented as the *punishment* connected with the neglect or transgression of a “natural law,” just as remorse, shame, conviction, and condemnation may be the punishment for a moral offence. In other words, a child who ignorantly drinks laudanum is *punished with death*, in the same sense, and for the same reason, that the murderer is punished with death for shedding the blood of a fellow-creature ; and the poor slater

<sup>1</sup> MR. COMBE, “Constitution of Man,” pp. 25, 53, 306, 364.

who misses his foot, and falls, most unwillingly, from a roof or parapet, is *punished with death*, just as a man would be who threw himself over *with the intention* of committing suicide! Surely there is some grave error here,—an error opposed to the surest dictates of our moral nature, and one that cannot be glossed over by any apologue, however ingeniously constructed, to show the evil effects which would follow from a suspension of the general laws of Nature. For, in the words of Mr. Scott, it is only where “the law is previously known”—and not only so, but where the “circumstances which determine the effect might be foreseen”—that “the pleasures or pains annexed to actions can properly be termed *rewards and punishments* ;” for “these have reference to the state of mind of the party who is to be rewarded or punished ; it is the intention or disposition of the mind, and not the mere act of the body, that is ever considered as obedience or disobedience, or thought worthy, in a moral sense, of either reward or punishment.” And as the theory is thus subversive of all our ideas of moral retribution, so it demands of man a kind of obedience which it is *impossible* for him to render, since *all* the laws of Nature, and *all* the states of particular things at a given time, cannot possibly be known by the ignorant many, nor even by the philosophic few. The philosopher, not less than the peasant, may perish through the explosion of a steam engine, or the unsoundness of a ship, or the casual ignition of his dwelling ; and that, too, without blame or punishment being involved in either case. On Mr. Combe’s theory, it would seem to be necessary that every one should be a man of science, if he would avoid *sin* and *punishment* ; and yet, unfortunately, the ablest man of science is not exempt, in the present state of his knowledge, from the same calamities which befall his less enlightened, but not less virtuous, neighbors.

These views are strikingly confirmed by the remarks of a writer in “The Reasoner,” who blames Mr. Combe for com-

plicating his argument unnecessarily and uselessly with some of the truths of Theism, and who thinks that the doctrine of "natural laws" can only be consistently maintained on the ground of Atheism. "If the system of Nature," he says, "be viewed by itself, without any reference to a Divine Author or all-perfect Creator, — merely as an isolated system of facts, — no comparison could be made, no reconciliation would be necessary, and the system of Nature would be regarded as the result of some unknown cause, a combination of good and evil, and no more to be censured or wondered at for being what it is, than any single substance or fact in Nature excites censure or surprise on account of its peculiar constitution. . . . The assumption of a Supernatural Being as the author and director of the laws of Nature appears to me to be attended with several mischievous results. First, you make every infringement of the laws of Nature an offence against the supposed Divine Legislator, which, to a pious and conscientious mind, must give rise to distressing remorse. . . . Again, under this view, the penalties incurred will often be very unjust, oppressive, and cruel; as where persons are placed in circumstances that compel them to violate the laws of Nature, as when they are obliged to pursue some unwholesome employment which injures their health and shortens their lives; or where the penalty is incurred by an accident, as when a person breaks a leg or an arm, or is killed by a fall; or where a person is materially or fatally injured in endeavoring to save another person from injury or death. In such cases as these, to represent the unavoidable pain or death incurred or undergone for an act of beneficence, as a punishment inflicted for a transgression of the laws of God the Divine Legislator, is to violate all our notions of justice and right, to say nothing of goodness or mercy, and to represent the Divine Being as grossly unjust and cruelly vindictive. . . . Again, if all suffering, however unavoidably incurred, is to be regarded as a punishment from

the Divine Legislator, to attempt to alleviate or remove the suffering thus incurred would be to fly in the face of the Divine authority, by endeavoring to set aside the punishment it had inflicted; just as it would be an opposition to the authority of human laws to rescue a prisoner from custody, or deliver a culprit from punishment.”<sup>1</sup>

3. We deem it another radical defect in Mr. Combe's theory of “natural laws,” that he represents the *distinct existence and independent action of these laws* as “the key to the Divine government,” as the one principle which explains all apparent irregularities, and accounts satisfactorily for the casualties and calamities of human life. We cannot doubt, indeed, either the wisdom or the benevolence of that constitution of things under which we live, nor dispute the value and importance of those laws according to which the world is ordinarily governed. We admit that the suspension of any one of these laws, except perhaps on some signal occasion of miraculous interposition, would go far to unsettle and derange the existing economy. But “natural laws”—whether viewed individually or collectively, and whether considered as acting independently of each other, or as mutually related and interdependent—cannot afford of themselves any key to the Divine government, or any solution of the difficulties of Providence. We must rise to a far higher platform if we would survey the whole scheme of the Divine administration: we must consider, not merely the *independent operation* of the several classes of “natural laws,” but also their *mutual relations*, as distinct but connected parts of one vast system, in which the “physical and organic” laws are made subordinate and subservient to the “moral,” under the superintendence of that Supreme Intelligence which makes the things that are “seen and temporal” to minister to those things which are “unseen and eternal;” we must carefully

<sup>1</sup> F. B. BARTON, “The Reasoner,” XI. 24, 373.

discriminate, as Bishop Butler has done, between the mere "natural government" which is common to man with the inferior and irresponsible creation, and the higher "moral government" which is peculiar to intelligent and accountable agents; and we must seek to know how far—the reality of both being admitted—the former is auxiliary or subservient to the latter, and whether, on the whole, the system is fitted to generate that frame of mind, and to inculcate those lessons of truth, which are appropriate to the condition of man, as a subject of moral discipline in a state of probation and trial. Nothing short of this will suffice for the explanation of the Divine government, or for the satisfaction of the human mind. It is felt to be a mere insult to the understandings, and a bitter mockery to the feelings, of men, to talk only of "natural laws," or even of their "independent action" in such a case, to tell a weeping mother that her child died, and died too as the transgressor of a wise and salutary "natural law" which establishes a certain relation between opium and the nervous system: for, grant that the law is wise and salutary, grant that evil would result from its abolition, grant even that it acts independently of any other law, physical or moral, still the profounder question remains, whether such an event as the death of a tender child, through the operation of a law of which that child was necessarily ignorant, can properly be regarded as a punishment inflicted by Divine justice? and whether a theory of this kind can afford "a key to the government of God?"

Such are some of the radical and incurable defects of Mr. Combe's theory of "natural laws." We ascribe it to him simply because he has been the most recent and the most popular expounder of it. But it is not original, nor in any sense peculiar to him alone. He acknowledges his obligations in this respect to a manuscript work of Dr. Spurzheim, entitled, "A Sketch of the Natural Laws of Man;" and he refers, somewhat incidentally, to Volney's "Law of Nature,"

published originally as a Catechism, and afterwards reprinted under the title, "*La Loi Naturelle; ou, Principes Physiques de la Morale.*" The same theory, in substance, had been broached in the "*Système de la Nature*," and *there* it was applied in support of the atheistic conclusions of that remarkable treatise. But it may be said to have been *methodized* by Volney; and in his treatise it is exhibited in a form adapted to popular instruction.<sup>1</sup> There is a striking resemblance between his speculations and those of Mr. Combe. He, too, acknowledges the existence of God; but virtually supersedes His Providence by the substitution of "natural laws." The "law of Nature" is defined as "the constant order by which *God* governs the world," and is represented as the most universal "rule of action." That law is supposed to be a command or a prohibition to act in certain cases, accompanied with the natural sanction of *reward and punishment*. After giving several examples of "natural laws," which are all merely *general facts* or the generalized results of experience, he describes man's relation to these laws almost in the words of Mr. Combe. "Since all these, and similar facts," he says, "are unchangeable, constant, and regular, there result for man as many true laws to which he must conform, with the express clause of a *penalty attached to their infraction*, or of a benefit attached to their observance; so that if a man shall pretend to see well in the dark, if he acts in opposition to the course of the seasons or the action of the elements, if he pretends to live under water without being drowned, or to touch fire without being burned, or to deprive himself of air without being suffocated, or to drink poison without being destroyed, he receives for each of these infractions of the 'natural laws' a corporeal *punishment*, and one that is proportioned to his offence; while,

<sup>1</sup> VOLNEY, "*La Loi Naturelle*," which has been translated, and is usually appended to his "*Ruins of Empires.*"

on the contrary, if he observes and obeys every one of these laws, in their exact and regular relations to him, he will preserve his existence, and make it as happy as it can be."

This code of "natural laws" is then described by Volney as possessing no fewer than *ten* peculiar characteristics, which give it a decided preëminence over every other moral system, whether human or Divine,—as being *primitive, immediate, universal, invariable, evident, reasonable, just, peaceful, beneficial*, and alone *sufficient*. But it is so only when viewed in connection with the miserably low and meagre system of morals with which it is avowedly associated. For when morals are described as a mere physical science, founded on man's organization, his interests and passions,—when the treatise, according to its *second* title, is professedly an attempt to expound the *physical principles of morals*,—and when, in pursuance of this plan, all the principles of Ethics are rigorously reduced to *one*, namely, the principle of self-preservation, which is enforced, as a duty, by the only sanctions of pleasure and pain,—it is not wonderful that, *for such an end*, the "natural laws" might be held sufficient: but it is wonderful that any mind capable of a moment's reflection should not have perceived that, in such a system, the cardinal idea of *Deity* is altogether omitted, or left unaccounted for, in the case of Man, and that no attempt is made to explain or to account for anything that is properly *moral* in the government of God.

On a review of these speculations, it is important to bear in mind that the existence of natural laws is not necessarily exclusive of a superintending Providence. Their operation, on the contrary, may afford some of the strongest proofs of its reality. For, whether considered as a scheme of *provision* or as a system of *government*, Divine Providence rests on a strong body of natural evidence. In the one aspect, it upholds and preserves all things; in the other, it controls and overrules

all things for the accomplishment of the Divine will. Considered as a scheme of government, it is either *natural* or *moral*. To the former, all created beings without exception are subject; to the latter, only some orders of being, — such, namely, as are intelligent, voluntary, and responsible agents. In the case of man, constituted as he is, the Physical, Organic, Intellectual, and Moral laws are all combined; and he is subject, therefore, both to a *natural* government, which is common to him with all other material and organized beings, and also to a *moral* government, which is peculiar to himself as a free and accountable agent. The *natural* government of God extends to all his creatures, and includes man considered simply as one of them; and its reality is proved, first, by the *laws* to which all created things are subject, and which they have no power to alter or resist; secondly, by the *final causes* or beneficial ends which are obviously contemplated in the arrangements of Nature, and the great purposes which are actually served by them; and, thirdly, by the *necessary dependence* of all created things on the will of Him to whom they owe alike the commencement and the continuance of their being. But the natural government of God, which extends to *all* His creatures, does not exhaust or complete the doctrine of His Providence: it includes also a scheme of *moral* government, adapted to the nature, and designed for the regulation, of His intelligent, voluntary, and responsible subjects. And the reality of a moral government may be proved, *first*, by the *moral faculty*, which is a constituent part of human nature, and which makes man “a law to himself;” *secondly*, by the *essential nature* of virtuous and vicious dispositions, as being inherently pleasant or painful; *thirdly*, by the *natural consequences* of our actions, which indicate a sure connection between moral and physical evil; and, *fourthly*, by the *moral atmosphere* in which we are placed, as being members of a community in which the distinction between right and wrong is universally

acknowledged, and applied in the way of approbation or censure. By such proofs, the Providence of God may be shown to be a scheme both of *natural* and *moral* government, — two aspects of the same system which are *equally real*, yet *widely different*. But the distinction between the two, although founded on a real and radical difference, is not such as to imply that they have no relation to each other, or no mutual influence, as distinct but connected parts of the same comprehensive scheme. They are not isolated, but interpenetrating; they come into contact at many points, and *the natural is made subordinate and subservient to the moral*. For there is a beautiful gradation in the order of the established laws of Nature. The physical laws are made subordinate and subservient to the organic; both the physical and organic are subservient to the intellectual; the physical, organic, and intellectual are subservient to the moral; and the intellectual and moral are subservient to our preparation for the spiritual and eternal. In the words of Bishop Butler, "The natural and moral constitution and government of the world are *so connected* as to make up together but *one scheme*; and it is highly probable that the first is formed and carried on merely in *subserviency to the latter*, as the vegetable world is for the animal, and organized bodies for minds."<sup>1</sup>

Every instance of pleasure or pain arising from the voluntary actions of men, is a proof that a relation of some kind has been established between all the distinct, but independent, provinces of Nature; and the invariable connection between moral and physical evil shows how the lower are made subservient to the higher departments of the Divine government. Apart from a scheme of moral discipline, there is no reason discernible, *à priori*, why pain should be the accompaniment or consequent of one mode of action rather than another; and the

<sup>1</sup> BUTLER'S "Analogy," p. I. c. 7.

relations which have been established, in the natural constitution of things, between sin and misery, affords a strong proof not only of the *reality* of a moral government, but of the *subordination* of physical and organic agencies to its great designs.

This relation between the *natural* and the *moral* government of God is admirably illustrated by Bishop Warburton: "The application of *natural events* to *moral government*, in the common course of Providence, connects the character of Lord and Governor of the intellectual world with that of Creator and Preserver of the material. . . . The doctrine of the *pre-established harmony*,—the direction of natural events to moral government,—obviates all irreligious suspicions, and not only satisfies us that there is but *one* governor of both systems, but that both systems are conducted by *one* scheme of Providence. To form the constitution of Nature in such a manner that, without controlling or suspending its laws, it should continue, throughout a long succession of ages, to produce its physical revolutions as they best contribute to the preservation and order of its own system, just at those precise periods of time when their effects, whether salutary or hurtful to many, may serve as instruments for the government of the moral world: for example, that a foreign enemy, amidst our intestine broils, should desolate all the flourishing works of rural industry,—that warring elements, in the stated order of *natural* government, should depopulate and tear in pieces a highly-versed city, just in those very moments when *moral* government required a warning and example to be held out to a careless world,—is giving us the noblest as well as the most astonishing idea of God's goodness and justice. . . . When He made the world, the free determinations of the human will, and the necessary effects of laws physical, were so fitted and accommodated to one another, that a sincere repentance in the *moral* world should be sure to avert an impending desolation in the *natural*, not by any present alteration or suspension of its established

laws, but by originally adjusting all their operations to all the foreseen circumstances of moral agency.”<sup>1</sup>

Viewed in this light, the course of Providence is wonderfully adapted to the constitution of human nature, since it affords as much *certainty* in regard to some things as is sufficient to lay a foundation for forethought, prudence, and diligence in the use of means, and yet leaves so much remaining *uncertainty* in regard to other things as should impress us with a sense of constant *dependence* on Him “in whom we live, and move, and have our being.” The constitution of Nature and the course of Providence in the present state seem mainly intended to teach these *two* lessons,—first, of *diligence* in the use of means, and, secondly, of *dependence* on a Higher Power: for there is sufficient *regularity* in the course of events to encourage human industry in every department of labor; and yet there is as much *uncertainty*, arising from the endless complication of causes and the limited range of human knowledge, as should impress us with a sense of our utter helplessness. The wisdom of God in the government of the world may be equally manifested in the *regular order* which He has established, and which, within certain limits, man may be able to ascertain and reckon on as a ground of hopeful activity; and in the *apparent casualty* and *inscrutable mystery* of many things which can neither be divined by human wisdom, nor controlled by human power. It matters not whether the remaining uncertainty is supposed to arise from some classes of events not being subject to regular laws, or from our ignorance of these laws, and the variety of their manifold combinations. In either case, it is certain that, in our actual experience, and, so far as we can judge, in the experience of every creature not possessed of omniscient knowledge, these two elements are and must be combined,—such a measure of *certainty* as should encourage

<sup>1</sup> WARBURTON'S “Works,” x. p. 8.

industry in the use of means, and such a measure of remaining *uncertainty* as should keep them mindful that they are not, and never can be, independent of God.

### SECTION III.

#### THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

The doctrine of Providence lays a firm foundation for the duty of Prayer. In the case of all intelligent, moral, and responsible beings, the mere existence of a Divine government to which they are subject, would seem to imply an obligation to own and acknowledge it; and this obligation is best fulfilled by the exercise of prayer, which is a practical testimony alike to man's *dependence* and to God's *dominion*.

Prayer, in its widest sense, includes the whole homage which man is capable of rendering to God as the sole object of religious worship; and it implies the recognition of all His supreme perfections and prerogatives as the Creator and Governor of the world. It is usually described<sup>1</sup> as consisting, first, in "adoration,"—in which we express our sense of His rightful supremacy and absolute perfection, and do homage to Him for what He is in himself; secondly, in "thanksgiving,"—in which we express our sense of gratitude for all His kindness and care, and do homage to Him for the benefits which He has bestowed; thirdly, in "confession,"—in which we express our sense of sin in having transgressed His law, and do homage to Him as our moral Governor and Judge; and, fourthly, in "petition,"—in which we express our sense of dependence alike on His providence and grace, and do homage to Him as the "Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRICE'S "Dissertations," p. 198.

and perfect gift." Of these, the *three first* are so evidently reasonable and becoming, so necessarily involved in the simplest idea which we can form of our relations to God and of the obligations which result from them, that few, if any, of those who admit the existence and providence of the Supreme Being, will deny that the sentiments themselves are appropriate to our condition, however they may doubt the necessity or the duty of giving formal utterance to them in the language of religious worship. But in regard to the *fourth*, which, if it be not the most sublime or elevated, is yet the most urgent motive to the exercise of devotion, many difficulties have been raised and many objections urged, which do not apply, at least in the same measure, to the other parts of Prayer, and which, in so far as they prevail with reflecting minds, would soon lead to the practical neglect of *all* religious worship. The practice of offering up "petitions" either for ourselves or others, with the view of thereby obtaining any benefit, whether of a temporal or spiritual kind, has been denounced, and even ridiculed, as an unphilosophical attempt to alter the established course of Nature, or the preordained sequences of events. The supposition of its "efficacy" has been represented as a flagrant instance of superstitious ignorance, worthy only of the dark ages, and even as a presumptuous blasphemy, derogatory to the unchangeable character of the Supreme. Some have held, indeed, that while prayer can have no real efficacy either in averting evil or procuring good, it may nevertheless be both legitimate and useful, by reason of the wholesome *reflex influence* which it is fitted to exert on the mind of the worshipper; and they have recommended the continuance of the practice on this ground, as if men, once convinced of its utter inefficacy, *would* or *could* continue, with any fervency, to offer up their requests to God, merely for the sake of impressing their own minds through the medium of a sort of conscious hypocrisy! We are told that David Hume, "after hearing a sermon preached by Dr. Leech-

man, in which he dwelt on the power of prayer to render the wishes it expressed more ardent and passionate, remarked with great justice, that ‘we can make use of no expression, or even thought, in prayers and entreaties, which does not imply that these prayers have an influence.’” This intermediate ground, therefore, is plainly untenable, and we are shut up to one or other of two alternatives: either there is an “efficacy” in prayer as a means of averting evil and procuring good, such as may warrant, and should encourage, us in offering up our requests unto God; or, there is *no* such efficacy in it, and no reason why it should be observed by any of God’s intelligent creatures, whether on earth or in heaven.

The principles which are applicable to the decision of this important question may be best explained, after adverting briefly to some of the particular objections which have been urged against the “efficacy of prayer.” Several of these objections evidently proceed on an erroneous view of the nature and object of prayer. When it is said, for example, that God, being omniscient, does not need to be informed either of the wants or the wishes of any of His creatures, the objection involves a great and important truth,—a truth which was explicitly recognized by our Lord when He said, “Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him;” but that truth is grievously misapplied when it is directed to prove that prayer is either superfluous or ineffectual, since the objection virtually assumes that the object of prayer is *to inform God of what He did not know before*, and that His omniscience is of itself sufficient to show that prayer from men or angels must needs be unavailing. When it is said, *again*, that God being immutable, His will cannot be affected or altered by the “petitions” of His creatures, this objection, like the former one, involves a great and important truth,—a truth which is also explicitly recognized in Scripture when it is said that “He is without variableness or the least

shadow of turning;" but this truth, too, is grievously misapplied when it is directed to prove that there can be no efficacy in prayer, since it might as well be said that the Divine dispensations must be invariably the same whatever may be the conduct of His creatures *in other respects*, as that they must be the same whether men do or do not pray; or, that His procedure as a Moral Governor has no reference whatever either to the character or conduct of his subjects. But, in the words of Dr. Price, "God's unchangeableness, when considered in relation to the exertion of His attributes in the government of the world, consists, not in always acting in the same manner however cases and circumstances alter, but in always doing what is right, and varying His conduct according to the various actions, characters and dispositions of beings. If, then, prayer makes an alteration in the case of the suppliant, as being the discharge of an indispensable duty, what would in truth infer *changeableness* in Him would be, not His regarding and answering it, but His *not* doing this."<sup>1</sup> When it is said, *again*, that there can be no "efficacy in prayer," because there is an established constitution and regular course of Nature, by which all events, whether prosperous or adverse, are invariably determined, and which cannot be altered or modified without *a miracle*, this objection, like each of the two former, involves an important truth,—a truth which is also explicitly recognized in Scripture when it speaks of "the ordinances of the heavens and the earth," and of the peculiar laws and properties of all created things; but this truth is also grievously misapplied when it is directed to prove that God's will has no efficient control over natural events, or that He has no agencies at His disposal by which he can accomplish the desires of them that seek Him. In all these objections there is an apparent truth, but there is also a latent error; and the false conclusion is founded on an erroneous supposition in regard to the nature and object of prayer.

<sup>1</sup> DR. PRICE, "Dissertations," pp. 208, 219.

For this reason, we shall endeavor to separate the truth from the error, and to lay down a few positions which may be established both by reason and Scripture, and which will be sufficient to show that the doctrine which affirms the efficacy of prayer is not only credible, but true.

1. Prayer, in the restricted sense in which we now speak of it, as denoting "petition" or "supplication," consists in offering up "the desires of the heart to God for things agreeable to His will." It is not a mere formal, outward homage, such as might be rendered by words or ceremonies; it is a spiritual service, in which the mind and heart of man come into immediate converse with God Himself. It is offered to Him personally, as to the invisible but ever-present "Searcher of hearts," who "hears the *desire* of the humble," and whose "ear is attentive to the voice of their supplications." This implies the recognition of His omnipresence and omniscience, but these perfections of His nature do not supersede the expression of our desires in prayer, just because prayer is designed, not to increase His knowledge, but to declare our sense of dependence on His will, and to procure His grace to help us in every time of need. Our petitions, too, are always bounded within certain limits, and subject to at least one indispensable condition; they are offered only "for things agreeable to His will;" and when our own will is thus, in the very act of prayer, expressly subordinated to that which is alone unerring and supreme, we acknowledge at once His rightful sovereignty and our dutiful subjection, and we are not justly chargeable with the presumption of dictating to God the course of procedure which He should pursue towards us. We are protected, too, against the evils which our own *errors in prayer* might otherwise entail on us, for "we know not what things to pray for as we ought;" and we have an infallible security that, in the best and highest sense,—that which is most in accordance with our real welfare,—our prayers *must* be

answered, since our wills are resolved into His will ; and His will, being omnipotent, cannot be resisted or frustrated in any of its designs. Our assurance of the certain efficacy of our prayers is so much the greater, in proportion as we have reason to believe that the things for which we pray are agreeable to His will ; and hence we are more confident in asking spiritual than temporal gifts ; for the former we know to be always agreeable to His will and conducive to our own welfare, while the latter may, or may not, be good for us in our present circumstances, and must be left at the sovereign disposal of Him who knows what is in man, and what is best for each of His children.

2. Considering the relation in which we stand to God as His creatures and subjects, it is natural, fit, and proper that *we* should make known our requests to Him, and supplicate the aids both of His providence and grace ; and if it be *our duty* to pray, it is reasonable to believe that God will have some respect to our prayers in His methods of dealing with us ; in other words, that, as a righteous moral governor, he will make a difference between the godly and the ungodly, the men who do, and the men who do not, pray.

In this position it is assumed that there are certain relations, natural or revealed, subsisting betwixt us and God, in virtue of which it is our duty to acknowledge His dominion and our dependence, by supplicating the aids of His providence and grace. That such relations do subsist between God and man, is evinced alike by the light of Nature and of Revelation ; and they cannot be discerned or realized without immediately suggesting the idea of certain corresponding obligations and duties. Every one whose conscience has not been utterly seared must instinctively feel the force of that appeal, " If I be a Father, where is mine honor ? and if I be a Master, where is my fear ? " For, considering God in the very simplest aspect of His character as the Creator and Governor of the world,

He stands related to us as the Author and Preserver of our being, as our rightful Proprietor and constant Benefactor, as our supreme Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge; and these *natural relations*, apart altogether from the *supernatural* which are revealed in Scripture, are sufficient to lay a solid groundwork for "the duty of prayer" in the case of every intelligent being who is capable of knowing God, and acknowledging his dependence on the Divine will. In such a case, prayer is felt to be a natural, fit, and becoming expression of what is known to be true, and what *ought*, as a matter of duty, to be practically avowed. Now, this is the grand design of prayer; and in its real design, when that is rightly apprehended, it finds its noblest vindication. The object of prayer is, neither to *inform* God, as if he were not omniscient, nor to alter His eternal purposes, as if He were not unchangeable, nor to unsettle the established course of Nature, as if He were not "a God of order;" but simply to acknowledge His *dominion* and our *dependence*, and to obtain from Him, in the way of His own appointment, the blessings of which we stand in need.

It is not unreasonable to believe that God, as the Governor of the world, will have some regard to the dispositions and actions of His responsible creatures, as a reason for dealing differently with those who own, and those who disown, His supremacy; and that He may require the use of certain means, such as the exercise of prayer, with the view of our obtaining from Him, in a way the most beneficial to ourselves, the blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, of which we stand in need. For if we really be the creatures of God, and, as such, dependent on His providential bounty, and subject to His righteous government, it is self-evidently natural and right that we should, as intelligent and responsible beings, acknowledge His supreme dominion and our absolute dependence by supplicating the aids both of His providence and grace. This is *our duty*, considering the relations which He sustains towards us; and

if it be fit and proper that we should pray to God, if it be, in our circumstances, a duty which we owe to Him, then it is most reasonable to believe that it is equally fit and proper in God to have some respect to our prayers, and to deal with us differently according as we either observe or neglect this religious duty.

Prayer may be regarded in one or other of two distinct aspects: either as *a duty*, the observance or neglect of which must be followed, under a system of moral government, with different results; or simply as *a means*, the use of which is productive of certain effects which are made to depend on this special instrumentality. And in either view, its "efficacy" may be affirmed on the same grounds on which we are wont to vindicate the use of *all other means*, and to enforce the observance of *all other duties*, in connection with the system of the Divine government.

3. The efficacy of prayer, so far from being inconsistent with, is founded on, the immutability of the Divine purposes and the faithfulness of the Divine promises. God's purposes are justly held, in all other cases, to include the *means* as well as the *ends*; and they are often fulfilled through the instrumentality of "second causes." His purpose to provide for the wants of man and beast has reference not merely to the harvest which is the result, but also to the agricultural labor by which, instrumentally, the harvest is prepared. May not "prayer" be also *a means* ordained by God in the original constitution of the world, a means towards certain ends which are made dependent on its use? If it be such a means, then its "efficacy" is established, in the only sense in which we are concerned to contend for it; while it is shown to be *no more inconsistent* with the immutability of the Divine purposes, than any other system of *means or instruments* that may be employed as subordinate agencies in the government of the world. This important view is strikingly illustrated in Scripture.

For some of the *purposes* of God, which might have been undiscoverable in the mere light of Nature, are there explicitly declared; nay, they are thrown into the form of express *promises*, to which the Divine faithfulness is solemnly pledged; and yet the exercise of prayer, so far from being superseded by these promises, is rather stimulated and encouraged by them; and the believer pleads with increased fervor and confidence when he simply converts *God's promises into his own petitions*. He feels that in doing so he is taking God at his word; and that his own prayer, in so far as it is warranted by His promise, cannot be ineffectual any more than God's faithfulness can fail.

Thus Daniel "understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish *seventy* years in the desolation of Jerusalem." He knew the Lord's promise, and that the time for its fulfilment was at hand; yet so far from regarding either the immutability of the Divine *purpose*, or even the infallible certainty of the Divine *promise*, as a reason for neglecting prayer, as if that exercise were superfluous or vain, he was stimulated and encouraged to pray just because "he knew the word of the Lord."—"And I set my face," he says, "unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes;" and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and said, "O Lord! hear; O Lord! forgive; O Lord! hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God!"<sup>1</sup> Thus, *again*, when the Lord gave certain great and precious promises to His ancient people, assuring them that "He would sprinkle clean water upon them, and give them a new heart and a right spirit," it is added, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."<sup>2</sup> Thus, *again*, when the Saviour himself gave to His disciples that promise, which is

<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9: 2, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 36: 37.

emphatically called "the promise of the Father," assuring them that they should be "baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," and directing them to "wait at Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from above," the apostles, so far from regarding that "promise" as superseding the exercise of "prayer," betook themselves immediately to an upper room, and "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication;" and, at the appointed time, God's promise was fulfilled, and their prayer answered, when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." These examples are abundantly sufficient to show that prayer, so far from being inconsistent with, is founded on, the immutability of the Divine *purposes*, and the faithfulness of the Divine *promises*.

4. Our next position is, that *the method* in which God answers the prayers of His people may be, in many respects, mysterious or even inscrutable; but no objection to "the efficacy of prayer," which is founded on our ignorance of His infinite resources, can have any weight, especially when there are *several hypothetical solutions*, any one of which is sufficient to neutralize its force.

An omnipresent, omniscient, and almighty Being, presiding over the affairs of His own world, as the author, upholder, and governor of all things, may well be conceived to have infinite resources at His command,—such as we can never fully estimate,—by which he can give effect to prayer in ways that may be to us inscrutable. But our ignorance of the *mode* is no reason for doubting the *reality* of His interposition in answer to prayer; and even if we were unable to decide on the comparative merits of the various explanations of it which have been proposed, the mere fact that there are several solutions, at once conceivable and credible, any one of which may be sufficient, as a hypothetical explanation, to neutralize every adverse presumption, should be held tantamount to a proof that no valid or con-

clusive objection can be urged against it. Dr. Chalmers has frequently illustrated the legitimate and important uses of "hypothetical solutions" in Theology; and has conclusively shown that even where they leave us at a loss to determine which of various methods of solving a difficulty is the truest or the best, they yet serve a great purpose, if they merely neutralize an objection, by showing that the difficulty in question *might* be satisfactorily accounted for, were our knowledge more extensive or more precise.<sup>1</sup> Now, with regard to "the efficacy of prayer," there are *four* distinct solutions, or rather *four* different methods of disposing of the difficulty, any one of which is sufficient to vindicate the claims of the doctrine on our faith. We shall not discuss the respective merits of these various solutions in detail, but shall merely state them, with the view of showing that there are several methods of accounting for "the efficacy of prayer" in perfect consistency with the established order of Nature.

The first is the theory of those who hold that there is *the same relation between prayer and the answer to prayer* as between *cause and effect in any other sequence of Nature*. Prayer is supposed to be the cause, and the answer the effect; and this by an invariable law, established in the original constitution, and manifested in the uniform course, of the world. To this solution Dr. Chalmers seems to refer when he says, that "the doctrine of the efficacy of prayer but introduces a *new sequence* to the notice of the mind," that "it may add another law of Nature to those which have been formerly observed," and that "the general truth may be preserved, that the same result always follows in the same circumstances, although it should be discovered that prayer is one of those influential circumstances by which the result is liable to be modified."<sup>2</sup> Now, if it be meant merely to affirm that, in the administration

<sup>1</sup> DR. CHALMERS, "Works," II. 286.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 325.

of His providential government, God has respect to the prayers of men as a consideration which affects their relation to Him and His treatment of them, and that this rule is as invariable as any other law of Nature, the principle that is involved in this solution may be admitted as sound and valid; but if it be further meant, that prayer and the answer to prayer are *in all respects* similar to any other instance of cause and effect, it must be remembered that the answer is not the effect of the prayer, at least directly and immediately, but the effect of the Divine will; and then the question suggested by Dr. M'Cosh — whether *causality* can properly be ascribed to our prayers with reference to the Divine will? — would claim our serious consideration. But in the former sense, as implying nothing more than that, in the original constitution and the ordinary course of Providence, the same effect is given to our prayers as to *any other moral cause or condition*, it seems to be exempt from all reasonable objection, and to afford a sufficient explanation of the difficulty.

The second “hypothetical solution” is that of those who hold that while God, in answering the prayers of men, does not ordinarily disturb the known or discoverable sequences of the natural world, yet His interference may be alike real and efficacious though it should take place at a point in the series of natural causes far removed beyond the limits of our experience and observation; and thus “the answer to prayer may be effectually given without any infringement on the known regularities of Nature.” Dr. Chalmers adverts to this second solution in replying to an objection which might possibly be raised against the first, namely, that “we see no evidence of the constancy of visible nature giving way to that invisible agency, the interposition of which it is the express object of prayer to obtain;” and he suggests that, in the vast scale of natural sequences, which constitute one connected chain, the responsive touch from the finger of the Almighty may be given

“either at a higher or a lower place in the progression,” and that if it be supposed to be “given far enough back,” it might originate a new sequence, but without doing violence to any ascertained law, since it occurs beyond the reach of our experience and observation. This solution we hold to be not so much an effective argument in favor of the efficacy of prayer, as a conclusive answer to a particular objection against it. It is sufficient to show that, with our very limited knowledge, we act presumptuously in deciding against the possibility of an answer to prayer such as *may* leave the established course of Nature unaltered; but there is no necessity, and no reason, for supposing that the responsive touch *can only* be given at a point to which our knowledge does not extend, or that, were our knowledge extended, we would have less difficulty in admitting it *there*, than in holding it to be possible at any lower term in the scale of sequences.

The third “hypothetical solution” is that of those who hold that a Divine answer to prayer may be conveyed through *the ministry of angels*, or the agency of intelligent, voluntary, and active beings, employed by God, in subordination to His Providence, for the accomplishment of His great designs. The existence of such an order, or rather hierarchy, of created intelligences is clearly revealed in Scripture; and it is rendered credible, or even probable, by *the analogy of Nature*, since we observe on earth a regular gradation of animal life from the insect up to man, and we have no reason to suppose that the gradation is suddenly arrested just at the point where the animal and the spiritual are combined. But not only their existence, their *active agency* also, as “ministers fulfilling His will,” as “ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation,” is explicitly and frequently declared as well as exemplified in Scripture; and this, too, would be, on the supposition of their existence, in strict accordance with *the analogy of Nature*, which shows that the lower orders of being

are placed under the care and control of the higher. Mr. Boyle, accordingly, makes frequent reference, in his Theological treatises, to *the ministry of angels*, as subordinate agents, through whose instrumentality many of the designs of Providence may be carried into effect; and President Edwards enlarges on the same theme.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth "hypothetical solution" is that of those who hold that God has so arranged His Providence from the beginning as to provide for particular events as well as for general results, and especially to provide an answer to the prayers of His intelligent creatures. This solution is more general than any of the *three* former, and may even be comprehensive of them all. It regards prayer as an element which was taken into account at the original constitution of the world, and for which an answer was provided, as the result of natural laws or of angelic agency, employed for this express end by the omniscient foreknowledge and wisdom of God. It is the solution that has obtained the sanction of some of the highest names in Science and Theology.

"I begin," says Euler, "with considering an objection which almost all the Philosophical Systems have started against prayer. Religion prescribes this as our duty, with an assurance that God will hear and answer our vows and prayers, provided they are conformable to the precepts which He hath given us. Philosophy, on the other hand, instructs us that all events take place in strict conformity to the course of Nature, established from the beginning, and that our prayers can effect no change whatever, unless we pretend to expect that God should be continually working miracles in compliance with our prayers. This objection has the greater weight, that Religion itself teaches the doctrine of God's having established the course of all events, and that nothing can come to pass but

<sup>1</sup> HON. ROB. BOYLE, "Theolog. Works," II. 96, III. 230. PRESIDENT EDWARDS, "Works," X. 1.

what God foresaw from all eternity. Is it credible, say the objectors, that God should think of altering this settled course, in compliance with any prayers which men might address to Him? But I remark, *first*, that when God established the course of the universe, and arranged all the events that must come to pass in it, He paid attention to *all the circumstances* which should accompany each event, and, particularly, to *the dispositions, desires, and prayers* of every intelligent being; and that the arrangement of all events was disposed *in perfect harmony* with all these circumstances. When, therefore, a man addresses to God a prayer worthy to be heard, that prayer was already heard from all eternity, and the Father of mercies arranged the world expressly in favor of that prayer, so that the accomplishment should be a consequence of the natural course of events. It is thus that God answers the prayers of men without working a miracle.”<sup>1</sup>

“It is not impossible,” says Dr. Wollaston, “that such laws of Nature, and such a series of causes and effects, may be originally designed that not only general provisions may be made for the several species of beings, but even *particular cases*, at least many of them, may also be provided for, without innovations or alterations in the course of Nature. It is true this amounts to a prodigious scheme, in which all things to come are, as it were, comprehended under one view, estimated and laid together: but when I consider what a mass of wonders the universe is in other regards, what a Being God is, incomprehensibly great and perfect, that He cannot be ignorant of anything, no not of the future wants and deportments of particular men, and that all things which derive from Him, as their First Cause, must do this so as to be consistent with one another, and in such a manner as to make one compact system, befitting so great an Author; when I consider this, I cannot

<sup>1</sup> EULER, “Letters to a German Princess,” I. 271.

deny such an adjustment of things to be within His power. The order of events, proceeding from the settlement of Nature, may be as compatible with the due and reasonable success of *my endeavors and prayers* (as inconsiderable a part of the world as I am) as with any other thing or phenomena how great soever. . . . And thus the *prayers* which good men offer to the all-knowing God, and the *neglects* of others, may find fitting effects, already *forecasted* in the course of Nature, which possibly may be extended to the *labors* of men and their *behavior* in general.”<sup>1</sup>

“If ever there was a future event,” says Dr. Gordon, “which might have been reckoned on with absolute certainty, and one, therefore, in the accomplishment of which it might appear that *prayer* could have no room or efficacy, it was just the restoration of the Jewish captives to the land and city of their fathers. And yet, so far from supposing that there was no place for prayer to occupy, among the various means that were employed to bring about that event, it was just his firm belief in the nearness and certainty of it that set Daniel upon fervent and persevering supplications for its accomplishment. . . . With regard to the rank which Daniel’s prayer occupied among the various means or agencies that were to be employed in bringing about the object of it, he had good reason to believe that it was neither without a definite place, nor in itself devoid of efficacy. . . . He had been honored to vindicate the power and assert the supremacy of the Lord God of Israel; by the wisdom of his counsels and the weight of his personal character, he had paved the way for that decision in favor of the people of God to which the King of Persia was soon to be brought; and the whole business of his active and most laborious life was made to bear on the interests and the liberation of his afflicted brethren. And if God had thus assigned to *the outward actions*

<sup>1</sup> DR. WOLLASTON, “Religion of Nature,” p. 103.

of His servant an important place in carrying into effect His thoughts of peace towards his penitent people, is it conceivable that He had no place in that scheme for *the holy and spiritual* efforts of the same servant? or that the aspirations of a sanctified spirit, the trāvailing of a soul intent upon the accomplishment of the Divine will and the manifestation of the Divine glory, should be less efficient or less essential in the execution of the Divine counsels, than the outward and ordinary agency of human actions? The whole tenor and the most explicit declarations of Scripture stand opposed to such a supposition; nor can I understand how a devout mind should have any difficulty in conceiving that it must be so. The agency of *prayer* is, indeed, a less obvious and palpable thing than that outward coöperation whereby mankind are rendered subservient to the accomplishment of the Divine purposes. But is it not an agency of an unspeakably loftier character? Is it not the coöperation of an immortal spirit, bearing the impress of the Divine image, and at the moment acting in unison with the Divine will? Is it not befitting the character of God to set upon that coöperation a special mark of His holy approbation, by assigning to it a more elevated place among the secondary causes which He is pleased to employ? And must there not be provision made, therefore, in the general principles of His administration, for fulfilling the special promise of His word, ‘The Lord is nigh to all that call upon Him, to all that call upon him in truth.’”<sup>1</sup>

“We should blush,” says Bishop Warburton, “to be thought so uninstructed in the nature of *prayer*, as to fancy that it can work any temporary change in the dispositions of the Deity, who is ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.’ Yet we are not ashamed to maintain that God, *in the chain of causes and effects*, which not only sustains each system, but connects them

<sup>1</sup> DR. ROBT. GORDON, “Sermons,” p. 369.

all with one another, hath so wonderfully contrived, that the temporary endeavors of pious men shall procure good and avert evil, by means of that ‘preëstablished harmony’ which He hath willed to exist between *moral actions* and *natural events*.”

“But should some frigid skeptic, therefore, dare  
To doubt the all-prevailing power of prayer;  
As if ’t were ours, with impious zeal, to try  
To shake the purposes of Deity;  
Pause, cold philosopher, nor snatch away  
The last, the best, the wretched’s surest stay.  
Look round on life, and trace its checkered plan,  
The griefs, the joys, the hopes, the fears of man;  
Tell me, if each deliverance, each success,  
Each transient golden dream of happiness,  
Each palm that genius in the race acquires,  
Each thrilling rapture virtuous pride inspires,  
Tell me, if each and all were not combined  
In the great purpose of the Eternal Mind?

\* \* \* \* \*

Thus while we humbly own the vast decree,  
Formed in the bosom of Eternity,  
And know all secondary causes tend  
Each to contribute to one mighty end;  
Yet while these causes firmly fixed remain—  
Links quite unbroken in the endless chain,  
So that could one be snapped, the whole must fail,  
And wide confusion o’er the world prevail;  
Why may not our petitions, which arise  
In humble adoration to the skies,  
Be foreordained the causes, whence shall flow  
Our purest pleasures in this vale of woe?  
Not that they move the purpose that hath stood  
By time unchanged, immeasurably good,  
*But that the event and prayer alike may be  
United objects of the same decree.”*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is with melancholy pleasure that the author recalls and reproduces, after an interval of thirty years, the lines of his early college companion, — WILLIAM FRIEND DURANT, — a young man of high promise, removed, like his distinguished fellow-student, ROBERT POLLOCK, by what might seem a premature death, but for the prospect of immortality.

On the whole, we feel ourselves warranted, and even constrained, to conclude that the theory of "government by natural law" is defective in so far as it excludes the superintendence and control of God over all the events of human life, and that neither the existence of second causes nor the operation of physical laws should diminish our confidence in the care of Providence and the efficacy of Prayer.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THEORIES OF CHANCE AND FATE.

WHEN we survey the actual course of God's Providence, by which the eternal purposes of the Divine Mind are carried into effect, we discern immediately a marked difference between *two great classes of events*. The one comprehends a multitude of events which are so regular, stable, and constant, that we feel ourselves warranted in reckoning on their invariable recurrence, in the same circumstances in which they have been observed; they seem to be governed by an unchangeable, or at least an established law. The other comprehends a different set of events, which are so irregular and variable that they occur quite unexpectedly, and cannot be reduced to any rule of rational computation; they appear,—perhaps from our ignorance,—to be purely accidental or fortuitous.

In exact accordance with this difference between the two great classes of Providential events, there is a similar difference in our *internal views or sentiments* in regard to them. We are conscious of two totally dissimilar feelings in contemplating them respectively. We have a feeling of certainty, confidence, or assurance in regard to the one; and a feeling of uncertainty, anxiety, and helplessness in regard to the other; while for an intermediate class of events, there is also an intermediate state of mind, equally removed from entire certainty and absolute doubt, arising from the various degrees of *probability* that may

seem to belong to them. These are at once natural and legitimate sentiments in the circumstances in which we are placed; for unquestionably there is much in these circumstances that is fitted to produce and cherish them all; and when they are combined,—especially when they are duly proportioned, in the case of any individual, they induce a habit or frame of mind most favorable to the recognition of God's Providence, and most conducive to our welfare, by impressing us with a sense both of our *dependence* on His supreme will, and of our *duty to be diligent* in the use of all appointed means. But when *either* of the two classes of events is exclusively considered, or the sentiments appropriate to them inordinately cherished, there will be a tendency, in the absence of an enlightened belief in Providence, towards one or other of two opposite extremes:—the extreme, on the one hand, of resolving all events into results of physical agencies and mechanical laws, acting with the blind force of “destiny,” and leaving no room for the interposition of an intelligent Moral Ruler; and the extreme, on the other hand, of ascribing all events to accidental or fortuitous influences, equally exempt from His control. The *former* is the theory of “Fate,” the *latter* is the theory of “Chance;” and both are equally opposed to the doctrine which affirms the eternal purpose and the actual providence of an omniscient and all-controlling Mind.

It matters little, with reference to our present purpose, whether or not every department of Nature be supposed to be equally subject to “natural laws;” for even were it so, still if these laws were either in part unknown and undiscoverable by us, or so related to each other that the results of their manifold possible combinations could not be calculated or reckoned on by human wisdom or foresight, ample room would be left for the exercise of *diligence* within the limits of our ascertained knowledge, and yet for a sense of *dependence* on a power which we feel ourselves unable either to comprehend or control. On

the ground of analogy, we think it highly probable that every department of Nature *is* subject to regular and stable laws; and on the same ground we may anticipate that, in the progressive advance of human knowledge, many new fields will yet be conquered, and added to the domain of Science. But suppose every law were discovered, — suppose, even, that every individual event should be shown to depend on some natural cause, there would still remain at least *two* considerations which should remind us of our *dependence*. The first is our ignorance of the whole combination of causes which may at any time be brought into action, and of the results which may flow from them in circumstances such as we can neither foresee nor provide against. The second is our ignorance, equally unavoidable and profound, of the intelligent and voluntary agencies which may be at work, modifying, disposing, and directing that combination of causes, so as to accomplish the purposes of the Omniscient Mind. Our want of knowledge in either case is a reason for uncertainty; and our uncertainty in regard to events in which we may be deeply concerned is fitted to teach us our dependence on a higher Power. Let it not be thought, however, that our argument for God's Providence is drawn merely from man's *ignorance*, or that its strength must diminish in proportion as his knowledge of Nature is extended; on the contrary, it rests on the assumption that *man knows enough to be aware that he cannot know all*, and that as long as he is not omniscient, he must be dependent on Him who alone "knows the end from the beginning," and "who ruleth among the armies of heaven" as well as "among the inhabitants of this earth."

It is in the invariable combination and marvellous mutual adjustment of these two elements, — the regular and the variable, the constant and the casual, the certain and the uncertain, — that we best discern the wisdom of that vast scheme of Providence, which is designed at once to secure our *diligence in the*

*use of means*, and to impress us with a sense of our *dependence on a higher Power*. And the same remark may be equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the revealed constitution of things, since Scripture itself exhibits certain definite truths surrounded with a margin of mystery like "lights shining in a dark place;" and while it prescribes and encourages diligence in the use of means, teaches us at the same time our dependence on the Divine blessing which alone can render our efforts effectual. Both elements, therefore, must be taken into account and kept steadily in view, if we would form a comprehensive conception of the method of the Divine government, or a correct estimate of the wisdom with which it is adapted to the case of created and dependent, but intelligent, active, and responsible beings. But when the one is either dissevered from the other, or viewed apart and exclusively by itself, when the mind dwells on either, to the neglect of what is equally a part of the same comprehensive scheme, then we are in danger of adopting a partial and one-sided view of Providence, and of lapsing into one or other of the opposite extremes, — the theory of "Chance" or the theory of "Fate."

A few remarks on each of these theories may be neither unseasonable nor useless, if they serve to illustrate the different kinds of Atheism which have sprung from them, and to place in a clear and strong light the radical difference which subsists between both, and the doctrine of Providence, as it is taught and exemplified in Scripture.

1. The theory of "Chance," which was once the stronghold of Atheism, is now all but abandoned by speculative thinkers, and exists only, if at all, in the vague beliefs of uneducated and unreflecting men. This result has been brought about, not so much by the Metaphysical or even the Theological considerations which were urged against the theory, as by the steady advance of Science, and the slow but progressive growth of a belief in "law" and "order" as existing in every department

of Nature. It has been undeniably the effect of scientific inquiry to banish the idea of Chance, at least from as much of the domain as has been successfully explored, and to afford a strong presumption that the same result would follow were our researches extended beyond the limits within which they are yet confined. To this extent there is truth in the reasonings of M. Comte as applied to *Chance*, while they have no validity or value as applied to *Providence*; and we deem it a noble tribute to Science when it can be said of her with truth, that she has been an effective auxiliary to Religion in overthrowing the once vaunted empire of that blind power.

At one time some ascribed all the works both of Creation and Providence to Chance, and spoke of a fortuitous concourse of *atoms* in the one case, and of a fortuitous concurrence of *events* in the other. The Atomic theory, which, as a mere physiological hypothesis, is far from being necessarily Atheistic, and which has been adopted and defended by such writers as Gassendus and Dr. Goode,<sup>1</sup> was applied by Epicurus and Lucretius to account for the fortuitous origin of existing beings, and also for the fortuitous course of human affairs. No one now, in the present advanced state of science, would seriously propose to account either for the creation of the world, or for the events of the world's history, by ascribing them to the operation of Chance; the current is flowing in another direction; it has set in, like a returning tide, towards the universal recognition of "general laws" and "natural causes," such as, from their invariable regularity and uniformity, are utterly exclusive of everything like chance or accident in any department of Nature. Instead of ascribing the creation of the world to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, modern speculation would refer it to "a law of development" such as is able of itself to

<sup>1</sup> DR. CUDWORTH, "Intellectual System," I. 75, 82, 106, 151; II. 77, 334. GASSENDI, "Syntagma." DR. J. M. GOODE, "Lucretius," Preface.

insure the production of astral systems in the firmament, and also of vegetable and animal races on the earth, without any direct or immediate interposition of a higher power; and instead of ascribing the events of history and the "progress" of humanity to a fortuitous or accidental origin, modern speculation would refer them to "a law of social or historical development," such as makes every succeeding state the natural, and, indeed, necessary product of a prior one, and places the whole order of sequences — whether physical, moral, political, or religious — under the government of "natural law," as contradistinguished from that of a "supernatural will." There is thus a manifest tendency to resile from the old theory of Chance, and to take refuge in the new asylum of Law, Order, or Destiny. There is, apparently, a wide difference between the two contrasted systems; and yet the difference may be, after all, more seeming than real: for both the old doctrine of "chance" and the new theory of "development" are compelled to assume certain conditions or qualities as belonging to the primordial elements of matter, without which it is felt that neither Chance nor Fate can afford a satisfactory account of the works either of Creation or Providence. The one party spoke more of "Chance," the other speaks more of "Law;" but both were compelled to feel that neither Chance nor Law could *of themselves* account for the established order of Nature, without presupposing certain conditions, adjustments, and dispositions of matter, such as could only be satisfactorily explained by ascribing them to a wise, foreseeing, and designing Mind.

In the present state of philosophical speculation, which evinces so strong a tendency to reduce everything to the dominion of "Law," it may seem unnecessary to refer to the doctrine of "Chance" at all; but believing as we do that there are, and ever must be, certain events in the course of life, and certain facts in the complex experience of man, which will irresistibly suggest the idea of it, even where the doctrine is

theoretically disowned, we think it right to lay down a distinct and definite position on this subject, such as may serve, if duly established, at once to neutralize whatever is false and noxious in the doctrine of Chance, and at the same time to preserve whatever is true and wholesome in it, as having a tendency to illustrate the actual scheme of Divine Providence. And the position which we are disposed to state and prepared to establish is this: That, with reference to God, as an omniscient Being, there is, and there can be, no such thing as "Chance;" while, with reference alike to men and angels, many events may be fortuitous or accidental, not as being independent of causes, but as depending on causes unknown, or on combinations of causes whose joint operation may result in effects absolutely undiscoverable by our limited intelligence.

This position\* consists of *two* parts. It affirms that with reference to God and His omniscient knowledge, there can be nothing that is fortuitous, accidental, or unexpected. It affirms, with reference to man and all created intelligences, that there may, or even must, be much uncertainty in regard to the products of natural causes, especially when they act in combination, and come into play in circumstances which we cannot foresee or control. Many events may thus be casual, accidental, or unexpected to men, which are not so to the supreme governing Intelligence. The first part of the position is proved by the general evidence which warrants us in ascribing omniscience, and especially an unerring prescience, to the Divine Mind; and it cannot be denied, without virtually ascribing *ignorance* to God. The second part of the position is established by some of the most familiar facts of experience. We know and feel that however certain all events are to the omniscient knowledge of the Most High, many of them are entirely beyond the reach of our limited foresight; and this because they are either dependent on individual causes which are unknown to us, or on a combination of various causes, too

complex to admit of any rational computation in regard to their results.

The "calculation of chances" has been reduced to something like scientific accuracy;<sup>1</sup> and it has been applied, with beneficial effect, to the insurance of life and property on land and at sea. Even the casual events of human history may be said, in a certain sense, to be governed by fixed laws. The *aggregate result* in such cases may be tolerably certain, while the *individual cases* are very much the reverse; and hence human wisdom, proceeding on a well-ascertained body of *statistics*, may construct a scheme for securing some against the evils to which they would otherwise have been liable, by means of the sacrifices of others, who would not have been in fact, although they might have been, for ought they know, liable to the same. But what is this, if it be not a practical acknowledgement of the uncertainty in which all are placed in regard to some of the most important interests of the present life? or how can it be said that chance or accident is altogether, and in every sense, exploded, when large bodies of men are found to combine, and that, too, at a considerable personal sacrifice, for the express purpose of protecting themselves, so far as they can, from the hazards to which they are individually exposed?

In the sense above explained, we cannot consent to discard "Chance" altogether, either at the bidding of those who resolve everything into "natural laws," or even in deference to the authority of others who ascribe all events to Divine Providence. It may be true that all events, however apparently casual or fortuitous, are governed by "natural laws;" it may be equally true that all events are determined, directed, or controlled by Divine Providence: but as long as some events depend on causes which are certainly known, and other events on causes which are not known, or on a combination of causes

<sup>1</sup> LA PLACE, "Des Probabilités."

whose results cannot be foreseen, so long will there be room for the distinction between the *regular* and the *accidental* phenomena of human experience. This distinction, indeed, is explicitly recognized in Scripture itself; for while it speaks of all events as being infallibly known to God, it speaks of some events that are *accidental* with reference to man.<sup>1</sup> The unknown, unforeseen, and unexpected incidents of life, which constitute all that is apparently casual or accidental, may be, and we believe they are, really subject both to natural laws and to God's providential will; but they are removed far beyond our comprehension or control; and being so, they are admirably fitted, as a part of the complex scheme of His natural and moral government, to serve one of the most important practical ends for which it is designed, by impressing us with a sense of constant dependence on a higher Power, and of dutiful subjection to a superior Will.

But while, in this sense and to this extent, the doctrine of "Chance" is retained, it must be utterly rejected as a means of accounting either for the creation or government of the world. For, on the supposition of a Supreme Being, there can be no *chance* with reference to Him; and without such a supposition, we cannot account for the regularity which prevails in the course of Nature, and which indicates a presiding Intelligence and a controlling Will.

2. But this very regularity of Nature, when viewed apart from the cross accidents of life, is apt to engender the opposite idea of "Fate" or "Destiny," as if all events were determined by laws alike necessary and invariable, inherent in the constitution of Nature, and independent of the concurrence or the control of the Divine will. We are not sure, indeed, that the idea of Fate or Destiny is suggested solely, or even mainly, by

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. 9: 11; Luke 10: 31; Deut. 19: 5.

the regular sequences of the natural world ; we rather think that it is more frequently derived from those unexpected and crushing calamities which occur in spite of every precaution of human foresight and prudence, and that thus it may be identified, in a great measure, with the doctrine of Chance, or, at least, the one may run into and blend with the other. But if any attempt were made to establish it by proof, recourse would be had to the established order and regular sequences of Nature, as affording its most plausible verification, although they afford no real sanction to it, in so far as it differs from the Christian doctrine of Providence.

Dr. Cudworth discusses this subject at great length, and makes mention of *three* distinct forms of Fatalism. The first, which is variously designated as the Democritic, the Physiological, or the Atheistic Fate, is that which teaches the material or physical necessity of all things, and ascribes all natural phenomena to the mechanical laws of matter and motion. The second, which is described as a species of Divine or Theistic Fate, is that which admits the existence and agency of God, but teaches that He both *decrees* and *does*, *purposes* and *performs* all things, whether good or evil, as if He were the only real agent in the universe, or as if He had no moral character, and were, as Cudworth graphically expresses it, "*mere arbitrary will omnipotent*:" this he describes as a "Divine Fate immoral and violent." The third, which is also designated as a species of Divine or Theistic Fate, is that which recognizes both the existence of God, and the agency of other beings in Nature, together with the radical distinction between moral good and evil, but teaches that men are so far under necessity as to be incapable of moral and responsible action, and unfit subjects of praise or blame, of reward or punishment: this he describes as "Divine Fate moral and natural." These *three* are all justly held to be erroneous or defective views of the

Divine government, and, as such, they are strenuously and successfully opposed.<sup>1</sup>

But there is room for a *fourth* doctrine, which may be designated as the Christian doctrine of Providence, and which combines in itself all the great fundamental truths for which Dr. Cudworth contends, while it leaves open, or, at least, does not necessarily determine, some of the collateral questions on which he might have differed from many of its defenders. This doctrine affirms, first, the existence and attributes of God, as a holy and righteous Moral Governor; secondly, the real existence and actual operation of "second causes," distinct from, but not independent of, "the First Cause;" thirdly, the operation of these causes according to their several natures, so that, under God's Providence, events fall out "either necessarily, freely, or contingently," according to the kind of intermediate agency by which they are brought to pass; and, fourthly, that in the case of intelligent and moral agents, ample room is left for responsible action, and for the consequent sentence of praise or blame, reward or punishment, notwithstanding the eternal decree of God, and the constant control which He exercises over all His creatures and all their actions. These four positions may be all harmoniously combined in one self-consistent and comprehensive statement; and, in point of fact, they are all included in the Christian doctrine of Providence, as that has been usually explained and defended by the various sections of the Catholic Church. Not one of them is omitted or denied.<sup>2</sup> They seem fairly to meet, or rather fully to exhaust, the demands of Dr. Cudworth himself, when he says: "These three things are, as we conceive, the fundamentals or essentials of true religion, first, that all things

<sup>1</sup> DR. CUDWORTH, "Intellectual System," I. 33. American Edition.

<sup>2</sup> DR. JOHN COLLINGES, "On Providence." DR. PRICE, "Dissertations." SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, "De Providentia Dei." DR. CHARNOCK, "On Providence."

in the world do not float without a head or governor, but that there is a God, an omnipotent understanding Being, presiding over all; secondly, that this God being essentially good and just, there is something in its own nature immutably and eternally just and unjust, and not by arbitrary will, law, and command only; and lastly, that there is something  $\epsilon\phi' \eta\mu\iota\nu$ , or that we are *so far forth* principals or masters of our own actions as to be *accountable* to justice for them, or to make us guilty or blameworthy for what we do amiss, and to deserve punishment accordingly." All these fundamentals of true religion are explicitly recognized in the Christian doctrine of Providence, which stands out, therefore, in striking contrast with the Atheistic, and even Theistic, theories of Fate which he condemns; and they are as zealously maintained (whether with the same *consistency* is a different question) by Edwards, Chalmers, and Woods, on the one side, as they ever were by Cudworth, Clarke, and Tappan, on the other.

It may be said, however, that the doctrine of Providence, especially when taught in connection with that of Predestination, does unavoidably imply some kind of *necessity*, incompatible with free moral agency, and that, to all practical intents, it amounts substantially to Fate or Destiny. But we are prepared to show that there is neither the same kind of *necessity* in the one scheme which is implied in the other, nor the same reason for denying moral and responsible agency in the case of intelligent beings. In doing so, we must carefully discriminate, in the first instance, between the various senses in which the term *necessity* is used. Dr. Waterland has given a comprehensive division of "necessity" into *four* kinds, denominated respectively, the Logical, the Moral, the Physical, and the Metaphysical.

"Logical necessity" exists wherever the contrary of what is affirmed would imply a contradiction; and in this sense we call it a *necessary truth* that two and two make four, that a

whole is greater than any of its parts, and that a circle neither is nor can be a square. It amounts to nothing more than the affirmation, that the same idea or thing *is what it is*; and it relates solely to the connection between one idea and another, or between one proposition and another, or between subject and predicate. This is "logical necessity;" we cannot, with our present laws of thought, conceive the thing to be otherwise without implying a contradiction.

"Moral necessity," again, denotes a connection, not between one idea and another, or between the subject and predicate of a proposition, but between *means* and *ends*. It is not necessary absolutely that any man should continue to live; but it is necessary *morally* that, if he would continue to live, he should eat and sleep, food and rest being, according to the established constitution of Nature, a *necessary condition* or indispensable means for the support of life. There is in like manner a "moral necessity" that we should be virtuous and obedient, if we would be truly happy, virtue and obedience being, according to the established constitution of Nature, an indispensable means of true and permanent happiness. This is "moral necessity" which has reference solely to the connection between *means* and *ends*, but that connection, being ordained, is immutable and invariable.

"Physical necessity," again, exists wherever there is either a causal connection between antecedents and consequents in the material world, or even a coactive and compulsory constraint in the moral world. It is physically necessary that fire should burn substances that are combustible, that water and other fluids should flow down a declivity, and rise again but only to a certain level; and there is the like kind of necessity, wherever a moral agent is forced to act under irresistible compulsion,—as when the assassin seizes hold of another's arm, and thrusting a deadly weapon into his hand, directs it, by his own overmastering will, to the brain or heart of his victim.

In this latter case, the unwilling instrument of his revenge or malice is not held to be the guilty party, but the more powerful agent by whom that instrument was employed. This is "physical necessity," which relates solely to the connection between cause and effect in the material world, and, in the moral, to the compulsory action of one agent on another.

"Metaphysical necessity," again, can be predicated of God only, and denotes the peculiar property or prerogative of His being, as existing necessarily, immutably, and eternally, or, to use a scholastic phrase, the necessary connection in His case between *essence* and *existence*.

Omitting the *last*, which does not fall properly within the limits of our present inquiry, we may say with regard to *the three first*, that each of them may exist, and that each of them does really operate, in the present constitution of Nature. We are subject, unquestionably, to certain "laws of thought," which we can neither repeal nor resist, and which impose upon us a logical necessity to conceive, to reason, and to infer, not according to our own whim or caprice, but according to established rules. We are equally subject to certain "conditions of existence,"—arising partly from our own constitution, partly from the constitution of external objects and the relations subsisting between the two,—which lay us under a moral necessity of using suitable means for the accomplishment of our purposes and plans. And we are still further subject to "physical necessity," in so far as our material frame is liable to be affected by external influences, and even our muscular powers may be overmastered and subordinated by a more vigorous or resolute will than our own. These *three* kinds of "necessity" exist; they are all constituent parts of that vast scheme of government under which we are placed; and the question arises, Whether, when the existence of these necessary laws is admitted, we can still maintain the doctrine which affirms the providential government of God and the moral

agency of man; or whether we must not resolve the whole series of events, both in the natural and moral worlds, into the blind and inexorable dominion of Destiny or Fate?

We answer, first, that there is nothing in any one of these three kinds of necessity, nor in all of them combined, which, when rightly understood, should either exclude the idea of Divine Providence, or impair our sense of moral and responsible agency. We may not be *so* free, nor *so* totally exempt from the operation of established laws, as some of the advocates of human liberty have supposed: but we may be free enough, notwithstanding, to be regarded and treated as moral and accountable beings. We may be subject to certain "laws of thought," and yet may be responsible for our opinions and beliefs, in so far as these depend on our voluntary acts, on our attention or inattention to the truth and its evidence, on our use or neglect of the appropriate means, on our love or our hatred to the light. And so we may be subject to certain other laws, in various departments of our complex experience, without being either restrained or impelled by such external coercion as alone can exempt creatures, constituted as we know and feel ourselves to be, from the righteous retributions of God.

We answer, secondly, that the doctrine of Providence, even when it is combined with that of Predestination, represents all events as "falling out according to the nature of second causes, necessarily, contingently, or freely;" nay, as falling out so "that no violence is offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." It follows that if there be either on earth or in heaven any free cause, or any moral and responsible agent, his nature is not changed, nor is the character of his agency altered, by that providential government which God exercises over all His creatures and all their actions; he still continues to develop, within certain limits imposed by unalter-

able laws, his own proper individuality, or his personal character, in its relation to the law and government of God.

We answer, thirdly, that the moral and responsible agency of man cannot be justly held to be incompatible with the Providence and Supremacy of God, unless it can be shown that, in the exercise of the latter, God acts in the way of physical coercion or irresistible constraint, and further, that man is not only controlled and governed in his actions, but compelled to act in opposition to his own will. But no enlightened advocate either of Providence or Predestination will affirm that there is any "physical necessity," imposed by the Divine will, which constrains men to commit sin, or that God is "the author of sin." "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed."<sup>1</sup>

We answer, fourthly, that when a "moral necessity" or *moral inability* is spoken of by divines as making sin certain and inevitable in the case of man, we must carefully distinguish between the *constitution* and the *state* of human nature,—its constitution as it was originally created, and its state as it at present exists. There might be nothing in the original constitution of human nature which could interfere in any way with the freedom of man as an intelligent, moral, and responsible being; and yet, in consequence of the introduction of sin, his state may now be so far changed as to have become a state of moral bondage. But the constitution of his nature, in virtue of which he was at the first, and must ever continue to be, a moral and accountable being, remains unreversed; from being holy, he has become depraved, but he has not ceased to be a subject of moral government, and the evils that are incident to his present position must be ascribed, not to God's *creative will*,

<sup>1</sup> James 1: 13, 14. See M'LAURIN'S profound discourse on this text.

but, in the first instance, to man's voluntary disobedience, and, in the second, to a Divine *judicial sentence* following there-upon.

And finally, we answer that the theory which ascribes all events, both in the natural and moral worlds, to the blind and inexorable dominion of Destiny or Fate, leaves altogether unexplained many of the most certain and familiar facts of human experience. There are two large classes of facts which no theory of Fate can possibly explain. The first comprises all those manifest indications of provident forethought, intelligent design, and moral purpose, which appear in the course of Nature, and which cannot be *accounted for* by a blind, unintelligent, undesigning cause. The second comprises all those facts of consciousness which bear witness to the moral nature and responsible agency of man, as the subject of a government which rewards and punishes his actions, in some measure, even here, and which irresistibly suggests the idea of a future reckoning and retribution. These two classes of facts must either be ignored, or left as insoluble, by any theory which advocates blind Fate or Destiny, in opposition to the overruling Providence and moral government of God.

These answers are sufficient, if not to remove all mystery from the methods of the Divine administration (for who would undertake to fathom the counsels of Him "whose judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out?"), yet to show at least that a Divine Providence is more credible in itself, and better supported by evidence, than any theory of Destiny or Fate; that the facts to which the latter appeals may be explained consistently with the former, while the facts on which the former is founded must either be left altogether out of view, or at least left unexplained, if the doctrine of Fate be substituted for that of Providence.

We have thus far compared the two theories of Chance and Fate, by which some have attempted to explain the system of

the universe, and have contrasted both with the Christian doctrine of Providence. On a review of the whole discussion, we think it must be evident that the latter combines whatever is true and valuable in each of these opposite theories, while it eliminates and rejects whatever is unsound or noxious in either. It may seem strange that we should speak as if anything, either true or valuable, could be involved in the theories of Chance and Destiny; and, unquestionably, considered as theories designed to explain the system of the world, and to supersede the doctrine of Providence, they are, in all their distinctive peculiarities, utterly false and worthless. But it seldom, if ever, happens that any theory obtains a wide-spread and permanent influence, which does not stand connected with some *partial truth*, or which cannot appeal to some *apparent natural evidence*. We have already seen that there are two distinct classes of events in Nature, and two corresponding classes of sentiments and feelings in the human mind; that the latter point, respectively, to the constant and the variable, the certain and the doubtful, the causal and the casual; and that were either of the two to acquire an absolute ascendancy over us, it would naturally lead to one or other of two opposite extremes—the theory of Chance, or the theory of Fate. Now, the doctrine of Providence takes account of *both* these classes of phenomena and feelings, so as to combine whatever is true and useful in each of the two rival theories, while it strikes out and rejects whatever is false in either, by placing all things under the government and control of a living, intelligent, personal God.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the views and sentiments which the Christian doctrine of Providence inspires are widely different from those which must be generated by a belief either in Chance or in Fate, as the supreme arbiter of our destiny. The doctrine which teaches us to look up and to say, with childlike confidence, “Our FATHER which art in heaven,” is

worth more than all the philosophy in the world! Could we only realize it as a truth, and have habitual recourse to it in all our anxieties and straits, we should feel that, if it be a deeply serious and solemn fact that "the Lord reigneth," it is also, to all his trusting and obedient children, alike cheering and consolatory; and he who can relish the sweetness of our Lord's words when he spake of "the birds of the air" and the "flowers of the field," will see at once that Stoicism is immeasurably inferior, both as a philosophy and a faith, to Christian Theism.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MICHELET has presented a graphic portrait of a Stoic:—"L'individu sous la forme du Stoïcisme, — ramassé soi, — appuyé sur soi, — ne demandant rien aux dieux, — ne les accusant point, — ne daignant pas même les nier." — "*Introduction à l'Histoire Universelle*."



## CHAPTER VII.

### THEORY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERALISM.

THE Eclectic method of Philosophy, which was first exemplified in the celebrated School of Alexandria, and which has been recently revived under the auspices of M. Cousin in the Schools of Paris, may be regarded, in one of its aspects, as the most legitimate, and, indeed, as the only practicable course of successful intellectual research. If by "eclecticism" we were to understand the habit of culling from every system that portion or fragment of truth which may be contained in it, and of rejecting the error with which it may have been associated or alloyed,—in other words, the art of "sifting the wheat from the chaff," so as to preserve the former, while the latter is dissipated and dispersed,—there could be no valid objection to it which would not equally apply to every method of Inductive Inquiry. But this is not the sense in which "eclecticism" has been adopted and eulogized by the Parisian School. For, not content with affirming that the same system may contain both truth and error, and that it is our duty to separate the one from the other,—which is the only rational "eclecticism,"—M. Cousin maintains that *error itself is only a partial or incomplete truth*; that if it be an evil, it is a necessary evil, and an eventual good, since it is a means, according to a fundamental law of human development, of evolving truth and advancing philosophy; and that thus the grossest errors may exert a

salutary influence, insomuch that *Atheism itself may be regarded as providential*.<sup>1</sup> In this form, Eclecticism becomes a huge and heterogeneous system of SYNCRETISM, including all varieties of opinion, whether true or false; and it has a natural and inevitable tendency to issue in a spirit of INDIFFERENCE to the claims of truth, which may assume the form either of Philosophical Skepticism or of Religious Liberalism, according to the taste and temperament of the individual who embraces it.

In the form of Religious Liberalism, it has often been exemplified in our own country by those who, averse from definite articles of faith, and prone to latitudinarian license, have studiously set themselves to disparage the importance of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and even to obliterate the distinction between the various forms of Religion, natural and revealed, by representing them all as so many varieties of the same religious sentiment, so many diverse, but not antagonistic, embodiments of the same radical principle. In the writings of Pope, several expressions occur which are easily susceptible of this construction, and which have often been quoted and applied in defence of Religious Liberalism, notwithstanding his explicit disavowal of it in his letter to the younger Racine, prefixed to the collected edition of his works. But on the continent of Europe, Syncretism has been much more fully developed, and fearlessly applied to every department of human thought. Pushed to its ultimate consequences, it obliterates the distinction not only between truth and error, but also between virtue and vice, nay even between Religion and Atheism; and represents them all as constituent parts of a scheme, which is developed under a law of "fatal necessity," but which is described also as a scheme of "optimism." Its range is supposed to be unlimited: for it has been applied to the History of Philosophy,

<sup>1</sup> M. COUSIN, "Introduction," I. 318, 391, 405, 419; II. 134. Ibid., "Fragmens Philosophiques." Preface, VII.

by Cousin, to the theory of the Passions, by Fourier, to the doctrines of Christianity, by Quinet and Michelet, and to the Philosophy of Religion, by Benjamin Constant. The practical result of such speculations is a growing *skepticism* or *indifference* in regard to the distinction between truth and error, and a very faint impression of the difference between good and evil.<sup>1</sup> The speculations of Pierre Leroux, the head, if not the founder, of the Humanitarian School, are strongly tinged with this spirit: they amount to a justification of evil, an apotheosis of man.<sup>2</sup>

We do not class these speculations among the formal systems of Atheism, although they have often been associated with it; but we advert to them as specimens of that style of thinking which has a natural tendency to induce an atheistic frame of mind.<sup>3</sup> The profession of such sentiments is a symptom rather of incipient danger, than of confirmed disease. But that danger is far from being either doubtful or insignificant. For should the distinction between "truth and error" be obliterated or even feebly discerned, should it come to be regarded as a matter of comparative indifference whether our beliefs be true or false, should it, above all, become our prevailing habit to "call good evil, and evil good," we can scarcely fail, in such circumstances, to fall into a course of *practical Atheism*; and this, as all experience testifies, will leave us an easy prey, especially in seasons of peculiar temptation and trial, to any form of *speculative Infidelity* that may happen to acquire a temporary ascendancy. If there be no dogmatic Atheism involved in this state of mind, there is at least the germ of *skepticism*, which may soon grow and ripen into the open and avowed denial of religious truth. At the very least, it will issue in that heartless

<sup>1</sup> VALROGER, "Etudes Critiques," pp. 115, 126, 151, 308, 316. MARET, "Essai sur Pantheisme," p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> P. LEROUX, "Sur l'Humanité," 2 vols.

<sup>3</sup> BUDDÆUS, "De Atheismo et Superstitione," pp. 184, 212.

*indifference* to all creeds and all definite articles of faith, which, under the plausible but surreptitious disguise of "freethinking" and "liberalism," is the nearest practical approximation to utter Infidelity.<sup>1</sup>

The system which is known under the name of Religious Liberalism or Indifference has been recently avowed in our own country with a frankness and boldness which can leave no room for doubt in regard to its ultimate tendency. The late Blanco White avowed it as his mature conviction, that "to declare any one unworthy of the name of Christian because he does not agree with your belief, is to fall into the intolerance of the articulated Churches; that the moment the name Christian is made necessarily to contain in its signification belief in certain historical or metaphysical propositions, that moment *the name itself becomes a creed*,—the *length* of that creed is of little consequence."<sup>2</sup> This is the extreme on one side, and it plainly implies that *no one article of faith* is necessary, and that a man may be a Christian who neither acknowledges an historical Christ, nor believes a single doctrine which He taught! But there is an extreme also on the other side, which is exemplified in the singularly eloquent, but equally unsatisfactory, treatise of the Abbé Lamennais,<sup>3</sup> in which, as *then* an ardent and somewhat arrogant advocate of the Romish Church, he attempts to fasten the charge of *Indifference* or *Liberalism* on

<sup>1</sup> RICHARD BENTLEY, "On Freethinking," Boyle Lectures. VILLEMANDY, "Scepticismus Debellatus," III. His words are remarkable:—"Passim haec, aliaque generis ejusdem, placita disseminantur,—neque verum neque bonum, qualia sunt in seipsis, posse dignosci; hinc que adeo sectandam esse duntaxat cum veri, tum boni, similitudinem: quæ si stent ac valeant,—illud omne erit verum, illud omne æquum,—illud omne pium et religiosum,—illud omne utile, quod *cuiquam tale videatur*; privatam cujusque conscientiam supremam esse agendorum, vel non agendorum, normam."

<sup>2</sup> JAMES MARTINEAU, "Rationale of Religious Inquiry," p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> F. DE LAMENNAIS, "Essai sur l'Indifference en matiere de la Religion," 4 vols. Paris, 1844.

the Protestant system, and to prove that there can be no true faith, and of course no salvation, beyond the Catholic pale. The chief interest of his treatise depends on his peculiar "theory of certitude," to which we shall have occasion to advert in the sequel; in the meantime, we may notice briefly the grievous error into which he has fallen in treating of the faith which is necessary to salvation. He *overstates* the case as much, at least, as it has been *understated* by the abettors of Liberalism. The latter deny the necessity of *any* articles of faith; the former demands the implicit reception of *every* doctrine propounded by the Romish Church. He repudiates the distinction between *fundamentals* and *non-fundamentals* in Religion, and insists that, as every truth is declared by the same infallible authority, so every truth must be received with the same unquestioning faith. He forgets that while all the truths of Scripture ought to be believed by reason of the Divine authority on which they rest, yet some truths are more directly connected with our salvation than others, as well as more clearly and explicitly revealed. Nor are we justly liable to the charge of "Indifference" or "Liberalism" when we tolerate a difference of opinion, on some points, among men who are, in all important respects, substantially agreed: for true toleration is the fruit, not of unbelief or indifference, but of charity and candor; and it is sanctioned in Scripture, which enjoins that we should "receive those who are weak in the faith, but not to doubtful disputations," and that "every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind."<sup>1</sup>

But it is not so much in its relation to the articles of the Christian faith, as in its bearing on the different forms of true and false religion, that the theory of Liberalism comes into collision with the cause of Theism, and evinces its infidel tendencies. If any one can regard with the same complacency,

<sup>1</sup> Romans 14: 1, 5.

or with the same apathetic indifference, all the varieties of religious or superstitious belief and worship; if he can discern no radical or important difference between Monotheism and Polytheism, or between the Protestant and Popish systems; if he be disposed to treat each of these as equally true or equally false, as alike beneficial or injurious in their practical influence, then this may be regarded as a sufficient proof that he is ignorant of the evidence, and blind to the claims, of truth,—a mere skeptical dreamer, if not a speculative Atheist.

An attempt has recently been made to place the theory of Religious Liberalism on a philosophical basis, by representing religion as a mere *sentiment*, which may be equally elicited and exemplified in various forms of belief and worship. Several writers, following in the wake of Schleiermacher, who gave such a powerful impulse to the mind of Germany, have made Religion to consist either in *a sense of dependence*, or in *a consciousness of the infinite*; and this sentiment, as well as the spontaneous intuitions of reason with which it is associated, is said to be alike natural, universal, and invariable, the essential principle of all Religion, the root whence have sprung all the various forms of belief and worship. These varieties are supposed to be more or less rational and salutary, according to the conception which they respectively exhibit of the nature and character of God,—a conception which may be endlessly diversified by the intellect, or the imagination, or the passions of different men; while all the forms of belief are radically identical, since they all spring from the same ground-principle, and are only so many distinct manifestations of it. Thus Mr. Parker tells us that, stripping the “religious sentiment” in man “of all accidental circumstances peculiar to the age, nation, sect, or individual, and pursuing a sharp and final analysis till the subject and predicate can no longer be separated, we find as the ultimate fact, that the religious sentiment is this,—‘*a sense of dependence.*’ This sentiment does not

itself disclose the character, and still less the nature and essence, of the object on which it depends, no more than the senses declare the nature of *their* objects. Like them it acts spontaneously and unconsciously, as soon as the outward occasion offers, with no effort of will, forethought, or making up the mind. But the religious sentiment implies its object; . . . and there is but *one religion*, though *many theologies*.<sup>1</sup>

There is, as it appears to us, a mixture of some truth with much grave and dangerous error, in these and similar speculations. It is an important truth, and one which has been too often overlooked in treating the evidences of Natural Theology, that the *sentiments* of the human mind, not less than its intuitive perceptions or logical processes, have a close relation to the subject of inquiry; but it is an error to suppose that *all* the sentiments having a religious tendency can be reduced to *one*, whether it be called "a sense of dependence" or "a consciousness of the infinite," for there are other sentiments besides these which are equally subservient to the uses of Religion, such as the sense of moral obligation, of the true, of the ideal, of the sublime, and of the beautiful. It is also an important truth, that there are spontaneous "intuitions of reason," or fundamental and invariable "laws of thought," which come into action at the first dawn of experience, and which have a close connection with the proof of the being and perfections of God; but it is an error to suppose that the proof depends *exclusively* on these, or that it could be made out irrespective of the evidence afforded by the works of Creation and Providence. It is further an important truth, that the religious sentiment, or religious tendency, is natural to man, and that it may appear either in the form of Religion or Superstition: but it is an error to suppose that "there is but *one*

<sup>1</sup> THEODORE PARKER, "Discourse of Matters pertaining to Religion," pp. 14, 17.

*religion*, although *many theologies* ;” for these theologies must spring from fundamentally different “conceptions of God,” and what are these conceptions, in their ultimate analysis, but so many beliefs, doctrines, or dogmas, which, whether formally defined or not in articles of faith, have in them the self-same essence which is supposed to belong only to the bigotry of “articled churches?” But the fundamental, the fatal error of all these speculations, is the denial of any *stable and permanent standard of objective truth*. Truth is made purely *subjective*, and, of course, it must also be progressive, inasmuch that the truth of a former age may be an error in the present, and the supposed truth of the present age may become obsolete hereafter. So that there is really nothing certain in human knowledge ; and “truth” may be justly described as never existing, but only *becoming*, as never possessed, though ever pursued ; it is a *verité mobile*, a truth not in *esse*, but in *fieri*. Hence we read in recent speculations of a “new Christianity,” of a “new Gospel,” and of “the Church of the Future,” as if there could be any other Christianity than that of the New Testament, any other Gospel than that of Jesus Christ, or any other Church than that of apostolic times.

I have adverted to this theory, because, while it is of little value in a speculative point of view, it is often found to exert a powerful practical influence, especially on “men of affairs,” men who have travelled in various countries, or who have been employed in the arts of diplomacy and government ; and who, finding religious worship everywhere, but clothed in different forms, and marking its subserviency to social and political interests, have been too prone to place all the varieties of belief in the same category, if not precisely on the same level, and to regard with indifference, perhaps even with indulgence, the grossest corruptions both of Natural and Revealed Religion. The world is surely old enough, and its history sufficiently instructive, to prove, even to the most indifferent statesmen,

that truth is always salutary, and error noxious, to the commonwealth, and that nowhere is society more safe, orderly, or stable, than in those countries which are blessed with "pure and undefiled religion." But let the opinion spread from the prince to the peasant, from the aristocracy to the artisans, from the philosopher to the public, that there is either no difference, or only a slight and trivial one, between truth and error, that it matters little what a man believes, or whether he believes at all: let the general mind of the community become indoctrinated with such lessons, and it needs no prophetic foresight to predict a crisis of unprecedented peril, an era of reckless revolution. A philosophic dreamer may affect a calm indifference, a bland and benignant Liberalism; but a nation, a community, cannot be neutral or inert in regard to matters of faith: it must and will be either religious or irreligious, it must either love the truth or hate it: it is too sharp-sighted, and too much guided by homely common sense, to believe that systems so opposite as Paganism and Christianity, or Popery and Protestantism, are harmonious manifestations of the same religious principle, or equally beneficial to the State.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THEORIES OF CERTITUDE AND SKEPTICISM.

WE formerly adverted to the distinction between Dogmatic and Skeptical Atheism; and, believing that the *latter* is the form in which it is most prevalent, as well as most insidious and plausible, we now propose to review some recent theories both of Certitude and Skepticism, which have sometimes been applied to throw doubt on the evidence of Christian Theism.

The Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in the French Institute announced in 1843 the theory of Certitude as the subject of a Prize Essay, and issued the following *programme* as a guide to the competitors in the selection of the principal topics of discussion:

“1. To determine the character of Certitude, and what distinguishes it from everything else. For example, Is Certitude the same with the highest probability?

“2. What is the faculty, or what are the faculties, which give us Certitude? If several faculties of knowledge are supposed to exist, to state with precision the differences between them.

“3. Of Truth and its foundations. Is truth the reality itself, —the nature of things falling under the knowledge of man? —or is it nothing but an appearance, —a conception, necessary or arbitrary, of the human mind?

“4. To expound and discuss the most celebrated opinions, ancient and modern, on the problem of Certitude, and to follow

them out into their theoretical and practical consequences. To subject to a critical and profound examination the great monuments of Skepticism,—the writings of Sextus, Huet, Hume, and Kant.

“5. To inquire what are, in spite of the assaults of Skepticism, the certain truths which ought to subsist in the Philosophy of our times.”

Such was the comprehensive *programme* of the French Institute; and many circumstances concurred at the time to impart a peculiar interest to the competition. M. Franck's volume<sup>1</sup> contains the Report of the Section of Philosophy on the papers which had been prepared, and offers a careful analysis and critical estimate of their contents. Various other works<sup>2</sup> not concerned in the competition appeared before and after it, showing how much the philosophical mind of France had been occupied with this great theme, while in Britain it was attracting little or no attention.

This is the most recent discussion, on a great scale, of the theory of Certitude. But the question, far from being a new or modern speculation, is as old as Philosophy itself, and has been perpetually reproduced in every age of intellectual activity. Plato discusses it, chiefly in the *Theætetus*, *Sophist*, and *Parmenides*; it was agitated by Pyrrho, Enesidemus, and Sextus Empiricus, with that peculiar subtlety which belonged to the mind of Greece; and in more recent times it has reappeared in the writings of Montaigne and Bayle, Huet and Pascal, Glanville, Hume, and Kant. Even during the middle

<sup>1</sup> M. A. FRANCK, “Rapport,” Paris, 1847. M. A. JAVARY, “Ouvrage Couronné par l'Institut,” 1847.

<sup>2</sup> M. ED. MERCIER, “De la Certitude, dans ses Rapports avec la Science et la Foi,” 1844. M. A. VERA, “Problème de la Certitude,” 1845. ABBÉ GERBET, “Des Doctrines Philosophiques sur la Certitude, dans leur Rapports avec les Fondemens de la Théologie.” ABBÉ DE LAMENNAIS, “Du Fondement de la Certitude,” 1826. Vols. II. and III. of the “*Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de la Religion*.” 4 vols., 1844.

age, the controversy between the Nominalists and Realists had an important bearing on this subject: so that from the whole history of Philosophy we derive the impression of its fundamental importance, an impression which is deepened and confirmed by the transcendent interest of the themes to which it has been applied.

In our present argument, we are concerned with it only so far as it stands connected with the foundations of Theology, or as the right or wrong solution of the general question might affect the evidence for the Being and Perfections of God. We do not propose, therefore, to offer a full exposition of the philosophy of Certitude, still less to institute a detailed examination of the various theories which have been propounded respecting it. It will be sufficient for our purpose if we merely sketch a comprehensive outline of the subject, and select some of the more prominent points which have the most direct bearing on the grounds of our religious belief. Thus much may be accomplished by considering, *first*, the statement of the problem, and, *secondly*, the solution of it.

In regard to the *statement* of the problem, it is necessary, in the first instance, to ascertain its precise import, by determining the meaning of the term Certitude. The programme of the Academy very properly places this question on the foreground, Is Certitude the same with the highest probability? And it is the more necessary to give precedence to this part of the inquiry, because it is notorious that there is a wide difference between the philosophical and the popular sense of Certitude,—a difference which has often occasioned mutual misunderstanding between disputants, and a profitless warfare of words. In the philosophical sense of the term, that only is said to be *certain* which is either an axiomatic truth, intuitively discerned, or a demonstrated truth, derived from the former by rigorous deduction; while all that part of our knowledge which is gathered from experience and observation, however credible

in itself and however surely believed, is characterized as *probable* only. In the popular sense of the term, Certitude belongs to all those truths, of whatever kind and in whatever way acquired, in regard to which we have no reason to be in doubt or suspense, and which rest on sufficient and satisfactory evidence. A philosopher is *certain*, in his sense of the term, only of what he intuitively perceives or can logically demonstrate ; a peasant is *certain*, in his sense of the term, of whatever he distinctly sees, or clearly remembers, or receives on authentic testimony. There is much reason, we think, to regret the existence of such a wide difference between the philosophical and the popular sense of an expression, which must occur so often both in speculative discussion and in the intercourse of common life. It may be doubted whether the metaphysician is entitled to borrow the language of society, and to engraft upon it an arbitrary definition of his own, different from and even inconsistent with that which it bears in common usage. Nor can he plead necessity as a sufficient excuse, or the accuracy of his definition as an effectual safeguard, since, however needful it may be to discriminate between *different species* of Certitude, by marking their peculiar characteristics and respective sources, surely this might be done more safely and satisfactorily by designating one kind of it as Intuitive, another as Demonstrative, another as Moral, or Experimental, or Historical, than it can be by any arbitrary restriction of the *generic* term to one or two of the many species which are comprehended under it. No doubt there is a real distinction, and one of great practical importance, between *certitude* and *probability* ; but this distinction is not overlooked in the language of common life ; — it is only necessary to determine what truths belong respectively to each : whereas when all the truths of Experience, and even, in some cases, those of scientific Induction, are ranked under the head of *probability* merely, is it not evident

that the language of Philosophy is in this respect at variance with the prevailing sense of mankind?

An attempt has sometimes been made to draw a distinction between *popular* and *philosophical* Certitude, or, in other words, between the unreflecting belief of the many and the scientific belief of the few. Thus, M. Franck distinguishes Certitude, first of all, from the blind faith which commences with the earliest dawn of intelligence: then, from the doubt which supervenes on the initial process of inquiry; and then, from that half-knowledge, that middle term between doubt and certainty, which is called *probability*. And M. Javari speaks of Certitude "as the complete demonstration, acquired by reflection, of the legitimacy of any judgment, or of the reality of any object: this is definitive and scientific certitude, which is contrasted with that belief, however strong, which springs, not from the *reflective*, but the *direct and spontaneous* exercise of our faculties."<sup>1</sup> It must be evident that, according to this definition of the term, Certitude, in the scientific sense of it, as the product of philosophical reflection, must be the privilege and prerogative of the few, who have been led by taste or education to cultivate the study of Psychology; while the vast majority of men, who are nevertheless as *certain* of the truths which they believe, and, to say the very least, as little liable to doubt or skepticism, as any class of philosophers whatever, must be held to have no Certitude, just because they have no Science. It seems to be assumed that Certitude is the creation of Science, the product of reflective thought; whereas it may be demonstrably shown that without Certitude, Science would be impossible, and that reflection can give forth nothing but what it finds previously existing in the storehouse of human consciousness. It surveys the streams of belief, and may trace up these streams to their highest springs; but it does not, it cannot, create a new

<sup>1</sup> M. FRANCK, p. 237. M. JAVARI, p. 28.

truth, or give birth to a higher certitude. We have no disposition, assuredly, to underrate the value of philosophical reflection, or to disparage the science of Psychology; the former may collect the materials and the latter may attempt the construction, of a goodly and solid fabric: but we cannot admit that the certainty of all our knowledge depends upon either of them, or that it is confined exclusively to the metaphysical inquirer. Reflection adds nothing to the contents of human consciousness: it examines our fundamental beliefs, but originates none of them; it discerns the elements and sources of certainty, but can neither produce nor alter them. Its sole province is to examine and report. If Certitude, in the philosophical sense of it, belongs to the *reflex*, Certainty, in the popular sense, belongs to the *direct* and *spontaneous*, operations of the human mind. We see and believe, we remember and believe, we compare and believe, we hear and believe, and that, too, with a feeling of confidence which needs no argument to confirm it, and to which all the philosophy in the world could impart no additional strength. Certitude is not the creation of Philosophy, but the object of its study; it exists independently of Science, and is only recognized by it; and it would still exist as a constituent and indestructible element of human consciousness were Metaphysics scattered to the wind.

It appears, again, to have been assumed in some recent treatises, that Certitude belongs only to that portion of truth the denial of which would imply a contradiction, or amount to the annihilation of reason. Is it, then, to be restricted to *necessary* and *absolute*, as contrasted with *contingent* and *relative* truths? Am I not as *certain* that I see four objects before me, as that two and two make four? Yet the former is a *contingent*, the latter a *necessary* truth. Is not my personal consciousness infallibly *certain*? And yet can it be said to belong to the head of necessary truth? Surely Certitude is unduly restricted when we exclude from it many of our surest and

strongest convictions, which relate to truths attested by experience, but the denial of which would involve no contradiction.

The question has been still further complicated by extreme opinions of another kind. It seems to have been assumed that there can be no Certitude, unless we can explain the *rationale* of our knowledge, and even account for the objects of our knowledge by tracing them up to their First Cause, as the ground and reason of their existence.<sup>1</sup> Now, if the question were, Can you account for your own existence, or for the existence of the world around you, without having recourse to a supreme First Cause? we would answer, No: but if the question be, Can there be any Certitude prior to the idea of God, not deduced from it, and capable of existing without it? we would answer, Yes: the little child is certain of its mother's existence before it is capable of knowing God, and the veriest Atheist is certain of his own existence and that of his fellow-men, even when he professes to doubt or to disbelieve the existence of God. It may be true that the essential nature and omniscient knowledge of God is the ultimate and eternal standard of truth and certainty, or, in the words of Fenelon, that "il n'y a qu'une seule verité, et qu'une seule manière de bien juger, qui est, de juger comme Dieu même;"<sup>2</sup> and yet it may not be true that all our knowledge is derived by deduction from our idea of God, or that its entire certainty is dependent on our religious belief. Surely we may be certainly assured of the facts of consciousness, of the phenomena of Nature, and of many truths, both necessary and contingent, before we have made any attempt to explain the *rationale* of our knowledge, or to connect it with the idea of the great First Cause; nay, it may be, and we believe it is, by *means* of these inferior and

<sup>1</sup> AMAND SAINTE, "Vie de Spinoza," p. 201. ABBÉ LAMENNAIS, "Essai sur l'Indifférence," IV. 256.

<sup>2</sup> FENELON, "Œuvres Spirituelles," I. 138.

subordinate truths that we rise to the belief of a supreme, omniscient Mind.

Some writers seem to confound Certitude with *Infallibility*, or at least to hold that there can be no Certitude without it. The *impersonal reason* of Cousin, the *common sense* or *generic reason* of Lamennais, and the *authoritative tradition* of the Church, have all been severally resorted to, for the purpose of obtaining a ground of Certitude in the matters both of Philosophy and Faith, such as is supposed to be unattainable by the exercise of our own proper faculties, or by the most careful study of evidence. According to these theories, Certitude belongs to our knowledge, only because that knowledge is derived from a reason superior to our own,—a reason not personal, but universal; not individual, but generic. When they are applied, as they have been, to undermine the authority of private judgment, and to supersede the exercise of free inquiry; when they are urged as a reason why we should defer to the authority of the Race in matters of Philosophy and to the authority of the Church in matters of Faith; when we are told that the certainty of our own existence depends on our knowledge of God, and that our knowledge of God depends on the *common consent* or *invariable traditions* of mankind,—we do feel that the grounds of Certitude, so far from being strengthened, are sapped and weakened by such speculations, and that we have here a new and most unexpected application of the Scottish doctrine of Common Sense, such as may be highly serviceable to the Church of Rome. Protestant writers, indeed, have sometimes appealed to *common consent* as a collateral proof, auxiliary to that which is more direct and conclusive; but they have done so merely because they regarded it as *a part of the evidence*, well fitted to prove what Dr. Cudworth calls “the naturalness of the idea of God,” and not because they confounded it with the *faculty* by which alone that evidence can be discerned and appreciated. They never

regarded it as the sole ground of certainty either in matters of Philosophy or Faith. Nor can it be so considered by any thoughtful mind. For how can I be more assured of an *impersonal reason* than of my own? How can I be more certain of the existence and the traditions of other men, than of the facts of my own consciousness, and the spontaneous convictions of my own understanding? or how can I be assured that, in passing from the impersonal reason to the individual mind, from the generic reason to the personal, the truth may not contract some taint of weakness or impurity from the vessel in which it is ultimately contained,—from the finite faculties by which alone it is apprehended and believed?

The fact is that any attempt to prove the truth of our faculties must necessarily fail. Did we set ourselves to the task of proving by argument or by authority that we are not wrong in believing in our own existence or that of an external world, or did we attempt to establish the trustworthiness of our faculties by resolving it into the veracity of God, our effort must needs be as abortive as it is superfluous, since it involves the necessity not only of proving the fact, but of *proving the proof itself*, and that, too, by the aid of the very faculties whose trustworthiness is in question! There are certain ultimate facts beyond which it is impossible to push our speculative inquiries; certain first or fundamental principles of Reason, which are in themselves indemonstrable, but which constitute the ground or condition of all demonstration; certain intuitive perceptions, which are widely different from rational deductions, but which determine and govern every process of reasoning and every form of belief. To deny the *certainty* of our intuitive perceptions, merely because we cannot prove by argument the truth of our mental faculties, would virtually amount to a rejection of all evidence except such as comes to us only through *one* channel, and *that* the circuitous one of a process of reasoning; while, by the constitution of our nature, we are qualified and

privileged to draw it fresh, in many cases, at its spring and fountain-head. It may be as impossible for man to prove the trustworthiness of his intellectual faculties as it is for the bee to prove the truth of its marvellous instinct; but, in either case, the reason may be that any such proof is unnecessary, that it is superseded by the laws of Instinct in the one, and by the laws of Thought in the other, and that by these laws a better and surer provision is made for our guidance than any that could have been found in a mere logical faculty,—a natural and irresistible authority, which the Skeptic may dispute, but cannot destroy, and which, however disowned in theory, must be practically obeyed.

It must be evident that the *various meanings* which have been attached to the term Certitude must materially affect both the statement and solution of the general problem, and, more particularly, that they must have an important bearing on the question, whether the doctrine which affirms the Being, Perfections, and Providence of God, should be ranked under the head of *certain*, or only of *probable*, truth. If, in making use of the term Certitude, I mean to denote by it something different from the certainty which belongs to the most assured convictions of the human mind, something that arises, not from the spontaneous and direct exercise of its faculties, but from a process of reflective thought or philosophical speculation, something, in short, that is peculiar to the metaphysical inquirer, and is not the common heritage of the race at large; then, unquestionably, the problem, as thus understood, must leave out of view many of the surest and most universal beliefs of mankind,—beliefs which may be illustrated and confirmed by Philosophy, but which are anterior to it in respect to their origin, and independent of it in respect of the evidence on which they severally rest. In the case of Certitude, just as in the case of every similar term expressive of a simple, elementary idea, the ultimate appeal must be made to individual

consciousness. No one can convey to another a conception of Certitude by means of words, apart from an experimental sense of it in the mind of the latter, any more than he could give the idea of color to the blind or of music to the deaf. It is because we have had experience of it in our own breasts that we recognize and respond to the descriptions which others give of it. Every one knows what it is to be *certain* in regard to many things, just because, constituted as he is, he cannot doubt or disbelieve them. He is *certain* of his own existence, of the existence of other men, of the facts of his familiar consciousness, of many events long since past which are still clearly remembered, of certain abstract truths which are intuitively discerned or logically demonstrated. These various objects of his thought may differ in other respects, and may occasion a corresponding difference in the *kind* of Certitude which is conceived to belong to them; but they all possess the same generic character, and admit, therefore, of being classified under the same comprehensive category, as objects of our *certain* knowledge.

In the current use both of philosophical and popular language, Certitude is spoken of in a twofold sense. We speak of a belief or conviction of our own minds as possessing the character of Certitude, when it is so strong and so firmly rooted that it excludes all doubt or hesitation;—we speak also of an object or event as possessing the same character, when it is so presented to our minds as to produce the full assurance of its reality. Hence the distinction between *subjective* and *objective* Certitude. The former is a fact of consciousness; it is simply the undoubting assent which we yield to certain judgments, whether these judgments be true or false; it exists in us, and not in the objects of thought; it denotes a condition of our minds, which may, or may not, be in accordance with the actual state of things. The latter is truth or certainty considered *objectively*, as existing in the objects of our knowledge; it

is independent of us and of our conceptions; it is *as it is*, whether it be known or unknown to us; our belief cannot add to its reality, nor can our unbelief diminish or destroy it. Certitude, considered as a mental state, denotes simply the strength of our conviction or belief, as distinguished from doubt or mere opinion; but, considered as an objective reality, it denotes the ground or reason existing in the nature of things for the convictions which we cherish. *Subjective certitude* is not always the index or the proof of *objective truth*, for men often believe with the strongest assurance what they find reason afterwards to doubt or to disbelieve; and the prevalence of many false beliefs, sincerely cherished and zealously maintained, raises the question, how we may best discriminate between truth and error? Hence the various theories of Certitude, and hence also the antagonist theories of Skepticism.

The theories of Certitude may be reduced to *three* classes. The *first* places the ground of Certitude in *Reason*; the *second* in *Authority*; the *third*, in *Evidence*, including under that term both the external manifestations of truth, and the internal principles or laws of thought by which we are determined in forming our judgments in regard to them. Each of these theories, however, has appeared in various phases in the history of philosophical speculation. The Individual Reason of Martineau, the Generic Reason of Lamennais, the Impersonal Reason of Cousin, the Authority of the Race, and the Infallibility of the Church, are specimens of these varieties.

The theory which places the principle of Certitude in REASON has assumed at least two distinct shapes. In the one it discards all authority except that of private judgment or individual reason; in the other it appeals to a higher reason, which is said to be impersonal and infallible, and which is supposed to regulate and determine the convictions of the human mind. In the former shape, it appears in the speculations of Martineau; in the latter, it is advocated by Cousin; and in one

or other of these shapes it constitutes the ground-principle of RATIONALISM. The theory, again, which places the principle of Certitude in AUTHORITY has also assumed two distinct shapes. In the one it speaks of a universal consent or Generic Reason, the reason not of the individual but of the race to which he belongs, and exhibits a singular combination of the Philosophy of Common Sense as taught by Dr. Reid and the Scottish School, with the principle of Authoritative Tradition as taught in the Popish Church; in the other, it refers more specifically, not to the infallibility of the race at large, but to the infallibility of a select body, regularly organized and invested with peculiar powers, into whose hands has been committed the sacred deposit and the sole guardianship of truth, whether in matters of philosophy or faith. In both forms it is presented in the writings of M. Gerbet and M. Lamennais, and in both it is necessary for the full maintenance of the Popish system of doctrine. The theory, again, which places the principle of Certitude in EVIDENCE, admits of being exhibited in two very distinct aspects. In the one, it has been treated as if Evidence were purely *subjective*, as if it belonged exclusively to thought, and not to the object of thought, or as if it depended solely on the perceptions of our minds, and not at all on any objective reality which is independent of them, and which is equally true whether it be perceived by our minds or not. In this form it is a theory of Individualism, and has a strong tendency towards Skepticism. In the other aspect, Evidence is regarded as the sole and sufficient ground of Certitude, but it is viewed both *objectively* and *subjectively*; — *objectively*, as having its ground and reason in a reality that is independent of our perceptions, and that may or may not be perceived without being the less true or the less certain in itself; — and yet *subjectively* also, as being equally dependent on certain principles of reason or laws of thought, without which no external manifestation would suffice to create the ideas

and beliefs of the human mind, since the evidence which is exhibited externally must not only exist, but must be perceived, discerned, and appreciated, before it can generate belief: but when perceived, it produces conviction, varying in different cases in degree, and amounting in some to absolute certainty, which leaves no room either for denial or doubt.

Such are the three grand theories of Certitude, and the several distinct forms or phases in which they have severally appeared. We have no hesitation in declaring our decided preference for the second form of the third theory, — that which resolves the principle or ground of Certitude into EVIDENCE; but EVIDENCE considered both *objectively* and *subjectively*, — *objectively*, as that which exists whether it is perceived or not, and is independent of the caprices of individual minds, and *subjectively*, as that which must be discerned before its proper impression can be produced, which must be judged of according to the laws of human thought, and which, when so discerned and judged of, imparts a feeling of assurance which no sophistry can shake and no philosophy strengthen.

According to some recent theories, Certitude belongs to our knowledge, only because that knowledge is derived from a reason superior to our own, — a reason not personal, but universal, not individual but generic, which, although not belonging to ourselves, is supposed to hold communication with our minds: and if this were meant merely to remind us of the limitation of our faculties, and of our consequent liability to error, or even to teach us the duty of acknowledging our dependence on a higher power, it might be alike unobjectionable and salutary; but when it is applied to undermine the authority of private judgment and to supersede the exercise of free inquiry, they have a tendency to excite suspicion and distrust in every thoughtful mind. The capital error which pervades all these speculations consists in not distinguishing aright between the *evidence* which constitutes the ground of our belief, and the

*faculty* by which that evidence is discerned and appreciated. The Generic Reason of Lamennais, as well as the uniform Tradition of the Church, may constitute, when duly improved, a branch of the objective evidence for the truth, and as such they have been applied even by Protestant writers when they have appealed to *common consent* as a collateral proof, auxiliary to that which is more direct and conclusive; but they cannot be regarded as the exclusive grounds of the certainty of human knowledge, since this arises from the fundamental, universal, and invariable laws of human thought.

The term Skepticism, again, may denote either a mere *state of mind*,—a state of suspense or doubt in regard to some particular fact or opinion; or a *system of speculative philosophy*, relating to the principles of human knowledge or the grounds of human belief. In the former sense, it implies nothing more than the want of a sure and satisfactory conviction of the truth on the particular point in question. Were it expressed in words, it would simply amount to a verdict of “non liquet.” In the latter sense, it imports much more than this; it is not merely a *sense* of doubt respecting any one truth, but a *system* of doubt in regard to the grounds of our belief in all truth, a subtle philosophy which seeks to explain the phenomena of Belief by resolving them into their ultimate principles, and which often terminates—in explaining them away. In both forms, it has existed, either continuously or in ever-recurring cycles, from the earliest dawn of speculative inquiry; and while it has seemed to retard or arrest the progress of human knowledge, it has really been overruled as a means of quickening the intellectual powers, and imparting at once greater precision and comprehensiveness to the matured results of Science.

Theoretical Skepticism may be divided into *three* distinct branches: First, Universal or Philosophical Skepticism, which

professes to deny, or rather to doubt the certainty of all human knowledge; secondly, Partial or Religious Skepticism, which admits the possible certitude of human knowledge in other respects, but holds that religious truth is either altogether inaccessible to our faculties, or that it is not supported by sufficient evidence; thirdly, a mongrel system, which combines Philosophic Doubt with Ecclesiastical Dogmatism, and which may be aptly characterized as the Skeptico-Dogmatic theory.<sup>1</sup>

We agree with Dr. Reid in thinking that Universal Skepticism is unanswerable *by argument*, and can only be effectively met by an *appeal to consciousness*.<sup>2</sup> It might be shown, indeed, that in so far as it assumes, however slightly, the aspect of a positive or dogmatic system, it is self-contradictory and absurd; it might also be shown that doubt itself implies thought, and thought existence or reality: but the ultimate appeal must be to the facts of human consciousness, and the laws of thought which operate in every human breast. And when such an appeal is made, we can have no anxiety in regard to the result, nor any apprehension that philosophical skepticism can ever become the prevailing creed of the popular mind. There is a risk, however, of danger arising from a different source; it may not be always remembered that the theory of Skepticism must be universal to be either consistent or consequent; and hence it may be *partially applied* to some truths, while it is practically abandoned in regard to other truths, which are neither more certain nor less liable to objection than the

<sup>1</sup> SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, "Adversus Mathematicos," that is, Dogmaticos — teachers of μαθηματα. GLANVILLE, "Scepsis Scientifica." HUME, and MONTAIGNE, "Essays." H. O'CONNOR, "Connected Essays and Tracts." VILLEMANDY, "Scepticismus Debellatus; seu, Humanæ Cognitionis Ratio ab imis radicibus explicata; ejusdem Certitudo adversus Scepticos quosque veteres ac novos invicte asserta." LAMENNAIS, "Essai sur l'Indifférence."

<sup>2</sup> DR. REID, Essays, — "On First Principles," II. 249-252, 293, 300. SIR WM. HAMILTON, "Reid," pp. 91, 101, 109.

former. Thus the skeptical difficulties which have been raised against the doctrines of Ontology are of such a kind that if they have any validity or force, they bear as strongly against the reality of an external world and the existence of our fellow-men, as against the doctrine which affirms the being of God: yet many will be found urging them against the latter doctrine, who do not profess to have any doubt in regard to the two former; and it is of paramount importance to show that this is a partial and therefore unfair application of their own principles, and that they cannot consistently admit the one without also admitting the other.

Atheism, in its skeptical form, must either be a mere *sense of doubt* in regard to the sufficiency of the evidence in favor of the being and perfections of God; or a *speculative system*, which attempts to justify that doubt by some theory of philosophical skepticism, either partial or universal. In the *latter* case, it may be best dealt with by showing that it affects the certainty of our common knowledge, not less than that of our religious belief, and that we cannot consistently reject Theology, and yet retain our convictions on other cognate subjects of thought. In the *former* case, it should be treated as a case of ignorance, by illustrating the evidence, and urging it on the attention of those who have hitherto been blind to its force; reminding them that their *not seeing* it is no proof that it does not exist, and that *doubt* itself on such a question, so nearly affecting their duty and welfare, involves a solemn obligation to patient, candid, and dispassionate inquiry.

"A skeptic in religion," says Bishop Earle, "is one that hangs in the balance with all sorts of opinions, whereof not one but stirs him, and none sways him. A man guiltier of credulity than he is taken to be; for it is out of his belief of everything that he fully believes nothing. Each religion scares him from its contrary, none persuades him to itself. . . . He finds reason in all opinions, truth in none; indeed, the least

reason perplexes him, and the best will not satisfy him. . . . He finds doubts and scruples better than resolves them, and is always *too hard for himself*. . . . In sum, his whole life is a question, and his salvation a greater, which death only concludes, and then he — is resolved.”<sup>1</sup>

This second phase or form of Skepticism, which we have designated as *Partial* or *Religious Skepticism*, admits the possible certitude of human knowledge in other respects, and especially in regard to secular and scientific pursuits, but holds that religious truth is either altogether inaccessible to man with his present faculties, or that its certainty cannot be evinced by any legitimate process of reasoning.

These two positions are in some respects widely different, although they are often combined, and always conducive to the same result,—the practical negation of Religion. Many who never dream of doubting the certainty of human knowledge, in so far as it relates to their secular or scientific pursuits, are prone to cherish a skeptical spirit in regard to religious or spiritual truths; and this, not because they have examined and weighed the evidence to which Theology appeals, and found it wanting, but rather because they have a lurking suspicion that men, with their present faculties, are incapable of rising to the knowledge of supernatural things, and that they could attain to no certainty, while they might expose themselves to much delusion, by entering on the inquiry at all. This is their apology for *ignoring* Religion altogether, and contenting themselves with other branches of knowledge, which are supposed to be more certain in themselves as well as more conducive to their present welfare. In this respect, it is deeply instructive to remark that Infidelity has been singularly at variance with itself. At one time, in the age of Herbert, human reason was extolled, to the disparagement of Divine Revelation; it was

<sup>1</sup> BISHOP EARLE, “Microcosmography,” p. 120.

held to be so thoroughly competent to deal with all the truths of Theology, and to arrive, on mere natural grounds, at such an assured belief in them, that no supernatural message was needed either to illustrate, or confirm, or enforce the lessons of Nature: but now, when the lessons of Nature herself are called in question, human reason is disparaged as incompetent to the task of deciphering her dark hieroglyphics, and while she can traverse with firm step every department of the material world, and soar aloft, as on eagle's wings, to survey the suns and systems of astronomy, she is held to be incapable alike of religious inquiry and of divine instruction! There is, indeed, a striking contrast between the high pretensions of Reason in matters of philosophy, and the bastard humility which it sometimes assumes in matters of faith.

But there is another, and a still more subtle, form of Partial or Religious Skepticism. It does not absolutely deny the possibility of religious knowledge, nor does it dogmatically affirm that man, with his present faculties, can have no religious convictions; it contents itself with saying, and attempting to prove, that the certitude of religious truth cannot be evinced by any legitimate process of reasoning. It examines the proof, and detects flaws in it. It discusses, with a severe and critical logic, the arguments that have been employed to establish the first and most fundamental article of Theology, the existence of God; and discarding them one by one, it reaches the conclusion that, whether true or not, it cannot be proved. Strange as it may appear, these sentiments have been embraced and avowed by men who still continue to profess their belief in God and Religion. Some have held that proof by reasoning is impossible, but only because it is superfluous. They distinguish between *reason* and *reasoning*; and hold that while the latter is incompetent to the task of proving the existence of God, the former spontaneously suggests the idea of a Supreme Cause, and imparts to it all the certainty which belongs to a direct

intellectual intuition. Others distinguish between the *Speculative* and the *Practical Reason*; and hold that while the former cannot prove by an unexceptionable argument the existence of God, the latter affords a sufficient groundwork for religious belief and worship. Others, again, speak not so much of reason or reasoning, as of *sentiment and instinct*, as the source of our religious beliefs; and instead of addressing arguments to the understanding, they would make their appeal to the feelings and affections of the heart. There is still another class of writers who resolve all human knowledge, whether relating to things secular or spiritual, into what they call the principle of faith (*foi*), and to this class belong two distinct parties who are widely different from each other in almost everything else. It is important, therefore, to mark the radical difference between their respective systems, since it is apt to be concealed or disguised by the ambiguous use of the same phraseology by both. The one party may be described as the disciples of a *Faith-Philosophy of Reason*, the other of a *Faith-Philosophy of Revelation*: the former resolving all our knowledge into the intuitive perceptions or first principles of the human intellect, considered as a kind of divine and infallible, though natural inspiration; the latter contending that in regard at least to the knowledge of theological truth, human reason is utterly powerless, and can only arrive at certainty by faith in the divine testimony. The two are widely different, yet there are points of resemblance and agreement betwixt them, and on this account they have sometimes been classed together under a wide and sweeping generalization.

The form of Partial Skepticism to which these remarks apply is perhaps more common than it is generally supposed to be. On what other principle, indeed, can we account, at least in the case of religious men, for the indifference and even aversion with which they turn away from any attempt to prove by natural evidence the existence and providence of God? The

prevalence of such feelings even within the Christian community has been admitted and deplored by one of the most profound spiritual teachers of modern times;<sup>1</sup> and it can only be explained, where Religion is cherished and professed, on the supposition that they regard *proof by argument* as superfluous, either because it is superseded by the natural instincts and intuitions of the human mind, or by the authoritative teaching of Divine Revelation. But it ought to be seriously considered, on the one hand, that the instincts and intuitions of human reason are not altogether independent of the natural evidence which is exhibited in the constitution and course of Nature; and, on the other hand, that Revelation itself refers to that natural evidence, and recommends it to our careful and devout study.

Besides the theories of Partial Skepticism to which we have already referred, there is a mongrel system which seems to combine the two opposite extremes of Doubt and Dogmatism, and which, for that reason, may be not inaptly designated as *Skeptico-Dogmatic*.<sup>2</sup> Ever since the era of the Reformation, when the principle of free inquiry, and the right or rather the duty of private judgment in matters of Religion, were so strenuously affirmed and so successfully maintained, there has been a standing controversy between the Popish and Protestant Churches respecting the rival claims of Reason and Authority as the ultimate arbiter on points of faith. Extreme opinions on either side were advanced. One party, repudiating all authority, whether human or divine, rejected alike the testimony of Scripture and the decrees of the Church, and, receiving only what was supposed to be in accordance with the dictates of Reason, sought to establish a scheme of Rationalism

<sup>1</sup> DR. JOHN LOVE, of Glasgow, "Discourses."

<sup>2</sup> COUSIN, "Cours," II. 420, 422. MORELL, "History of Philosophy," I. 251; II. 221, 505, 522. SPINOZA, "Tractatus Theolog.-Polit.," p. 267. LAMENNAIS, "Essai sur l'Indifférence," *passim*.

in connection with at least a nominal profession of Christianity. The opposite party, not slow to detect the error into which extreme Protestants had fallen, and intent seemingly on fastening that error on all who had separated themselves from the Catholic Church, affirmed and endeavored to prove that Rationalism, in its most obnoxious sense, is inherent in and inseparable from the avowed principles of the Reformation, and that the recognition of the right of private judgment is necessarily subversive of all authority in matters of faith. They did not see, or if they did see, they were unwilling to acknowledge that Rationalism is a very different thing from the legitimate use of Reason; and that while the former repudiates all authority, whether human or divine, the latter may bow with profound reverence to the supreme authority of the Inspired Word, and even listen with docility to the ministerial authority of the Church, in so far as her teaching is in accordance with the lessons of Scripture. It may be safely affirmed that the Confessions and Articles of all the Protestant Churches in Europe and America do recognize the authority both of God and the Church, and are as much opposed to Rationalism, considered as a system which makes Reason the sole standard and judge, as they are to the opposite extreme of lordly domination over the faith and consciences of men. But such a controversy having arisen, it was to be expected that while eager partisans, on the one side, might unduly exalt and extol the powers and prerogatives of Reason, the adherents of Romanism, which claims the sanction of infallibility for her doctrines and decrees, would be tempted to follow an opposite course, and would seek to disparage the claims of Reason with the view of exalting the authority of the Church. Hence arose what has been called **POPISH PYRRHONISM**,—a system which attempts to combine Doubt with Dogmatism, and to establish the certitude of religious knowledge on the sole basis of authority, which is somehow supposed to be more secure and stable when it rests

on the ruins of human reason. Not a few significant symptoms of a tendency in this direction have appeared from age to age. It was apparent in some of the writings, otherwise valuable, of Huet, Bishop of Avranches; some traces of it are discernible in the profound "Thoughts of Pascal;" but it was reserved for the present age to elaborate this tendency into a theory, and to give it the form of a regular system. This task was fearlessly undertaken by the eloquent but versatile Lamennais, while as yet he held office in the Church, and was publicly honored as one who was worthy to be called "the latest of the Fathers." His "Essay on Indifference in Matters of Faith," exhibits many proofs of a profound and vigorous intellect, and contains many passages of powerful and impressive eloquence. We heartily sympathize with it in so far as it is directed against that Liberalism which makes light of all definite articles of faith; but we deplore the grievous error into which he has been seduced by his zeal for the authority of the Church, when he attempts to undermine the foundations of all belief in the trustworthiness of the human faculties. In opposition to the claims of private judgment, he contends for the necessity of a Reason more elevated and more general as the only ground of Certitude, the supreme rule and standard of belief. This normal Reason he finds in the doctrine and decrees of an Infallible Church, wherever the Church is known; but where the Church is yet unknown, or while it was yet non-existent in its present organized form, he seeks this more general Reason in the common sense or unanimous consent of the race at large, and affirms that this is the sole ground of Certitude, and the ultimate standard of appeal in every question respecting the truth or falsity of our individual opinions.<sup>1</sup> He holds that the authority both of the Church and of the Race is *infallible*; and that its infallibility neither requires nor admits of proof.<sup>2</sup> With

<sup>1</sup> LAMENNAIS, "Essai," II. 6, 7, 52, 60, 258.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II. 9, 97, 110.

the view of establishing this one and exclusive criterion of Certitude, he assails the evidence of sense, the evidence of consciousness, the evidence of memory, the evidence even of axiomatic truths and first principles, and involves everything except ecclesiastical authority or general reason in the same abyss of Skepticism.<sup>1</sup> He ventures even to affirm that "Geometry itself, the most exact of all the Sciences, rests, like every other, on common consent!" No wonder, then, that he should also found exclusively on *authority* our belief in the existence and government of God.

An intelligent member of his own communion propounds a very different, and much more reasonable, opinion: "Il n'y a pas d'autorité morale qui n'ait besoin de se prouver elle-même, d'une manière quelconque, et d'établir sa légitimité. En définitive, c'est à l'individu qu'elle s'adresse, car on ne croit pas par masse, on croit chacun pour soi. L'individu reste donc toujours juge, et juge inevitable de l'autorité intellectuelle qu'il accepte, ou de celle qui s'offre à lui. Nous n'avons pas à examiner si cette disposition constitutive de l'esprit humain est bonne ou mauvaise; la seule question que l'on en fait est vaine et sterile. Nous sommes necessairement amenés par l'observation psychologique à constater qu'il faut que l'homme croie à la fidélité du témoignage de ses sens individuels, et à la valeur de sa raison personnelle, avant de faire un pas au-delà."<sup>2</sup>

We think it unnecessary to enter into a detailed discussion of this strange and startling theory, especially as the altered position of the writer in his relation to the Church before his death may be held to indicate that to a large extent it had been abandoned by himself. Nor should we have thought it worthy even of this transient notice, had we not discerned symptoms of an incipient tendency in a similar direction among

<sup>1</sup> LAMENNAIS, "Essai," II. 59, 72, 75, 78, 80, 84, 94; IV. 255.

<sup>2</sup> BOUCHITTÉ, "Histoire des Preuves," p. 478.

some writers in the Protestant ranks. It should be remembered by divines of every communion that the rational faculties of man and their general trustworthiness are necessarily presupposed in any Revelation which may be addressed to them; and that in Scripture itself frequent appeals are made to the works of Creation and Providence, as affording at once a body of natural evidence, and a signal manifestation of His adorable perfections. It were a vain thing to hope that *faith in God* may be strengthened by a spirit of *Skepticism* in regard to Reason, which constitutes part of His own image on the soul of man.

It is but common justice to add that the speculations of Lamennais, so far from being sanctioned, were openly censured, by some of the most distinguished of his fellow-ecclesiastics. Such writers as Valroger, Gioberti, and the late Archbishop of Paris, gave forth their public protest against them, and have thereby done much to vindicate their Church from the imputation of conniving at the progress of Skepticism.

Valroger's testimony is strong and decided: "M. de Lamennais prétendait que la raison individuelle est incapable de nous donner la Certitude. Cette prétention est, suivant, nous absurde et funeste. N'est ce pas par notre raison individuelle que la vérité-arrivé a nous et devient notre bien? Quel moyen plus immediat pourrions-nous avoir de saisir la vérité? Quel principe de connaissance ou de Certitude pourrions-nous placer entre nous et notre raison? Et comment pourrions-nous l'employer, si ce n'est avec notre raison? N'est ce pas une contradiction flagrante de vouloir persuader quelque chose à des hommes que l'on a déclarés incapables de connaître certainement quoi que ce soit? A quoi bon une methode, une autorité infaillible, un enseignement Divin, si nous n'avons que des facultés trompeuses pour user de ces secours? Nous croyons, nous, que la raison individuelle peut connaître avec certitude toutes les vérités nécessaires à l'accomplissement de notre des-

tinée. Si nous avons besoin de la Grace, de la Revelation, de la Tradition, et de l'Eglise pour atteindre le bût supreme de notre vie,—sur une foule de questions subalternes, nous pouvons arriver a une certitude complete, sans recourir à aucune extérieure, à aucun secours surnaturel.”<sup>1</sup>

Gioberti is equally explicit: “M. de Lamennais dans sa theorie sur la Certitude, confond les deux methodes, Ontologique et Physiologique; il les rejette toutes les deux, et leur substitue la seule methode d'Autorité. Mais la methode d'Autorité est impossible sans un fondement Ontologique, et c'est une manifeste petition de principe que d'établir l'Ontologie sur l'Autorité.”<sup>2</sup>

And the late Archbishop of Paris,—the same who fell before the barricades, a martyr to Charity if not to Truth, and who seems to have had a wakeful eye on the progress of philosophic speculation,—took occasion, in a preface to the Abbé Maret's “Theodicée,” to declare that Lamennais' system was obnoxious to the Church, because of its opposition to the doctrine of Rational Certitude: “Tout le monde sait que le clergé de France avait repoussé le systeme de M. de Lamennais precisément à cause de son opposition a la Certitude Rationnelle constamment professée dans nos ecoles; et tout le monde peu savoir que les Bossuet, les Fenelon, les Descartes ont raisonné, et que nous aussi nous raisonnons et discutons avec nos accusateurs,” . . . . “preuve irrécusable que LE RATIONALISME ET LA RAISON SONT DEUX CHOSES FORT DIFFERENTES.”<sup>3</sup>

PERRONE has given a similar testimony, and we cannot doubt that the more thoughtful adherents of Romanism must be sensible of the danger which is involved in any attempt to combine Rational Skepticism with Dogmatic Authority.

It were well, however, if they would reconsider their position

<sup>1</sup> VALROGER, “Etudes Critiques,” p. 574.

<sup>2</sup> GIOBERTI, “Introduction a l'Etude de la Philosophie,” i. 592.

<sup>3</sup> MARET, “Theodicée,” Preface, p. VIII.

with reference to this whole question, in its more general bearings in connection with their doctrine as to the rule of faith; and weigh, with candid impartiality, the arguments which have been adduced by Protestant writers on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LA PLACETTE, "De Insanabili Romanæ Ecclesiæ Scepticismo."



## CHAPTER IX.

### THEORY OF SECULARISM.—G. J. HOLYOAKE.

SUCH is the new name under which Atheism has recently appeared among not a few of the tradesmen and artisans of the metropolis and provincial towns of Great Britain. In literature, it is represented by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, the author of an answer to Paley, the editor of "The Reasoner," and a popular lecturer and controversialist, whose public discussions are duly reported in that periodical, and occasionally reprinted in a separate form.<sup>1</sup> The extensive circulation which these and similar tracts have already obtained, the number of affiliated societies which have been formed in many of the chief centres of manufactures and commerce, the zeal and boldness of popular itinerant lecturers, and the urgent demands which have been incessantly made for the extension of their machinery by means of a *propaganda* fund, are all indications of a tendency, in some quarters, towards a form of unbelief, less speculative and more practical, but only on that account more attractive to

<sup>1</sup> GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE, "Paley Refuted in his own Words," Third Edition. London, 1850. TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "A Public Discussion on the Being of a God," Third Thousand. London, 1852. GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, "Christianity and Secularism; a Public Discussion held on six successive Thursday evenings," Seventh Thousand. London, 1853,

the English mind, and neither less insidious nor less dangerous than any of the philosophical theories of Atheism.

We have often thought, indeed, that should Atheism ever threaten to become prevalent in England, this is the form which it is most likely to assume. The English mind is eminently practical; it has little sympathy with the profundity of German or the subtlety of French speculation on such subjects. A few speculative spirits may be influenced for a time by the reasonings of Comte, or the representations of "The Vestiges;" but the general mind of the community will desiderate something more solid and substantial; not content with any scientific theory, however ingenious, it will demand a practical system. And we are not sure that "Secularism" may not be made to appear, in the view of some, to be just such a system, since it dismisses or refuses to pronounce on many of the highest problems of human thought, insists on the necessary limitation of the human faculties, and seeks to confine both our aspirations and our thoughts to the interests and the duties of the present life. In estimating the probable influence of such a system on the public mind, we must not forget the large amount of practical irreligion which exists even in England, the strong temptation which is felt by many to escape from their occasional feelings of remorse and fear by embracing some plausible pretext for the neglect of prayer and other religious observances, and the disposition, natural and almost irresistible in such circumstances, to lend a willing ear to any doctrine which promises to relieve them of all responsibility with relation to God and a future state. The theory of Secularism is adapted to this state of mind; it chimes in with the instinctive tendencies of every ungodly mind; and it is the likeliest medium through which *practical Atheism* may pass into *speculative Infidelity*.

Mr. Holyoake, it is true, abjures the name both of an *Atheist* and *Infidel*. We admire the prudence of his policy, but cannot subscribe to the correctness of his reasons for doing so. "Mr.

Southwell," he says, "has taken an objection to the term Atheism. We are glad he has. We have disused it a long time. . . . We disuse it, because Atheist is a worn-out word. Both the ancients and the moderns have understood by it *one without God, and also without morality*. Thus the term connotes more than any well-informed and earnest person accepting it ever included in it; that is, the word carries with it associations of immorality, which have been repudiated by the Atheist as seriously as by the Christian. Non-theism is a term less open to the same misunderstanding, as it implies the simple non-acceptance of the Theist's explanation of the origin and government of the world."<sup>1</sup>

But "Non-theism" was afterwards exchanged for "Secularism," as a term less liable to misconstruction, and more correctly descriptive of the real import of the theory. "*Secularists* was, perhaps, the proper designation of all who dissented extremely from the religious opinions of the day."—"Free-thinking is the *Secular* sphere; drawing its line of demarcation between time and eternity, it works *for the welfare of man in this world*."—"The *Secularist* is the larger and more comprehensive designation of the Atheist."<sup>2</sup> With all this coyness and fastidiousness about names, there can be no doubt that the character of the system is essentially atheistic: "We refuse to employ the term God, not having any definite idea of it which we can explain to others, — not knowing any theory of such an existence as will enable us to defend that dogma to others. We therefore prefer the honest, though unusual designation of Atheist; not using it in the sense in which it is

<sup>1</sup> "The Reasoner," New Series, No. VIII. 115. Of this serial it is said (XII. 6, 81), "The Reasoner, which was established in 1846, has come to be regarded as the accredited organ of Freethinking in Great Britain. Indeed, for a long time, it has been the principal professed exponent of these views, *addressed to the working and thinking classes*."

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., XI. 15, 222; XII. 4, 6, 49, 81.

commonly employed, as signifying *one without morality*, but in its stricter sense of describing those *without any determinate knowledge of Deity*.”<sup>1</sup> “That the Atheist does consider matter to be eternal is perfectly correct; and for this reason, no Atheist could make use of such a term as that matter *originally* possessed, or *originally* was; whatever is eternal has no origin, beginning, or end. . . . Organized plants and animals—man also with his noble intellect—are not *now* at least produced by supernatural causes; and the Atheist, without positively asserting that there *must* have been a beginning to life in this earth, argues that if a plant, an animal, or a man, can be produced at this time without supernatural interference, so also a first plant, a first animal, or a first man, may have been naturally produced in this earth under the right circumstances,—circumstances which probably cannot occur in the present condition of our globe. Our difficulties and our ignorance are not in the least dispelled, but on the contrary complicated and increased, by the adoption of the ancient belief in a Supernatural Contriver and Maker, who, after existing from eternity in absolute void and solitude, suddenly proceeded to create the universe out of nothing or out of himself.”<sup>2</sup> The editor thinks “the course to be taken is to use the term Secularists as indicating general views, and accept the term Atheist at the point at which Ethics declines alliance with Theology; always, however, explaining the term Atheist to mean ‘not seeing God,’ visually or inferentially; never suffering it to be taken (as Chalmers, Foster, and many others represent it) for Anti-theism, that is, hating God, denying God, as *hating* implies personal knowledge as the ground of dislike, and *denying* implies infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof.”<sup>3</sup>

These extracts are sufficient to illustrate the peculiar character of this popular form of Infidelity. It is not a philosophical

<sup>1</sup> “The Reasoner,” XII. 4, 50.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid., XI. 18, 271.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid., XI. 15, 232.

system, although philosophical terms are often employed by its advocates; it does not even profess to solve, as the theory of Development does, any of the great problems of Nature. We shall offer a brief statement of its distinctive peculiarities, as it is developed by Mr. Holyoake, and suggest some considerations which should be seriously pondered by those who may be tempted to exchange Christianity for Secularism.

1. The theory of Secularism is a form, not of *dogmatic*, but of *skeptical*, Atheism; it is dogmatic only in *denying the sufficiency of the evidence* for the being and perfections of God. It does not deny, it only does not believe, His existence. There may be a God notwithstanding; there may even be sufficient evidence of His being, although some men cannot, or will not, see it. "They do not deny the existence of God, but only assert that they have not sufficient proof of His existence."<sup>1</sup> "The Non-theist takes this ground. He affirms that natural reason has *not yet* attained to (evidence of) Supernatural Being. He does not deny that it *may do so*, because the capacity of natural reason in the pursuit of evidence of Supernatural Being is not, so far as he is aware, fixed." — "The power of reason is yet a growth. To deny its power absolutely would be hazardous; and in the case of a speculative question, not to admit that the opposite views may in some sense be tenable, is to assume your own infallibility, — a piece of arrogance the public always punish by disbelieving you when you are in the right."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly the thesis which Mr. Holyoake undertook to maintain in public discussion was couched in these terms:—"That we have *not sufficient evidence* to believe in the existence of a Supreme Being independent of Nature;"<sup>3</sup> and so far from venturing to deny His existence, he makes the important admission, that "*denying implies infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof.*"

<sup>1</sup> "The Reasoner," XII. 24, 376.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., New Series, pp. 9, 130.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. XI. 24. 368

It is admitted, then, by the Secularist himself, — that there *may be* a God, — that there may be evidence of His existence, — that it may yet be discovered in the progress of natural reason, — and that to deny any one of these possibilities would be to assume “infallibility,” or to arrogate “infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof.” Now, we humbly conceive that there is enough in these admissions, if not to disarm the Secular polemic, yet to shut up every seriously reflecting man, not, perhaps, to the instant recognition of a Divine Being, but certainly to the duty of earnest, patient, and persevering inquiry. It was with this view that both Chalmers and Foster penned those powerful passages which seem to have left some impression on the mind even of Mr. Holyoake, not for the purpose, as he seems to imagine, of confounding Atheism with Anti-theism, but for the very opposite purpose of discriminating between the two, so as to show that, the one being impossible, the *other* can afford no security against the possible truth of Religion. And every word of warning which they convey should tell with powerful effect on Mr. Holyoake’s conscience, after the admissions which he has deliberately made, especially when he is engaged in the cheerless task of undermining the faith of multitudes in their “Father which is in heaven.”

Dr. Chalmers devotes a chapter of his “Natural Theology” to illustrate “the duty which is laid upon men by the *possibility* or even the *imagination* of a God.” He does not overlook, on the contrary he founds upon, the distinction between Skeptical and Dogmatic Atheism. “Going back,” he says, “to the very earliest of our mental conceptions on this subject, we advert first to the distinction, in point of real and logical import, between unbelief and disbelief. There being no ground for affirming that there is a God, is a different proposition from there being ground for affirming that there is no God. . . . The Atheist does not labor to demonstrate that there is no God; but he labors to demonstrate that there is no adequate

proof of there being one. He does not positively affirm the position, that God is not; but he affirms the lack of evidence for the position, that God is. Judging from the tendency and effect of his arguments, an Atheist does not appear positively to refuse that a God may be; but he insists that He has not discovered Himself, whether by the utterance of His voice in audible revelation, or by the impress of His hand upon visible nature. His verdict on the doctrine of a God is only that it is not proven; it is not, that it is disproven. He is but an Atheist: he is not an Anti-theist."

Mr. Holyoake can scarcely fail to recognize in these words a correct and graphic delineation of his own position and sentiments. Now, says Dr. Chalmers, "there is a certain *duteous* movement which the mind *ought* to take, on the bare suggestion that a God *may be*. . . . The certainty of an actual God binds over to certain distinct and most undoubted proprieties. But so also may the imagination of a possible God; in which case, the very idea of a God, even in its most hypothetical form, might lay a *responsibility even upon Atheists*. . . . The very idea of a God will bring along with it an instant sense and recognition of the moralities and duties that would be owing to Him. Should an actual God be revealed, we clearly feel that there is a something which we *ought* to be and to do in regard to Him. But more than this: should a possible God be imagined, there is a something not only which we feel that we *ought*, but there is a something which we actually ought to do or to be, in consequence of our being visited by such an imagination. . . . To this condition there attaches a most clear and incumbent morality. It is to go in quest of that unseen Benefactor, who, for aught I know, has ushered me into existence, and spread so glorious a panorama around me. It is to probe the secret of my being and my birth; and, if possible, to make discovery whether it was indeed the hand of a Benefactor that brought me forth from nonentity, and gave me place

and entertainment in that glowing territory which is lighted up with the hopes and happiness of living men. It is thus that *the very conception of a God throws a solemn responsibility after it.*"<sup>1</sup>

It is a dangerous mistake, then, to imagine either that we can ever know *that there is no God*, or that we can get rid of all responsibility by merely *doubting* His existence. Atheism, in so far as it is *dogmatic*, must, in his own language, "arrogate infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof;" and in so far as it is merely *skeptical*, it can afford no security against the fears and forebodings which *doubt* on such a subject must necessarily awaken in every thoughtful mind. And this consideration will become only the more solemn and impressive the longer we reflect upon it. Mr. Holyoake, however, is far from being consistent in his various statements on this subject. For not content with saying, "Most decidedly I believe that the present order of Nature is insufficient to prove the existence of an intelligent Creator," he<sup>2</sup> adds that "*no imaginable order*, that no contrivance, however mechanical, precise, or clear, would be sufficient to prove it."<sup>2</sup> At one time he tells us that "an increasing party respectfully and deferentially avow their inability to subscribe to the arguments supposed to establish the existence of a Being distinct from Nature." At another, "We have always held that the existence of Deity is 'past finding out,' and we have held that the time employed upon the investigation might more profitably be devoted to the study of humanity." Again, "That central point in all religious belief — the existence of God — has not yet been approached in a frank spirit. The very terms of the assertion are *as yet* an enigma in language, the fact is *yet* a problem in philosophy; the world possesses *as yet* no adequate logic for that province of our speculation which lies beyond our immediate ex-

<sup>1</sup> DR. CHALMERS' "Works," I. 64.

<sup>2</sup> "Paley Refuted," p. 12.

perience.”<sup>1</sup> “Man must die to solve the problem of Deity’s existence.”<sup>2</sup> “The existence of God is a problem to which the mathematics of human intelligence *seems to me* to furnish no solution,”<sup>3</sup> “a problem without a solution, a hieroglyphic without an interpretation, a gordian knot still untied, a question unanswered, a thread still unravelled, a labyrinth untrod.”<sup>4</sup> That there is here a strong expression of Skeptical Atheism is evident; but is there not something more? Does not Skeptical Atheism insensibly transform itself into Dogmatic, when doubt respecting the sufficiency of the evidence is combined with a denial of the possibility of any satisfactory proof, or of the capacity of the human mind to reach it, here or hereafter? Yet the plea is the want of sufficient evidence now; and this plea is urged in connection with the admission that “the power of reason is yet a growth,” and that although “it has not yet attained to evidence of Supernatural Being,” the denial of it “would imply infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof.” Mr. Holyoake does not deny that there *may be* a God, distinct from Nature and superior to it; but he denies, first of all, the sufficiency of the evidence to which we appeal, embracing here that form of Atheism which is merely skeptical; and he denies, secondly, the possibility of any sufficient proof, for “no imaginable order would be sufficient,” and the whole “subject exceeds human comprehension,” embracing, in this instance, that form of Atheism which is strictly dogmatic, if not in affirming that there is no God, yet in affirming that it is impossible He can ever be known to exist. What then becomes of his cautious limitations, — “The fact is *yet* a problem in philosophy.” — “The world possesses *as yet* no adequate logic for that province

<sup>1</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, “Discussion,” pp. 5, 8, 221.

<sup>2</sup> “The Reasoner Reasoned with,” p. 13. “Holyoake’s Reply to Dr. Forbes of Glasgow.”

<sup>3</sup> “The Logic of ‘Logic of Death,’” p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> “Paley Refuted,” p. 37.

of speculation" — "Men must die to solve the problem of Deity's existence?" Is it still a problem, and one, too, which may after all be solved, and solved even in the affirmative? If it be, why may it not be solved before death? or what *other* evidence will there be after death? And as to the plea of insufficient evidence, what is its precise meaning? Does it mean merely that it has hitherto failed to convince himself and his associates? If so, how can he tell that it may not yet flash upon him with irresistible power, and that he too, like his former associate, Mr. Knight, may be able to say, "By the blessing of God, the exercise of those mental powers which He has bestowed upon me has led me to the conclusion that He exists. There is a God."<sup>1</sup> If it means more than this, will he say that it is insufficient for others as well as for him? But why, if others believe on the ground of that evidence, and if, according to his favorite theory, belief is *the inevitable* result of evidence? Is his belief, or theirs, the measure of truth? Does he not know that multitudes have passed through the same dreary shade of unbelief in which he is still involved, and have afterwards emerged into the clear light of faith, discovering what they now wonder they had overlooked before, and saying with heartfelt humility and gratitude, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see"?<sup>2</sup> But what has their belief, or his unbelief, to do with the great, the momentous fact? The truth, whatever it be, is independent of both: and it is the *truth*, and not our apprehensions of it, it is the *evidence*, and not our belief or doubt, that is the subject of inquiry. Will it be affirmed, then, either that the supposed existence of God is intrinsically incredible, and as such incapable of proof, or that the evidence is insufficient, in the sense of being illogical and inconclusive? This is the ultimate ground of atheistic

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> "The Converted Atheist's Testimony."

unbelief, and here the Skeptical unites and blends with the Dogmatic form of Infidelity.

But when driven to this last resort, and before taking up the position which it is concerned to defend, Secularism puts forth certain preliminary pleas, partly in the way of self-defence, and partly with the view of exciting prejudice against the cause of Theism.<sup>1</sup> "I make no pretence," says Mr. Holyoake, "to account for everything. I do not pretend to account for what I find in Nature. I do not feel called upon to account for it. I do not know that I am required to account for it." . . . "A man will come to me and say, Can you account for this? Can you account for that? Now he expects me to tell him all about everything, just as though I was present at the beginning of Nature, and knew all its manifestations. If I cannot do it, he will not admit my plea of ignorance;— he will not admit the propriety of my saying, I do not know." He is not bound to explain either the past or the future: "What went before and what will follow me I regard as two black impenetrable curtains, which hang down at the two extremities of human life, and which no living man has yet drawn aside. . . . A deep silence reigns behind this curtain; no one once within will answer those he has left without; all you can hear is a hollow echo of your question, as if you shouted into a chasm."<sup>2</sup> And can a mind that is capable of writing thus be content to discard Religion from his thoughts on the sorry pretext that he is not bound to account for the phenomena of Nature? One would expect at least a thoughtful, serious, and earnest spirit, even were it a spirit of doubt, in one surrounded with such solemn mysteries, gazing on these black impenetrable curtains, listening to the hollow echo from that awful chasm: nay, that seriousness might be expected to deepen into sadness,

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 56, 57.

<sup>2</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Logic of Death."

too intensely real to be soothed by the plea of ignorance, or assuaged otherwise than by the light of truth. But to say, "I do not pretend to account for what I find in Nature," what is this but to discard the whole question, to give it up as one insoluble, at least *by him*, and to leave to others the problems which have ever exercised the noblest and most gifted minds? Mr. Holyoake is not bound, indeed, to explain everything, and he mistakes if he supposes that any one expects this at his hand. There are many subjects on which even a man of science must ingenuously confess his ignorance, and many more so little connected with the interests and duties of life as to have only a very slight claim on his interest and attention. But Religion is not one of these: it is so closely related to the welfare and the duty of men, and has such a direct bearing on the conscience, that it demands and deserves the serious attention of all; and no one who undertakes to instruct his fellow-men, and especially when he attempts to overthrow their most sacred convictions, is entitled to turn round and say, "I do not pretend to account for what I find in Nature." He is bound to give some intelligible answer to the question, What is the cause of these marvellous phenomena which I behold? and what is the ground of that religious belief which has always prevailed in the world?

But Mr. Holyoake is deterred from any attempt to answer such questions by its amazing presumption: "The assumption is,—we may look through Nature up to Nature's God. That seems to me to imply a power, a capacity, an endowment, which repels me at the outset. If we are to deal with the common sense of probability, I say I am repelled by the amazing probability which is against me if I am to deal with the assumption of distinctness,—that I can look from Nature up to Nature's God. Why, in the presence of this shadowy form of things, before which all men stand in awe and dread, in the presence of so many mysteries and marvels which art is unable

to unravel, which philosophy is unable to explain, it seems to me an immense endowment when a man can say with confidence, I look through Nature, and beyond Nature, up to Nature's God. I say the presumption of the thing does repel me."—"Let the profound sense of our own littleness, which here creeps in upon us, check the dogmatic spirit and arrest the presumptuous world; we stand in the great presence of Nature, whose inspiration should be that of modesty, humility, and love."—"When my friend talks so much about matter, . . . his reasoning proceeds upon this very great hypothesis, namely, that *he knows* all that matter can do, and all that it cannot do. If he does not know that, I wonder by what right he says so plainly that the wonders he observes in Nature are not the work of Nature, but of some Being above Nature. That which repels me from that aspect of the argument is its amazing presumption, the amount of knowledge it implies."<sup>1</sup> Foster's argument against Dogmatic Atheism seems to have made some impression on Mr. Holyoake, since he makes the important admission that "the denial of a God implies infinite knowledge as the ground of disproof," but it is here retorted against Dogmatic Theism; and Unbelief, at other times so arrogant in its pretensions, so confident in the powers of reason, and so proud of the prerogatives of man, borrows the cloak of modesty from the wardrobe of true science, and assumes an attitude of deep humility. At other times Mr. Holyoake does not scruple to sit in judgment on what God,—supposing such a Being to exist,—could or could not do; on what He could or could not permit to be done;—He could not create a moral, and responsible agent, and leave him to fall; He could not require or receive any satisfaction for sin; He could not hear or answer the prayers of his people; He could not inflict penal suffering, or allow it to be permanent. There is no presumption,

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 22, 37, 55.

it would seem, in determining what God could or could not do; but "when we stand in the great presence of Nature," her inspiration should be "that of modesty and humility." But presumption does not consist in looking at what we can see, or aiming to know what may be known; and it is a bastard humility, not the true modesty of science, which would turn away from the contemplation of any truth, however sublime, that is exhibited in the light of its appropriate evidence. We are not concerned to deny that it is "a great endowment" which enables men to discern in Nature a manifestation of God; it is a great endowment, but not too great for the mind of man, if he was made in "the image and likeness of God;" a small mirror may reflect the sun. Is it presumptuous in the mind of man to scale the heavens, and trace the planets in their course, and calculate their distances, their orbits, and their motions in the illimitable fields of space? And if the sublime truths of Astronomy are not interdicted to our faculties, simply because there is a natural evidence in the light of which they may be clearly discerned, why should it be presumptuous to look from Nature up to Nature's God, if in Nature we behold a mirror in which His perfections are displayed? If there be presumption on either side, does it not lie rather with those who virtually deny *the power of God to make Himself known*,—His power to create a world capable of exhibiting His perfections, and a mind adapted to that world capable of discerning the perfections which are therein displayed? There might be modesty, there might be humility in the ingenuous confession of ignorance, saying, "I do not know;" but there can be neither in the confidence which affirms that "no imaginable order would be sufficient" to prove the existence of God, for what is this but to say that "he knows all that matter *can* do, and all that it *cannot* do," or be made to do?

2. Secularism admits the existence of a self-existent and

eternal Being, and thereby recognizes the fundamental law of *Causality* on which the Theistic proof depends, while it forces upon us the question whether these attributes should be ascribed to Nature or to God.

"I am driven," says Mr. Holyoake, "to the conclusion that the great aggregate of matter which we call 'nature' is eternal, because we are unable to conceive a state of things when nothing was. There must always have been something, or there could be nothing now. This the dullest feel. Hence we arrive at the idea of the eternity of matter. And in the *eternity* of matter we are assured of the self-existence of matter, and self-existence is the most *majestic of attributes*, and *includes all others*."<sup>1</sup> "If Natural Theologians were content to stop where they prove a *superior something* to exist, Atheists might be content to stop there too, and allow Theologians to dream in quiet over their barren foundling."<sup>2</sup> "If I supposed that the Christian meant no more than that something exists independently of Nature, that it may be boundless, that it may be limited, that it may be one, that it may be many beings, if I supposed nothing more than that was meant, then surely I would not occupy your time or my own in discussing a question so barren of practical consequences."—"If we reason about it, unless we take refuge in the idea of a creation which we cannot understand, we must come to the conclusion that *Nature is self-existent*, and that attribute is so majestic,—the power of being independent of any ruler,—the power of being independent of the law of other beings,—seems so majestic as fairly to be supposed to *include all others*; for that which has power *to be* has power *to act*, for the power to be is the most majestic of all forms of action."<sup>3</sup>

It is here admitted that there must be a self-existent, inde-

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Logic of Death."

<sup>2</sup> "Paley Refuted," p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 17, 24.

pendent, and eternal Being, that self-existence is an attribute so majestic that it may be fairly said to include all others, that the Being to whom it belongs is exempt from the conditions of other beings, and that the power *to act* is involved in the power *to be*. It is assumed, indeed, that these attributes may belong to Nature, and that Nature is mere matter; but, reserving this point for the present, are we not warranted in saying that his doctrine, as stated by himself, involves the same profound mysteries, and is embarrassed by the same difficulties, which are often urged as objections to the theory of Religion, and that it is, at the very least, as *incomprehensible* as the doctrine which affirms the existence of God? Suppose there were simply an equality in this respect between the Theistic and Atheistic hypothesis, that both were alike incomprehensible and incapable of an adequate explanation, still the former might be more credible and more satisfactory to reason than the latter, since in the one we have an intelligent and designing Cause, such as accounts for the existence of other minds and the manifold marks of design in Nature, whereas in the other all the phenomena of thought, and feeling, and volition, as well as all the instances of skilful adjustment and adaptation, must be resolved into the power of self-existent, but unintelligent and unconscious matter.

Further it is admitted, not only that we may, but that we *must*, proceed on the principle of Causality, the fundamental axiom of Theology; for "there *must* always have been something, or there *could be* nothing now." This principle or law of human thought leads him up to a region which far transcends his present sensible experience, and guides him to the stupendous height of self-existent and eternal Being. It is assumed and applied to prove the self-existence and eternity of matter. But if it be a valid principle of reason, its application may be equally legitimate when it is employed, in conjunction with the manifest evidence of *moral* as distinct from *physical* causation,

to prove the self-existence and eternity of a supreme intelligent Cause. A principle such as this cannot, from its very nature, be limited within the range of our present sensible experience. We are told, indeed, that "if we look over the nature of our own impressions, we find we always shall begin with things which lie below reason, with things plainer than reason, with things which need no demonstration. Such is the nature of the human mind, that we all begin in this sphere of equal knowledge, we begin under the dominion of the senses, and whatever comes within that wants no demonstration, wants no proof, wants no logic; it is the constant, it is the most indubitable, it is the most indisputable of all our knowledge. And if the question of the being of a God came within that sphere, if it was found amongst those indisputable truths, if it was found to be a matter of sense, then there would be no occasion for us to reason at all about it: it could not be a matter of controversy, because it never would be a matter of dispute."<sup>1</sup> Certain first principles of reason are admitted, but only, it would seem, with reference to matters of sense; but why, if there be such a principle of reason as compels the Atheist himself to acknowledge a Self-existent and Eternal Being? Is this a matter of sense? Is it not a conclusion of reason,—founded, no doubt, on present sensible experience, but far transcending it,—and yet self-evident and irresistible as intuition itself? And if reason may thus rise from the contingent and variable to the conception and belief of the self-existent and eternal, why may it not be equally valid as a proof of a supreme, intelligent First Cause?

Speaking of Nature as self-existent and eternal, Mr. Holyoake ascribes such attributes to it as might seem to imply a leaning towards Pantheism, rather than the colder form of mere material Atheism. "It seems to me," he says, "that

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 25.

Nature and God are one; in other words, that the God whom we seek is the Nature whom we know." But he afterwards states, with clearness and precision, in what respects Secularism accords with, and differs from, Pantheism: "The term, God, seems to me inapplicable to Nature. In the mouth of the Theist, God signifies an entity, spiritual and percipient, distinct from matter. With Pantheists, the term God signifies the aggregate of Nature,—but Nature *as a being, intelligent and conscious*. It is my inability to subscribe to either of these views which constitutes me an Atheist. I cannot rank myself with the Theists, because I can conceive of nothing beyond Nature, distinct from it, and above it. . . . The Theist, therefore, I leave; but while I go with the Pantheist so far as to accept the fact of Nature in the plenitude of its diverse, illimitable, and transcendent manifestations, I cannot go further and predicate with the Pantheist *the unity of its intelligence and consciousness!*"<sup>1</sup> He holds, therefore, that self-existence is an attribute of Nature, that this attribute is so majestic that it may be fairly held to include *all others*, and that, while intelligence and consciousness exist, he cannot affirm their *unity* in Nature, or regard "Nature as a being, intelligent and conscious." Whence it follows that he can give no other account of the living, intelligent, active, and responsible beings which inhabit the world, than that they came into existence, he knows not how, and that they have the ultimate ground of their existence in a necessary, underived, and eternal being, which is neither intelligent nor self-conscious!

3. Secularism seeks to invalidate the proof from *marks of design* in Nature by attempting to show, either that it is *merely analogical*, and can, therefore, afford no certainty, or that, if it were certain, it could prove nothing, because, by an extension of the same principle, it must prove too much.

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Logic of Death."

Such is the pith and substance of Mr. Holyoake's argument in his singular pamphlet entitled, "Paley refuted in his own Words." He first of all endeavors to invalidate the proof from design by assuming that it is a mere argument from *analogy*, and that at the best analogy can afford no ground of *certainty*, although it may possibly suggest a *probable conjecture*: "It may be said that *analogy* fails to find out God, and this must be admitted, it being no more than was to be expected. The God of Theology being infinite, it is no subject for analogy. . . . No conceivable analogy can prove a creation. Creation is without an analogy. . . . No analogy can prove creation, because no analogy can prove what it does not contain, namely, an example of creation."<sup>1</sup> "Analogy, the specious precursor of reason, would suggest the personality of the powers which awed and cheered man. Reason sends us to facts as the only positive grounds of positive conclusions; but in the childhood of intellect and experience, *likelihood* is mistaken for *certainty*, and *probability* for *fact*. In the disturbed reflection of man's image on the wall, as it were, of the universe, arose the idea of God." . . . "I say, if that is all you mean by your argument, that it is *merely a matter of analogy*, if it is only a matter of partial resemblance, I say you can get from it no complete proof; that if you merely found it upon partial resemblance, there is no demonstration there whatever, and your cause is no better, no sounder than I have before described it,—as being merely *your conjecture* about a Being independent of Nature; it is merely a conjecture, merely a suggestion, just like my own conjecture, just like my own suggestion about Nature being that one great Being about which we are all concerned."<sup>2</sup>

But not content with assailing *analogy* as incapable of leading to any *certain* conclusion, he changes his tactics, and

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Paley Refuted," p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 23, 47.

seems at least to do homage to it, while he insists only on its *extension*. "The argument of *design*," he says, "is unquestionably the most popular ever developed, and the most seductive ever displayed. It has the rare merit of making the existence of God, which is the most subtle of all problems, appear a mere truism,—and the proofs of such existence, which have puzzled the wisest of human heads, seem self-evident." This tribute, however, must be read in the light of his chosen motto,—“The existence of a watch proves the existence of a watch-maker; a picture indicates a painter; a house announces an architect. See here are arguments of terrible force for children.”<sup>1</sup> “I took up,” he says, “Dr. Paley’s book, . . . and I agreed with myself to admit, as I read, whatever appeared plausible. I did so, and my objection to my author was this: Upon the grounds of analogy and experience I found Paley insisted that design implies a designer, that this designer must be a person, and that this person is God: but the analogy which had been the guide to his feet, and the experience which had been a lamp to his path, were suddenly abandoned, and at the very moment when their assistance seemed to promise curious revelations.”—“Two modes of refutation are open; to attack the *principle*, or pursue the *analogy*. Geoffroy St. Hilaire has taken one course. I take the other. If, in the investigation of this question, it be legitimate to employ analogy in one part, it must be legitimate to employ it in like respects in another. . . . Analogy was Paley’s alpha, it must be made also his omega.”<sup>2</sup> In pursuing this course, he makes large concessions, such as might seem at first sight to involve the very principles on which the Theistic proof depends. “That design implies a designer, I am disposed to allow; and that this designer must be a person, I am quite inclined to admit.

<sup>1</sup> DE GRIMM, Title page of “Paley Refuted.”

<sup>2</sup> HOLYOAKE, “Paley Refuted,” pp. 8, 11.

Thus far goes Paley, and thus far I go with him. . . . His general position, that design proves a personal designer, is so *natural*, so *easy*, and so *plausible*, that it invites one to admit it, to see where it will lead, and what it will prove."—"Paley tells us that God is a person. He insists upon it as a legitimate inference from his premises, nor *would it be easy to disturb his conclusion*. . . . From Paley's premises, it is the clearest of all inferences. Design must have a designer, because whatever we know of designers has taught us that a designer is a person. All analogy is in favor of this inference. This is Paley's reasoning upon the subject, and it is too *natural*, too *rigid*, and too *cogent* to be escaped from."<sup>1</sup> Here we have an *apparent* admission of the principle on which the argument of *design* is based, but it is *apparent* only, and is afterwards withdrawn. It was used to serve a temporary purpose, and as soon as that purpose was served, it was thrown aside, although it had been described as "so natural, so easy, and so plausible, that it invites one to admit it," as "too *natural*, too *rigid*, and too *cogent* to be escaped from." "When I made the admission, I was going in the footsteps of Paley, and adopting his own phraseology: then I came to the conclusion to see whether it was right, and then *I gave it up*; when I found it led me to a contrary result, then I gave it up; what I supposed to be *design* in the opening of my argument is *no longer design*. My reverend friend is wrong in supposing that *I admit design*, and yet refuse to admit the force of the *design argument*."<sup>2</sup> And what is the reason which now induces him to deny the existence of *design* in Nature, and to withdraw all the admissions he had previously made? Why, simply because he conceives that, by a legitimate extension of the same analogy, the design argument may be pushed to a *reductio ad absurdum*, so as to prove first

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Paley Refuted," pp. 19, 23.

<sup>2</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 27.

the existence of an *organized person*, "an animal God," and, secondly, an infinite series of such organized persons, since one such must necessarily presuppose another, and that again another, and so on *in infinitum*. For there are two stages in his extension of the analogy. In the first, it is extended so far as to show that the person to whom design is ascribed must necessarily be an organized Being: in the *second*, it is still further extended, so as to show that, being organized, that person must also have had a designer or maker, since organization is held to imply design, and design to imply a designer. And thus the analogy, when extended, does not lead up to one Supreme Mind, the Infinite and Eternal Creator of all things, but to an organized being, himself exhibiting marks of design in his organization, and requiring therefore, like every organism, a prior cause, and, by parity of reason, an eternal succession or infinite series of such causes.

The following extracts will place the progressive steps of his argument in a clear, if not convincing light: "By reasoning from analogy, Paley infers that there is a personal, intelligent being, the author of all design, whom he christens Deity. But what kind of a person is a Deity? If a person, is it organized like a person? Whence came it? How did it originate? Was it formed, as it is said to have formed us? . . . . I ask, has the person of Deity an organization? because, if it be unreasonable to suppose design without a designer, it is surely as unreasonable to suppose a person without an organization, to the full contradiction of all analogy and all experience." . . . . "Every person is organized. No person was ever known without an organization. The term person implies it. All analogy, all experience are in favor of this truth. This is so plain as to be admitted almost before it is stated. . . . No person ever knew of consciousness separate from an organization in which it was produced. No man ever knew of thought distinct from an organization in which it was gener-

ated. . . . Shelley says that 'Intelligence is only known to us as a mode of *animal being*.' . . . We have great authority, —the authority of universal and uncontradicted experience,—for limiting the properties of mind to organization. . . . If intelligence is without an organization, design may be without a designer; because there are the same experience and analogy to support the organization, as there are to support the design argument."<sup>1</sup>

But "organization proves *contrivance*. . . . If, then, every known organization is redolent with contrivance, and teems with marks of design, by what analogy can we conclude that *Deity's organization* is devoid of these properties?"—"Shelley thus states the case,—'From the fitness of the universe to its end, you infer the necessity of an intelligent Creator. But if the fitness of the universe to produce certain effects be thus conspicuous and evident, how much more exquisite fitness to this end must exist in the author of this universe! . . . how much more clearly must we perceive the necessity of this very Creator's creation, whose perfections comprehend an *arrangement* far more accurate and just! The belief of an infinity of creative and created gods, each more eminently requiring an intelligent author of his being than the foregoing, is a direct consequence of the premises.'"—"Hence from design, designers, and persons, we have stepped to organization and contrivance, and arrive at a contriver again."<sup>2</sup>

Such is the outline of his argument. He seems to think that if there be any flaw in it, the only assailable point must be his *extension of the analogy*: "In the chain of analogies which Paley commenced, and which I have continued, I believe there is no defective link. The principle of assailment, if any, is the *extension* of the analogies beyond the Paley point. . . . With

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, "Paley Refuted," pp. 19, 24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 26, 32, 39. See also TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 27, 29, 34, 43, 45.

the extension commences my responsibility. He who proves an irrelevancy in it answers my book." This is, no doubt, a vulnerable point, but we venture to think that it is not the only one. His whole reasoning seems to proceed on an unsound view of the nature and conditions of the argument, and is radically defective in at least *three* respects.

It is not correct to say that the argument of design is *a mere argument from analogy*. Were it so, it might, like many another process of mere analogical reasoning, yield no more than a probable conclusion or a plausible conjecture. But in the case before us, the conclusion is strictly and properly an *inductive inference*. It may be suggested by the perception of *analogy*, but it is founded on the principle of *causality*. It is capable, therefore, of yielding, not a mere *probability*, but an absolute *certainty*. The fact that analogy is so far concerned in the process cannot weaken a conclusion which rests ultimately on a fundamental law of reason, the ground-principle of all induction. It is true, no doubt, that were we destitute of the conscious possession of intelligence, will, and design, we should be utterly incapable of forming these conceptions, or applying them to the interpretation of Nature; and in a loose sense, it may be said that we are guided by the analogy of our own experience to the belief in an intelligent First Cause; but mere analogy would not produce that belief without the great law of causality, which demands an adequate cause for every effect, nor is this law deprived of its necessary and absolute certainty merely because it comes into action along with, and is stimulated by, the perception of obvious analogies. Is it not equally true, that it is only by our own mental consciousness that we are qualified to conceive of other minds, and that we are, to a certain extent, guided by analogy to the belief that our fellow-men are possessed, like ourselves, of intelligence and design? But who would say that this conclusion is no more than a *probable* conjecture, or that, depending as it does in part

on the analogy of our own experience, it cannot yield absolute certainty? In so far as it is *merely* analogical, it might be only more or less probable; but being founded also on the law of causality, it is an inductive inference, and, as such, one of the most certain convictions of the human mind.

And so the argument derived from marks of design in Nature may be stated in one or other of two ways:—it may be stated *analogically* or *inductively*. The difference between analogy and induction, which is not always duly considered, should be carefully marked. Analogy proceeds on *partial*, induction on *perfect* resemblance. The former marks a resemblance or agreement *in some respects* between things which differ *in other respects*: the latter requires a strict and entire similarity *in those respects* on which the inductive inference depends. The one by itself may only yield a *probable* conjecture, but the other, when combined with it, may produce a *certain* conviction. Accordingly the design argument may be thrown either into the *analogical* or the *inductive* form. Stated *analogically*, it stands thus: "There is an ascertained partial resemblance between organs seen in art and organs seen in nature; as, for instance, between the telescope and the eye.

"It is probable from analogy that there is in some further respect a partial resemblance between organs seen in art and organs seen in nature: in art the telescope has been produced by a *contriver*, analogy makes it probable that in nature the eye also will have been produced by a *contriver*."

But stated inductively, it stands thus: "If there be in nature the manifestation of supernatural contrivance, there *must* exist a supernatural contriver.

"There is in nature the manifestation of supernatural contrivance.

"Therefore a supernatural contriver,—God,—must exist."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 7, 414.

Combine the perfection of analogy with the principle of causality, and you have not only the *verisimilitude* or *likelihood* which prepares the way for belief, but also a positive proof resting on a fundamental law of reason. The inference of intelligence from marks of design in nature is not one of analogy, but of strict and proper *induction*; and accordingly we must either deny that there are marks of *design* in nature, thereby discarding the *analogy*, or do violence to our own reason by resisting the fundamental law of causality, thereby discarding the inductive inference. And of these two unavoidable alternatives, Mr. Holyoake seems to prefer the former: he will venture to deny the existence of design in nature, rather than admit the existence of design and resist the inevitable inference of a designing cause; for he is compelled in the long run to come round to this desperate confession, "What I supposed to be *design* in the opening of my argument is *no longer design*. My reverend friend is wrong in supposing that I *admit design*, and yet refuse to admit the force of the *design argument*."

But if he mistakes the general nature and conditions of the argument when he speaks of it as if it were a mere argument from analogy, his *extension of the analogy*, and the reasonings founded on it, are equally unjustifiable and inconclusive. He forgets that analogy proceeds on a partial resemblance in *some respects*, between things which differ in *other respects*, and that even induction itself requires a perfect resemblance only in *those respects* on which the inference depends. There may be such a resemblance between the marks of design in nature and in art as to warrant the inference of a contriver in both; and yet in *other respects* there may be a dissimilarity which cannot in the least affect the validity or the certainty of that inference. It is only when we *extend the analogy* beyond the inductive point, that the conclusion becomes, in some cases, merely probable, in others altogether doubtful. If we advance a step further than we are warranted to go by

obvious and certain analogies, our conclusions must be purely conjectural, and cannot be accepted as inductive inferences. From what we know of this world, and of God's design in it to make Himself known to His intelligent creatures, we may infer, with some measure of probability, that other worlds may also be inhabited by beings capable, like ourselves, of admiring His works, and adoring His infinite perfections; but if we go further, and infer either that all these worlds must *now* be inhabited, or that the inhabitants must be *in all respects* constituted as we are, we pass far beyond the point to which our knowledge extends, and enter on the region of mere conjecture. And so when Mr. Holyoake extends the analogy, so as to include not only the marks of design, on which the inductive inference rests, but also the forms of organization, with which in the case of man, intelligence is at present associated, although not identified, he goes beyond the point at which analogy and induction combine to give a *certain* conclusion, and introduces a conjectural element, which may well render his own inferences extremely doubtful, but which can have no effect in weakening the grounds of our confidence in the fundamental law, which demands an adequate cause for the marks of design in nature.

Mr. Ferrier has shown that "the senses are only *contingent conditions* of knowledge; in other words, it is possible that intelligences different from the human (supposing that there are such) should apprehend things under other laws, or in other ways, than those of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling; or more shortly, *our* senses are not laws of cognition or modes of apprehension which are binding on intelligence necessarily and universally."—"A contingent law of knowledge" is defined as "one which, although complied with in certain cases in the attainment of knowledge, is not enforced by reason as a condition which *must* be complied with wherever knowledge is to take place. Knowledge is thus possible under

other conditions than the contingent laws to which certain intelligences may be subject; in other words, there is no contradiction in affirming that an intelligent being may have knowledge of some kind or other without having such senses as we have."<sup>1</sup>

The application of analogy as a principle of judgment is subject to certain well-known limitations, which cannot be disregarded without serious risk of error. They are well stated by Dr. Hampden: "There are two requisites in order to every analogical argument:—1. That the two, or several particulars concerned in the argument should be known to agree in some one point; for otherwise they could not be referable to any one class, and there would consequently be no basis to the subsequent inference drawn in the conclusion. 2. That the conclusion must be modified by a reference to the circumstances of the particular *to* which we argue. For herein consists *the essential distinction between an analogical and an inductive argument*. Since, in an inductive argument, we draw a general conclusion, we have no concern with the circumstantial peculiarity of individual instances, but simply with their abstract agreement. Whereas, on the contrary, in an analogical argument, we draw a particular conclusion, we must enter into a consideration of the circumstantial peculiarity of the individual instance, in order to exhibit the conclusion in that particular form which we would infer. Whence it follows, that whilst by induction we obtain absolute conclusions, by analogy we can only arrive at relative conclusions, or such as depend for their absolute and entire validity on the coincidence of *all* the circumstances of the particular inferred with those of the particular from which the inference is drawn." Again: "The circumstances *to* which we reason may be considered of

<sup>1</sup> PROF. FERRIER, "Institutes of Metaphysic," Epistemology, Prop. XXII. p. 377, also pp. 381, 385, 506.

threefold character. They are either known or unknown. If they are known, they are either (1.) Such as we have no reason to think different in any respect from those under which our observations have been made; or (2.) Such as differ in certain *known* respects from these last. (3.) They are unknown, where we reason concerning truths of which, from the state of our present knowledge, from the nature of our faculties, or from the accident of our situation as sojourners upon earth, we are totally ignorant.”<sup>1</sup>

With these necessary limitations, suggested by the different circumstances in which analogy is applied, we shall have little difficulty in disposing of Mr. Holyoake's *extension* of Dr. Paley's argument. Not content with resemblance *in some respects*, he requires a sameness *in all*. He would exclude all dissimilarity, forgetting that analogy denotes a certain relation between two or more things which in other respects may be entirely different. We may see a resemblance between the marks of design in nature and the ordinary effects of design in art; and that perception of design gives rise to an intuitive conviction or inductive inference of a designing cause: thus far we proceed under the guidance of analogy, but on the sure ground of induction. If we go beyond this, and insist that the designing cause must be *in all respects* like ourselves, that if we be organized, He must be organized, that if we act by material organs He must act by the same, we exceed the limits of legitimate reasoning, and enter on the region of pure conjecture. But such conjectures, groundless as they are, and revolting as every one must feel them to be, can have no effect in shaking our confidence in the valid induction by which we infer from marks of *design* in nature the existence of a designing Cause.

<sup>1</sup> DR. HAMPDEN, "Essay on the Philosophical Evidence of Christianity," pp. 60, 64.

It can scarcely be necessary to enlarge on the gratuitous assumptions on which this *extension* of the argument is made to rest; — such as that “every person is organized,” that “all power is a mere attribute of matter,” that “no man ever knew of thought distinct from an organization in which it was *generated*.” The only fragment of truth that can be detected in these assumptions is the fact that we have, in our present state, no experience of intelligence apart from the organization with which it is here associated: but will this warrant the inference that intelligence *cannot* exist apart from organization, or that the one is the mere product of the other? It may be a good and valid inference from the marks of design in nature, that a designing cause must exist; for this inference, although suggested by analogy, is founded on induction, which requires a perfect resemblance only *in those respects* on which the inference depends. But to go beyond this, and to insist that the designing cause must be organized, because we have *no experience* of intelligence apart from organization, is to make our experience the measure of possible being, and to exclude, surely on very insufficient grounds, all notion of purely spiritual personality. In “extending the analogy beyond the Paley point,” Mr. Holyoake is arguing from the particular case of man to another case, which resembles it in some respects, but may differ from it in others; and similar as they are in the one point of living, designing intelligence, they may, for aught he knows, differ in many other respects. And this we hold to be a sufficient answer to his argument, especially when it is combined with the consideration that the assumptions on which that argument is based are purely gratuitous, namely, that “every person is organized,” and that there is no “thought distinct from an organization in which it is *generated*.” By these assumptions, his theory connects itself with the grossest Materialism; and that subject has been sufficiently discussed in a separate chapter.

But in truth we regard the whole discussion on organization as a huge and unnecessary excrescence on his argument, for he would have come to his point quite as effectually, and much more directly, had he said nothing at all about an organized being, and insisted merely on one, whether material or spiritual, possessing powers of intelligence, contrivance, and design ; for it is evidently on the existence of such a being, and not on the arrangements or adaptations of his organic parts, that his main argument depends, namely, that such a being implies also a contriver, and that again another, and so on in an endless series. Whatever force belongs to his argument lies here : it consists, not in the evidence of design arising from material organization, but in the necessity of a cause adequate to account for a being possessing intelligence, purpose, and will. The existence of an endless series of such beings is impossible, and the supposition of it is absurd ; and Mr. Holyoake himself admits a self-existent, underived, and eternal Being, — a being exempt, therefore, from all the conditions of time and causality to which others are subject, — while he ascribes the origin of intelligent, self-conscious beings to Nature, which is “neither intelligent nor self-conscious,” rather than to God, the father of spirits, Himself a Spirit, infinite, omniscient, and almighty. He ascribes the existence of intelligent, self-conscious, personal moral agents to a power called *Nature*, which he cannot venture to call “a person,” nor even “an animal being,” and of which he “cannot predicate with the Pantheist the unity of its intelligence and consciousness.” His theory, in so far as it is intelligible, seems to have a stronger affinity with Pantheism than he appears to suppose. Were he to define the meaning of the word *Nature*, — a word so often used in a vague, indefinite sense,<sup>1</sup> — he would find that his idea bears a close resem-

<sup>1</sup> ROBERT BOYLE, “Theological Works,” on the term “Nature.”

blance to that of the German school,<sup>1</sup> who speak of the first being as the *Indifference of the different*,—a certain vague, undetermined, inexplicable entity, possessing no distinctive character or peculiar attributes, whose existence is necessary, but not as a living, self-conscious, and active being, while it is the cause of all life and intelligence and activity in the universe; in short, a mere abstraction of the human mind. To some such cause, if it can be called a cause, Mr. Holyoake ascribes all the phenomena of the universe; or he leaves them utterly unaccounted for, and takes refuge in an eternal series of derived and dependent beings, without attempting to assign any reason for their existence. He undertakes to account for nothing. He leaves the great problem unsolved, and discards it as insoluble. “Mr. Harrison demanded of me, where the first man came from? I said, I did not know; I was not in the secrets of Nature.” “I cannot accept, says one, the theory of progressive development, it is so intricate and unsatisfying.” “If something must be self-existent and eternal, says another, why may not matter and all its properties be that something?” “The Atheist holds that the universe is an endless series of causes and effects *ad infinitum*, and therefore the idea of a *first* cause is an absurdity and a contradiction.”<sup>2</sup> In short, the eternity of the world is assumed, the origin of new races is left unexplained, and no account whatever is given of the order which everywhere exists in Nature. In the last resort, he takes refuge in the plea of *ignorance*. His only answer is, “I do not know, I am not in the secrets of Nature.”

But how does his extension of Paley’s argument justify the position which he now assumes? Or how can it invalidate the admissions which he had previously made? That extension of the argument, even were it supposed to be legitimate, amounts

<sup>1</sup> PROFESSOR NICOLAS, “*Quelques Considerations sur le Pantheisme*,” pp. 30, 33, 35, 38.

<sup>2</sup> “The Reasoner,” XI. 8, 119, 23, 356. New Series, pp. 9, 141.

simply to this, that a designer must be an organized being, and, as such, must have had a cause. But what analogy suggests, or what law of reason requires, an *infinite series* of such causes? And what is there in this extension of the argument that should exclude the idea of a First Cause? It is thought, indeed, that by connecting intelligence with organization, we may succeed at least in excluding His infinity, His omnipresence, and other attributes which are ascribed to the Most High: but the main stress of the argument rests not on the fact of organization, but on the supposed necessity of an *endless series* of contrivers to account for the existence of any one intelligent being, whether organized or not is of little moment. Now, this is a mere assumption, an assumption entirely destitute of proof, an assumption which is not necessarily involved even in the proposed extension of the analogy: for all that the analogy, however extended, can possibly require is a cause adequate to the production of designing minds, and that cause may be a self-existent, underived, and eternal Being. Let the analogy be extended ever so far, it must reach a point at which we are compelled, by the fundamental law of *causality*, to rise to a self-existent Being, exempt from all conditions of time, space, and causality. Mr. Holyoake admits the very same truth in regard to Nature which we maintain in regard to God: "I am driven to the conclusion that Nature is eternal, because we are unable to conceive a state of things when nothing was. . . . And in the eternity of matter, we are assured of the *self-existence* of matter, and self-existence is the most majestic of all attributes, and includes all others;" it is "the power of being *independent of the law of other beings*." Now, what is there in the proposed extension of the analogy that should exclude the idea of a self-existent First Cause, or shut us up to the admission of an endless series of designing causes? And still further, what is there in the proposed extension of the analogy which should invalidate the argument from design, or induce Mr.

Holyoake to *give it up*, and to withdraw the concessions which he had previously made in regard to it? These concessions must be supposed to have been honestly made in deference to the claims of truth, and they are not in the least affected by the extension of the analogy. It is still true, if it ever was, that *order prevails in Nature*; and this is admitted: "If by Atheism is meant the belief that all that we see in Nature is the result of *chance*, of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, nothing would be so absurd as Atheism. Nothing can be more evident than that *law and order* prevail in Nature, that every species of matter, organic or inorganic, is impressed with certain laws, according to which all its properties and movements are regulated. . . . In denying, therefore, the existence of a personal, intelligent Deity, we do not admit that there is any chance, contingency, or disorder in Nature: we do not deny, but absolutely affirm, the constant and universal operation of *law and order*. This we do, because it is a matter of fact of obvious and daily experience."<sup>1</sup> Again, it is still true, if it ever was, that *design implies a designer*; and this, says Mr. Holyoake, "I am disposed to allow; and that this designer must be a person, I am quite inclined to admit. Thus far goes Paley, and, therefore, thus far I go with him. His general position, that design proves a personal designer, is so *natural*, so *easy*, and so *plausible*, that it invites one to admit it. . . . Paley insists upon it as a legitimate inference from his premises, nor would it be easy to disturb his conclusion. . . . This is Paley's reasoning upon the subject, and it is too *natural*, too *rigid*, and too *cogent* to be escaped from." Now, what is there in the proposed extension of the analogy that can invalidate either of these admissions, or that should induce us to set aside both? Extend the analogy ever so far, it is still true that *law and order* prevail in Nature, that design implies a *designer*, and that a designer

<sup>1</sup> "The Reasoner," XI. 23, 357.

must be a *person*. And how does Mr. Holyoake save his consistency? Simply by stretching the analogy till it snaps asunder; he begins by extending, and ends in destroying it; he admits it at first, merely "to see where it will lead and what it will prove," and finding that it must imply an organized designer, and an endless series of such beings, "he gives it up," and denies the existence of *design* altogether. There is a *hiatus*, it would seem,—an impassable gulf,—between the admission that *law and order* prevail in Nature, and the conclusion that *law and order* are manifestations of *design*: "What I supposed to be design in the opening of my argument is *no longer design*. My reverend friend is wrong in supposing that I admit DESIGN, and yet refuse to admit the force of the *design argument*." On the supposition, then, that *law and order* are manifestations of *design*, the design argument might be valid and conclusive: but "*no conceivable order*" could prove the existence of God; why? Because no conceivable order could be a manifestation of *design*. But how is this proved by the extension of the analogy? Does it not amount to a denial of the analogy itself? And is it not an instructive fact that his abortive attempt to disprove the design argument, results, not in the denial of the *inductive inference*, but in the exclusion of the very *analogy* which he proposed to extend, not in shaking the validity of the proof, but in disputing the fact on which it is based? The extension of the analogy cannot prove either that law and order are *not* manifestations of design, or that there may be design without a personal designer; all that it could prove, even were it legitimate, would be the existence of an *organized* instead of a *spiritual* Being, which, on the supposition of its self-existence,—a supposition which is not excluded by the argument, since that majestic attribute, which may be fairly held to "include all others," is expressly admitted,—neither requires nor admits of an infinite series of contrivers.

4. Secularism denies the truth of a special Providence, and

also the efficacy of Prayer, while it justly holds both to be indispensable for the purposes of practical religion.

The importance of these doctrines is strongly declared, and sometimes illustrated with much apparent feeling, by Mr. Holyoake himself: "There is more mixed up with the question than the mere fact as to whether some Being exists independently of Nature; for instance, if any man would debate whether there existed a Divine Being, whether a Providence, who was the Father of His creatures, whom we could propitiate by prayer in our danger, from whom we could obtain light in darkness, and help in distress,—if any man debated a proposition like this, I should say there was much of great practical utility about it. . . . If you tell me God exists, that he is a power, a principle, or spirit, or light, or life, or love, or intelligence, or what you will,—if He be not a Father to whom His children may appeal, if He be not a Providence whom we may propitiate, and from whom we can obtain special help in the hour of danger,—I say, practically, it does not matter to us whether He exists or not."<sup>1</sup> "The great practical question is, whether there exists a Deity to whom we can appeal, who is the Father of his children, who is to be propitiated by prayer, and who will render us help in the hour of danger and distress."

With the spirit of these remarks every believer will cordially sympathize. He knows that there can be no practical religion without faith in Providence and confidence in prayer; for "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is *the rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him." Mr. Holyoake does not err in supposing that this is the general belief of Christians, or that it is explicitly sanctioned in Scripture. He may, and we think he does err in his interpretation of the Bible doctrine, and the inferences which he deduces

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 16, 59.

from it; but assuredly Christianity would be robbed of its most attractive and endearing attributes, were it represented as silent on the paternal character of God and His providential care. He is right in saying that "the Providence man needs, the Providence the old theologies gave him, was a personal Providence, an available help. . . . I care only to add, that there is hardly any feature in the Christian system which is so seductive as this doctrine of a special Providence. . . . Do you not know that in all your appeals your success depends upon your telling all orders of people that there is One in heaven who cares for them, that every prayer will be answered, that every hair of their head is numbered, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without their heavenly Father's knowledge, and are not they worth more than many sparrows?"<sup>1</sup> He sees the necessity, and seems to feel the attractiveness, of the doctrine; yet he denies its truth: why? because it is contradicted, as he conceives, by experience. He adduces his own personal experience, and then appeals to the experience of his fellow-men: "I once prayed in all the fervency of this same religion. I believed once all these things. I put up prayers to Heaven which I cannot conceive how humanity could have refused to respond to,—prayers such as if put up to me I must have responded to. I saw those near and dear to me perishing around me; and I learned the secret I care no longer to conceal, that man's dependence is upon his courage and his industry, and dependence upon Heaven there seems to be none."<sup>2</sup> Such was his private experience; and facts of public notoriety are appealed to in confirmation: "It has long seemed to me the most serious libel on the character of the Deity to assume for one moment that he interferes in human exigencies. A mountain of desolating facts rises up to shame into silence

<sup>1</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 80, 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 80.

the hazardous supposition? Was not the whole land a short time ago convulsed with horror at the fate of the *Amazon*? There was not a wretch in the whole country whose slumbering humanity would not have been aroused in the presence of that dismal calamity." . . . "How is it that liberty is in chains all over Europe, if God be still interposing in human affairs? If the older doctrine were true, if our brother's blood still cried to God from the ground, the patriot would be released from the dungeon, and the tyrant would descend from the throne he has polluted."—"Science has shown us that we are under the dominion of general laws, and that there is no special providence, and that prayers are useless, and that propitiation is vain; that whether there be a Deity independent of Nature, or whether Nature be God, it is still *the God of the iron foot*, that passes on without heeding, without feeling, and without resting; that Nature acts with a fearful uniformity, stern as fate, absolute as tyranny, merciless as death; too vast to praise, too inexplicable to worship, too inexorable to propitiate, it has no ear for prayer, no heart for sympathy, no arm to save."<sup>1</sup>

In these and similar appeals to the facts of individual or common experience, the scriptural doctrine of Providence and Prayer is supposed to be very different from what it really is, and stated without any of the qualifications which are expressly declared by the sacred writers.

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that *every* prayer must receive an immediate answer, whatever may be the object for which it is presented, or the spirit in which it is offered. On the contrary it is expressly written, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed: For

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 58.

let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your lusts."<sup>1</sup>

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that man is to obtain whatever he asks, irrespective of that Sovereign Will which is guided by unerring wisdom as well as infinite love. On the contrary, prayer is an expression of dependence and subjection, and must ever be qualified by submission to His sovereignty: "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done."<sup>2</sup>

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that Providence will suspend, or that Prayer will counteract, the operation of the general laws of Nature, excepting only in the case of those to whom a promise of miraculous power was vouchsafed. On the contrary, these laws are declared to be stable and permanent: "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth: they continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants;" and any wilful neglect or violation of these laws is a sinful *tempting* of Providence, even when it may seem to be sanctioned by a perverse application of Scripture itself; for the Saviour himself was solicited on this wise, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for *it is written*, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone;" but he answered, "*It is written* again, Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God."<sup>3</sup>

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that Providence will secure, or Prayer obtain, exemption from the afflictions and calamities of life. On the contrary it is written, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." "If ye endure

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 66: 18; James 1: 6; 4: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 26: 39.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119: 90; Matt. 4: 6.

chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "And we know that *all things* work together for good to them that love God! . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in *all these things* we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."<sup>1</sup>

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that Providence will award, or that Prayer may hope to secure, a regular and equal distribution of good and evil in the present life. On the contrary the present state is described as a scene of probation, trial, and discipline, which is preparatory to a state of retribution hereafter: "I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time for every purpose and for every work." "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with those that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."<sup>2</sup> "This is the faith and patience of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 34: 19; John 16: 33; Heb. 12: 7, 11; Rom. 5: 3; 2 Cor. 4: 17; Rom. 8: 28, 35, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. 3: 16, 17; 8: 11.

the saints ;” a faith which is often staggered, a patience which may be ready to fail, in the view of the darker aspects of Providence ; for many a true believer may say, “ As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped ; for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ;” and even “ the spirits of just men made perfect ” sing the song, “ O Lord ! how long ? ”

—It is nowhere declared in Scripture that Providence excludes the aid of Science, or that Prayer supersedes the diligent use of ordinary means. On the contrary it is written, “ When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee ; ” and believers are required to be “ not slothful in business, ” while they are “ fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. ”<sup>1</sup>

On all these points, so clearly involved in the Christian doctrine of Providence and Prayer, Mr. Holyoake’s argument rests on assumptions which are utterly groundless, and hence he imagines that the doctrine is contradicted by experience, when a more scriptural view of it would be sufficient to obviate all his objections. He reasons as if there could be no truth in the doctrine of a special Providence, and no efficacy in Prayer, unless *every* petition were immediately heard and answered ; unless the cry of nature in distress were sufficient to ward off the stroke of disease and bereavement, and to avert all the calamities of life ; unless the operation of the general laws of Nature were forthwith suspended ; unless the present state of trial and discipline were converted into one of strict and impartial retribution ; and unless man’s wisdom and man’s agency were to be superseded altogether by dependence on a higher power. But not one of these suppositions has any place in the doctrine of Scripture on the subject. It speaks of a special Providence,

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 2 : 10 ; Rom. 12 : 11.

but not such as is incompatible with the constant operation of natural laws; it ascribes a certain efficacy to Prayer, but not such as implies a miraculous interference with the ordinary course of Nature, and still less an exemption from affliction, or an equal distribution of good and evil in the present life. If it be said that such being the doctrine of Scripture, it can afford little or no consolation, since it holds out no hope of sure and instant relief in circumstances of distress and danger, may we not ask, Is there no comfort in knowing that our affairs are under the superintendence of a Being everywhere present, infinitely wise and good, whose ear is ever open to our cry, who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask, and who has promised to sustain us in all our trials, to sanctify us by means of them, and to make all things work together for our good? Is there no comfort in being able to say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom"?<sup>1</sup> Is there not enough for all the purposes of practical religion in the assurance, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; . . . for if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"?<sup>2</sup> And when the believer is enabled in any measure to comply with the injunctions of

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 46: 1, 2; 23: 1, 4; 2 Tim. 4: 18.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. 7: 7, 11; 6: 32, 33.

Scripture,—“Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain it, “Commit thy way unto Him, and He will bring it to pass,” “Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,”—does he not know experimentally that it is faith in a living, personal God,—the God of providence, and the Hearer of prayer, and not the desolate doctrine of Nature,—“the *God of the iron foot*, stern as fate, absolute as tyranny, and merciless as death,”—that can sustain him under every trial, and nerve him with fresh vigor for the “battle of life”?

Mr. Holyoake refers to his own experience, and appeals to the experience of his fellow-men, in confirmation of his *negative* conclusion in regard to a special Providence and the efficacy of Prayer. But what weight is due to his testimony in such a case? Is it sufficient to countervail the experience of all in every age—“the great cloud of witnesses”—who have unanimously declared that “the Lord hath not forsaken them that seek Him,” and that “He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain”? Which is entitled to the greater weight, the testimony of Mr. Holyoake, or that of the Psalmist, “I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry;” or that of the prophet, “I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me: out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice: When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto Thee into thine holy temple;” or that of the apostle, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness”?<sup>1</sup> A cry for help may not be “the prayer of faith,” but

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 40: 1; Jonah 2: 2, 7; 2 Cor. 12: 8.

the utterance of an unsubdued and rebellious will, and can afford no test, therefore, of the truth of the doctrine of Scripture.

But "Science," says Mr. Holyoake, "is the providence of life, and spiritual dependence may be attended with material destruction." He would substitute, therefore, the Science of man for the Providence of God, and secular *diligence* for spiritual *dependence*. But is there no room for both? Are they necessarily incompatible or mutually exclusive? Why should the Science of man be opposed to the Providence of God, or secular industry to religious faith? All Christians combine the two; why should Mr. Holyoake seek to divorce them? What is Science? It is "the well-devised method of using Nature; it is in this that Science is the providence of man. It is not pretended that Science is a perfect dependence; on the contrary, it is admitted to be narrow and but partially developed; but it is the only special dependence that man has."<sup>1</sup> And is the *wise use of Nature* inconsistent with Religion? is it the exclusive monopoly of Atheism? Or is spiritual dependence necessarily incompatible with industrial pursuits? Who have been the most scientific and the most industrious members of the community, the small band of Atheists, or the great body of Christians? To the latter belong all the advantages which Science, or the wise use of Nature, can secure, while they have *besides* a Providence, distinct from Nature and superior to it, whose wakeful eye never slumbers, and whose ear is ever open to their cry.

5. Secularism seeks to supersede Religion, and to substitute *morality* in its stead,—but a *morality* which leaves men irresponsible for their belief, their passions, and even their actions, to any superior Power.

"The histories of all ages," says Mr. Holyoake, "and the

<sup>1</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, v. 8, 40, 50, 57.

bitter experience of mankind, prove the pernicious influence of piety. It seems a more useful work cannot be performed than to sweep away the assumed foundations of all religions." "I deem it inimical to human welfare, and should no more proceed to supply a new religion than the people who had just interred the cholera would think of raising a plague. . . . Religion is a distraction of social progress; once removed, no wise man will desire its restoration."

"But one question remains to be answered, If Religion is not our proper business, what is? I answer, *Morality!* . . . . By Religion I understand a system of human duties, commencing from a God: by Morality a system of human duties, commencing from man. Religion asks but one question, Is an act pleasing to Deity? Morality makes the wiser inquiry, Is an act useful to man? The standard of religion varies with fickle creeds; the standard of morality is *utility*."<sup>1</sup> "There exist (independently of Scriptural Religion) guarantees of morality in human nature, in intelligence, and utility." "Morality; that system of human duties commencing from man, we will keep distinct from Religion, that system of human duties assumed to commence from God."<sup>2</sup> "Nature refers us to science for help, and to humanity for sympathy; love to the lovely is our only homage, study our only praise, quiet submission to the inevitable our *duty*, and work is our only worship."<sup>3</sup> "We, by establishing morals independently of scriptural authority, and basing them on secular considerations,—more immediate, more demonstrative and universal,—attain a signal benefit; for when Inspiration is shaken, or Miracles fail you, or Prophecy eludes the believer, he breaks away, and probably falls into vice; while we hold the thinker by the thousand relations of Natural Affection, Utility, and Intelligence, which the Christian dis-

<sup>1</sup> "Paley Refuted," p. 38, 43.

<sup>2</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. v. 7.

<sup>3</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 58.

trusts. . . . A man may do good because it is honest, because it is useful, because it is commanded by human law, because it is humane, because it is polite, because it is a noble pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Of course, when Morality is thus divorced from Religion there can be no responsibility to a higher Power, and man is not accountable to any one for his belief, his passions, his will, his character or conduct, except in so far as his *actions* may trench on the rights of others, and render him amenable to civil or criminal law. And Mr. Holyoake, at one time an associate and fellow-laborer of Robert Owen, still cleaves to the doctrine that his belief is entirely dependent on evidence, and that his character is, to a large extent, determined by the circumstances of his condition.

An attempt is thus made to establish the Ethics of Atheism on the ruins of Religion. But to one who calmly reflects on the subject, it must be evident that a scheme of morals founded on the negation of all religious belief can have none of that authority which belongs to the expression of a superior will, and must be utterly destitute of all sanctions excepting such as may be found in the *natural* consequences of our conduct. Its only standard is *utility*; and *utility* must be interpreted by every man for himself, according to his own taste and inclination. The word *duty* is used, but there is nothing in the system to account for the *idea* which that word is intended to convey, nothing to explain or justify the meaning of the phrase, *I ought*. For why *ought* I to do this, or refrain from that? Because it is *useful*? because it is conducive to *happiness*? Because it will be followed by certain natural consequences? But if I love the pleasures of sin, if I prefer them to every other kind of enjoyment, if I am willing to accept the consequences and to say, "Evil, be thou my good," what is there in the system of secular ethics that should oblige me to forego my

<sup>1</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 223.

favorite indulgences, or that can impress me with the conviction that I *ought* to do so? True I may suffer, and suffer much, as the drunkard and the libertine do, in the way of natural consequence, and it may be prudent to be temperate in the indulgence of my sensual appetites; there may even be a sense of inward degradation, and a politic regard to the opinions of my fellow-men, which will operate to some extent as a restraining influence; but if I be destitute of a sense of *duty*, and willing to brave all hazards and accept all consequences, Secularism has nothing to say to me, and is utterly powerless to govern or control me otherwise than by physical coercion or the power of brute force. But admit the idea of God as a Moral Governor, and of Conscience as His vicegerent in my soul, view the law of my moral nature as the authoritative expression of His supreme will, and instantly I recognize a Master whom I *ought* to obey, and a course of conduct which it is my *duty* to pursue, irrespective alike of my personal propensities and of all possible consequences. The "categorical imperative" within is felt to be a far more solid ground, as well as a much stronger sanction, of duty, than any that can be found in the mere consequences of my actions; while it accounts for the innate sense of right and wrong, and the sentiments of remorse, and shame, and fear which conscious guilt inspires.

But Mr. Holyoake shifts the question from this broad general ground, which is common to all earnest inquirers after truth, and seeks to entangle us in a collateral, but subordinate, discussion respecting the relation between Morality and Scripture. He proposes to show that "there exist, *independently of Scriptural Religion*, guarantees of morality in human nature," and that "morals may be established *independently of scriptural authority*." But this is not the question: the question is a wider and more comprehensive one, namely, whether a system of morals can be established apart from the recognition of God, and independently of *any* expression, natural or supernatural,

of His supreme and authoritative will? Mr. Holyoake is bound to return and defend an affirmative to *this* question, and is not at liberty to take refuge in the mere denial of the absolute dependence of morals on "scriptural authority." The idea of *duty* may be involved in the principles of Natural Religion, and these may be presupposed and assumed in Revelation; but to make out his case, he must attempt to show that neither Natural nor Revealed Religion is necessary to establish and sanction a code of ethics, and that the natural consequences of our actions are sufficient *of themselves*, and without reference to the law of a Supreme Will, to awaken and sustain a sense of moral obligation. In point of fact, Christianity does not represent the duties of morality as dependent on its own *sole* authority. It sanctions these duties, it illustrates their nature, it enforces their observance by new and powerful motives; but it presupposes the existence of Conscience, as God's vicegerent in the heart, and appeals to "a law" by which every man is "a law to himself." The *law revealed* in Scripture is binding by reason of the authority of the Lawgiver; but not more binding than the law written on the heart, without which we should be incapable alike of moral instruction and of moral government. The question, then, is not whether morality be entirely dependent on the authority of Scripture, but whether it be so independent of Religion as to be equally authoritative and binding with or without the recognition of God?

And if this be the real question at issue, few will be bold enough to affirm either that the nature of moral duty is in no wise affected, or that its foundation is in no degree weakened, by the non-recognition of God and His supreme will. The will of God may not be the ultimate ground of duty, but it is the expression of the essential holiness of His nature, which is the unchangeable standard of rectitude. The supposition of His non-existence, therefore, or even the skeptical Atheism which doubts, without venturing to deny, the reality of His

being, deprives morality of its only absolute support, and leaves it to depend on the fluctuating opinions or the capricious tastes of individual minds. It affects both the *nature* and the *extent* of moral duty, by resolving it into a mere regard to utility, and excluding a large class of duties which Religion sanctions, while it deprives every other class of their sacred character as acts of obedience to God. It shuts out some of the most powerful and impressive motives to virtuous conduct, by relieving men from a sense of responsibility to a higher Power, by excluding the idea of a future retribution, and still more by keeping out of sight the attributes, alike august and amiable, of a living personal God, everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good, an omniscient Witness and an impartial Judge. Christianity leaves all the *secular* motives to morality intact and entire, and only superadds to these certain *spiritual* motives of far higher power. It neither supersedes the lessons of experience nor abjures all regard to utility; but by revealing our relation to God, it extends, and elevates, and purifies our sense of duty. In vain does Mr. Holyoake pretend that by basing morals on secular considerations, he attains a signal benefit, and that he "holds the thinker by the thousand relations of Natural Affection, Utility, and Intelligence, *which the Christian distrusts*;" for not one of these "relations" is excluded by the scheme of Revealed Religion, not one of them is *denied* by the Christian; and if he may be said to *distrust* them, it is only because he holds them to be *insufficient*, without a belief in God, to maintain a pure morality in the world. But he can say, with at least as much earnestness as any Secularism can feel, "Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be *any* virtue, and if there be *any* praise, think of these things;" and he feels that far from

weakening, he greatly enhances, the force of that appeal, when he adds, "and perfect holiness *in the fear of the Lord.*"

6. Secularism professes to be "the positive side of Atheism," and to be better than Religion at least for this world, because it pays a preëminent, if not an exclusive, regard to the *duties of the present life.*

This is, perhaps, the most dangerous aspect of the doctrine. It prescribes a course of systematic ungodliness, a practical disregard of the future, and an engrossing attention to things seen and temporal, as if these were virtues in which mankind are greatly deficient, and as if their general prevalence would be a prelude to a secular millennium, or the commencement of an atheistic paradise. But the purely *negative* part of the system, however accordant with the natural tendencies of men, is felt to be in itself somewhat unattractive; it must be associated, therefore, with some *positive* element, some *practical aims*, such as may give it a hold on the interest and a claim on the zealous support of its adherents. "Under this conviction," says Mr. Holyoake, "the Secularist applied himself to the re-inspection of the general field of controversy, and the adoption of the following rules, among others, has been the consequence: 1. To disuse the term *Atheist*, since the public understand by that word one who is without God and also without morality, and who wishes to be without both. 2. To disuse the term *Infidel*, since Christians understand by that term one who is unfaithful or treacherous to the truth. . . . 3. To recognize, not as a matter of policy merely, but as a matter of fact, the sincerity of the clergy and the good intentions of Christians generally. . . . 4. To seek the maxims of duty in the relations of man to society and nature, and, as the *Christian Spectator* did us the honor to admit, 'to preach nature and science, morality and art: nature, the only subject of knowledge; science, the providence of life; morality, the harmony of action; art, the culture of the individual and of society.'"

"We therefore resolved to choose a new name (Secularism), which should express the *practical and moral* element always concealed in the word Atheism. . . . Secularism seeks the personal Law of duty, the Sphere of duty, and the Power by which duty may work independently. The Law is found in natural, utilitarian, and artistic morals. The Sphere is this, to work with our first energies in this life, for this life, — for its growth, culture, development, and progress. The Power is discovered in Science, the providence of life, and intelligence."<sup>1</sup>

"By 'Secularism' is meant giving the precedence to the duties of this life over those which pertain to another life; — attention to temporal things should take precedence of considerations relating to a future existence." "The *positive* side of our views is a more recent development of our own." "We seek the coöperation of all who can agree to promote present human improvement by present human means."<sup>2</sup> . . . "If there are other worlds to be inhabited after this life, those persons will best be fitted for the enjoyment of them who have made the welfare of humanity their business in this. But if there are not other worlds, men are essentially losers by neglecting the enjoyment of this. Hence Aristippus was truly wise, who agreed with Socrates in dismissing, as wholly unprofitable, all those speculations which have no connection with the business of life." "This life being the first in certainty, we give it the first place in importance; and by giving human duties in relation to men the *precedence*, we secure that all interpretations of spiritual duty shall be in harmony with human progress." "Secularism is the philosophy of the things of time. A Secularist is one who gives primary attention to those subjects, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life. The Secularist principle requires

<sup>1</sup> GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," pp. 4, 221.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., v., vi. 7.

that precedence should be given to the duties of this life over those which pertain to another world.”<sup>1</sup>

Secularism, then, professes to be the *positive* or *practical* side of Atheism, and it claims to be better than Religion at least for this world, because it pays a preëminent, if not exclusive, regard to the duties of the present life. We cannot consider this “new development” of an old system, in connection with its recent change of name, and the reasons that are assigned for it, without seeing that the force of public opinion, whether well or ill founded, has compelled its advocates to alter their tactics at least in two respects: they are anxious to withdraw from offensive prominence the *negative* articles of their creed, and to put forward the *positive* elements of truth which may still survive after the ruin of Religion; and they evince a disposition, somewhat new, to conciliate the Christian community, by admitting the sincerity of the clergy and the good intentions of believers generally, and inviting their coöperation in plans of secular improvement. But Atheism still lurks under the disguise of Secularism; and men of earnest religion are not likely to be tempted to any close alliance or active coöperation with those who misrepresent the character of that God in whom they believe, and of that Saviour in whom they trust. There may be some nominal Christians, however, already as unconcerned about the future and devoted to the present life, as Mr. Holyoake himself could wish them to be, who will eagerly grasp at this “new development,” as a plausible pretext for continuing in their present course; for “with the exception of those who compose the real Church of Christ, whose faith is not a mere name and an unthinking assent to Christianity, but a real, living, constant power over their life, the *whole world is practically secularist*, and is living solely by

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE, “Paley Refuted,” p. 43. GRANT AND HOLYOAKE, “Discussion,” pp. 7, 8.

the light of *the present*, and under the impulse of the motives which it supplies.”<sup>1</sup> For “Secularism is only the Latin term for the old Saxon worldliness: Secularism has more elements of union than perhaps any other phase of infidelity; it has the worldliness of mere nominal Christians, as well as of real infidels.”<sup>2</sup> They are really *Secularists*, but as yet they may not be at ease in their *Secularism*. There may be a secret monitor within, which reminds them occasionally of death, and judgment, and eternity; and the rapid flight of time, or the incipient sense of disease, or the ever-recurring instances of mortality, may awaken them to transient thoughts of another life for which it were well to be better prepared. What they want is a theory, — of plausible aspect and easy application, — which might serve to quell these rising thoughts, and allay their foreboding fears; and just such a theory they may seem to find in the proverbial maxim of Secularism, “Work in this life, for this life.” We are not sure, however, that even with such men the zeal of the new *propaganda* will be altogether successful. It may seem to some to be out of place, and may even excite a sense of the ludicrous. “Just fancy for a moment,” says the author already quoted, “some missionary of this principle going into the Royal Exchange at London, or the Stock Exchange at Leeds or Bradford, or the Cloth-halls of any of our manufacturing towns, summoning around him the merchants and the brokers, and then beginning with much earnestness and point to urge them *not* to live for eternity, but to be very careful about the present life: insisting that it was very, very doubtful if earth were not all, — the present existence the whole of human existence; and that therefore until there was more certainty they had better make the most of this; be industrious and prudent, and make themselves as comfortable

<sup>1</sup> “Modern Atheism, or the Pretensions of Secularism Examined,” p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Logic of “Logic of Death,” p. 4.

as possible; get as much money as they could honestly, and by no means let any dread of retribution hereafter fetter them in any of their actions here. Why, these merchants would turn away laughing and saying, 'Either the man is mocking us, or he is mad: that is just what we are doing with all our might.' They would see at least that Mr. Holyoake's teaching is very different from that of Him who said, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? But seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.' 'For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' And marking that vast difference, they will feel, at least, that no man is entitled to address them as rational beings in the style of Secularism, unless he can give them an *absolute assurance* that there is and can be no future state of existence, — that the *present* is man's *only* life, and that death is an eternal sleep."

But does Mr. Holyoake give, or pretend to give, any such *assurance*? "We do not say," he tells us, "that every man ought to give an *exclusive* attention to this world, because that would be to commit the old sin of dogmatism, and exclude the possibility of another world, and of walking by a different light from that by which alone we are able to walk. But as our *knowledge* is confined to this life, and testimony, and conjecture, and probability are all that can be set forth with respect to another life, we think we are justified in giving *precedence* to the duties of this state, and of attaching *primary* importance to the morality of man to man." It is not *certain*, then, that there is no future life; it is even *possible* that there may be one; the supposition is not in itself incredible, it may even have "testimony, conjecture, and probability" in its favor: — some attention to it, therefore, cannot be forbidden without

“committing the old sin of dogmatism, and excluding the possibility of another world;” but its comparative uncertainty is urged as a reason for “giving *precedence* to the duties of this state, and attaching *primary* importance to the morality of man to man.” The question would seem to be, not whether *any* attention should be bestowed on a future life, but whether it should be less or more than the attention which we bestow on the present world. It is a question of degree; and the settlement of that question is made to hinge entirely on the comparative uncertainty of our prospect after death. Suppose it were more uncertain, might not the magnitude of the interests that must be involved in a new and untried existence hereafter, and which must be measured on the scale of eternity, be more than sufficient to counterbalance the difference? “Let us be only fully convinced that our present life is (or may be) the beginning of an *eternal duration*, and how irresistibly are we urged to a mode of conduct answerable to that *accession of importance* which our present condition in the world derives from the peculiar point of view in which we then contemplate it!”<sup>1</sup> But, in point of fact, can it be reasonably said that *the future of our present life* is in any respect more certain than our prospects after death: “What is our life? is it not like a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?” And yet, in spite of its proverbial uncertainty, is it not a fundamental principle of Secularism that “true life begins in renunciation,” and that “the *future* must rule the *present*?” Extend these maxims, which are of unquestionable authority with reference to the present life, to our prospects beyond the grave, whether they be regarded as certain, or probable, or possible only, and they will abundantly vindicate the position that our conduct now and here should be regulated to some extent by a regard to what may be before us. In

<sup>1</sup> DR. HAMPDEN, “Philosophical Evidence of Christianity,” p. 28.

both cases alike, present gratification must give place to future safety, and *self-denial*, according to the shrewd remark of Franklin, is neither more nor less in the case of a prudent man than *self-owning*, the recognition of his own dignity, and the preference of a greater and more permanent to a smaller and transitory good. It might still, therefore, be alike our interest and our duty to have *some* regard to a possible future in the scheme of our present life. And aware of this Mr. Holyoake solaces himself, and attempts to sustain the spirits of his friends with the assurance, "Whatever is likely to secure your best interests here will procure for you the same hereafter,"—a strange inversion of the scriptural maxim, for it practically amounts to this, "Seek first the things of this world, and the kingdom of heaven shall be added unto you." And he states the ground or reason of his confidence in this respect: "If there be other worlds to be inhabited after this life, those persons will best be fitted for the enjoyment of them who have made *the welfare of humanity their business in this.*" To make "the welfare of humanity their business in this life," is a duty which may be discharged by the Christian not less than the Secularist, and perhaps with all the greater zeal in proportion to his estimate of men as responsible and immortal beings, all passing on, like himself, to an interminable future. But if there be another state of being after death, will he be best prepared for it who lives "without God" in this world, without serious forethought in regard to his eternal prospects, without any deliberate preparation for his certain and solemn change? Or will it be a consolation to him *then* to reflect that he disbelieved or doubted now, and that he exerted his talents and spent his life on earth in undermining the faith of his fellow-men, and weakening their impressions of things unseen and eternal?

Mr. Holyoake seems to imagine that whether there be or be not a future state after death, Secularism is the "safest side,"

and he puts the alternative thus: "If there are other worlds to be inhabited after this life, those persons will best be fitted for the enjoyment of them who have made the welfare of humanity their business in this. But if there are not other worlds, men are essentially losers by neglecting the enjoyment of this." On either supposition, it would seem, the Secularist has the advantage of the Christian: on the one, because he and not the Christian, "makes the welfare of humanity his business;" on the other, because he, and not the Christian, has the true "enjoyment" of the present life. It might be difficult to prove either of these convenient assumptions, or to show that there is anything in Christianity to prevent, anything in Atheism to promote, the care of humanity on the one hand, or the enjoyment of life on the other. On the contrary, all experience testifies that Religion is the only sure spring of philanthropy, and that, on the whole, none have a sweeter enjoyment of the present life than those who can look abroad on the works of Nature and say, "My Father made them all," and who can look forward to death itself with "a hope full of immortality." It is true, that the serious expectation of a future state must impose a certain restraint on the indulgence of our appetites and passions; but is it such a restraint as is injurious even to our temporal welfare? is it not the dictate of enlightened prudence, were we to look no further than to the present life? Mr. Holyoake himself repudiates the language which the apostle puts into the mouth of the unbeliever, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,"—language which is expressive of what would be, the natural tendency of men, were they assured of non-existence hereafter, but which Mr. Holyoake rejects, with something like virtuous indignation, saying; "That is the sentiment of the sensualist: it is not the sentiment of a man who is at all conscious that right and wrong are inherent in human nature, that there are wide distinctions between virtue and vice. This is not the sentiment of the man who comprehends

that if we do well, it will be well with us, that if we do harm, the evil influence will follow us; who sees distinctly that "our acts, if good, our angels are," and "if ill, our fatal shadows that walk by us still."<sup>1</sup> It is not the apostle's sentiment nor the sentiment of any believer; it is, as Mr. Holyoake says, "the sentiment of the sensualist;" but it is represented as the natural offspring of unbelief in regard to a future state, just as sensualism is naturally generated and fostered by unbelief in regard to those moral principles which have respect to the present life; and if these principles may and should exert a controlling influence over our conduct, even to the extent of imposing restraint and self-denial with a view to our welfare in time, may they not be expected to be all the more powerful when we include also our welfare in eternity? and may it not thus become manifest that "godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come?" It would be difficult to say in what respect believers "neglect the enjoyment of this life," or are "essentially losers" by their religion. They will gratefully ascribe to it their highest and purest happiness; and rather than part with it they will cheerfully submit to "the loss of all other things," and even to persecution and martyrdom itself. But it is asked, "If Christianity be false, is it nothing that you are troubled with a thousand anxieties and cares about what shall become of you after death? If Christianity be false, is it nothing that day after day you have the fear of death before your eyes? If Christianity be false, it makes you slaves while you live, and cowards in death."<sup>2</sup> We might answer, If Christianity be *true*, what then? but we prefer a different course: we say that the reality of a future state is in nowise dependent on the truth of Christianity, however much we may be indebted to Christianity for

<sup>1</sup> HOLYOAKE AND GRANT, "Discussion," p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> "Modern Atheism," p. 14.

our certain knowledge of it; that even on the principles of Atheism there is no security against the everlasting continuance of self-consciousness, any more than there is against the inevitable stroke of death; that Christianity in either case assumes the fact, and addresses men as dying yet immortal creatures, while it reveals a way in which those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" may be delivered from that fear, and raised to "a hope full of immortality." As death is not created or called into being by Christianity, so neither is the awful future which lies beyond it: the Secularist not less than the Christian has to do with it. Mr. Holyoake seems, at least occasionally, to be sensible of this solemn truth. "I am as much concerned," he says, "as this reverend gentleman can be, as to what shall be *the issue of my own condition in the future*; I am as much concerned *in the solution of this question* as he is himself; and I believe that the view I entertain, or that any of us may entertain, *conscientiously*, will be our justification in that issue, if we should come to want justification. When we pass through the inexorable gates of the future; when we pass through that vestibule where death stands opening his everlasting gates as widely to the pauper as to the king; when we pass out here into the *dim mysteries of the future*, to confront, it may be, the interrogations of the Eternal, —I apprehend *every man's responsibility will go with him*, and no second-hand opinions will answer for us."<sup>1</sup> Is there not something here that should arrest the attention and awaken the anxiety even of the Secularist himself? He sees before him the inevitable event of death, and beyond it "the dim mysteries of the future;" he *may be* called to "confront the interrogations of the Eternal," and then "every man's responsibility will go with him." Surely there is enough in the bare *possibility* of such a prospect to justify more than all the interest which has

<sup>1</sup> TOWNLEY AND HOLYOAKE, "Discussion," p. 18.

ever been expended upon it even by the most "anxious inquirer." But, haunted by these solemn thoughts, Mr. Holyoake takes refuge in the other alternative of his dilemma: "If there are other worlds, those will best be fitted for the enjoyment of them who have made the welfare of humanity their business in this." Secular philanthropy is the best, and only needful, preparation. With this any belief in regard to the future is unnecessary, without it no belief will be of any avail: for "the view which any of us may entertain, conscientiously, will be our justification in that issue, if we should come to want justification;" "No second-hand opinions will answer for us. Nothing can justify us, nothing can give us confidence, but the *conscientious nature* of our own conclusions; nothing can give us courage but *innocence*; nothing can serve our turn but having believed according to *the best of our judgment*, and having followed those principles which *seem to us* to be the truth." He takes refuge, then, first in his *good works*, and secondly in the *sincerity* of his convictions, as the sole grounds of his confidence in the prospect of "confronting the interrogations of the Eternal!"

Is it wonderful,—such being his only hope in death,—that when cholera appeared in London, and multitudes were suddenly removed by that appalling visitation, he should have felt it necessary to deliver a series of Lectures,—now reprinted as "The Logic of Death,"—"with a view to the assurance of his friends?" Might there not be some among them who would shrink from a future judgment on the ground of their "innocence" or "good works," and many more who would feel that they were making an awful venture in leaving their eternity to depend on the mere *sincerity* of their convictions, in whatever way these convictions may have been formed, and whether they were *true* or *false*? And could they be reassured or comforted by any other article of the Secular Creed? They might be told, as Mr. Holyoake tells them, "I am not an

unbeliever, if that implies the rejection of Christian truth, since all I reject is Christian error :” I reject “the fall of man, the atonement, the sin of unbelief, the doctrine of future punishment ; a disbeliever in all these doctrines, why should I fear to die ?” But the more thoughtful among them, all who were really in earnest, might desiderate something more ; they might see that *disbelief*, however dogmatic, does not amount to *disproof*, and that the *real ground of fear* is not in the least removed by it. Does his question imply, that if these doctrines were *true*, he would have just reason to fear death ? or does it mean merely, that whether they be true or false, he can have no reason to fear death, simply because he *disbelieves* them ? On the former supposition, how vast the difference between the Secularist and the Christian ? The one would have reason to fear because these doctrines are or may be true ; the other believes them to be true, and finds in that very belief a deliverance from the fear of death, and a firm ground of confidence and hope ! On the latter supposition,—which we believe to be the correct one,—what an amazing confidence must that man possess in the *sincerity* of his convictions, the *conscientiousness* of his judgment, and the rigid *impartiality* of his inquiries after truth, who can peril his eternal prospects on the mere fact that he *disbelieves* these doctrines, whether they be *true* or *false* ! Suppose that disbelief may diminish the intensity of his fears, can it alter the real state of the case, or remove the only just ground of apprehension and anxiety in regard to the future ? The truth of these doctrines is not dependent either on our belief or disbelief ; and in the way of *natural consequence*, even were there no additional penal infliction, they may vindicate themselves hereafter in the case of those who neglect or disbelieve them here, by leaving them destitute of all the advantages which flow only from the cordial reception of the truth. Thus much at least would be in entire accordance with the analogy of our experience with reference

to the interests of the present life ; for we do suffer, even now and here, in consequence of our ignorance, or neglect, or practical disbelief of truth,—and it may be so hereafter, in the way simply of inevitable natural consequence, but much more in the way of righteous penal retribution, if there be any truth in that *philosophy of unbelief*, so true to nature and so solemnly proclaimed, “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil ; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.”<sup>1</sup>

We have endeavored to estimate the claims of Secularism, and to examine the foundations on which it rests. In doing so, we have not denied either the right or the duty of any man to inquire and to decide for himself on his own solemn responsibility. We admit as fully as Mr. Holyoake himself, that personal responsibility implies the right, or rather the duty, of inquiry. He has our entire sympathy when he says, “It is my business to take care, if I walk *from time to eternity*, that I walk by that light which satisfies my own understanding. If it were true that any of you would take my place, *if we should eventually find ourselves at the bar of God*, and I should find myself to be made answerable for the opinions which I entertain, or for beliefs which I had in time, if any of you, or all of you, would take my place, and answer for me, then I might be content to take your opinions, then I might stand on the side of the world : but what does it matter to me what Newton believed, what Locke believed, or what the world believes, unless the world will answer for me if I believe as the world believes ?” But while the right of inquiry is frankly admitted, it can scarcely be denied that the mind may be biased by prejudice and

<sup>1</sup> John 3: 20, 21.

involved in error; and the ultimate question is, not, what are your opinions? but, what are the grounds on which they rest? —not, what is your belief? but, what is the truth? Mr. Holyoake is the Coryphæus of his party. As a popular writer and speaker, his talents and zeal, devoted to a better cause, might have fitted him for extensive usefulness, and rendered him a benefactor to his country. As it is, no man in England rests under a heavier load of responsibility. He has placed himself at the head of the *propaganda* of popular infidelity. Is it yet too late for him to reconsider his opinions, and retrace his steps? For his own sake, for the sake of those who are near and dear to him, for the sake of the multitudes who must be influenced, for good or evil, by his speeches and writings, let him lay to heart the solemn words of Sir Humphrey Davy;—“I envy no quality of mind or intellect in others,—not genius, power, wit, or fancy: but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a *firm religious belief* to every other blessing; for it makes life a discipline of goodness, creates new hopes when all earthly hopes vanish, and throws over the decay, the destruction of existence, the most gorgeous of all lights, calling up the most delightful visions, where the sensualist and skeptic view only gloom, decay, and annihilation.”

“Attempt how vain,—  
 With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,  
 With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love  
 To satisfy and fill the immortal soul!  
 To satisfy the ocean with a drop;—  
 To marry immortality to death;  
 And with the unsubstantial Shade of Time  
 To fill the embrace of all Eternity.”

THE END.



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