

CHRISTIANITY  
EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

*A GUIDE TO DOUBTERS.*

BY  
ORIELENSIS,  
OXON.

LONDON:  
RIDGWAY, 169 PICCADILLY, W.

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MY DEAR FRIEND,

You ask me to photograph my view of Christianity.

I will give it to you as it appears to me, in the form of a short argument, and a brief sketch. This statement may not be altogether the same with that which my ancestor, the Archbishop, would have given you, but, nevertheless, *I* believe it to be true.

At any rate, a Theologian is bound to aid, to the best of his power, any honest, doubting soul of man distressed and wearied with the burden of his doubts.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has lately spoken with his wonted power of Theology as the first of Sciences, and so, indeed, it is,—a science for both this world and 'the world to come.'

ORIELENSIS.

*Pall Mall,*  
*November 1874.*

# CHRISTIANITY

## BRIEFLY EXPLAINED AND VINDICATED.

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### HONEST DOUBTERS COMFORTED.

THE present state of the nominal Christian churches makes the thoughtful mind anxious.

There is but little real discriminating belief. Gross superstition on the one hand, largely prevailing, is followed, in the almost invariable course of mental reaction, by chill infidelity.

What we need is more of simple faith in God. But, in order that faith may exercise itself, there must be some definite scheme of Christianity presented to the mind of educated man, or he will pass often into moods of alternate carelessness, and alarm and despondency. Education is valuable; but the frequent first effect of it, in questions of religion, is to suggest doubts. Therefore, the poor man, who can only read and write, but who has learnt, in his deep-felt needs, that his Bible is a book

of truth, and that it meets the necessities of his soul, is often more thoroughly religious than his richer neighbours. But for this fact 'Cassandra's prophecies' would present very real cause for alarm.

Notwithstanding this happy circumstance, however, the same difficulty will force itself upon the reflective, whether poor or rich, uneducated or educated. It is really the *one grand* difficulty in the reception of Christianity. Remove this, and all others can, by research and patience, be dealt with, and all, as time advances, and knowledge is accumulated, may be, as many have already been, removed.

This difficulty is 'the origin of Evil.' How can the reasoning mind reconcile the infinite benevolence, and the almighty power of God as it is generally viewed, with the existence of so much of sorrow, suffering, pain, anguish, and death, as there is in this world? How could a benevolent Being of Omnipotent power create a race which should be foreseen as the sufferer of such tremendous physical evils as London (if it stood alone as the only city on the face of the earth instead of being one amongst thousands), in its dens and alleys, and streets and hospitals, presents? What an addition, too, of *moral* evil! What agonies of spirit! What crushing, death-bearing woes of soul! What gnawing pains within, which ever lacerate, like vipers in the bosom, yet bring not that death which would be

welcomed! Add to this the accumulated evil and suffering of the World. Theologian, how is this? Explain the marvel!

I think I can hear the earnest, solicitous inquirer say, 'Remove this stumbling-block; enlighten my darkness upon this one problem, which racks me, and I ask no more. I can see my way into the other recesses. Christianity will then appear, in a world of trial, so needful, that I shall not hesitate to accept at once a religion which offers present peace, and opens up a region of light and joy beyond the grave.'

'I shall trust that the petty objections, arising from apparently inconsistent texts in the Bible, or seemingly unscientific statements, scattered here and there, will, as time goes on, be answered; and a book, so necessary to the welfare of sorrowing, suffering, dying man, be shown to be as exact as it is valuable—as truthful as it is essential to his chief, his everlasting interest.'

My desire is to grapple with this great and primary threshold difficulty. But, first, I would clear the way.

I find a race in existence of which I am one. It is distinguished in some points, from other, and evidently inferior races which surround it. The name whereby we call it is Mankind.

It possesses a body—a physical frame, which contains in every part machinery subtle, yet exquisitely adapted to the supply of its wants. The eye

—the hand, the brain, the foot, the blood-circulation system, the heart, all are skilfully contrived—and each suited to its own distinct and evident purpose.

I reason 'in these there is evidence of design.' Take, as an instance, the eye. How beautifully contrived are its many lenses, humours, vessels, nerves, and chords. I cannot imitate it. The best telescope, or even microscope, which I can make, falls very far short, in beauty and fitness of design, of the eye with which the child is born.

But, in addition to this bodily frame, I find that I, with my brother-man, possess certain other powers and faculties. I can reason—imagine—remember, exercise judgment. I find also a faculty, within me, condemning or approving the thoughts and actions of myself and of other men.

Experience and history assure me that these faculties are in a greater or less degree common to mankind. I possess, also, speech—which belongs to what I call the lower animal creation, if at all, only in a very inferior form and method. Am not I, then, a being raised above the rest of the animal kingdom? Wherein do I differ? What gives me that pre-eminence which these faculties presuppose? Is it a soul which I possess? In common parlance it is. But I question whether common parlance goes to the root of the matter. In many points other animals are very much like myself. They love or hate. They reason in some sense. They have also an instinct in their earliest period of life

superior to mine. What is it which creates the difference and gives me my after vast superiority? This question is now being grappled with. The present Dean of Norwich entered upon the topic this year with much ability at the Brighton Congress. Several years ago I remember bringing it before the Victoria Philosophical Institute of Great Britain, to the great surprise of a few amongst those present. The real answer probably is, that animals possess a *soul*, as it is in the Greek of the New Testament. But man possesses *not only a soul* like theirs ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ), but also in addition an immortal *spirit* ( $\piνεῦμα$ ). (1 Thess. v. 23.) The latter is the cause of his superiority.

But then the latter is also the instrument of much additional suffering. For it has a moral sense capable of becoming very acute, and ever the source of much anxiety and disquietude. This spirit, also, looks forward and onward to its condition at death, and marvels what shall transpire after the present life. Is there a life to come? So it earnestly asks, What then will be my condition, my portion, there? If I am, or am created only for this life, my sufferings will soon terminate in death. But, if not, if there be a future state (and I certainly yearn for such a future), what will it be? And how shall I feel in that state?

Moral evil. This is my problem. This, by reason of my inward feelings, or, as I call them, my conscience, creates the risk and the alarm. This

bodes, unless it can be got rid of, suffering in the future. Some penalty is threatened by conscience. If an eternal penalty—then what trouble moral evil has brought into this world. Whence its origin? Is it eternal in its source? Or, if created, who created it? Surely, not an Almighty yet beneficent Being! This is the real difficulty. All others are of comparatively little importance. Theologians in all ages of Christianity have felt, and many have directly acknowledged, this fact. But they have failed to grapple thoroughly with the difficulty. The usual reply to the infidel's objection, and the timid doubter's question, has been, that moral evil was necessary as a discipline. This may, or may not be true. Its truth is certainly questionable, for how then is moral evil kept out of heaven, where, as they affirm and truly, there is perfect holiness and yet no such discipline?

It is strange that a man possessing so much reasoning power as Bishop Butler, the author of the well-known 'Analogy,' should not have grappled more closely with this question; for whilst he clearly proves that the conditions of human life in this world tend to show that law reigns, and that punishment follows sin, and that it is therefore probable that a similar order prevails in the world unseen; still, this is insufficient. This does not justify the creation or permission of evil. This argument adds rather to the difficulty, for it proves, if anything, that moral evil will shed its baneful in-

fluence throughout eternity like an 'Upas tree,' which shall be immortal.

This difficulty, with which I desire to grapple, clogs every step of the theologian, puzzles every acute lay thinker, and drags down into the abyss of doubt and unbelief every reasoning infidel. It is an awful chasm in the onward road of every sensible person, be he even a believer. As a believer, indeed, he is sustained by inward hope, and may and does overleap it. As an unbeliever he plunges in and is lost.

I marvel not at the prevalence of infidelity in our day of quickened intellect and constant thought. When no Church will, carefully and painfully, throw open this barred iron-gate, and deliver the human mind. The fact is the Divine Spirit must be sought. He is *the* Teacher. 'He shall teach you all things. (John, xiv. 26.) But, that gracious Divine Spirit is willing. He desires to teach all who, in humility of spirit, whilst using diligently the faculties which He has given, for 'means are ours,' seek His guidance: 'He shall lead you into all the truth.' (John, xv. 13.)

There is nothing (excepting the mysteries of the Infinite Nature, and the dwelling-place of Him who inhabiteth Eternity, which no human words could express, and no finite mind could comprehend, simply because of the infinity,) which He has not promised, in His unspeakable goodness and love, gradually to teach to the humble but diligent inquirer.

The answer which I would, in humble and grateful submission to His teaching, desire to make to my brother man's question, how came Evil into existence, is short and simple.

It was impossible, if moral beings were to be created, that it could be otherwise. Omnipotence is limited only by that law, 'whose seat,' as the judicious Hooker says, 'is the bosom of God.' The Divine attributes are of the very essence of the Divine Nature. So much is revealed to us. For God is defined so far. He is 'LIGHT' and 'LOVE.' Light and love abstractedly.

The principles of light and love do constitute His nature. To come down to a mere human phrase, He is light in the mind, and love in the heart. Or, to employ another phrase, the intellect is light—the heart is love. We cannot measure infinity. We have no such line. But we add the word, which implies an idea that we cannot grasp. He is *infinite light and infinite love*.

How then could He create Evil? I reply again, 'He did not.' Evil was a contingent result of His creation of any moral being. No one *created* as a *moral being* could be otherwise than free to stand, or free to fall. This is the inevitable consequence of being such. Hence, if such beings were created the contingency of their choosing to fall must exist. This, of course, was foreseen.

But, even to our limited capacities, it is evident that the, to us, innumerable material worlds which

have been created would be all but wasted if no beings were created with faculties which could fully enjoy their exquisite beauty and their order.

And it is equally evident that mere matter could not enjoy and praise the Divine nature as moral beings, such as men and angels, could enjoy and magnify that nature. They possess understandings limited indeed and imperfect, and yet vastly superior to the animal creation subject to us.

The material world, in a figurative sense, can lift up its voice of praise to God. And so, also, in the same manner, can the unreasoning creatures, as we call them, give thanks. But it is only the intellects and hearts of moral beings which can form a choir of harmony fit to praise Him, whom they *alone* can appreciate.

Inherited even by dogs, and horses, and elephants, alone, the happiness and joy of the universe would, truly, have been incomplete. There would have been the music of praise, but only of unreasoning, unconscious praise. The creation of moral beings was *necessary* to fill up the void. Their songs are the songs of heart, but of reason also. Their higher, although finite, nature enables them to testify in intelligible, because intelligent, accents of thanksgiving to the attributes of Light and Love in their marvellous, yet most benign, Creator. Earth echoes (when men will listen to its voice) the harmony of Heaven. But their human praise and thanksgiving are also due.

Therefore angels and men were created.

But the risk was foreknown, and, in the case of men, and of the vast majority of the 'thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers,' provided against. I speak of the vast majority.

The Bible tells us, indeed, of some fallen angels who sinned untempted. They saw Jehovah. They worshipped within view of His Majesty. They knew well His might. No one led *them* astray. It was in their power as moral beings to fall. They chose to fall. Being untempted, as we learn, for them no recovery has been provided.

They molest us. Possibly (I will say no more than *possibly*) this world *was* their residence. Hence, (as nothing is created *in vain*,) its state of chaos and the death of the large and smaller animals subject. This was the penalty. Revelation speaks not, in the Bible, on this interesting topic.

All that we know is, when chaos was the condition of our earth, and 'darkness was upon the face of the deep'—that the Spirit of Jehovah 'moved upon the face of the waters.' He, who is Light (in the abstract) called light into being here below. He, who is *Love*, created plants, animals, man.

Man, as a moral being, chose to fall. The position in which he was placed was the best for him. He was allowed every delight of Eden—the garden of God. One tree alone was refused

to him. Some *test of obedience* was essential. But *one* only was selected. Eve, tempted, ate of the forbidden tree. She tempted Adam. He acquiesced. They, therefore, rebelled. They broke the law of the universe. This law sustains every obedient moral being in the universe in the enjoyment of security, and so of happiness. The welfare of innumerable Beings, who were still dutiful and submissive to the will of the benign Moral Ruler, demanded that the law should be upheld. Otherwise, the universe must have fallen into confusion. Chaos, moral and, ere long, physical, would have been everywhere. No more peace, tranquillity, joy, love. Discord, war, tumult, malice, hatred, revenge, reigning. I say again, it is, even to our finite minds, clear that law must be maintained. We maintain it ourselves, poor creature as man is, and yet we cannot foresee consequences as God can foresee.

The penalty had been threatened, and must be levied. Man risked happiness by wilful rebellion, and must suffer. The tree of life, if it had been partaken of, would have made him an immortal sufferer, for to knowledge of evil he had attained. The flaming sword turned, therefore, 'every way to keep the way of the tree of life.' 'The cherubim,' stationed by the Lord, shielded man from, *at least*, an earth-derived, immediate immortality of sin and anguish.

But his moral nature was already defiled. His

mind was darkened. Adam and Eve sent down this sad inheritance by natural entail of a fallen mind and an enfeebled body.

This catastrophe had been foreseen, and a provision made; otherwise the flaming sword would not have been the merciful protector that it became.

What was this provision?

I now come to the most important point in the whole statement. The scheme is one which man could never have imagined or devised. Only the mind of God could have suggested it.

The second race had fallen, but fallen *being tempted*. For them there was to be amnesty and recovery. Not the abyss of darkness for ever, but the hope of a blessed eternity—of eternal life. The sun's golden gleam of joy shone out upon the tornado-sky. After the earthquake and the fire came 'the still small voice' of hope. It was the voice of God. In the Divine Triune Council, one offered to atone: one to sanctify. Each offer was accepted. God undertook to take human form, and exhaust the penalty by the union of the Divine with the human, of the Godhead with weak humanity. Unutterable love! God, as man, humbled himself to die for man.

Then the jubilant voice of prophecy broke forth. It came from Eden's sacred precincts. It came long ago, but its echoes are in Britain to-day, and they fall on the ear of waiting faith, of the widow, the orphan, the dying.

'The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's head.'

'Lo I come.'

This is what the Bible calls 'the bringing in of atonement.' This is 'redemption.'

After that day of early light and hope, the voice came again and again; sometimes at noon-day, sometimes in the hush of evening. But ever, was it as light, to the darkened, life to the dead. Erewhiles, it was embodied in type and figure. The ark of gopher-wood; the slain lamb; the ram caught in the thicket; the ladder reaching from earth to heaven; the burning bush; Aaron's rod that budded; the ark of the covenant with the law *hidden*, and the cherubim looking only upon the golden mercy-seat; the paschal lamb; the scapegoat; the annual day of atonement; the brazen serpent, on which all who looked in trust (even the eye growing dim in death) lived; the smitten rock in Horeb; Jordan's healing power; Jordan's divided water. Recovery, by atoning death, was preached. The Jewish sacrifices were eloquent. Man learnt thus the atonement.

Yet, also, the Voice spake.

'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' 'The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.'

'There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.'

'For dogs have compassed me, They part my garments among them.' 'I am poured out like water.'

'Unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given.'

'The government shall be upon His shoulder.'

'The chastisement of our peace was upon Him.'

'Wonderful Counsellor. The mighty God. The Father of the everlasting age. The Prince of peace.'

'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet, out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting.'

'I will bring forth my Servant, the Branch.'

'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple.'

'Emmanuel, God with us.'

That voice died away only when the sceptre departed from Judah; and, then, the full choir of angelic spirits took up its sweet strain as fulfilled in Bethlehem,—

'Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a *Saviour*, which is Christ the Lord.'

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will towards men.'\* He also spake, 'I and My Father are one.' 'Before Abraham was, I AM.'—'In due time Christ died for the ungodly.'—

Then was the fulfilment of these words, to which all Scripture is an echo, words upon which, as I well know, the devout heart clings in the agony of death as well as in the midst of cheerful life, ever

\* See also Gal. iv. 4, 5.

*its only but all-sustaining hope*, upbearing in the passage (through which we must all pass) across the dark, cold Jordan waters.

'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Thus, in the 'accursed' death upon the Cross the penalty was paid; 'He hath borne our griefs;' 'The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'\* The law of the universe was upheld; countless myriads of angels were saved from catastrophe. Man was recovered, and could be *freely offered* mercy. 'God just,' and 'yet the justifier of him that believeth.' So 'that being justified by faith, we may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

This event, like the Voices from Heaven, which literally now and then were heard, was attested to that generation, which beheld them, by the witness of miracles.

I claim not more for miracles except we are *wise* enough to receive the narrative of them upon testimony far stronger than the evidence which we possess of the life of Julius Cæsar. For many men have testified at the cost of their lives to these miracles. Men have sacrificed property, liberty, fame, life itself, again and again, in witnessing to 'Jesus and the Resurrection.' Let the Coliseum speak.

\* See also 1 Pet. ii. 24.

But I do claim for *prophecy* vast weight. The Jewish Scriptures treasured by the nation (every word counted up), have been in existence at least from two to three thousand years. They foretold the disasters of that wonderful people. What *man* could have foreseen their present and past sufferings in banishment for even a thousand years? Every child of Abraham, whom we may meet in Piccadilly or the Strand, is a witness for the truth of the Bible, and so for the atonement upon Calvary. God alone, the Omniscient, could so *certainly* foretell. Ask any one of the most enlightened statesmen what will be the condition of Turkey or of India twenty years hence — can he foresee with certainty? Who, then, of all the children of men could prophesy of events two thousand years before they happened?

God speaks in 'the Book.' Again, there is the living voice of the Bible, addressing the tried, and accusing human conscience—full of fear, yet capable of high hope; explaining all this inward conflict; solving the problem of a world like ours — soothing, comforting, satisfying. Do other books so *satisfy*? Why not? This is the Word of One who 'knows what is in Man,' for He '*created*' Man. *Therefore* it satisfies.

This voice of God's love to man's heart is very convincing to those who listen with patient, pure ear. It is the Gospel which is the special 'Power of God.' The gospel of Christ is but little understood. Some fancy it to be one set of truths; others,

a class completely different. But, if it was more than one truth, its loss of simplicity would render it much more difficult to receive than it really is. St. Paul, who received it by miracle from the Lord Himself, tells us plainly what the Gospel is; \* 'Christ died for our sins.' 'Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world.' † 'Christ died for the ungodly.' ‡ And, by the Holy Ghost, he adds, 'Though we, or an angel from Heaven' (words could not be stronger) 'preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' As we said before so say I now again, 'If any preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be *accursed*.' (Gal. i. 8, 9.) 'Again I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ.' (Gal. i. 11, 12. See, also, Rom. xvi. 25, and Col. i. 26, 27.) Thus it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' A revelation so special of the Gospel shows its *vast* importance. Disfigure it in any feature, and you lessen or hinder its progress. Mutilate it, and you destroy its effect. (These few words will explain the failure of the Roman, Eastern, and even Greek churches, to illuminate and convert mankind.) A clear view of the Gospel is required.

\* 1 Cor. xv. 3.

† Gal. i. 4.

‡ Rom. v. 6.

This was the message of 'glad tidings,' which our Lord commanded His disciples to announce throughout the world,—

'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned.' (Mark, xvi. 15.)

Herein, then, lies the whole secret of salvation. This Gospel must, constantly, be received in its simplicity, and if thus received, trustingly in obedience to Divine command, the Holy Ghost sanctifies that soul which so receives it confidently. Then a good life follows—not perfect, for how could the life of an imperfect man be perfect, but a life of faith, and so of progress towards perfection? Thus the faithful person 'lays aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset, and runs with patience the race which is set before him (or her), looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith' (Heb. xii. 2, 3); 'pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling,' (Philip. iii. 14.) 'Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.' (Rom. xii. 11, 12.)

This is the process by which the Holy Ghost gradually sanctifies. Many other passages in the two Testaments further elucidate its course.

But how far was this command of Christ obeyed?

By the Apostles undoubtedly it was obeyed. 'Their sound went forth unto all the earth; their words unto the ends of the world.' 'How beautiful were the feet of them that preached the Gospel of peace, and brought glad tidings.'

Yet this happy time did not continue. 'Even now,' says the Holy Ghost by one of them, 'there are many antichrists.' 'The day of Christ shall not come,' adds another, 'except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God and that is worshipped.'

Nothing is more sad to the reflecting mind than to review, from that day downwards, the history of the nominal and visible Christian churches. Paganism and Judaism mingled themselves in with Christianity, like arsenic mixed up in bread. Judaic and heathen philosophy and 'vain deceits crept in.' 'The rudiments of the world' abounded, and the Church was 'spoilt.'

Brilliant exceptions, truly, there were from the days of Polycarp downwards. Many martyrs, confessors, and saints, witnessed for the 'truth' at the cost of all that men usually count dear, even unto death.

But, as a whole, the visible Church became corrupted. For this reason it was that the heathen were not converted. Teachers went not forth. And 'how should the heathen hear without a preacher?'

Where the responsibility really lies God alone knows. A future day will show.

The Crusades in the Middle Ages were no true sign of abiding life. Warriors took up earthly arms, and neglecting home duties, used the weapon of the sword. They did not seek to convince, but to sweep away the Mahomedan enemy.

The invention of the art of printing, at last, enabled the masses of the people to read the Bible.

The Book was unsealed.

'To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them.' This was the cry of the people.

Then the dawn of the Reformation broke pleasantly upon the Western Churches. And, where the few had read the heavenly message in the ancient manuscript or in the Latin Breviary in the monastic library and the convent cell, numbers, in the field, and in the shop, and in the cottage, now read, believed, and rejoiced. Savonarola, Wicliffe, Huss, Jerome, Cobham, Luther, Melancthon, Bucer, Beza, Peter Martyr, Cranmer, Latimer, Hooper, and Ridley, arose and taught.

But, the action of reforming principle has been slow. A walk up-hill. A struggling, misty morning. Now, however, after three hundred years the sun has risen much higher ; and we thank God, that by railroads, telegraphs, newspapers, books, preaching power is extended, and the apostolic sound travels to the ends of the world.

What in our day is the chief need ? I return whence I set out.

It is the need of a clearer, a stronger faith ! 'Only believe.' 'If thou believest thou mayest.' 'According to your faith be it unto you.' As is faith so is its reward. Faith in man is a powerful, necessary agent in daily, earthly life. Faith in the Eternal alone can scale the heavens, and bring your seeking, needing, anxious, trembling, way-worn spirit near to 'the bosom of its Father and its God.' Therefore pray. 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' 'Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.'

To reject these truths is determinately to ensure your own condemnation. 'He, that believeth not, shall be damned.' To receive them meekly, and to carry them out in the life, is true wisdom. They are not popular with all men who know them. But, was our Saviour popular with all men ? What say you about the Scribes and Pharisees ? When, as even foreign sceptics call Him, that excellent Teacher walked the earth, men did not universally follow Him. The majority in Judea simply crucified Him. Never mind what such men say. Walk with God. There are, indeed, base, vulgar, and degraded individuals, who may try to persecute you. Yet, what can they do after the short day-dream of life is past ? At the very worst, 'Fear not them which kill the body and are not able to kill the soul ; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy

both body and soul in hell.' Uphold *ever* bravely the true banner of the cross, and you (as certainly as you are a living being), by God's grace, will enter Paradise with that standard flying.

The sands of the world's probation-time are now running out. The Christian dispensation nears its close. The two preceding, the Patriarchal and the Jewish, dispensations lasted, each, about two thousand years. The dates of Holy Writ are too clear for any one who really studies, with the added light of modern history, to mistake the fact that this dispensation will last about the same length of time.

Mahommedanism and Popery, those two scourges of negligent and corrupt churches, have continued during their predicted periods. They must fall. The earth's real universal sovereign returns, as conqueror, to reign. Vishnu's tenth Avatar, and the Druse's longed-for Thlakim, and the war-song of the wild North American Indian, show the world's yearning for the great *Deliverer*.

This will be the golden age of which of old the poets sung. 'His reign brings righteousness and peace.' This is 'the time of the *restitution* of all things.' 'Whom the Heavens must receive' (says the Holy Ghost) 'until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.' (Acts, iii. 21.)

'The Redeemer shall come to Zion,' saith Je-

hovah. He will wear Earth's recovered Crown, won back with His own blood.

'He shall rise with healing in His wings.'

'The beam that rests on Salem's towers  
Shall lighten every land ;  
The King who rules on Zion's hill  
Shall the whole world command.'

'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.'

'There shall be a Root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles in Him shall the Gentiles trust.' 'A king shall reign in righteousness.'

Paradise lost shall then be Paradise restored.

Should we, the soldiers of the Cross in warfare still with evil, forget to cheer, by our camp-fires, our drooping comrades with the happy expectation of 'that Rest which remaineth,' 'the very stones would cry out.' (Luke, xix. 40.)

END OF PART I.

## PART II.

MANY arguments in vindication of Christianity arising from its elevating power, its clear code of conduct, its frequent beauty of moral thought and of diction, might again of course be, as they often have been, adduced. But this is not my object. I wish, simply, to present a sketch of Christianity in its history and leading truths, and to meet one paramount difficulty, urged, in all ages of the Christian Church, as an objection against the possibility of Christianity being true, and which has lately, as I understand the position, been urged to prove the non-existence of the Christian's God, or, indeed, of any Supreme Being.

No doubt, had it been impossible to show that moral evil was not positively created by Deity, it would have been possible for the Christian only to say, 'I am ignorant. In the world to come this fearful problem will be solved.' But, then, the unbeliever's answer would immediately be, 'I cannot accept a system as true, which presents, at first sight and at its very threshold, such a blot.' Atheism would have gained much by such a determined statement in an age like our own. But, with this

reply to the atheist, that 'it was impossible that it could be otherwise without leaving the universe desolate, and the Creator of it with no moral being to enjoy its excellence and to give Him loving thanks,' we Christians cannot only show that all creation, and the scheme of the Creator, are worthy, but also that the creation of moral beings has led to the most sublime display conceivable of the goodness of God.

Be it urged that moral beings, who had no free choice, might have been created, I reply that this is a contradiction in terms, just as it would be to say, that white is black, or that two and two make fifteen, or could ever make fifteen, or that two angles of an equilateral triangle might be less than the third.

There are impossibilities which are obvious. The law of the Divine Nature prevents. So, God *cannot* 'lie.' 'He is not a man that He should lie.'

I allege that this scheme of Christianity, thus drawn out, answers every honest and reasonable objection to Christianity, as a system affirming the power, and yet the benevolence, of Deity, as distinguished from objections which deal with the details of the biblical records, which really cannot be fully answered, or even *fairly brought*, until we can obtain more knowledge than we possess, and until we are sure that some few words in ancient manuscripts have not been altered or interpolated.

At present the main difficulty is, that which Mill suggests, and which I have here dealt with briefly, in order that the hard-working artisan may be able easily to read what I have written. I have striven to vindicate the ways of God with man, and to comfort the honest doubter.

I will now turn once more for a moment to the question of miracles. It has been affirmed that the usual method of sustaining the evidence for the Bible as the written Word of God, by appealing to miracles, is very much like an argument in a circle. For, as undoubtedly miracles of some sort have been wrought in support of error; so, in adducing them in behalf of the truth of the Bible, the doctrine must first be appealed to in favour of the miracle, and then the miracle in support of the doctrine, or *vice versa*. There is some truth in this allegation. I have, however, only adduced miracles as strong confirmation at the time when they were wrought. Then, certainly, it must have strengthened the faith of those who heard 'the gracious words' of Jesus of Nazareth,—words such as 'never man' before 'spake;' when they beheld also the lame made to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lepers cleansed, and the dead returning to life. The united evidence must have been most cogent; so our Lord argued, 'Or else believe Me for the *very work's sake*.' And this was the opinion of a learned Jew: 'No man

can do these miracles that Thou doest except God be with him.'

But to us the question is one of testimony. Yet the testimony to these miracles of our Lord's is most satisfying. This I have already shown, and objectors forget the truth mentioned by our Lord, that His miracles spoke for themselves as being wrought in support of statements, which not only recommended themselves to every pure Jewish conscience, but also were obviously hostile to Satan's kingdom of evil; and how then, could that astute spirit have wrought them without opposing himself? 'And if Satan be divided against Satan, how shall his kingdom stand?'

I am, however, unwilling to press the argument from miracles further. Christianity needs it not whilst she has prophecy, and the evidence derived from her marvellous suitability to human nature, its fears, hopes, wants, and wishes, to sustain her.

I wish now to look at a few additional objections to Christianity. There are those who deny the Divine authority of the Scriptures, but admit and acknowledge the existence of a Creator, a God of omnipotence and *benevolence*. Bishop Butler's argument appears to be conclusive against such persons. The argument from analogy certainly shows that a vast amount of probability is on the side of a future state, and that future, as a state of rewards and punishments, if it be once allowed that there is a moral Ruler of the universe. In which case the proba-

bility of a revelation becomes a certainty, God being *benevolent*.

But, if this be denied, then the conflict, of course, lies between Atheism or Pantheism (and Pantheism is, in its result, really Atheism) and Christianity as we receive it in our national capacity.

It does appear to my mind that there is no permanent *real standing ground* between these theories. The one or the other must be true. Intervient theories are very self-contradictory.

Let us look for a moment at the atheistical: 'There is no God.' These atoms and their molecules have been from eternity. By accident (what a lucky accident!) they have shaped themselves into the various beautiful forms which we see around us. Evolution and natural selection are to account for all improvements. Is it so? As a reasoner, I cannot see the proof of such a theory. First of all, the induction of facts is not yet sufficiently large to prove 'evolution' a scientific doctrine in the sense in which the term is used. Partial evidence there may be, but it is incomplete. No trial of patience and wisdom is greater, than to know how long to pause before the decision is arrived at that we have gathered facts enough to form a thoroughly sound scientific theory.

Again, almost everything, of which by experience I have any real knowledge, has a sufficient cause, which more or less clearly I can trace. It is so with man, the lower animals, and the works of

both. I can find, within my range, no effect of which I cannot with patience discover some cause near or remote. Is there no evidence of *design* in a watch, or a telegraph, or a steam-engine? Will any man, in his senses, say, the atoms have so framed themselves as, without human manufacture, to produce *these* effects? If not, is it probable, let him say, that this wonderful and beautiful earth came into being as the result of a 'happy-go-lucky' concourse of atoms? Every effect has a cause. Well, however remote, the great *first* Cause we call the Deity! Is there no evidence of design in the instinct of the beaver, the bee, the ant? Is it all chance? But, be it alleged that atoms of matter may have these extraordinary faculties. Is there nothing but matter in this world?

'*Cogito, ergo sum*,' truly reasons Descartes. 'I think, therefore I am.' What is that which thinks, and which, when the body is dying, remains often calm, clear, collected, and enables (as I have seen) the Christian to smile a farewell when his tongue is being paralysed in death? Is man a mere machine wound up by taking food? Nothing in revelation would be such a marvel as this would be. And, what is that which obliges you to say, 'When I was a baby,' although every atom of your baby body has been long lost; and again, and again, since that time, your whole material body has been changed. What is that 'I.'

What, also, is that power or faculty with which

you reason, remember, imagine? Is it not your mind? Every effect must have a cause and a cause sufficient to produce the effect. Who, then, is the author of mind but a greater mind? In the order of causes, the mind of God.

But, secondly, if there be, as it is evident to reasonable men that there must be, an all-powerful Creator, if He is also good, how came evil into the world?

The Manichæans would tell us that there are in the universe two principles. Good and evil. Hormuzd and Ahriman, as the Gnostics and the Parsees would have it; or, both eternal, always at war, as Marcion seems to have thought.

Then, first, there is no *one* Almighty cause of all things. But, secondly, is not the answer given in the first part of this letter, a far better mode of accounting for evil, as it impugns not God, nor yet exalts evil?

Again, thirdly, the Hylists say, '*Matter* is essentially evil.' Plato, even, inclined to this theory. Yet how can they prove it? Is Parian marble (untouched even by the chisel of a Phidias) essentially evil?

Their statement is absurd.

Yet the objector will turn to the field of Providence, and ask, Is God good, who permits His servants to pass through so many dangers and trials?

In reply, I say, 'We cannot see the whole plan,'—the end from the beginning.

We see, as yet, 'through a glass darkly.' We are on the *shred* side of the tapestry.

When we go round, we shall perceive the exquisite pattern.

The servants of God do suffer with others; but, then, they have a good hope,—an Ark in their deluge. And what do we hear the Lord God saying by His word, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' 'He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness.' And, finally, 'our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and *eternal weight* of glory.'

Thus Providence is vindicated.

But, then, like John Stuart Mill, some will say, 'Look at Nature! She is full of cruelties and perplexities. The ways of the Christian's Deity in Nature are on many occasions at variance with the precepts of the same Deity (as he believes) in the Gospel.'

These are Mill's words. 'And further, it is impossible that any one, who habitually thinks, and who is unable to blunt his inquiring intellect by sophistry, shall be able without misgiving to go on ascribing absolute perfection to the author and ruler of so clumsily made and capriciously governed a creation as this planet and the life of its inhabitants.'

This is an evidently careless statement in the use of the words, 'clumsily made,' while the whole paragraph is the language of exaggeration. Never-

theless, except as I have answered in the preceding letter, it would, and it does, form a very serious difficulty in the way of many.

Even the thoughtful Christian is puzzled, and can but veil his face, and answer nothing, until he perceives that it *could not have been otherwise*,—and, that the conduct of the Deity is exhibited clearly in creation, and specially in redemption (even to our human minds, born yesterday), in the light of a most gracious, merciful, loving, condescending, yet infinite, and all-just being. God is still 'Light.' God is yet 'Love.'

Nature,—material Nature,—as we see her, has suffered through human sin. It will be, only when the recovery shall have been completed, that we shall be able to judge of her excellencies and to admire her final perfections. Even now, in her principles, she is always sound. Art copies her forms. Science is guided by her facts. To man, indeed, it is left to improve in detail (while he imitates), that his mind may be trained. This is his moral school. So God teaches him, by His own industrious exertions, to improve his position, and benefit his race.

View Nature, providence, and redemption, as we will, there is no ground for real complaint. There is, on every side, a demand for praise.

I have sought to sketch what I believe to be the true view of Christianity, and have been purposely brief. In our day time is valuable, and the

short statement, which will remain upon the memory, is much more useful to the vast majority than length, and, with it, tedium.

In conclusion, I would merely add, that the key adduced seems to be the real one, as it fits all the wards of the ancient lock.

Yet, if there were simply a high probability of Christianity being the truth of God, it would be the test of wisdom to receive it, since then the dreadful contingent risk will be avoided, for the Bible, which declares it, invites all to come and will neglect none, who come in the spirit of true *humility*. 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' The heavenly fountain is accessible. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' (Rev. xxii. 17.)

A PRAYER WHICH MAY BE USED BY  
ANY TROUBLED SPIRIT.

'O HOLY GHOST the Comforter,' 'open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.'

*From the Te Deum.*

'Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man : Thou didst not abhor the virgin's womb. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death : Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

'Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father.

'We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee help Thy servants whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting.'

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