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Mr. JAMES BATEMAN, F.R.S.—In acknowledging this kind vote of thanks, my words will be very few: and they will not be few, I am sorry to say, from any embarrassment such as a person might feel from having himself wrought any part of the meritorious work which has called forth such a handsome acknowledgment in such an important meeting. Full justice, and, I think, no more than justice, has been done to the Council; honour to whom honour is due; and we must not forget the thirteen years' labours of my gallant friend the Hon. Secretary, who is entitled to a very large share of this well-merited meed of praise. He must himself be astonished at the success of his labours. To those labours, to his indomitable perseverance, and to his unflinching faith in his mission, this Society owes what it has attained. I remember the time when our adherents were reckoned by units, while now they are to be counted by hundreds, for at this moment the Society has a roll which extends to four figures. (Applause.) It would have been still larger than it is but for a very heavy death-rate, which includes some of our most important members, and men who were universally known, such as the Earl of Harrowby and Lord O'Neill. How much the Society has lost by the death of Lord O'Neill you will be better able to appreciate when you have heard the paper which the Bishop of Derry is about to read. I hope I shall not be accused of any breach of confidence if I read a passage from a letter which I received yesterday from Lord O'Neill's widow. She tells me that not only she, but her daughter and all the family have their thoughts fixed on this meeting to-night. Her words are these: "I do hope that you and all who value the dear and holy words will be able to be present, and in doing so you will bring solace to a heart as completely broken as there ever was on earth." This adds a new interest to our meeting to-night, and I am sure it will be a great privilege to me to be able, when the meeting is over, to communicate to Lady O'Neill, not only how largely it was attended, but also how fully the value of Lord O'Neill's paper was appreciated by those who were privileged to be present.

[THE following Address (entitled "An Unbeliever's Description of Christianity") written shortly before his decease, by the late Rt. Hon. LORD O'NEILL, was then read by the RIGHT REVEREND the LORD BISHOP OF DERRY.]

I AM not aware that I have met with any more succinct enumeration of the objections raised against Christianity, or one more plausibly expressed, than that which occurs in Mr. Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, p. 120. Speaking of the spirit of toleration which "the catholic thinker" should display, he there says:—

"Doubtless, whoever feels the greatness of the error to which his fellows cling, and the greatness of the truth which they reject, will find it hard to show a due patience. It is

hard for him to listen calmly to the futile arguments used in support of irrational doctrines, and to the misrepresentation of antagonist doctrines. It is hard for him to bear the manifestation of that pride of ignorance which so far exceeds the pride of science. Naturally enough, such a one will be indignant when charged with irreligion, because he declines to accept the carpenter-theory of creation as the most worthy one. He may think it needless, as it is difficult, to conceal his repugnance to a creed which tacitly ascribes to the Unknowable a love of adulation such as would be despised in a human being. Convinced as he is that all punishment, as we see it wrought out in the order of nature, is but a disguised beneficence, there will perhaps escape from him an angry condemnation of the belief that punishment is a divine vengeance, and that divine vengeance is eternal. He may be tempted to show his contempt when he is told that actions instigated by an unselfish sympathy, or by a pure love of rectitude, are intrinsically sinful; and that conduct is truly good only when it is due to a faith whose openly-professed motive is other-worldliness. But he must restrain such feelings," &c.

And the Christian must also restrain his feelings of "indignation," "repugnance," "angry condemnation," and "contempt," when he meets with such a burlesque of Christianity as that set forth in the paragraph just quoted. Not being able to read the hearts of his fellow men, he must endeavour to give them credit for good intentions, even when they are misrepresenting and vilifying the religion which he believes in his heart to be true, and on which he leans for deliverance from the wrath to come. He must not allow himself to be surpassed by the unbeliever in patience and forbearance, when he sees the creed which he is accustomed to hold in veneration painted in false colours, and finds doctrines which, so far as they are believed and acted on, are calculated to regenerate the world, represented as irrational, degrading, and injurious to morality. This charitable spirit I shall endeavour, with God's help, to maintain in dealing with Mr. Spencer and others who assail the doctrines of Christianity. I desire to believe that their study of the orderly and regular processes of what we call nature, has caused them unconsciously to see subjects of a different kind through a distorting medium, and that they are not instigated by any wrong motives or intentions.

In all caricatures, a certain likeness to the original is preserved. It is this, indeed, that gives them their piquancy. And it is not difficult to see, in the above passage of Mr. Spencer's, a likeness to the creed which is burlesqued in it, sufficient to leave us without any doubt that Christianity

is the religion held up to scorn through it. It divides itself into five heads:—

1. The carpenter-theory of creation.
2. Love of adulation on the part of the Deity.
3. Eternal vengeance.
4. Good actions intrinsically sinful.
5. Other-worldliness the motive of faith.

First, then, as to the carpenter-theory of creation.

If by this expression be meant simply a belief that God created the universe and all that it contains, what can be the object of calling it the carpenter-theory? The only conceivable object, in that case, is to make it *sound* absurd, by giving it an anthropomorphic twang which does not in reality belong to it. It is like the Puritans creating a prejudice against church organs, by calling them "whistle-pipes," or "skirl-pipes." I am not aware of having ever seen the belief in creation called a carpenter-theory by any Theist, whether the form of his religion be Christianity or any other. It is, in fact, a *nickname*, most unjustly conferred upon that belief by those who reject it. It is true, we occasionally find the Creator of the universe spoken of as "the great Artificer." But it is evident to all who choose to see, that this word is only meant to be a synonym to the word "Creator," expressing (as synonyms generally do) but a part of the whole idea, and used with a view to avoid wearying the ear with the same word often repeated, as well as to impart a pleasing variety to the language. "Artificer" means, in its strictest sense, "maker," a word which is also often applied to the Creator, as witness its use in our creeds. And both these words (artificer and maker), when used in speaking of men, can only include in their signification the idea of forming things out of materials already existing. Transferred metaphorically to the Deity, they connote to believers the additional idea of creating those materials. Believers, therefore, in using such words, are very far from implying that God only works as a carpenter does, from materials ready to his hand. But it suits the object of unbelievers to ridicule them as holding this view, and as associating the Deity in their imagination with a wooden bench, in the midst of planes, saws, chisels, sawdust, shavings, &c.

If they should reply that by the carpenter-theory of creation they mean the belief in creation out of nothing, then the word is a complete misnomer. Believers in creation no more believe in the carpenter-theory of creation than does Mr. Spencer himself. They believe that God called the world into existence out of nothing, the very thing which a carpenter cannot do. Mr. Spencer may, therefore, spare his indignation at "being charged with irreligion because he declines to

accept the carpenter-theory of creation as the most worthy one." Those against whom he feels so indignant might, perhaps, charge him with irreligion if he *accepted* that theory. But certainly it is not for rejecting it that they do so. It is for rejecting creation itself. It is for rejecting the doctrine that there is a conscious, intelligent Creator of the universe, or any God, unless that name may be given to the Persistence of Force which he seems to identify with the Unknowable (*First Principles*, chap. vi.).

But why should Mr. Spencer feel so indignant at being charged with irreligion? Does he wish to be considered religious? As a worshipper of the persistence of force, perhaps he does. But he cannot expect that Christians will accept that for religion. Or perhaps he only objects to the *ground* on which the charge is brought. If so, however, I think it has been sufficiently made to appear that he has entirely mistaken that ground. The ground is that he rejects God as a Creator, not as a carpenter.

Dr. Tyndall, in his well-known Belfast Address, supplies us with a similar, yet somewhat different, view of this "carpenter-theory." Speaking (in p. 36) of the different forms of life, rising gradually from the simplest to the most complex, he says: "In the presence of such facts it was not possible to avoid the question—Have these forms, showing, though in broken stages and with many irregularities, this unmistakable general advance, been subjected to no continuous law of growth or variation? Had our education been purely scientific, or had it been sufficiently detached from influences which, however ennobling in another domain, have always proved hindrances and delusions when introduced as factors into the domain of physics, the scientific mind never could have swerved from the search for a law of growth, or allowed itself to accept the anthropomorphism which regarded each successive stratum as a kind of mechanic's bench for the manufacture of new species out of all relation to the old."

By those influences which have always proved hindrances and delusions when introduced into the domain of physics, Dr. Tyndall evidently means the Mosaic account of the Creation, which, according at least to the ordinary interpretation, assigns a distinct act of creation to each of the successive forms of life. And this he calls *anthropomorphism*, which is as unfair and false a term to apply to it as is the term "carpenter-theory." For what is anthropomorphism? It is taking our idea of the Deity from what we see in man. It is, to use another expression of Dr. Tyndall's, looking upon God as "a manlike artificer." But what is there that is manlike in

creating the universe out of nothing? It is just, of all others, the thing which no man ever did or could do. We may justly enough ascribe anthropomorphism to the ancient heathens, who described their gods and goddesses as swayed by human passions, prejudices, and interests, and having material bodies—a little more ethereal, perhaps, and more easily transformed than those of men, but sustained by food and drink (which, to distinguish them from those used for human wants, were called “ambrosia” and “nectar”), and capable of being hurt, though not completely destroyed, seeing that they were immortal. Thus, Homer represents Venus as wounded in battle by Diomedes, which caused a refined kind of blood, called ichor, to flow from her hand (“Iliad,” v. 340). Virgil* represents his gods and goddesses as changing their form when occasion required, which is, no doubt, attributing to them a power more than human; but even so, we may accept Hume’s description of them, as quoted by Dr. Tyndall in the first page of his Belfast address—namely, that they “were nothing but a species of human creatures, perhaps raised from among mankind, and retaining all human passions and appetites.” That the invention of gods and goddesses such as these may be ascribed to anthropomorphism, we can readily admit. But the God in whom Christians believe is as different from these as light is from darkness. These have bodies and passions like ourselves, whereas our God is a pure Spirit, “without body, parts, or passions” (Art. I.). I am not aware that any of the heathen gods were supposed to have created the universe out of nothing. Jupiter is indeed called “pater omnipotens” by Virgil in many places, but I find no trace of the idea that his power extended beyond a certain control over the atmosphere, whereby he was supposed to wield the powers of thunder and lightning, or such a control over matter as we ourselves have (only in a much greater degree), whereby the mountain Olympus, which was supposed to be his throne, could be shaken by his nod (“Æneid,” ix. 106). But however this be, the power to create is a power utterly impossible to man, and to accuse us of anthropomorphism for attributing this power to God, however little intended by Mr. Spencer and Dr. Tyndall, is to utter a most unfounded calumny against those who believe in the Creator of heaven and earth.

The belief in successive creations is made to sound more improbable still by Dr. Tyndall, through the use of an

* “Æneid,” i. 315, and vii. 419.

expression whose unfairness is indubitable. In p. 58 of the Belfast Address he describes that belief as "a theory which converts the Power whose garment is seen in the visible universe into an artificer, fashioned after the human model (the usual cavil again) and *acting by broken efforts*,"* as man is seen to act." The effect of the word "efforts" on the mind of an unthinking person would be that he should imagine the efforts of the Creator, or at least some of them, to have been unsuccessful. Else why call them efforts? Why not say they are *acts*, which word means *successful* efforts, and would truly describe the work ascribed to the Deity by believers? But he also calls them *broken* efforts, thereby intensifying the idea of want of success, because the expression seems to imply that they had to be broken off, some of them at least, in an unfinished state. If this were not the object, "successive," or some such word, would be the correct one to use. It might be asked, How would Dr. Tyndall like to hear the words "broken efforts" applied to a series of successful physical experiments conducted by himself?

It is really surprising that men of philosophical mind and habits of thought should condescend to such quibbling. If it were to promote any other object than the depreciation of religion, I cannot think they would. But for such an object as that, it seems all stratagems are allowable.

Mr. Spencer, in an earlier part of his book than that to which I have been lately referring (*First Principles*, pp. 33-4), carefully calls attention to the inadequacy of the "carpenter-theory" to serve as a simile for creation. But he does so under the delusion that Theists have adopted that theory, the fact being that it is falsely attributed to them by the men of his school. Theists, especially those of them who are Christians, have no theory whatever on the subject of creation. By a theory is generally meant a hypothesis explanatory of some fact. The fact of creation they acknowledge, but they confess their inability to account for it by any theory. Whatever else, therefore, may be said against us, let us no more be charged with accepting, or requiring others to accept, the carpenter-theory of creation.

The next objection we have to consider is that in which we are accused of ascribing a love of adulation to the Deity.

If we take the word "adulation" in its usual sense, it is enough simply to deny the charge. That God is pleased with His creatures for their own sake, when they appreciate His character, however inadequately, and when they have a

* The italics are mine.

grateful sense of His goodness towards them, is a truth which believers are not ashamed to confess. And for the outward expression of such feelings on the part of men, they use the word "praise," but not "adulation." The word "praise," however, would not have answered Mr. Spencer's object, and therefore he prefers to call it "adulation." Now, adulation means flattery, which is a very different thing from praise. If I might venture to explain the difference, the word "adulation" includes in the idea expressed by it, the notions of servility and insincerity on the part of the flatterer, together with the supposition that the flattered person is so vain as to swallow all that is said to him, and so weak as to be induced to confer favours without reference to the question whether the object of them be deserving or not. Praise includes none of these elements. It is the outcome of admiration of the divine attributes, among which are right and justice, and freedom from all those weaknesses to which human beings are liable. This word therefore would not have served Mr. Spencer's turn. "Adulation" suits him much better; only it has this disadvantage, that it is utterly inapplicable to the Deity in whom Christians believe. I hope, therefore, we may no more hear believers charged with worshipping a God who loves adulation.

The next charge brought against the God whom Christians acknowledge is, that they consider punishment to be a divine vengeance, and that divine vengeance is eternal. Now it may be fully admitted that the Scriptures often use such words as "vengeance," "anger," "wrath," &c., when speaking of punishment inflicted by God. But inasmuch as the God in whom Christians believe is described by them as a Spirit, "without parts or passions," as already observed, it is evident that they do not understand the words in question in the sense in which they are used when applied to human beings. They are used to signify that God does what *in a man* would be looked upon as the result of one of those passions, but it is not meant that the Deity acts upon any such impulse, or from any other motive than to do what is right. When the Scriptures say that the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears open to their prayers, no one imagines them to mean that the Deity has the bodily parts there mentioned, inasmuch as they always represent Him as pure Spirit. Similarly when they say His hand is stretched out, or His arm uplifted, no one is so absurd as to think they attribute to Him literally the possession of arms or hands. Why, then, should they not be understood in a somewhat similar manner when they speak of divine vengeance? The

character of God is so little comprehensible to us, that we can only take in descriptions of it which are couched in human language. We are quite unable to represent to ourselves the state of mind (to use a very inadequate expression) which corresponds in Him to the feeling which we call vengeance. Beyond the fact that it terminates in acts something similar to those which are the outward manifestation of vengeance in us, we know nothing about it. We can only believe that God punishes the wicked, because He sees it to be fitting and right that He should do so. There are, no doubt, some who question the fitness or righteousness of the acts of the Deity in this matter. But I believe that such persons speak of a matter of which they are no judges. If we were our own judges, no doubt we should punish ourselves lightly, if at all. And it appears to me that we are only able to look upon the matter from our own standpoint. I mean that we can only know what judgment we should pronounce upon our own demerits, but have no means of judging how they ought to appear in the sight of God, or with what degree of punishment it is right that they should be visited. Those of whom I have now been speaking admit God's justice in inflicting a certain amount of punishment. They believe that His inflictions are not vengeance, such as men would exercise, and here their view of Christianity differs from that depicted by Mr. Spencer. Whether the punishment be greater or smaller, shorter or longer, he attributes it (in his representation of that view) to a motive of revenge—for although he calls it vengeance, which is a word of somewhat wider signification, the implied motive is revenge, otherwise the objection would amount to nothing. Vengeance may, I think, be explained to be the infliction of punishment from a motive of revenge. And this, all believers refuse to accept as the explanation of Divine punishment. Surely if Mr. Spencer had considered the great love for the world which Christians ascribe to God, and which induced Him to give His only Son to save its inhabitants from the punishment which justice would otherwise oblige Him to inflict—he might have been saved from giving so false and injurious a representation of the divine motives, as forming a part of the Christian system.

What I have said about applying to God words ordinarily used to express human feelings, may be taken as explanatory of the Christian view (mentioned under the last division of our subject), that God is pleased when His creatures express their appreciation of His perfections in terms of praise. As we can form no adequate conception of the feeling in Him to which we give the name of vengeance, so neither can we form an

adequate conception of the feeling in Him which we call pleasure. All we can say is, that everything shows us that God is good, and wills that His creatures should be good also in their degree. Goodness in man is accompanied by the appreciation of goodness in other beings, and therefore chiefly in the Divine Being, in whom it is found in all perfection. Therefore, they who appreciate the divine character as they ought are good—are, to a certain extent, such as God would have them be, and so we say that God is pleased with them, and with the praises they offer Him.

The next objection, as stated by Mr. Spencer, is, “that actions instigated by an unselfish sympathy, or by a pure love of rectitude, are intrinsically sinful.”

It seems probable that the allusion here is to the thirteenth of the “Articles of Religion,” in which it is declared that “works done before justification,” or, as further explained, “before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ,” and that not being done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, “we doubt not but they have the nature of sin;” or it may be that Mr. Spencer had in his mind some passages of Scripture to the same effect, as “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. xi. 6), and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. viii. 8). Now, it cannot be necessary to observe here, except for the information of some outsiders who may read the Transactions of this Society, that the Christian doctrine is this—that owing to the fallen nature which we all inherit from the first human pair, no works that we can do, even when assisted by grace, are free from much that is imperfect and sinful; and that still more is this the case when we are not so assisted. Thus, so far from saying that an act springing from a purely good and unselfish motive is intrinsically sinful, the Christian teaching is that such an act is never done; that, however excellent a deed may appear in the eye of man, in the sight of God it is so mixed up with sinful thoughts and motives that it can only be made acceptable to Him when it is done in faith, and that, for the sake of the atonement made by His Son, whereby what is wrong in it is, as it were, washed out and not had in remembrance before Him. In the Christian system, faith is set forth as the root of all that is good in our character, and as that which makes us to be accounted righteous in God’s sight. Thus, works that are done in faith are looked upon, notwithstanding all their imperfections, as good. The goodness in which they are deficient is *imputed* to them. But without faith they are not pleasing to God; and, as this

is owing to their being so mixed up with worldly, selfish, or sinful motives and feelings, works not done in faith are said in the Articles to "have the nature of sin."

Now, Mr. Spencer's way of representing this teaching would make Christianity answerable for the absurd assertion that works intrinsically good are to be looked upon as intrinsically sinful; whereas its true teaching is that *no* human works are intrinsically good, but that such of them as are done in faith have a goodness imputed to them which does not actually belong to them, and so are rendered acceptable to God for the merits of His Son.

We may observe the contrast between the mode of expression adopted in the Article and that made use of by Mr. Spencer. The Article adopts as mild a form of words as could well be thought of. It does not say that the works of which it speaks (works done previously to justification) are actually sinful, much less intrinsically so, but merely that "they have the nature of sin" (Latin, "*peccati rationem habere*"). Mr. Spencer, on the contrary, intensifies the assertion by the addition of the adverb "intrinsically," leaving no stone unturned whereby religion might be made to appear absurd in the eyes of his readers.

The fifth and last of the misrepresentations (I do not say *intentional* ones) comprised in the comprehensive paragraph quoted near the commencement of this paper is, "that conduct is truly good only when it is due to a faith whose openly-professed motive is other-worldliness."

The gist and force of this lies in the rather unusual word, "other-worldliness." As *worldliness*—*i.e.*, a regard to our well-being in this world—is generally looked upon as a low motive to action, the imputation of *other-worldliness* has the appearance of implying that a regard to our well-being in the world to come is a low motive also. Now, no Christian looks upon a regard to our welfare, whether in this world or the next, as the highest motive; but neither is it to be looked upon as a *wrong* one. To excite a prejudice against Christianity, some unbelievers have called it *selfishness*, and pronounced it *immoral*, while they at the same time erroneously represent it as the *only* motive held out by the Christian system to those who believe in it. Thus they would have the world to suppose that the whole of Christianity rests on an immoral foundation. It might seem that a charge so absurd as this might well be left to refute itself. But it is so often urged in the present day, and that by writers whose eminence in other departments than that of religion imparts to them a factitious influence over the minds of the unthinking, that it

is incumbent on the Christian advocate to endeavour to take it to pieces and point out its baselessness and unfairness.

I shall begin, then, by calling attention to the distinction between *selfishness* and *self-love*. They are sometimes used in the same sense, but there is a proper and praiseworthy self-love, to which no blame whatever is to be attached. I should prefer to avoid the use of the word, as being liable to be misunderstood, were it not that it has been adopted by Bishop Butler as a convenient expression for that regard to our own interests and happiness which it is not only our privilege, but our duty, to act upon. He calls it *reasonable* or *cool* self-love, as leading us to consider and reflect upon the best means of ensuring our happiness in the long run. But while he looks upon this reasonable regard to our well-being as a right and proper motive, he is very far from representing it either as the highest, or the only one that ought to influence us. *Benevolence*, or a regard for the good of others, should come in at least in an equal degree ("Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"), but both of these principles are subordinate to the moral sense, or conscience, by means of which we judge whether an action is right or wrong, virtuous or vicious, abstracted from its consequences to ourselves or others. This is the moral test to which our actions should be submitted, the principle which, as it were, reigns supreme over all the other principles of our nature. If an action be prompted by benevolence or by that reasonable self-love which I have endeavoured to describe, yet if we see it to be *wrong*, we ought at once to refrain from doing it.

That the Christian religion recognises and proceeds upon the view of morality here set forth, cannot, I think, be reasonably disputed. No doubt it holds out other motives in addition to those above mentioned, but its morality is founded upon eternal principles of rectitude. The Deity Himself acts upon such principles, as already observed, and the precepts given in Scripture show that He would have men to act upon them too.

Bishop Butler designates a reasonable self-love by the name of *prudence*, observing that although subordinate to moral considerations, it is very superior to acting merely on such desires as happen for the moment to be uppermost. It is not properly called *worldliness*; for prudence is a good and useful trait in the human character, whereas worldliness is not looked upon as such. Worldliness as a term of reproach appears to have little meaning, except when used by believers in a future state of retribution. Christianity recognises prudence, or a reasonable regard to one's own interests, as a

duty, when it does not lead to any violation of the principles of rectitude; only it ought not to be confined to the present life, but should provide also for happiness in a life to come. When it is confined to the present life, it is called worldliness, which has thence become a term of reproach, as implying the neglect of a man's highest interests, while unduly caring for his worldly welfare. But when used by an unbeliever in a world to come, there can be no reproach implied in it, because then it simply means a prudent regard to prosperity and comfort in the only world whose existence he acknowledges. If this be a correct description of worldliness, as I venture to think it is, there is really no intelligible meaning in the term "other-worldliness," as implying that a regard to happiness in a future state is a wrong motive. The very persons who use it would be among the last to find fault with a due regard to worldly welfare, and are therefore inconsistent when they insinuate that there is anything faulty in the endeavour to secure lasting happiness in another world. A desire for happiness, in short, is one of the strongest principles implanted in our nature, and nothing can be more absurd than to expect that a religion which has any pretension to exert an influence in the world, should ignore it, or fail to contain a provision for working upon it; subordinate, of course, to the higher motive of acting according to right. This higher motive is that which the enemies of Christianity endeavour to keep out of view.

That selfishness is not to be confounded with a reasonable self-love is obvious. A selfish person is one who thinks *only* of himself, and has no regard to the feelings, wishes, or comforts of others. But a reasonable self-love is quite compatible with a regard to the happiness of others. There may, no doubt, be particular cases in which we are compelled to choose between the good of ourselves and that of our neighbours, but these are comparatively rare: and it is evident that the two *principles* of a desire for our own and for our neighbour's advantage are quite compatible, and in general conduce the one to the other, when all the circumstances are taken into account.

I have said that besides the duty of regulating our actions by the rule of rectitude, Christianity supplies us with motives which, if duly encouraged and cultivated, are of great assistance towards enabling us to act up to what is right. The chief and highest of these additional motives is love to God, with the desire to please Him which such love is calculated to engender. This, as well as that principle of rectitude which lies at the root of all morality, is entirely left out by Mr.

Spencer in the summary of Christianity (as he represents it) which forms, as it were, the text of this paper, so as to make it appear that the only motive to do what is right is a love of self, and this love of self he characterizes by a term of reproach entirely inapplicable and undeserved, namely, other-worldliness.

Upwards of three years ago a controversy appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*, on a subject very much akin to that which is now before us, namely, the question whether atheism destroys the foundations of morality. The advocate of atheism was Miss Bevington, who maintained that morality, so far from suffering any loss, would be rather a gainer by the rejection of a belief in God. Her opponent was Mr. Mallock, the author of *Is Life Worth Living?* and of other works, who maintained, on the other hand, that the rejection of a belief in God necessarily involved the abolition of moral distinctions. To me it appears that both of these gifted writers were mistaken, believing, as I do, in opposition to Miss Bevington, that morality would lose very substantially if a belief in God should perish from the world, and, in opposition to Mr. Mallock, that morality has its root in the nature of things, and need not absolutely perish if a belief in God were rejected. There is, indeed, reason to fear that, practically, great moral laxity would follow the extinction of theism; but I believe that there would still remain the distinction between virtue and vice, although the obligation to follow the one and avoid the other would have a much looser hold on the generality of human beings. When I speak of belief in God, I of course mean the acknowledgment that there is not only a god of *some kind or other* (such, perhaps, as the Persistence of Force), but a Deity conscious, intelligent, powerful, and who has a regard to the conduct of His creatures. Nothing short of this would be a belief that could influence human conduct.

To consider, one by one, the arguments used by Mr. Mallock and Miss Bevington respectively, would both occupy too much time, and would be beyond the scope of this paper. But I may perhaps be permitted to bring forward one or two considerations of a general nature in connexion with the subject.

It seems evident at once that a belief in the God whom Christians acknowledge not only supplies additional *motives* for morality, but also *enlarges its domain*. The motives to which I refer are the love and fear of God, and the enlargement of the domain of morality consists in the addition of a distinct class of duties, comprised under the head of Duty to God.

Neither these duties nor those motives could possibly have place in the morality of an unbeliever. In these respects, therefore, morality must be a loser by the extinction of belief in God, unless indeed it could be shown that duty to God forms no part of it, and that love to God and unwillingness to incur His displeasure have no influence on those who believe in Him. To prove that duty to God forms no part of morality, would require that it should be first proved that there is no God in the believer's sense of the word; and this, I venture to say, never has been, or can be, done. That the love and fear of God have little or no influence on those who acknowledge Him, Miss Bevington attempts to show, but in my mind she entirely fails to do so. She brings forward a number of motives by which the generality of mankind are influenced as much, or more, than they are by religion; and asserts that "a man who is capable of making difficult exertion, restraining a furious passion, or patiently enduring a painful experience, for the sake of a loved and ideal God, or a vague and distant heavenly reward, is equally capable of doing so for the sake of a fellow creature, or for the reward he receives through the exertion of his sympathetic affections." This is quite true, but no argument. The man who can endure pain and restrain a furious passion for the sake of a loved God and a heavenly reward (I omit Miss B.'s disparaging epithets, as not being to the purpose, and put *and* instead of *or* before "a heavenly reward," because Christianity holds out *both* motives) is, according to Christian belief, under the influence of Divine grace, which will certainly prove no hindrance to the exercise of sympathy and benevolence towards his fellow creatures, but rather increase it. Thus religion aids morality by supplying additional motives and good dispositions. I do not say it *creates* morality. I have already stated my belief that morality would exist if there were no religion, though it would stand a much worse chance of being practised. But the question is not between religious motives alone and ordinary motives alone. It is between ordinary motives alone and ordinary motives *plus* religious motives. It is, therefore, only a source of confusion and fallacy to discuss the question whether religious or ordinary motives are the more efficacious. With the generality of mankind, it is too true that the visible affects them more than the invisible—the things seen, which are temporal, more than the things unseen, which are eternal. But our position is, that whether this be so or no, religion is calculated to come to the aid of morality by supplying motives and principles which morality alone does not supply. If morality rests on motives connected with what is visible, religion does not discard these,

but supplies motives derived from the invisible also, and there can be no doubt that these two together are calculated to be of more force than one of them alone.

But Miss Bevington, in dwelling upon the little power which religion has to improve the generality of those who acknowledge the Deity, seems entirely to ignore that class of believers who are what we call *true Christians*. That there are too many who, while intellectually acknowledging God, yet act as though they disbelieved His existence, and seldom or never give Him a thought, is a melancholy fact, and one which the Scriptures fully recognise. But there is also a large class of them—though, it is to be feared, not *so* large—who “set God always before them,” remembering that He is ever present, and that He watches over all that they do or think ; loving to do His pleasure, and careful to avoid whatever may be displeasing to Him ; recognising His authority, and looking to the reward held out to those who endeavour to follow Christ’s example. These are not free from imperfections ; temptations may at times get the better of them, and the hopes and allurements of this life may occasionally obscure their visions of the world to come. But their course, notwithstanding occasional, or even frequent, deviations, is heavenly, and many of them have shown that they are ready to endure pain and imprisonment, yea, to suffer death itself, for the sake of Christ, who suffered and died for them. These would be among the last to say they are perfect, but they trust that their imperfections and sins will be washed away in the blood of the atonement. This is a class of persons which seems to be entirely left out of sight by those who say that religion is no help to morality. As long as there are true Christians in the world, so long will it be evident that such a position is false. Let unbelievers say what they will, such as these are “the salt of the earth,” and if they were not living examples of what religion can do in promoting love to our neighbours, which lies at the root of practical morality, it seems quite possible that belief in religion might become a thing of the past.

I would just notice one other statement of Miss Bevington’s, in the articles contributed by her to the *Nineteenth Century*. It is this : that the requisites to an action being virtuous are :—1. That it should be useful ; and 2. That it should be difficult. I think it is easy to show that these two characteristics do not constitute the ground of virtue. We may presume that Miss Bevington means to say that the action, in order to be virtuous, should be done with the *intention* that it should be useful ; and I think it may also be presumed that by “useful,” she does not mean useful to some, while it causes

greater injury, perhaps, to others, but that on a balance being struck, the good which the action is calculated to produce should exceed the injury; and, therefore, that on the whole it may be looked upon as useful. This interpretation of her meaning appears to be warranted by other passages in her essay, in which she alludes to motives and to the general good, though her not having included the motive in this, the only one (if I do not mistake) in which a formal statement of that in which virtue consists is attempted, cannot but be considered a great omission. The great consideration is the motive. If an action ever so difficult, and ever so useful to the majority of human beings, be done from malice, for the purpose of injuring even one person, that action, so far from being a virtuous one, will be highly wicked. This I am sure Miss Bevington would admit. What we have to consider, therefore, is whether the fact of an action being difficult, and done *for the purpose* of causing more good than harm, necessarily makes it a virtuous one.

In the first place, it does not clearly appear that difficulty is an essential ingredient in a virtuous action at all. Difficulty requires self-denial, and self-denial is virtuous only when it is undergone for the sake of doing a virtuous action. It may be undergone, however, for the sake of doing a very vicious action, and then it is far from being virtuous. Self-denial, therefore, is not in itself a virtue, nor could it make an action virtuous that was not so independently of it. If I pay a just debt, I am doing a right thing, whether I had the money ready wherewith to discharge it, or whether I have been compelled to work hard in order to obtain it. I admit that the endurance of pain and labour may be a certain test of the *strength* of the virtuous principle in my character. It is possible that a man who pays his debt without any trouble might be disposed to repudiate it if he had a difficulty in procuring the means. But the payment is not the less an honest act on that account. That which tests the strength of a principle is no more the essence of that principle than a spirit-gauge is the essence of the spirit of whose strength it is an index. We must here distinguish between a particular act of honesty and the principle of honesty in the human character. An act done with a view to give a man what belongs to him is an honest act, independent of the question whether the doer of it would have the principle of honesty sufficiently strong to enable him to do it if the difficulty were greater. Thus it cannot be said that one honest act is more honest than another, while yet it may be said that one *man* is more honest than another, because in the one case we are speaking of what a

man does, and in the other of the man himself. Again, if difficulty were essential to a virtuous act, the vicious character of an act would also depend on whether it is easy or difficult. And I do not think any one would maintain that the guilt attached to the perpetration of a murder would not be guilt if the question whether it was easy or difficult were decided either way. If it be done under difficulties, it only shows the determination of the murderer to be the stronger, and if it be done with ease, it is equally a wicked deed. It seems to me, therefore, that we have now disposed of the question whether difficulty is essential to the moral character of an action, and have fairly decided it in the negative.

There remains still the question whether utility makes an action to be virtuous. Here, again, we must take in the consideration of motive, as the most useful action that ever was done must be morally bad if the motive that induced it be bad. The question, then, should be put in this form. Does the intention of doing good, or—if its results be of a mixed character—of doing more good than harm, make an action to be morally good?

As this question has long exercised the deliberations of moralists, of whom there are two schools, chiefly represented by Bishop Butler on the one hand and Archdeacon Paley on the other, it seems to me that it would be a superfluous task to discuss it here. My only reason for not entirely leaving the matter in the hands of those two eminent writers is, that Butler, in opposing the doctrine that utility is the foundation of morality, assumed a Creator, and thence inferred the reality of moral distinctions, on the principle that God has so constituted us as to have a perception of those distinctions, which we cannot suppose He would have done if they did not exist. As this argument could not have weight with those who deny a Creator, and as our present business is with these, a few words seem necessary to make our subject complete.

It cannot, I think, be denied that there are certain things which all human beings have a *right* to. Every one, for example, has a right to his life, as is acknowledged in the laws of civilised countries, which make homicide in self-defence to be justifiable. Every one also has a right to his limbs, as is acknowledged in the laws against mutilation; and every one has a right to his personal liberty. These rights may be called natural, as without the recognition of them all social relations must be destroyed, and man is by nature sociable. It is true that rights may, under certain circumstances, be forfeited, as when a murderer justly suffers the punishment of death, with the loss of his liberty for the time

he is allowed to live. But such cases are exceptional, and (as is often the case) they prove the rule, because society must punish outrages which tend to its own destruction, and it is on the existence of society that the rights just mentioned are founded. I am not forgetting here that Christians have a still better foundation than society for the acknowledgment of these rights, but it must be kept in mind that from the nature of the case I am compelled to take ground which unbelievers must, or ought to, acknowledge; and as these only acknowledge what is natural, and man is naturally sociable, they must hold that rights founded on society are natural.

Now, the very idea of a man's having a right to anything, involves moral distinctions. For, if A has a right, B does wrong if he endeavours to deprive him of it. To do so would be to do him an *injury*—an injustice.* It is something more than merely inflicting pain upon him, which is cruelty. The idea of its being an offence against right is also included. On this account I look upon moral distinctions as having a foundation in nature—in human nature at any rate. And it is because we have no right to injure our neighbour that the precepts of the Decalogue—those of them, at least, which inculcate our duty to our neighbour—were given. The object of those precepts was to enforce morality, not to supersede it; and therefore it is that I look upon Mr. Mallock as going much too far in his laudable zeal for religion when he says that without it there would cease to be any distinction between virtue and vice, as such. I so far concur with him, however, as to believe that men would have much less regard to moral distinctions even than they have now, little as, alas! they now regard them; and, therefore, that with the extinction of religion, morality would receive a most severe blow, and perhaps be in danger of perishing altogether.

I have mentioned natural rights, such as the right to the possession of life and limb. There are, however, other rights, founded on the rules and customs of society, which may be different in different countries, and which may be looked upon as natural in a secondary sense, because society itself has its foundation in nature—in human nature especially, but we see the germs of it in the lower animals also. In civilised society these rules and customs include the laws of the country, and as life and limb are possessions to which nature itself gives every one a right, there are other possessions, external to the individual, the right to which is given by the law of the land.

* From Latin *in*, signifying *not*, and *ius*, right.

Hence the idea of *ownership*. Hence also the general consent of mankind that it is a wicked thing to deprive any one, either by force or subtlety, of what is his own.

Many are the speculations suggested by these considerations, but I must forbear to enter upon them. My chief aim has been to make it appear that the Christian religion rests upon a moral foundation; that, while appealing to our desire for happiness,—that desire which is ingrained in the constitution of man,—it holds out no selfish motives, such as its enemies are so anxious to accuse it of, but proposes to us the noblest aims, and calls forth the highest principles of our nature; and that the God whom Christians acknowledge and adore is falsely accused when He is represented as “a man-like artificer,” as delighting in adulation, or as indulging feelings of revenge. If I have in any degree, however small, contributed to bring out and disseminate these results, my object has been gained.

MR. ALEXANDER MCARTHUR, M.P., moved,—“That our best thanks be presented to the Lord Bishop of Derry for reading the late Lord O’Neill’s Address, and to those who have contributed papers during the session.” We deeply regret the loss of our excellent friend Lord O’Neill, and we must all be much obliged to the right reverend gentleman for having read his paper. We have also to express our thanks to those who have taken the trouble to prepare and read papers at the meetings of the Institute during the past year. Many of these papers have been very valuable, and those who have heard them read, or who have themselves read them afterwards, must, I am sure, have derived much benefit, and will be desirous of returning their best thanks to the authors.

The Bishop of BALLARAT.—I have very great pleasure in seconding the resolution. I hope I shall be excused from making a speech, but I will offer one remark. It struck me, when the Bishop of Derry was reading the very luminous paper of the late Lord O’Neill, that it forcibly illustrated the truth, that we really ought not to be frightened at the formidable words and expressions which some Freethinkers make use of; because, when you come to look into them, you find there is really nothing whatever in them. They remind me of the passage in Shakespeare’s “Second Part of Henry IV.,” where the hostess, after listening to one of Pistol’s magniloquent but inane utterances, exclaims, “By my troth, captain, these are very bitter words.” And so they were to her, no doubt; but they meant absolutely nothing. (Laughter.) Some of the epithets applied to Christianity sound very alarming indeed; but, when one comes to examine them, the dismay and horror which are intended to be inspired altogether vanish. I second with great pleasure the resolution which has been proposed by Mr. M’Arthur, and I very much congratulate myself, on the eve of returning to Australia,

at having been present at this meeting, and having heard so valuable and interesting a paper as that of the late Lord O'Neill.

The motion was unanimously agreed to.

The Bishop of DERRY: Perhaps I may be allowed to say just one word, I am sure it will be a great consolation to Lady O'Neill to hear of the favour with which her husband's most excellent paper has been received. The Bishop of Ballarat, in the remarks he made, spoke of things as they ought to be, and not, I am afraid, as they are. I am afraid that long words do make a great impression, especially on the minds of young men. Archbishop Whateley was in the habit of illustrating this by telling some of his friends a story about a lady to whom he gave some advice as to medicine for her children. When he told her to give them some tartar emetic she was horrified; but when he said she should give them a little antimonial wine she replied that she would be very glad to do so. With reference to the paper itself, a nickname is very often a sort of condensed epigram. The very word "carpenter" throws ridicule on the larger idea of the creation, and the word "adulation" makes praise odious. I have to thank the meeting very much for the attention which they have bestowed upon the paper. Just to recall for one moment what Lord O'Neill was, I must say that he was at once a man of extreme modesty and a man of very singular gifts. If not a heaven-born mathematician, he was exceedingly able in mastering mathematical problems. His musical gifts were something marvellous. He was a learned divine and ripe scholar, and up to the last days of his life one of his greatest pleasures was to walk out with a friend and talk over with him a chapter of the Greek Testament. Above all and beyond all, his soul was based on a rock, and that rock was Christ.

Mr. D. HOWARD (Vice-Pres. Inst. Chemistry).—It is not without deep feeling that I rise to propose a vote of condolence to Lady O'Neill. The beautifully lucid paper to which we have just listened comes to us with the deep solemnity of a voice from beyond the tomb. These are almost the last words of one who had devoted all the exceptionally high powers of his mind to the highest uses, and is now gone to join the heavenly choir, where the music he loved so well here shall find its highest expression; to that heaven where all the deep problems with which he dealt here find their true solution, to live for ever in the beatific vision of Him who is the Truth.

The thought of this is specially fitting for us as members of an Institute which seeks to harmonise all our intellectual powers with the life to come and to teach us so to pass our lives in things intellectual and philosophical that finally we lose not things eternal.

Mr. HORMUZD RASSAM.—Permit me to second this vote.

Bishop RYAN, D.D.—I have great pleasure in proposing that the thanks of this meeting be presented to Sir Henry Barkly, our chairman upon the present occasion. During some eventful years of my life I often had the pleasure of seeing Sir Henry Barkly in the chair at meetings in the distant land of Mauritius, where he was always ready to encourage scientific knowledge. I was very much struck with one of the speeches we have heard, and

in which we were told how we should proceed in our investigations so as to lead up from one question to another. That was Voltaire's method. Voltaire wanted to be an Atheist, and he could not. In such an assembly as this I need not scruple to give his own words:—"Ce monde m'embarrasse et je ne puis songer que cet horloge existe, et n'a pas d'horloger. "This world troubles me. I cannot imagine how there can be this beautiful world, and yet none to construct it." I believe that real, honest investigation must always lead to points like this. A remark has been made about works of the Society being addressed to those outside. I remember an episode that occurred in Gosport on one occasion. There was a man there named S—who was in great trouble. I said to him: "S——, what is the matter with you?" He replied: "I have a set of fellows about me who are Atheists and Infidels, and I don't know what. They are plaguing me morning, noon, and night." I said, "take this book to them." It was Bishop Watson's answer to Tom Paine. Those who remember Paine's time know that his book was doing immense harm, and the Christian Knowledge Society brought out a cheap edition of Bishop Watson's reply. After S—— had taken that book to his friends he said it fell like a bombshell among them. They who know the book know that Bishop Watson argues the whole matter learnedly and simply, so that the most ignorant and the most intelligent and well-informed can find something in it that will profit. I think that this Society should endeavour to bring out books of this kind, and see that they are clearly and simply written, and are circulated far and wide. (Hear, hear.) It does not do to tell the masses they must not read the works of our opponents, for they will read them. I am a good deal among the manufacturing population in Yorkshire. An artizan in Bradford came up to me in the street the other day and said: "Bishop Ryan, I am very much troubled in mind." I asked him why? He replied: "I have been reading Professor Tyndall's address at Belfast." I asked him how often he had read it right through? "Once," he answered. Then I told him that I had read it three times and suggested that he should read it again. The man did so, and his trouble vanished. The fact is, that we must show boldness, especially in this matter. With regard to other books, I have seen those containing gross and violent attacks on Christianity, and have kept them in my study, saying to those who came to me about them: "There are the books, read them if you like; but read also the answers to them." (Hear.) There was one remark made by the Bishop of Derry which was exactly what had been passing through my mind: It was with regard to Lord O'Neill's statement being deep and solid, and coming from the heart. With regard to Herbert Spencer, I think his accusing Christians of ascribing a love of adulation to God, only shows what straits men are in for an argument when they are driven to the use of such words. Let us all remember that whenever there is anything very startling we ought to examine it, and it may be that, as in this Institute, we shall find that in the discussion of infidel objections we come to the blessed truth of the

Word of God, by which we can carry the mind to that heaven into which His servants have entered.

Sir THOMAS GLADSTONE, Bart.—I have been unexpectedly called upon to discharge a very pleasing duty. Having been an intimate friend of the late Lord O'Neill, I am able to express my entire participation in every word that has fallen from the right rev. prelates who have just addressed your Not one word they have said was undeserved by the deceased nobleman. It is not my intention, however, to intrude on you beyond making one remark with regard to the very able speech we have heard from the right hon. gentleman on my left, and in reference to the suggestion he has offered to this society, that it should produce such a work as he has so ably sketched out. I would venture to express a hope that he may himself put his shoulder to the wheel, and try what he can do in carrying out such a work. I now beg to second the resolution, which has been so ably proposed, of a vote of thanks to our Chairman. (Applause.)

The vote of thanks having been carried by acclamation,

Sir HENRY BARKLY said: I thank you for the compliment you have paid me, and which I have done so little to deserve. I have long taken great interest in the work of this Society, and it has been a privilege on my part to preside at so large and influential a meeting as this, and to have heard the late Lord O'Neill's paper. I believe the Society is doing a great work, and that it deserves support in its efforts to show that science, when properly cultivated, is not antagonistic to religious truth, but that they are really one and the same. I will not detain you longer, and can only repeat my thanks for the compliment paid to me.

The proceedings having terminated, the members and their friends adjourned to the Museum, where refreshments were served.