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SIX CHAPTERS ON SECULARISM : OR THE SECULAR THEORY EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF
SCRIPTURE AND PHILOSOPHY.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH PARKER, AUTHOR OF A " SOLDIER'S RETROSPECT," ETC.

LONDON : WILLIAM FREEMAN, 69, FLEET STREET.

1854,

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FAVERSHAM : F. W. MONK , PRINTER, COURT STREET.

BRIT M U E S U I S H M

INTRODUCTION

In the month of Maylast, Mr. G. J. Holyoake visited Banbury, and delivered two lectures illustrative of the principles of Secularism. The writer was urgently desired to attend the lectures, and to reply to the Secular advocate, if such a course appeared to himself judicious. This suggestion, though coming from Christian friends, he entertained with caution, but eventually agreed to fall in with a wish so generally and so cordially expressed. The result was, that the discussion occupied three evenings, and was conducted in the presence of a large and enthusiastic assembly. No word of bitterness escaped Mr. Holyoake's lips; he was, in every sense of the terms, impartial and unpersonal. At the conclusion of the whole, the lecturer was pleased to say, that he never took part in any debate, which, as a whole, yielded him more satisfaction, inasmuch as all ill feeling and abusive personalities had been avoided, and attention entirely devoted to the discussion of principles. Reflecting on the controversy, it occurred to the writer that he might throw

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his various replies and expositions into a more complete and permanent form than they could take in the columns of a newspaper. This is the simple history of the present volume.

In committing the following chapters to the press, the writer may be permitted a brief statement of his views as to the mission of such publications. The conviction and conversion of Secularists may not perhaps be effected by such means, yet it is just possible that the young tremulous believer may be fortified in his religious faith, and confirmed in his Christian course. Hints may be thrown out, which will enable him to cope with the adversary wherever he may be found. Young men especially are oftentimes beset in the counting-house, the shop, or the manufactory, with fellow-workmen who delight in ridiculing Christianity, and in tormenting those who profess it. To such, the barest outline of thought on the religious side, may sometimes prove sufficient to stimulate further meditation, and to arm them in the meantime against the opposition of their sceptical assaulters. The writer, then, has here presented the arguments which have consoled and strengthened his own heart, in the hope that others may give to the subject that amount of consideration which it imperatively demands. It is ever interesting to trace out the means by which any mind has been conducted from the uncertainties and negations of scepticism, to the assurance and positive repose of earnest Christian faith. The writer by no means asserts that ever he was the victim of infidelity; at the same time, in common with every religious

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student, he has been thrown in the way of many a difficulty, and had many a black shadow stretching out upon his spiritual life. In examining the pretensions of Secularism, he has increasingly seen how hollow and heartless they are: they minister not to the growth and development of the noblest features of humanity, they are evermore pointing man downward, and stifling the aspiration which quivers on the wing for holier regions: such at least have they appeared in the writer's estimation.

He has found no flower in the desert of Secularism-no spring filled with water. If there are any good things in Secularism, they are all to be found in Christianity-they are not peculiar to it as a separate system. The religion of the New Testament appears more beautiful and simple, when contrasted with the distorted and cumbrous theories of scepticism. It meets man in his real and felt position and stretches out the hand of deliverance, while it beams with the radiance of divinest sympathy. True, it has its deep and inscrutable mysteries : its fathomless and dread abysses. With these we dare not intermeddle: it is not necessary that we should do so. Our own consciousness is on the side of faith ; we compare our past with our present, and decide by the testimony of experience. Amid the rush of controversial strife, we can ever say " Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know-once I was blind, but now I see."

This was a source of evidence which no power could take from the blind who was restored to sight, he might, indeed, feel himself inadequate to cope with his learned examiners in mere intellect or

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historical reference, still he carried the evidence within himself that he had been blessed by a man that is called Jesus. " (John ix. 11.) Precisely so, is it with those who have been restored from spiritual blindness ; they are opposed and cross-examined by the enemies of Christianity-difficulties are propounded-theological definitions are called for, until the young believer is well nigh confounded; let him, however, never forget to introspecthis own heart-one look within may serve a better purpose than a thousand arguments however true in philosophy or cogent in logic. It is thus that Christianity is made a personal thing: not a mere array of words, or classification of doctrines, but a living reality that seeks and subdues the heart that purifies and exalts the life.

The actual number of Secularists is not confined to those whose names are enrolled on the lists of secular societies.

There are, alas ! many practical Secularists who frequent the sanctuary; men, indeed, who would shudder to proclaim themselves unbelievers in God and religious truth, and yet whose lives are spent in " buying and selling and getting gain," and who are emphatically " without God in the world." These are the greatest foes to Christianity ! They are mere dead forms, having no spiritual life; they bring disgrace on the very profession of the religious name, they are food for ridiculeand contempt. The best argument in favour of practical Christianity is holy, unimpeachable conduct : men are judged more by their life than by their theological creed; it is, therefore, of no avail that aman's orthodoxy be sound, ifhis outward demeanour

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give the lie to his professions. The exactness and extent of his knowledge only aggravate and hasten his condemnation. Would to God, that professors of Christianity were distinguished by thorough, earnest consistency of character ! Consistency is always majestic. It carries power along with it. Unitedness of life is a concentration of moral forces.

It is better to deal with an avowed infidel than a masked one.

If all the members of our Churches were earnest, faithful, and united, scepticism would thereby receive the deadliest blow which ever has fallen on its unholy head. To Him who is the Fountain of Truth, and to His blessing, this little book is earnestly commended. J. PARKER .

Banbury, 1854.

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CHAPTER I. ITS FOUR RIGHTS AND MORAL BASIS .

THE New Testament is the only infallible standard of appeal on the side of Christianity. If we appoint no standard then controversy will be useless for practical purposes. To sects we bow not. The law and the testimony are our only authoritative guides. Denominationalism is distinct from Christianity. We cannot allow, therefore, that the latter should be charged with any inconsistencies which may be imputed to the former. By the New Testament we stand or fall. If its teachings oppose our own consciousness, and violate our moral sense-if they lead us out of sympathy with humanity, and dry up the holiest feelings of the heart then we shall abandon them. But if they are in harmony with the universe of pureness and truth-if they breathe a regenerating spirit over the deep fountains of society if they are at once the spring of comfort and the source of hope-we shall cling to them with ardent attachment, and only exchange them for the fuller revelation which awaits us in heaven.

On the side of Secularism we shall appeal to the writings of its recognised advocates. Truth fears not to pry into the subtlest objections adduced against Christianity. Where truth discovers truth, there is immediate recognition and combination.

But where error lurks, there is at once detection and repulsion. We shall endeavour to present the two systems-Christianity and Secularism in the light of contrast. We resort not to personal abuse, or to sectarian recrimination ; we rely on the simple majesty and divine omnipotence of truth.

In a small pamphlet entitled " Secularism the Practical B

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Philosophy of the People," we have the dogmas of Secularism set forth for the benefit of those who wish to understand them. In the course of the book the writer affirms that " Secularism builds on the foundation of four rights." We entreat special attention to this " foundation," inasmuch as it may assist our estimate of the entire superstructure. The first right is " the right to think for one's self." This right is not peculiar to Secularism; as Christians, we claim it, and rejoice in its possession ! On this right the doctrine of responsibility rests; deny this, and you have overturned the basis of our accountability either to man or to God. We need not dilate on this first " right," suffice it to say, that it belongs as essentially to Christianity, as it does to any possible system of religion, ethics, or philosophy. The second right is " the right to differ, without which the right to think is nothing worth." The remarks on the first right belong to the second. In Christianity we recognise the claim to difference of opinion; we are not careful to maintain uniformity at the expense of our private judgment. In this right, then, the Secularists have nothing to offer which Christianity has not bestowed long before Secularism as a system was ever conceived of. The third right claims to assert difference of opinion." Be it so; is this a discovery which Secularists have made ? The history of Christianity answers " No." Our churches, chapels, literature, services, are so many confirmations of the statement, that we claim the right of speaking what we think, whether it be in the affirmative or the negative. In the third right, Secularism has got no new boon to offer. The last " right " needs some definition; it is said to be "the right to debate all vital opinion." Here explanation is required of the term " vital." No man, for instance, can debate mathematical truth; the reason is, it is " vital," absolute, demonstrable. Who ever disputed that the three angles of every triangle are together equal to two right angles ? or that the circumference of a circle is everywhere equi-distant from its centre? or that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points ? These propositions can be reduced to ocular demonstration, and therefore no man professes to debate " vital opinion" in mathematics. Again, the term " opinion " is loose and indefinite. A matter of mere "opinion" is not, in any logical sense, "vital." It is not

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amatter of " opinion " whether the sun shines, or the river flows, it is absolutely true that such is the case in both instances.

Let the reader bear in mind that there is the widest difference between moral and mathematical truth, so far as evidential proof is concerned. We cannot appeal to the same standard in both cases. To the eye we can demonstrate the truth of all the exact sciences ; but in moral questions appeal is to be made to consciousness, experience, or history: in those departments man may seek out his proofs on all questions within their province, but when they fail to furnish the right solution, recourse must be had to the supernatural, as revealed in the Holy Scripture.

It is not for us to discuss the divinity of the Bible here ; this, in the meantime, must be assumed as granted.

Our readers are now in possession of the four rights of Secularism, and are, therefore, in a position to say whether they have sustained loss by being Christians ? So far, we apprehend the Secularists have nothing which Christianity does not bestow upon all its believers. We are ready to accept any good gift which they may offer, but must, up to this point, confess our inability to perceive that they have excelled the teachings of Christianity. Let us not shout the victory too hastily: in addition to the "foundation of four rights," Secularism claims for itself a " moral basis;" whether the foundation is below the basis , or the basis below the foundation we have not skill to determine. It is enough to know that such a " moral basis " exists, and is thus defined: " Justification by conduct is a higher and more reliable truth than justification by faith in Christ."

It is here assumed that there is no connexion between the one justification and the other: this, Christianity denies most emphatically. The doctrine of Christianity is, that justification by faith in Christ originates and sustains the utmost purity of conduct, and that without the former it is impossible to exhibit the latter. In the New Testament we are continually reminded that faith without works is dead (James, ch. ii., v. 14-24). Justification has two aspects: the one having respect to God-the other relating to man. When justification by faith in Christ is spoken of, it is always in connexion with our relationship to God; a proof of this may be seen in Romans, chap. v., v. 1. There are certain duties which man may perform towards man, in B 2

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the capacity of citizen, neighbour, nei or tradesman, without having any saving interest in the atonement of Christ; but there is no duty which man can properly exercise toward God without having the "conscience sprinkled" with the sacrificial blood of Christ. The relationship which we sustain towards God is purely moral; having violated his law, it is impossible, with impure hands, to make a holy law "honourable" again. The case is totally different in reference to civil and political society; the Jew who ignores Christ may be a conscientious citizen, or a skilful politician, but in those particulars we do not touch the spring of his moral being. We have said nothing of his spiritual nature, and therefore it would be rash to conclude upon it until the facts are ascertained. The Secularists talk as though Christianity disregarded conduct, whereas the reverse is true; it touches the fountain of the heart for the express purpose that the stream of the life may be pure. For the information of Secularists, who are so loud in their praise of virtuous conduct, we present the following passages, that they may see how the matter of "good works" is regarded in the Scripture:—Eccles., ch. xii., v. 14; Matt. ch. xii., v. 36; Matt., ch. xxv., v. 31-46; 2 Cor., ch. v., v. 10. An examination of those references will prove that Christianity recognises conduct with a searching eye, and the final audit turns upon the deeds "whether they be good, or whether they be bad." Further, it is evident that Secularists expect something from Christians by virtue of their profession: this is abundantly clear, from the readiness with which they charge inconsistency upon false professors. In so charging, however, the Secularists err egregiously; for if Christianity be so bad, why is any good thing expected from those who profess it?

And if Christianity be good, why do not the Secularists themselves believe it? Let them point out to us any passage in the New Testament in which evil conduct is sanctioned, and we will yield the discussion at once, and abandon Christianity. Until they have done this, we cannot accept dogmatism for argument, or blunt assertion for logical proof. We ask, is it not true that virtue is expected from a Christian? If so, what is the ground of such expectation? If it be answered that virtue is expected from everyman, the religious question is left entirely untouched.

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But, if Christianity be pernicious, how can virtue be hoped for at the hands of its professors ? Why seek a salubrious stream from a poisoned fount ? We are bold to contend that forpurity of life-magnanimity of action-benevolence of disposition, Christianity is unrivalled; for proof, we point at once to individual and national history. Christian character shrinks not from comparison with the pretended purity of Secularism. Laying aside all theological formulæ, and all religious creeds, still there is left a transparent clearness of principle, and an ample breadth of moral nobleness to be found nowhere but under the benign influence of the Christian faith. Life is made a thing of active service and of earnest love only as it is trained to obey great and pure principles. It is, then, impossible that action can be truly good in itself, if the actuating motive is vicious in its nature and grovelling in design. The whole argument therefore turns on the divinity of the Christian religion ; and certainly one of the best tests is the examination of the New Testament doctrines and a searching scrutiny into their real effects on man's daily life. The moral basis of Secularism ignores and despises the doctrine of Christ's atonement as the ground of a sinner's salvation. It presents the law of works as the only useful, law, forgetting or concealing the fact that Christianity supplies the basis on which alone, good works can be performed. Intelligent Christians will know how to treat this representation of their principles ; they know that their especial requirement is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God; that upright, earnest-hearted and philanthropic service is required at their hands ; that penury and sickness plead before them on the very ground of their religion; and that all men are ready to denounce, if their conduct is not consistent with their exalted and sublime profession.

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CHAPTER II . ITS PRACTICAL RESULT .

HAVING thus very briefly examined the " four rights," and the " moral basis " of Secularism, we pursue our inquiries further, and are told by Mr. Holyoake that there is, a great practical issue, which gives body and worth to the mass of theory ; we confess it is pleasant to learn that practical benefit will accrue from any belief, speculation, or controversy. We hear the advocate of secularism stating with emphasis, that " its practical result is the discovery that science is the providence of man." Our readers will allow that this is a short answer to a profound problem but is not shortness the main qualification of the reply? Does it touch the real question in debate? Is the panting heart assuaged and satisfied by the blunt response ? We must here, as before, call upon the Secularists to define their terms ; what mean they by " Science ? " What idea do they attach to the term " Providence? " How does man bring " Science " and " Providence " to bear upon himself? In seeking an answer to the question, " What is science ? "

wemay possibly be told that it implies a knowledge of the laws of nature in the first instance, and then a " practical" working out of those said " laws " in the common concerns of life and time. Will the Secularists answer this question -Does not law imply the existence of a law-giver ? If so, is not the giver greater than the thing given ? Is not the maker greater than the thing made ? Whatever course may be taken in answering this inquiry, we put it to the common sense of our readers to say whether, in talking about the " laws " of England, they do not proceed on the supposition that there are legislators who appoint, modify, or annul the " laws " which govern the country ? Whoever heard of law making itself? It is easy to resolve everything into law, but if law implies a law-giver, it is evident that law cannot be the final source of appeal. We submit

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further, that in discarding the idea of a law-giver, the Secularists quench the glory and efface the beauty of their idol-Nature.

To us, the universe is left of its splendours, and its music is silenced, if the life behind be ignored; but when the great personal HE is spoken of as being the kindler of the sun-the sustainer of the heavens and the monarch of all being, it is then that gushing song and dazzling brilliance, pregnant life and a blooming immortality, thrill and glorify the universal creation! But further, if law be self-existent and eternal in theology, how comes it that law in every other department of inquiry rests on a different basis, and reflects the mind while it involves the character of the legislator? If reason is consistent with itself, it must recognise the consistency of our statement with the current of history and fact, as well as of judgment and consciousness, that law in religion and law in politics claim paternity somewhere in the universe. In whatever aspect we view this question, we find ourselves dissatisfied, until we repose on the assurance that all law is under the beneficent control of an Eternal God.

True, we may not be able to answer every inquiry concerning His nature or His *modus existendi*, yet if we take one step backward, or in any direction from this conclusion, we are plunged into "darkness visible;" hence, on this low ground, our testimony of reason, judgment, and consciousness, is, that the balance of difficulty is altogether on the side of scepticism. We thus allow, with all cordiality, that there are insoluble difficulties about the Christian argument, but, much as we may be perplexed with these, we are thrown into the deepest dungeon of despair in turning to any other hypothesis, doctrine, or creed. The Secularists seem to proceed on the assumption that Christianity opposes science, than which nothing can be more at variance with truth. When the geologist threatened to overwhelm the Mosaic history, Christianity calmly awaited the result of his investigations, and is at this hour hearing from the primary, secondary, and tertiary battlements of the earth her own praises uttered; and still she courts examination, knowing that every fossil will testify to her truth, and that every rock is inscribed with her name! When astronomy threatened, from starry heights, to quench the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness,

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Christianity patiently demanded the completion of the trial, the result of which, so far as ascertained, has been that all suns and systems, all comets and stars, in their fiery splendour, Are for ever singing, as they shine, The hand that made us is divine.

Christianity is the greatest friend to all true science, all sound philosophy. It is readily admitted that Providence will not do for man what man might do for himself. Providence has placed at our disposal certain instrumentalities, for the right use of which we are accountable, and for the abuse of which we must suffer punishment. Science itself is one of the gifts of Providence; whatever man may have been able to accomplish, he has drawn his skill from a source higher than himself—he has been sustained by a power allied to Omnipotence ! Let not the Secularists vauntingly talk of science, as though they were its only patrons, and as though Christians derided its triumphs; if they do so, it is evident that they are speaking from malignity on the one hand, or ignorance on the other. The history of science speaks in loudest tones concerning the valuable labours of Christian students in all its diversified departments.

We have already intimated that God will not do for man what man can do for himself; if a man thrust his hand into the fire, he will be burnt ; if he plunge into the water, he must be drowned. God will not miraculously interpose in behalf of the man who wantonly and knowingly violates the " laws of nature." So far the Secularist professes to agree with us, but states the question in a different form, viz., if a man be thrown into the fire, will God deliver him ? If he be plunged into the water by the homicide or the oppressor, will special Providence rescue him?

In this altered form, we cannot see much that contravenes the doctrine of Divine Providence ; it is perhaps more plausible than profound; at all events, the most cursory reader of the Bible knows that God has interposed for his children who have been thrown into the furnace, he has enabled believers to quench the violence of fire," and has made them "more than conquerors " by the inspiration of a holy energy and an immortal hope. But

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laying those instances apart entirely, we don't know that deliverance would have been the highest triumph of Divine graciousness, it strike us there is something higher even than this: we submit, for example, that that in the case of Stephen, it was an infinitely greater proof of Godly assistance, to enable the expiring martyr to breathe forgiveness, than had Omnipotence conducted him safely to his home ! To the gross-minded, there would, indeed, have been in the latter case, that which is so much wished, viz., an ocular manifestation of superhuman aid ; but to the ear of the Christian, there was in Stephen's dying prayer a holier melody than the music of the spheres a nobler instance of forgiving love than angelic tongue could express ! Man is not to dictate in what precise manner God is to give proof of his providential reign; man has his own province-in that he may rise to eminence and usefulness, but when he attempts to grasp the divine prerogative, and to purloin the crown of Deity, he either rushes into the extremes of insanity, or sinks into contempt as fierce and endless as it is deserved. But, turn the question upon the Secularists themselves: if a man be thrown into the fire, will science save him ?

If so, tell us what science ? Will chemistry deliver him ? Will mathematics save the victim ? Will botany, geology, or astronomy, stretch forth an assisting hand ? Answer, philosophic Secularist ! Here, however, we may be chided for levity, if not rebuked for impertinence. We are gravely told that a human helper made his appearance just at the time, and effected a deliverance for the burning man. Aye, aye, but tell us, gentle Secularist, what induced the " human helper" to be there "just " at the crisis ? Was it chance ? If so, then, how could it be science ? If science brought the "human helper" there, then explain to us how it operated upon his mind, in order to effect his presence at the scene of danger? If you reply, that it is beyond the power of reason to account for the fact, then it is plain that, after all, you believe sometimes even when reason does not explain the cause or reveal the process. If you ask us, why God does not deliver every victim from persecution, in the sameway that he rescued the three Hebrew children in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, it is easy to turn round upon you, and ask if science ever delivered one victim,

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what's the reason it has not delivered all victims ?

What has science been doing to allow so many shipwrecks, explosions, collisions, and divers other disasters ? On the Christian principle, we believe that " all things work together for good " to the trustful and obedient child of God; that although there may be " clouds and darkness " around the PROCESS, yet that the RESULT will glorify God and enshrine pious humanity in universal blessedness ! We wish the Secularists to tell us whether any man has been delivered from danger by the intervention of science. If so, will they also explain how the man became acquainted with science -what were the circumstances attending his rescue---how did the helper come-how did the idea occur to his mind of rendering assistance ? We persuade ourselves that when these questions are fully answered-when the hidden history is brought to light, that Secularism, bold as is its front, will stand abashed at the revelation of a supreme and benevolent Providence. We believe that God assists humanity by the quickening of mind, the suggestion of thought, as well as by tangible gift or visible aid. If God shews a man how he is to deliver himself, God is then the deliverer : if he teaches his child resignation, he is then the God of Providence and sustaining love.

No man of sound mind professes to deny that science has done much for man ; but because a child has done much for himself, we cannot conclude that, therefore, there is no parent, and never was one. We are told by the Secularists that science is " independent of every form of theological faith ;" well, what then ? Whoever professed to show that science and systems of theology were connected ? The Secularist is here confounding things that differ, if he imagines that Christianity teaches the unity of the two. We have already affirmed that we are not contending for any of the " logical forms " of Christian truth, but for the whole theology revealed and enforced in the New Testament, and from this position we shall not shrink.

We have not sought to teach the Christian doctrine of Divine Providence, but have contented ourselves with replying briefly to the representation of Secularism on this important subject.

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So often have we watched its wondrous developments in our experience, that we shudder at the thought of its rejection by others. We have had repeated recourse to science, but only as an instrumentality : we have reaped benefits, great and numerous, from scientific discovery, but we rejoice in the reflection that a paternal hand had provided the agencies which man has detected, and given man the mental power and physical might requisite to their full development. We look upon science as the handmaid of religion : every star discovered by the former is a gem in the diadem of the latter ; -every flight taken on the pinions of science is welcomed to higher altitudes by the reigning presence of Divine Truth.

Christianity it forbids not the cultivation of true science. It supplies vital stimulus to the mind of the earnest student.

It gives purpose and stability to the profoundest research. While our own experience continues to speak so loudly in favour of providence, and our observation sees the simple yet sublime connection between religion and science, we dare not rush into the fastness of scepticism, or delude ourselves with the vagaries of a capricious and senseless CHANCE .

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CHAPTER III. ITS THEORY OF MORALS.

ANY system which professes to endorse and propagate immorality would be at once discarded as impure, and avoided as pernicious. It is well, therefore, for all systemfounders to define their dogmas in such a manner as to impress the public with a sense of their goodness and practical utility. Acting upon this thought, the Secularists have boldly claimed their right to be considered as the lovers and abettors of all that is pure and exalted in the domain of morals. In fact, they have not simply declared themselves in such general terms, but, in a rage for formulating, they have embodied their belief in a philosophic form, under the name placed at the head of the present chapter. The secular " theory of morals" is thus worded by its founders and advocates :-" There exist guarantees of morality inhuman nature, in utility and intelligence." In the first place, it may suffice to state, that there is a difference between the terms " morals " and Christianity. Had the terms been synonymous, the secular proposition would have assumed very contrary relationships, and would have involved another species of argument. It is not denied that there may be much morality-such as temperance, industry, honesty, and the like-without an experimental knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity; I so that the proposition of Secularism does not in anywise deny the necessity of Christianity, if that proposition be interpreted in the light of simple logic or philosophy. The expounders of the Christian religion have proclaimed that morality is not a passport to heaven--that something higher and deeper is required to regenerate and glorify man, both in the present world and in the life to come. Had the affirmation of Christianity been, that morality was the highest achievement of spiritual being, and that there was no other pathway to its temple but through

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Christianity itself, the ground of the discussion would have been entirely different; but when it affirms that such morality as we have indicated is insufficient to satisfy the requirements of God and the pantings of man's spiritual nature, it demands to be judged on its independent merits, apart entirely from morality as popularly understood. We affirm, therefore, that if Secularism does transform a drunkard into a sober man, and a thief into a honest one, it still leaves unsolved problems the most momentous, whether viewed in relation to this or any other world. According to the dogma of Secularism man must be born with a pure nature, and, if placed under proper treatment, would grow into perfectness. It is, however, well known, by experience and observation, that the infant develops tempers and inclinations directly opposed to 1 goodness and gentleness. The question is not whether there is a preponderance of good in the child, but rather why is there any evil at all? If it be said that this evil is attributable to second causes, still we are thrown back upon the origin of evil—we are still left to enquire into the cause of those "second causes," which have vitiated the infantile mind.

How did evil enter the mind and degrade the character of the first man? If there were guarantees of morality in human nature, utility, and intelligence, how comes it that ever they failed—that vice and impurity ever deformed or ruined humanity? We have to deal with the plain fact, that evil is present in the world, and we call upon the Secularists to account for it on their hypothesis, or to allow that their theory does not invariably prove its own truthfulness. "Human nature, utility, and intelligence" have been long enough in the world to test their capabilities, yet the world is groaning under its load of oppression, wickedness, and ruin. This cannot be affirmed of Christianity, for wherever Christ's religion has been fully understood and consistently reduced to practice, it has reformed and blessed humanity; despotism has been uncrowned in its presence; hypocrisy and deceit have been unmasked and chastised.

Be it remembered, too, that Christianity found evil in the world; its mission therefore has been destructive as well as constructive.

"Human nature" did not find evil in the world; it were absurd to charge it with doing so, it has hence brought

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into being the very evil which the Secularists now declare it has the power of removing ! This is equal to saying to the suicide, thou hast slain thyself and must restore thyself to life or be forever dead; instead of saying that the restorative power must come from without, even from the supernatural-the divine. The Secularists are now left to show that the self-destroyed can be self-saved; to prove that as human nature induced evil, so human nature has within itself the power to heal every moral malady and to rectify its position in relation to the entire universe of the good and glorious. We confess our inability to see how moral self-destruction and self-salvation are reconcilable either with Scripture or philosophy. To our ear there is sublime music in the divine proclamation, " O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help," (Hosea xiii. and 9th verse). The words pierce the depths of our spiritual nature and awaken the most grateful response. Moral help is purely objective, appealing doubtless to our own sense of subjective insufficiency and claiming experience as its tester and judge.

The self-rectifying power of human nature must have some source ; we call upon the Secularists to say what that source is-or, in other words, how comes it that the poisoned fountain has wrought out its own purification ? Man is ever feeling from self-consciousness that there is something wrong in his moral nature-something which mars his happiness, and casts a cloud over his most brilliant prospects. Laying the Scripture aside entirely, the voice of consciousness loudly and distinctly affirms the unhealthfulness of man's moral being. It was not left for the Bible to reveal this truth, but rather to confirm it, and reveal the sufficient remedy.

It is in this direction that another argument is found for the proposition that Christianity meets man in his own circumstances and stretches forth the hand of help and the balm of restoration. Christianity did not make those circumstances ; we cannot be so sure that Secularism is guiltless in their formation. Once placed in this position man cries for help he asks for a deliverer -the burden of his heart-sigh is," Who shall show us any good?" Deny it who may, it has been the voice of universal man ever since disobedience brought " death into our world and all our woe."

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In these observations, we have accepted the term " morals,"

in its largest signification, as comprehending the whole of humanbeing in its relationship to society and to God. But we started with a distinction between morals and Christianity, and to that we now return, making, however, this emphatic affirmation that morals, as popularly understood, cannot secure the love of God, inasmuch as, in the popular sense, they are limited to our connexion with men simply in acommercial or social acceptance. Is it true, then, that " there exist guarantees of morality, in human nature, in utility and intelligence ? " Were it so, surely some proof would be found in the every-day experience of society; in fact, were it so, it is the most difficult thing in the world to show why there has ever been, or is now, any immorality at all ! "Human nature "

is the only nature of which we predicate immorality, but if, according to Secularism, there is a guarantee of morals inhuman nature, how, in the name of reason, can there be any longer, or rather, how was there ever any violation of the laws of truth, purity, and righteousness ? And further, how is it, if human nature is its own moral guarantee, that society is a huge moral hospital, crowded with victims conscious of moral disease ?

If it be said that if men will not obey the dictates of human nature, they must suffer the consequences, we ask them if they are not obeying the inclinations of human nature, then what other nature in the universe is there which they can be obeying ? Secularism does not recognise a God, and it disclaims any knowledge of a devil, -it ignores the doctrine of angelic or demoniacal existence, so that, after all, men must in their immorality be acting in acquiescence with the dictates of their own nature; but how is this possible if human nature is itself one of the guarantees of the very morality which it destroys ? We are told that disobedience is the cause of immoral conduct, but what are men disobeying ? They cannot, if Secularism be true, be disobeying their own nature, for that is a guarantee of morality, and if they be disobeying the laws of the external universe, then tell us who ordained those laws, and is there any power superior to their own ? This question we have already proposed. Further, how does man become tempted to immorality ? If there are passions within him exciting him to evil, then

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how is this reconciled with the dogma that man is born free and pure from sin ? It cannot be said that one man tempts another, for the question is not one of individuals, but of nature ; somewhere temptation finds its source. If humannature is the only accountable existence in the universe, and if there be no evil power brought to bear upon it, we are landed at the point where we started, viz., the origin of evil. Were Secularism true, then man would still have been in Paradise, having nothing to fall on his ear but sublimest melody-nothing to meet his eye but forms of beauty and grandeur-nothing to agitate his heart but the gushings of thankfulness-the throbs of a joyous life. Instead, however, of this, we have mourning, lamentation, and woe-we have embodiments of horror, hideousness, and destitution-we have our hearts torn by ten thousand tormentors. The most confounding reflection of all being that man was born pure, had no one to tempt him or bless him, but that in an unaccountable manner he tempted himself, polluted his holy nature, needs no one to help him, for his own human nature, which so grossly tempted and destroyed itself, is one of the " guarantees " of its own morality!

One word as to the power of " utility " in shaping and regulating it is not nor is it attested " morals;" by observation, that proved a sense by of experience, " utility " leads to goodness. Take the instance of a swearer ; ask him if he believes in the goodness of swearing, and he answers, No; ask him if he sees the " utility " of blaspheming, and the man honestly confesses that he does not ; in short, the man himself condemns the practice even while he pursues it? In what sense, therefore, is it true that either human nature, or utility, is a guarantee for this man's morality? It is his " human nature " that is swearing, and as to " utility " he reaps not one iota of benefit from the stream of curses which has rushed from his profane tongue. You ask him how he came to swear, and he points to his companions; you trace the cause to its origin, and you find that an originally holy man found himself on one occasion swearing, but could give no account of his sudden turning to blasphemy! We cannot see how Secularism can justify itself in this case, except by laying down the principle that to swear is not to be immoral, for swearing and immorality

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are synonymous terms; an alternative this, which Secularists know better than to adopt in public, whatever may be their hidden individual opinions. The same line of observation applies to the third guarantee of morality, viz., "intelligence." Go to the drunkard ---and drunkenness is certainly immoral--and ask him if his "intelligence " justifies his sensuality, and he solemnly affirms that his judgment condemns and reproaches him for his dissipation. Ask him if he finds drunkenness useful to him in any of the aspects of his life, and he curses it as the ruin of his business and the plague of his heart. How can it be proved true, then, that either "utility " or "intelligence" saves him from the immorality of his conduct and its consequent punishment? The victim of intemperance attempts not for a moment to deny that his "intelligence," judgment, and conscience are opposed to his habits; but they are blinded or overpowered by an all-mastering, a tyrannous appetite for wine and strong drink. But will Christianity save him from his pernicious habits? Most undoubtedly; there never was a swearing Christian--there cannot be a drunken saint. Christianity goes to the source of the evil; it purifies and regenerates the heart, and then the blaspheming tongue pours out its song of piety, and the drunken sensualist is transformed into a sober and trustworthy citizen. Go to our prisons, bridewells, asylums, or go to our dens of prostitution and all uncleanness--ask the inmates concerning their views of sin, and they will with one voice inform you that human nature shudders at the realisation of its own enormities, that no utility whatever has ensued from their habits, and that intelligence fiercely condemns the viciousness of their course of life.

The Secularists tells us, that when appeal to human nature and the artistic sense fails, then the vicious and the dull are exhorted to morality on the score of " utility."

"If any one," says Mr. Holyoake, "will not pursue right conduct for its own sake, it is still worth his while to do it for his interest sake; if any one will not live uprightly because of the intellectual beauty and harmony of the thing, we say it is worth his while pursuing it as a matter of calculation."

We request special attention to this secular morality; C

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we conceive that it carries in its own words the best refutation of which it is capable. The Secularist, in appealing to utility as his last resort, has thereby confessed that human nature and intelligence are only partial guarantees, and that there are instances in which their force is completely resisted. Imagine, then, a world governed from beginning to end by a system of organised selfishness, and you have pictured out the climax of secular morality. But the Secularists are not the discoverers of this plan of pointing to utility as a moral "guarantee;" men have been actuated by selfishness, or "calculation," in all generations, and yet what has the world come to? Mr. Holyoake himself interrogatively exclaims—"In a state of society in which every inch of land, every blade of grass, every spray of water, every bird and flower, has an owner, what has the poor man to do with orthodox religion, which begins by proclaiming him a miserable sinner, and ends by leaving him a miserable slave?" But does he not see that every "owner" has been, either in himself or in his predecessors, a secular moralist, who has been pursuing life for "interest sake," and who has thus by "calculation" made himself proprietor of the several items mentioned? If every "owner" has not been a Secularist, but an industrious and painstaking citizen, whose conduct has been regulated by the principles of Christianity, then who shall dare to question the claims of such a man—a man who is enjoying the reward of persevering and conscientious labour? But if he can be a Secularist, then Mr. Holyoake cannot gracefully rhapsodise any longer on such "a state of society." Moreover, we submit that it is simply ridiculous to charge upon Christianity all the poverty, disorder, and hardships of our working population; on the principle laid down, we have equal right to say to the "poor man," what have you to do with "science," for although Secularism calls it your "providence," yet what need have you of providence "in a state of society where every inch of land, every blade of grass, every spray of water, every bird and flower, has an owner?" If such a course of argument would be deemed ridiculous by our opponents, they cannot murmur if we return the compliment, and avoid their doctrines as being illogically argued and philosophically untrue. We appeal to our readers to decide, whether the principle of utility or

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the principle of gospel morality is the greater, the more sublime, the more worthy of humanity and of God. Utility says, Do good, for it will be most into your own pocket; be upright, for "interest sake;" be sober, for thereby your banking account will be improved; and be honest, for thereby you will gain some of the land, grass, water, birds and flowers, which in this uncivilised "state of society are unhappily all under some proprietorship! Christianity, on the other hand, touches the springs of moral life, and leads out the heart to worship goodness because it is divine "

in its origin, and in harmony with the laws of the great universe; and its utility consists, not in self-concentration, but in those genial, benignant, and expansive influences which encircle the globe and bless the entire family of man. The Secularist tells us that "after eighteen centuries of interminable Christian preaching," it is a shame for Christians to confess that vice is often "perfectly successful." The critic forgets, however, that something more than "preaching" is required to dethrone and annihilate vice; ministers may preach their lungs away, but if hearers refuse to believe their message and exemplify their doctrines, we cannot blame Christianity for the faults of its opponents, nor attribute to it the villainies of hypocrisy. Let men believe in Christianity—let them breathe its spirit—and embody its divine realities then shall the desert blossom as the rose, and every form of vice perish from the earth. History has shown that Christianity alone can elevate the debased paganised nation—call forth and perpetuate the flow of greatness, sublimity and love—dash from the tyrant's hand the sceptre of oppression, and from his head the crown which is reeking with human blood. The triumphs of Christianity have all tended in the highest degree to the benefit of the world; it has gone like an angel of mercy into the house of mourning, and with a gentle hand wiped the tears of misery; it has shed the beam of hope on the pilgrim's path and conducted him to the abiding city; it has quickened a spirit of gratitude in the abode of penury; it has filled humanity with hope and nerved it for action; it has rendered the dungeon vocal with song, and transformed the stake into a chariot in which the victim of tyranny has ascended to his heavenhome.

Secularism cannot cheat us out of our individual c2

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experience : we know what we once were-what agonies tore our hearts-what phantoms deluded our imaginations -how gloomy and terrible was the portentous future; we know what we now are-what joys thrill our spirits-what scenes of glory regale our vision-how resplendent and inviting is an approaching eternity! Aye, and we point to the "poor man" too, and as we listen to his simple strains and watch the tears which gush from his eyes as he relates the history of his heart, we feel that though he enters not into theological niceties, yet in his deep spirit there is a living consciousness of thorough transformation; we stand in the presence of a redeemed soul and bow under the impression that such a man is in fellowship with the Deity !

What is the worth of such pious rhapsody? exclaims the Secularist. Simply this, it is the utterance of experience, the testimony of consciousness, and therefore it demands practical attention: we know and feel that " if any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

We submit, finally, that the man who is living under an apprehension that the eye of a pure God is continually upon him-that an " unspeakable gift" has been bestowed for his redemption-that immortal bliss or woe is pending on his conduct that the judgment-day will settle the destinies of every human being-will exhibit a purer morality than the mere Secularist, who follows his natural propensities, cultivates the artistic sense, or is moral simply for selfish purposes,

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CHAPTER IV. THE ECLECTICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT .

THOUGH Secularism claims its own special theory of morals, its professors are by no means averse to some parts of the New Testament, at least so they represent themselves.

The Secularist confesses that Christ sometimes manifested a " noble simplicity" and a " majestic moderation; " but he is unable to decide as to the real spirit of the Saviour, inasmuch as Christ often departed from such exhibitions of courtesy, and designated the Pharisees and Scribes " fools" and "hypocrites," adding that " Christ did not instruct, he only irritated the Scribes and Pharisees by this violence of language." It is impossible to decide whether weakness or perversity predominates in such representations ; we are at a loss to understand how men of common sense, literary culture, and even business habits, can commit themselves to such statements. It is evident that everything should be termed by its right name-that folly should not steal the garb of wisdom-and that hypocrisy should not lurk under the guise of simplicity and truthfulness. The Secularist, appears, however, to overlook the fact, that in discussing the epithets which Christ employed, there is an antecedent inquiry turning upon the claims which he possessed to speak in this searching and expositive manner.

If it be true, as the New Testament teaches, that Christ needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man, then by virtue of his omniscience he could detect the fallacy of human nature, and speak concerning it with authority and power. Instead, however, of examining the question of our Lord's divinity, it is assumed that he was simply a fallible and erring being, who had arrogated to himself the most supercilious airs, and the right to speak in a tone of pompous and heartless dogmatism ! We allow, indeed, that the Scribes and Pharisees did not feel themselves highly

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flattered by the faithfulness of Christ, but this is only an illustration of the old principle that the truth is not always palatable, and that some men would rather hear anything than the straightforward truth concerning themselves.

Further, regarding Christ as a mere man, we are not sure that he is the only teacher who condemns unbelievers, who is indignant with the vicious, and who refuses to recognise the friendship of the hypocritical. We cannot allow that the Secularists themselves are anything over and above in the line of courtesy and affection; they professedly stand aghast at the " violence" of Christ's language, and then, in the most forgiving and lenient spirit, they accuse him of jugglery, and denounce him as a " charlatan." Now we demand to know which course in Secularism we shall take ; shall we imitate the Secularist who yearns for " noble simplicity" and " majestic moderation," or the Secularist who employs " the coarse epithets which every vulgar nature may reproduce ?" This is just the logic of Secularism regarding the Scriptures; because Christ is righteously indignant with hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, he is to be dreaded and avoided as the patron of coarse and vituperative epithets ! What do the Secularists wish Christ to do? Do they wish him to countenance the perversity and cruelty of the world -to speak in commendatory terms of the thief, the murderer, and the libertine ?

If so, where is their love of truth? And if not, where is the justice of their complaint? Christ, in denouncing the Scribes and Pharisees, grounded his accusation upon their vile conduct ; he accused them as the devourers of widows' houses, and as covering their robbery with the mask of long prayers ; and yet when Christ comes forth as the friend and helper of the widow, and as a consuming fire among the masks and trickeries of the dissembler, he is charged with harshness and branded as a tyrant ! The Secularist cannot make us believe that they are the only defenders of widows' houses, and the only enemies of tedious and shallow prayers; our Saviour's conduct, in the very instances which they condemn, is one of the best possible proofs that he was the friend of humanity-a rampart for the oppressed and defenceless! We challenge the Secularists to produce an instance in which Christ condemned one virtuous action, repressed one noble aspiration, or interdicted one course of

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goodness.

On the other hand, we are prepared to show that he was the terrible foe of all oppression, intemperance, and licentiousness ; and that, in his own conduct, he embodied the doctrine and reflected the purity of heaven. We submit it is unreasonable to charge Christ with a moral contradiction, because in one case he says " Love your enemies; " and in another, he condemns the Scribes and Pharisees for their inconsistency in saying right and doing wrong--in praying much and then devouring the houses of widows. The Secularists know, or ought to know, that there is a love of compassion as well as a love of complacency; the love which would forbid to do an enemy a wilful injury, and a love which gathers its friends into its warm and complacent embrace.

Christianity teaches us to feed our enemy if he hunger, and if he thirst to give him drink ; we leave it to the Secularists to decide whether this is not noble, sublime, and magnanimous.

The Secularist tells us, that " if any human reformer in thesedays should go about the country in the same character, and accompanied in the manner described in the New Testament, you would hoot him from society." Gentle reader ! observe these words: this is the deliberate utterance of that Secularism, which is so horrified at the denunciations of the Saviour, which is so loud and bold in defending free thought and free action ! How sublime, to observe a multitude of free thinkers, " hooting" a " human reformer" out of the world! How eloquently after that could they censure Christ for his acerbity, and trumpet forth the consolations and the beauties of free, unfettered thought! Secularism says, that we " make it out that man is more merciful than God," because while God enjoins us to forgive our enemies, he himself refuses to do the same, and sends them to eternal punishment. Then, says the Secularist, " I'll take the former part and love it, but I deny and despise the pretended fury of God." We judge that in this exclamation there is a fearful confounding of things that differ. There is a placing of God and man on the same level, an investiture of man with all the prerogatives of an infinite and eternal being. The command to love our enemies is given to Christians ; if the command is carried out--and we believe it can only be fully carried by

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the pure in heart, and that purity of heart comes by the Lord Jesus—the obedient is not sent to eternal misery, but to everlasting happiness; and those who go down to endless punishment are self-convicted, and their career terminates in corresponding retribution as a moral necessity as we shall attempt hereafter to show and not by the decree of a vindictive and malignant being. That God does compassionately love his enemies is abundantly clear from the temporal mercies which are being continually showered upon them; the rain and the sunshine are alike the portion of the just and the unjust—the evil and the good; invitations to mercy, proclamations of love, are being continually heard in the world, the voice of God is ever attesting that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked." If ever enemies were loved, it is by the merciful Being whom we adore as the Sovereign of the universe! Remember, nevertheless, that unless an enemy accepts our forgiveness, avails himself of our love, he is an enemy still, and we are not accountable for his enmity; if, therefore, an enemy obstinately refuses our friendship, how can he expect to be admitted to our confidence, and to receive our benefactions? So, when God's enemies are placed before his tribunal, there will be self-witness that God's offer of mercy was refused, and a self-conviction of the righteousness of the retribution necessarily attendant on iniquitous conduct. The enemy therefore is self-alienated from the family of God, because he has practically despised God's favour, and as he would not commune with Jehovah on earth, he cannot expect his fellowship in heaven! The Secularists appear to overlook the fact, that an enemy is still an enemy, whether he is forgiven or not, except he avails himself of the forgiveness; does it not then logically follow that such an enemy prefers death to life and hell to heaven? We shall further illustrate this argument in a succeeding chapter. The eclectic Secularist says he will believe in the passage, "Be diligent in business," but he will not trust the injunction, "Take no thought for the morrow," or "Be careful for nothing." This is not fair criticism, nor is it philosophical argument. Why not interpret those passages in the same way that they would be construed in a modern author? Is not trust in God at the basis of the command?

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:The legitimate and obvious signification of the passage is, that no corroding, tormenting anxiety is to distress the mind of the Christian, but rather that, being diligent, faithful, and upright in business, he is to leave the future to the supervision of the Great Parent, who will cause all conflicting occurrences to blend and harmonise in the promotion of the common good. The Secularists themselves deny our right to interfere with the future, yet when Christianity says "Take no thought for the morrow," the Secularists charge it with inculcating carelessness and indifference !

The eclectic further tells us, that we are to reject all those parts of Scripture which "interfere with our notions of humanity." This is cool! Who is meant by the royal "our" in the preceding sentence ? Do the Secularists proclaim that their notions of human nature are the only true notions ? If they do so, then where is their homage to free thought ? According to the Secularist's definition of the term, what possible right can he have to controvert Christianity and establish Secularism in its stead? Free thought, in the Secularist's sense of the word, would for ever forbid all teaching, inasmuch as to teach thoroughly there must be superior force brought to bear on the mind of the instructed; and hence, the teacher must necessarily leave his own individuality impressed on the mind under his tuition, which is fatal to the secular argument for free thought. But we deny the correctness of the definition ; we believe there is a nobler and a better than the loose and irrational interpretation of Secularism. The eclectic further proposes "to take the New Testament's gentler precepts to believe in the gentle Christ and to reject the austere Christ." The reader may well marvel at the Secularist being so enraptured with the meek and gentle. One would naturally infer that a Secularist is the most amiable and affectionate creature in the world; yet this pleasant dream is utterly inconsistent with facts, for the writings of secular teachers are not in every case overdone with the forgiving and conciliatory. We demand, therefore, in reason and fairness, that the man who falls so passionately in love with gentleness, should exhibit in his own conduct that which he in theory so devotedly admires. What mean those words, "gentle Christ" and "austere Christ?" Why, just this, that Christ was indignant with

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the hypocrite, and gentle to the little children. What an alarming charge to adduce against the Saviour ! Had Jesus patronised and defended the villanies of human nature, the Secularists possibly might have charged him with positive iniquity ; and yet, when he exposes and denounces them, they reject him as the " austere Christ! " We may be charged with dulness, yet really we cannot see the force of such secular logic, or the soundness of such eclectic philosophy. There is not a man in existence that is not alternately gentle and austere, so that if we be eclectics in friendship, how countless will be the half-friends that populate our social circles ! But further, if all people were so loving and gentle, there would be no occasion afforded for the manifestation of austerity ; and if all persons were good, all persons would be gentle, too. So long, however, as the wicked exist—so long as the tyrant, the vicious, the oppressor, and the hypocrite are on the earth, gentleness itself must be clothed in frowns, and utter the voice of condemnation. We have no sympathy with that spurious charity which dare not designate men and things by their right names—which cants and whines, where it should expose, remonstrate, or denounce. Again, men who sustain different relationships to society are required to exhibit such feelings and thoughts as the nature of each particular case may require—for example, the judge on the bench is oftentimes necessitated to be austere and obdurate, yet in the family circle he may be gentle and playful. Is it reasonable to imagine that the father in the domestic group is to look at the criminal at the bar from the same point of view as he observes his innocent and affectionate children ?

Or, would it be successful on the part of the prisoner to take refuge in secular eclecticism, and say that he would accept the " gentle" father but " reject" the " austere" judge ? Would he as a "freethinker" be allowed to leave the dock, or to turn an orator and preach up the beauty of gentleness ? The thing is every way absurd when looked at in the light of business, and no less foolish and perverse when studied in the light of conscience and theology. Christ, the brother and friend, is ever genial, loving, and sympathetic; Christ, the pure, is ever averse to impurity, deception, and uncleanness ; Christ, the Saviour, is all-compassionate and all-powerful;

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Christ, the judge, employs correct balance and upholds the claims of justice in the sight of the whole universe ! It is pitiful, therefore, to talk of two Christs, and delusive to beckon men to the pretended stronghold of a capricious eclecticism. The Secularist finds fault with the New Testament because it teaches men to be content ; arguing that he who is content with his position will not seek to improve it, whereas Secularism says in whatsoever position you are, endeavour to make it better. There is nothing peculiarly precious in this reasoning; we feel, indeed, disposed to believe that the contented labourer is the most likely man in the world to ameliorate his social position ; at all events, the discontented, the peevish, and fretful are not considered ornaments in any department in society, nor is it highly probable that discontentment will lead to preferment, honor, and influence. If Secularism has no more dignified criticism to offer than this rare specimen, we need not feel greatly alarmed, for common sense despises it as being equally contemptible and harmless. We are further informed--for it is nothing short of information--that " every Christian who is courteous and kind to opponents must make a selection of one part of Scripture and disregard the other." Now, first of all, we deny that any man can be a Christian who so eclectically treats the Christian revelation ; and, secondly, the statement is altogether contradictory, inasmuch as the persons who employ the gentle terms in the New Testament are the very same who utter such " austere " and " violent " language as that referred to; so that it follows, that it is possible for the same writer or speaker either to " distil as the dew " or to peal as the thunder. But we ask, why " make a selection " of the Scriptures at all? If the New Testament is not suitable for moral guidance, it is worse than vain to think and talk of " making a selection;" it would be decidedly more honourable to discard it entirely, yet this could not be done until it was proved that it was so unfit, and then humanity might resolve accordingly.

The eclectic proceeds to state that he never anathematizes any unbeliever in Secularism, as Paul anathematized the unbelievers in Christianity, and then modestly adds, " If you find that ever I used this sort of language to anybody,

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I will apologise for its use and retract it." Here, as in former examples of Secular reasoning, there is an assuming of avital argument, viz., that a Secularist and an apostle occupy precisely the same position and have equal right to beheard on the same subject ; whereas the Secularistdiscards the idea of inspiration in his own case, and, as a free thinker(!) he deniesit also in the case of the apostle! The Secularist, then, attempts not to examine the claims of the New Testament writers to divine and infallible guidance, he finds it a shorter and easier way to assume that there is, and can be no such guidance, and that, therefore, the apostles wrote in a spirit of fanatical and objurgating bigotry.

To the Secularist eclectic we offer this plain advice : examine the pretensions of the New Testament writers ; collate the various evidence professedly bearing on the subject ; make truth the lofty object of your struggle, and if your examination-candid, comprehensive, earnestshould terminate, as terminate it undoubtedly will, in establishing their claim to divine inspiration, then be it yours to cherish their teachings as the voice of God to the deepheart of humanity.

PRAYER

CHAPTER V. PRAYER .

MISAPPREHENSION has been rife among Secularists as to the real nature and spiritual doctrine of prayer.

They have manifested a violent passion for literalising, and have demanded that every answer to supplication should be visible and tangible. In discussing the teachings of Scripture on the question, it will be necessary to remember the distinction we have already insisted upon, between an infinite and eternal God and finite humanity. The very fact of man praying is an acknowledgment of superiority on the part of the Being appealed to, and if superior, he is of necessity more capable of judging as to the real merits and necessities of every case. Prayer not only implies superiority on the one part, but also ignorance and helplessness on the other. If the suppliant is not ignorant, why does he ask wisdom ? If he is not helpless, why does he implore assistance ?

Man, in addressing God—recognising the perfection of his attributes—does not dictate to God what course he must pursue, but utters his wants so far as he understands them, and then adds "Not my will but thine be done," thus confessing that the Almighty knows better than man does what the suppliant really requires to promote his highest interests.

On this very point we have Christ's own example, for when in the terrible agony preceding his crucifixion, when his human nature was overwhelmed with the burden of a guilty world, he besought that the cup should pass from him, he breathed the submissive and sublime language which we have just quoted and italicised. Such being Christ's own example, it is but reasonable that his followers should do as he did, viz., trust the entire decision in every case to the all-wise and benevolent Creator. Not only so, but man, the suppliant, is bound to leave God to his own way in answering petitions. So it is

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in society; the inferior never dictates to the superior, either as to whether a favour shall be conferred, or as to what particular manner shall be observed in its bestowment. The Secularists ignore the duty and practice of prayer because a visible hand is not stretched out from the sky in immediate response to every petitioner ! We feel bound to characterise such an expectation as dictatorial, dogmatic, and presumptuous. Men, in appealing to their fellows, are called upon to wait until the superior shall feel at liberty to attend to their request; and shall not HE, who is the Universal Creator, be permitted at least a similar discretion ? It is, however, argued that the analogy is unsound, because men have not offered to attend to every suppliant, and God has done so, for Christ has said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that, believing, ye shall receive." Observe, however, that the passage so quoted, is applied by Christ to his disciples, and that, further, the promise is contingent on given conditions, viz . , "inmy name," and " that, believing;" if, therefore, the conditions are violated, the promise is no longer binding ; this is true in secular, as well as in religious life. It is of essential importance to understand that Christ's promise applies solely to those who love him and believe in him ; for it is true that when men are overtaken with trial and sorrow they seek consolation in prayer, but this is tempting God, it is a last resource, it is hollow and heartless mockery! Is it come to this, that men are to live in practical Atheism when the sun of success is shining, never to acknowledge the hand of Providence in their prosperity, and yet when the cloud gathers and adversity stares them in the face, if they cry to God for help and He doesn't answer them, the Secularist scoffs at the prayer, denies the God, and re-asserts that science is the providence of life!

Let us see then what the scriptural doctrine of prayer really is: there can be no higher source of appeal on this question than the Bible itself, from which it appears(1.) That wicked men in the hour of danger have confessed the value of prayer. An illustration of this proposition is supplied in the case of Jeroboam, who was the first king of the Ten Tribes, after the revolution consequent on the accession of Rehoboam. When this wicked king put forth

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his hand to lay hold on the "man of God out of Judah," his hand " which he put forth against him dried up so that he could not pull it in again to him." What was to be done in this exigency? Why did not Jeroboam, as a Secularist, believe in the formula that " science is the providence of life? " Why didn't he send for a physician, and prove that science was the only providence in his creed? Instead of doing this, he cried to the " man of God out of Judah," and said, " Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me that my hand maybe restored to me again." Here, then, is confession arising out of danger-man in extremity fleeing to God for help. What was the issue?

Here it is : "And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." (1 Kings xiii. 6.) It is easy for the Secularist, who professes to read the Bible eclectically, to reject this as contrary to his " moral sense,"

-as opposed to his reason; but if all literature, if all testimony, is to be trifled with in this manner, there is an end at once to all appeal and to all legitimate argument. What would the Secularists make of this case if they found it in profane literature? To say that they would ignore it as untrue, is not fair, until evidence has been adduced tending to invalidate the main particulars ; we now give the case of Jeroboam as a problem to the Secularists, asking them to account for the healing of the hand, or to supply us with such evidence as shall overturn the whole narrative. In this case it is evident that God interposed for a special purpose, but it by no means follows that because God was pleased to restore the hand of Jeroboam that he is bound to cure all maladies of the present day, by a miraculous interference. It is least of all to be expected that God will regard the prayer of the wicked, by interposing for them, because they appeal to him in the hour of peril and helplessness. On this point the declaration of Scripture is emphatic, for " the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord."

" The Lord is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." (Prov. xv. 29.) " If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." The case of Jeroboam cannot be quoted against those passages, inasmuch as he received a blessing through mediation, and not as a direct

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personal answer. While, therefore, the case serves to illustrate our proposition and to prove the efficacy of prayer, it is also an unanswerable proof that Jeroboam was conscious that his own prayers could not be accepted on account of his wickedness. From Bible testimony it is further evident, (II.) That God interposes on behalf of good men, in answer to earnest prayer. As a proof, examine the case of Asa, who ascended the throne of Judah two years before the death of Jeroboam. Of this youthful king it is affirmed by the sacred historian, that " he did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God." He opposed the idolatrous administrations of his mother, and sought to establish the pure worship of Almighty God. In this case we are in a fair position for testing the value of prayer, inasmuch as Asa is a good man, and therefore in direct communication with the Divine Object of his faith and love.

In the eleventh year of his reign there came out against the army of Asa " Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a thousand and three hundred chariots."

What was to be done in this tremendous crisis ? How should this prodigious and countless host be encountered by the men of Asa? In this calamitous position the king manifests an earnest resolution and a victorious faith, such as a man of God could alone exhibit; " And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art God; let not man prevail against thee." (2 Chron. xiv. 11.) Those piercing words bursting from the agonised spirit winged their flight to the Great Ear, and brought down so much power, that " the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled" (verse 12.) With this remarkable instance of answered prayer before us, we dare not commit ourselves to scepticism ; let the Secularists give usevidence that shall destroy its truthfulness if they can, and then our course will be clear. The conduct of Asa supplies us with an opportunity of remarking, that God blesses means to the accomplishment of a given end. The hosts of the Ethiopian were not destroyed by miracle—they were overcome by human agency—agency which confessed

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God and implored his guidance. This principle holds good now, as it has done in the generations of the past. The farmer may pray for ever, but except he ploughs and sows, he may expect the harvest in vain. The indolent may profess to pray for maintenance, but unless he employs the means he will be famished to death. God is not the patron of carelessness, self-ease, and inactivity. We have a beautiful and noble illustration of this principle in the life of Nehemiah. When this patriotic Hebrew went to build the city of his fathers' sepulchres, what did he seek? He sought not only the help of the Persian monarch, but his devout spirit towered higher still on the pinion of a triumphant faith, and sought the arm of Omnipotence! Hence it is, that book which bears his name, is musical with the voice of heavenly converse, and the page is begemmed with such expressions as "So I prayed to the God of heaven;" "the God of heaven, he will prosper us;" "our God shall fight for us;" and "think upon me, my God for good, according to all that I have done for this people." Those sentences written as with lightning—are so many criteria by which we are enabled to estimate the spirit of the patriot. But did he leave the matter to prayer alone? By no means; "Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders every one had his sword girded by his side and so builded." (Neh. iv. 17, 18.) This, then, is just what we mean by prayer and labour; a finer example it is impossible to supply. Men, in the diligent employment of their faculties in any good work, in looking up to God, are taught to expect his approving smile.

But, objects the sceptic, the Secularist sows his seed and prays none, while his harvest is just as bountiful as that of the Christian who prayed over every handful of corn which he cast into the ground; wherein then is the Christian better off than the Secularist?

We answer, that if the prayerless husbandman had a tenfold richer produce than the Christian, he had it not on the ground of his Atheism or unbelief in prayer, he had it in spite of this, as a proof of the mercy of Him who causeth his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust; while the Christian, whose produce is scanty, can do what the Secularist cannot do

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do, viz. , feel resigned to the dispensations of Providence, knowing that God is taking his own inscrutable way for the working out of some greater ulterior good. Physical aggrandisement is not always, if ever, the best favour that can be bestowed ; spiritual blessing is a richer and a more enduring inheritance, so that he who can cheerfully meet adverse providences with "Thy will be done," is a wealthier and a happier man than he who pulls down his barns and builds greater, and confesses not the hand of God. "The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." (Prov. x. 22.) "In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble." (Prov. xv. 6.) " Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith." (Verse 16.) " A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked." (Psalm xxxvii. 16.) The Secularist proceeds on the assumption that earthly and temporal possessions are the greatest blessings, while we are taught in the Scriptures to believe that there is a higher standard of greatness, influence, and felicity. We profess that God knows better what is good for us, than we know ourselves, and are therefore content to cast ourselves into His paternal arms. No man can pray in faith whose prayer is not grounded on a promise ; Yet a good man commendeth all things to the righteous wisdom of his God : For those who pray in faith trust the immutable Jehovah, And they who ask blessings unpromised lean on uncovenanted mercy. Tupper.

It is not assumed in our proposition, that God will so interpose on behalf of his children as to rectify all social inequalities in our present state; there will still be the rich and poor, even if all men were to become Christians immediately. The inspired writers recognise this fact, and address humanity accordingly. Let any man, for example, carefully ponder the 37th Psalm, and he will find it the best exposition of the doctrine of cross-providences that can anywhere be found. Throughout that beautiful psalm, David recognises the well-known fact, that the righteous are frequently found in the vale, while the wicked are enjoying themselves on the mount of prosperity. It opens like a full trumpet-blast of encouragement; it comes on the weary soul of man like a refreshing breeze from celestial

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lands; the first verse is like the first note in an anthem of gladness, " Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." We are told next that the prosperity of the wicked is comparatively short-lived, that " they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." The Secularist looks at prosperity with very different eyes to the Spiritualist; what the former would regard as true and noble, the latter would despise as false and mean. The Psalmist proceeds with majestic force in his exhortation, " Trust in the Lord and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day." It may be long before the morning dawns, but dawn it will ; the shadow and the sadness which now enshroud thee, shall soon be lighted with the star of promise, and that star again shall mingle its soft radiance with the splendours of an inextinguishable sun! The prayerless Atheist, who scorns thy altar of worship, who drinks the reddest of the wine and who eats the finest of the wheat, shall one day open his eye and behold how providence after providence has occurred for the exaltation and enthronement of the righteous ! We are now travelling in a shaded scene; the wicked have in many cases more of this world's goods than the holy, but ever and anon lights are streaming on our path to tell of an approaching morn, when the wicked shall be covered with confusion and the righteous with everlasting honour! " For evil-doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth! " Mark the terrible words which follow : " The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him; for he seeth that his day is coming." "His day," that is, the day which the evil-doer is himself making, for men make their own hells-let the wicked have time and he will fill the heavens with tempest-he will enkindle a fire under his own feet and he shall perish by the work of his own hands ! " The wicked have drawn out the sword, bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation. Their sword shall D2

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enter into their own heart and their bows shall be broken."

The Psalmist confesses himself to have greatly stumbled at the prosperity of the unrighteous; he says he was envious at the foolish when he saw the prosperity of the wicked.

"They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. "

" Their eyes stand out with fatness : they have more than heart could wish."

"When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."

(Psalm lxxiii.) Couple this testimony with the one found in the Thirty-seventh Psalm, and the evidence, so far as David is concerned, is most complete. " I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." It is, after all, by the end that man must be judged; it is premature to judge while in the process, we only see the dross at the top of the refining furnace; but wait a while; when that dross is cleared away, the pure silver will be seen reflecting the unclouded image of the Divine Refiner.

In further fortifying the proposition, that God interposes on behalf of good men in answer to earnest prayer, take the following passages : " The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth." (Ps. cxlv. 18). " Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. vii. 7). " Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." (John ix. 31.) " The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James . 16.) "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John iii. 22.) It is quite apparent, from this concurrent testimony, that the promise applies solely to the good man, and hence that the wicked have no part nor lot in this matter. The Secularist, having allowed us thus to state the case, inquires how it comes that all our prayers are not answered. In considering this question, be it borne in mind that the age of miracles is past or suspended, and that,

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therefore, answers are not now returned in the wondrous manner in which they were given aforetime; but if prayer is answered at all, we conceive that it is entirely immaterial as to how the answer comes. Now, on individual experience, and from credible testimony, we are prepared to affirm that God does answer prayer now. The question, then, which we turn upon the Secularist is not, why are not all prayers answered, but why is any prayer answered at all? The Secularist must confess himself involved in difficulty in accounting for this. If he turns round as an eclectic, and says he does not believe in our experience, or in what we term "credible testimony," we may fairly suspect the soundness of his belief in his own dogma; for nothing is easier than to call an opponent a liar, or to substitute sweeping negation for logical analysis and candid reasoning. Further, remembering a rule already enunciated, that in every case an infinite and eternal God must know what is good for us better than we know ourselves, the decision may be safely left to his infallible and beneficent will.

We leave the Secularist to pursue one of two courses, either, first to give the Christian world the lie, when it affirms on the ground of experience that God does answer prayer; or, secondly, to believe that affirmation and account for it. (III.) God does not answer prayer by deliverance in every case, but more frequently by the excitement of thought—the suggestion of idea. A passage at hand settles the matter: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (James i. 5.) This passage is strictly in harmony with the copious quotations already given, in so far as the application is limited to the good; James is here addressing the twelve "tribes which are scattered abroad," whom also in the second verse he salutes as "brethren."

The term "wisdom" in the above verse, does not signify mere intellectual attainment or mental force, but rather that sound understanding and discretion which are necessary for the guidance and culture of our secular and religious natures that sagacity which is proper to direct in the season of perplexity, and calculated to regulate the springs and issues of our daily conduct. Let not the Secularist then vainly tell us to close our educational establishments, and seek to make men philosophers by praying for

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wisdom; for we know that intellectual sovereignty can only be gained by assiduous, well-directed, and systematic labour.

Genius, education, or scientific eminence, are not gained by prayer merely, but prayer will sweeten toil ; it will impart fresh impulse to the student's mind, and give keener edge and finer polish to the holy purpose of his intellectual endeavour. There is no department of thought in which prayer is not useful; what is study, but search after the universal mind ? It is an ever-rising aspiration after the universe of intellectual being ; and who is so likely to quicken thought aright as He who is the fountain of mind, the spring of all intelligence ! That student who combines prayer with labour will be the most successful climber of the lofty Himalaya, on which stands the temple of Genius-the Sanctuary of Wisdom. The student is all the more vigorous for scientific or philosophic research after bathing his spirit in the atmosphere of heaven ; he comes to his labour then with a high aim, and pursues his studies in reference not only to himself, but to all the realities of life, and the solemnities of eternity.

The passage, furthermore, relates to a certain class of askers : " If any of you lack wisdom;" here then is conscious ignorance to begin with ; there is some hope of a man who knows his own deficiencies, but none of that man who imagines that wisdom was born with him, and that the same coffin will contain them both.

The man who is wise in his own eyes, is not the successful suppliant at the throne of grace; the humble and childlike have " showers of blessings," but the proud are sent empty away. The principle holds good in all the aspects of life. " Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning. (Proverbs ix. 9.) The man who knows all things, of course needs no further acquisition, and therefore cannot be referred to in the passage under examination; and if he is self-excluded from the promise, it is impossible that he can receive the blessing. If then, God gives wisdom to all sincere suppliants, who shall say that strength is not implied in that comprehensive term ? " Knowledge is power," and " wisdom is better than strength." See those mentoiling and sweating in removing that immense block of stone-they are brawny, muscular

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men, but they make no impression on the stone; but here comes a man who knows that "knowledge is power," he places a fulcrum, inserts the point of his lever, and with comparative ease he moves the block, and thus shows that "wisdom is better than strength!" It is just possible that a Secularist, looking upon this triumph of the mechanical power, would clap his hands in ecstasy, and exclaim, "Lo! science is the providence of life!" But that rapturous Secularist is only looking at second causes; his eye doesn't pierce the imbedded philosophy of the case—he doesn't trace this leverage up to its original source, or possibly he might discover that the idea was excited by Him in whose word it is declared that "wisdom is better than strength." "There was a little city, and few men within it, and there came a great king against it and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man; and he by his wisdom delivered the city, yet Wisdom no man remembereth that same poor man. is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroyeth much good." (Eccl. ix. 14.) The Christian recognises a good idea in business, as from the Lord; he is not so self-complacent as to attribute all success to his own endeavour, he knows that "every good gift and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James i. 17.) And this strong confidence and fervent gratitude make him a happy man; at all times he enjoys the hallowed assurance, that the Great Master is doing all things well, and that in due time the path of providence will be flooded with light and beauty -that chaos will become order-that every shattered limb in the great Osiris of God's unity of government will be ...

brought together, and that the perfections of God, and the happiness of man will shine with the splendour of sunlight, and flow on for ever, in a deep and tranquil current. Such is our confidence in the omnipotence of prayer; we dare not rush into the negations of non-theism; conscience cries after us, if we take one step from the throne; judgment utters its stern remonstrance if we waver in our love, experience reminds us of blissful intercourse in bygone hours, brings to our remembrance holy resolves, deep emotions, celestial thoughts; so that when conscience, judgment,

SECULARISM : and experience shake the heavens and the earth by their thunders of reproach, remonstrance, and remembrance, we must, we will be suppliants at God's throne, and If we perish, we will pray Andperish only there !

DOCTRINALLY AND SOCIALLY CONSIDERED .

CHAPTER VI . SECULARISM DOCTRINALLY AND SOCIALLY CONSIDERED .

Life is a reality. He who makes the best of life will often be found at the altar of utilitarianism .

Little time can be spared for theorising. Man cannot know much of the universe in three score years and ten. The wide earth and wider heavens he must, to a large extent, leave unexplored. Whatever can most exalt and adorn life, that man wants. The heart needs tuition and comfort. Without the former it runs into seed-reft of the latter it shrinks into despair.

A young heart is ever a deeply interesting object. It knows not the sorrows of earth : it is fresh, tremulous, and impressible. Every development is watched with anxiety. Every glance of the infant eye is a glance of wonder—a manifestation of inquisitiveness. In a few years that heart will cease to throb, and that eye will be dimmed in death. It is then of momentous consequence to ascertain what will most perfectly educate and most completely bless the life, so precious yet so uncertain. Two teachers are found at the very threshold of society—both profess to have the best system of culture. One says, confine your attention to earth-work, but do not pray-serve this world well, and if there be a better you will assuredly inherit it—"mean well and do well, and you will deserve well, both here and hereafter"—pay no attention to religion—enter no sanctuary but the temple of nature—trust to science, and confess no other providence. The other says, you are the noblest of God's works on earth—you are an immortal and responsible being—there is a deep spring of impurity in your heart that spring can never be eradicated by your own might it will lead to the commission of sin against your Creator, and finally ruin you for ever—nevertheless despair not! God has provided a grand remedial economy—He "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on

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Such, in substance, is the groundwork of instruction imparted by the two representative teachers. The Secularist says, " When the young are taught that they are deplorably sinful by nature, it snaps the sinews of moral effort; while, on the other hand, the doctrine of the elementary goodness of human nature is a powerful inducement to purity and perseverance in wholesome development." The reader will at once observe how one-sided and consequently how misleading is this representation. It would indeed discourage the sick man to tell him that no physician understands his disease or can remove it; it would cast into utter hopelessness the bleeding slave to tell him that no power on earth can break his fetters ; it would fill the hungry man with anguish to inform him that the obtainment of food was impossible; but there is a better side to those cases, as there is also in the case of the young who " are deplorably sinful by nature."

Christianity goes to the morally diseased, and proclaims that there is " balm in Gilead; " it goes to the bondsman and shows him how emancipation is possible ; it hastens to the abode of starvation and spreads out manna sent down from heaven. The Secularist loudly asserts that Christianity convicts all men of being " deplorably sinful by nature," but unhappily forgets to state that Christianity doesn't leave them there ; it tells of disease, it is true, but it also brings along with it the precise and all-sufficient remedy. We earnestly implore the Secularists to be fair in their statements of Christian truth ; misquotation or distortion can serve no useful purpose: let Christianity be represented both in its negative and positive bearings, otherwise the treatment will be uncandid and the result unprofitable. To deny that we are " deplorably sinful by nature," is to oppose our own consciousness, and to give the lie to our daily experience. We feel that there is pollution at the centre ; we know that evil has found its way to the throne of our heart. We oppose then the assertion of Secularism, that the doctrine of inherent evil when taught to the young " snaps the sinews of moral effort." On the contrary, we contend that when the young are taught that there is a high remedial provision in store for them, it stirs up their noblest powers, and

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awakens their tenderest sympathies. It is as a gleam of sunlight breaking on the gloom of their hearts, and as the voice of emancipation to their enslaved and quivering souls. The fact of our innate depravity excites inquiry in our own minds as to the best means of purification. We look to dry fountains for the water of life and find none ; we turn to superstitious observances and shallow formalisms, but the grand problem remains unsolved. It is not until we repose on the finished work of the Saviour, that we enjoy the " peace which passeth understanding." Our last allusion reminds us that Secularism discards the idea of Christ's atonement. We are told that atonement by his death is " unsatisfactory as a scheme, and immoral as an example." The substance of the argument pursued by the Secularist on this doctrine is, that " the broad, the palpable, the demoralising element in the doctrine of the atonement is that of eternal punishment." We beg to remind our opponents that the atonement of Christ was devised in mercy, not in wrath ; hence it is said that God gave his Son to die because he " so loved the world,"

not that his wrath burned so fiercely, and his justice was so eager for blood, but rather that his love for a self-alienated world was so profound, so paternal, so forgiving, that he placed at man's disposal the freest and grandest means of restoration that the universe could supply. Besides, how natural is the whole course of argument; an infinite God devises his own infinite law of goodness and truth-and remember that both goodness and truth are eternal ; man of his own free will violates the said law which, being infinite, of course involves infinite consequences. Let it be remembered, too, that as disobedience to God's law is attended with eternal punishment, so he that walks in harmony therewith is meetening for everlasting life and joy. Both courses of conduct eventuate in eternal issues. It would be simply fair therefore for the Secularist lecturer, after having wrought upon the passions of his auditory by references to the unending retribution of the wicked, to remind them also of the glorified life which awaits the truly righteous. Be it remembered, furthermore, that men have not to die to find out what the result of their conduct is. It is plainly and fully revealed to them on earth, and remonstrance is employed

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It is clear then that men condemn themselves ; they transgress against light and love, and in entering the punishments of eternity they feel that the bitterest aggravation of their misery is that their condemnation is self-inflicted. God has placed the entire question before humanity in the most luminous manner ; nothing can be more direct and simple than the teachings of the New Testament on this momentous subject. He who stumbles must stumble amid the noontide blaze of gospel light. We are told that when men are punished by human authorities there is some proportion between the crime and the penalty. What then? This is just what we are representing with regard to God. Man can only make finite laws, and finite laws imply corresponding duration of punishment ; but God has announced infinite laws, and therefore transgression necessarily implies infinite penalty. Further, human magistracy can only take cognisance of the outward act, it enters not into the heart, the motive, or the will, but God by virtue of his omniscience can deal with the subtlest intent of the transgressor's nature, and can award the proper retribution. And, again, human judges can only inflict punishment on the corporeal, while God deals with the spiritual existence. The analogy, therefore, between the earthly administrators of justice and the Judge of all the Earth is unsound and untenable. The Secularist further says, " the doctrine of the atonement includes the idea of eternal, never-ending punishment for no other crime than that I am not able to believe as you are able to believe." This is simply untrue. A man is condemned because he won't believe what God tells him is true, and what God in mercy calls upon him to believe, God has set life and death before men, he has told the consequences of the most opposite courses of conduct,-and he leaves it to man to decide for himself which he will choose and which reject. The Secularist says, that sincerity is everything, and that no sincere man will be consigned to eternal punishment, whatever he may see reason to believe. This is a misstatement, and is utterly without meaning. Sincere is simply a concrete term conveying no positive idea; sincerity is an abstract word, purely without significance until some object of sincerity is named. What

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is a man sincere in ?

This must determine the nature and value of his sincerity. A man may be famous for perseverance, but it altogether depends upon the nature of the object which excites his energy, whether we praise it or not. When the Secularist says he is a sincere man, the first question we put to him is, what are you sincere about ? If you are sincere in calling God a liar, then you must be sincere in the blackest and wildest presumption. Further, we believe that the real question is not one of sincerity, but one of faith, the object in each case being, of course, determined. Take an illustration : There are two roads leading in opposite directions ; at the junction a living guide is stationed, whose qualification is that he knows every inch of both the ways, and can, therefore, give the most specific information ; a traveller comes up to the guide and states his difficulties as to the choice of road; the director tells the wanderer that by taking the right he will find an easy road to a pleasant destination, but that if he takes the left he will assuredly be ruined; the guide does not dictate, he simply states the case and leaves the decision to the traveller's own judgment. On consideration, the latter tells the guide that he does not believe him; that he is perfectly sincere in his scepticism, and that he will pursue the lefthand road. Away he starts and finds, to his ruin, that he was wrong, and that the guide was right ; every step that he takes brings him nearer to the terrible result. Now, we ask, what ruined that man? Was it his sincerity or his belief that plunged him into misery? Is the guide to be called a tyrant, and charged with cruelty ? To us, it is as clear as noon-day that the man is self- condemned, through his self-reliance in opposition to the warnings of a superior and infallible guide. If the traveller takes the right-hand road-the road of Christianity-he thanks God for making such a beautiful way, and for inviting man to walk in it; but if the traveller pursues an opposite course-the course of infidelity, he feels that it is a man-made path, and he curses his own infatuation in neglecting the voice of the warner, and persisting in the way of ruin. In our estimation, it is something worse than weakness to talk of sincerity being all that is required. The Secularist allows that people may be sincere in believing Christianity, we answer then, that if sincerity is everything, and Christians

SECULARISM are sincere, why, in the name of consistency, does the Secularist employ the pen, the press, and the platform in attempts to throw down religion, and to transform Christians into Secularists ! According to his own showing, if we be sincere we are all right, and if we are all right, he surely should let us alone. For ourselves, we discard his theory of sincerity-it is weak in intellectual power, and misleading in its spiritual results.

The Secularist says, " If I believe sincerely and honestly, you have no right to damn me and declare against me an interminable punishment." This is outrageous. It is mere declamation. The objector is here proceeding on the assumption that Christians pronounce the sentence of " interminable punishment " against the Secularists, whereas the simple fact is, that they are working out their own condemnation, and that God himself will be only left to announce that terrible fact in the audience of an assembled universe. Such language as we have quoted will no doubt excite the passions of a promiscuous multitude in the heat of a public meeting; but, when dispassionately weighed, it is as untrue in theology, as it is groundless in imputation. Christians are too wise to rejoice in the prospect of any immortal spirit being driven to " interminable punishment; " to them it is a matter of deep solemnity, and such as arouses their most earnest desires and indefatigable labours for the salvation of the human family.

The Secularist having denounced the doctrine of the atonement as immoral, supplies us with this curious specimen of criticism : " It does not imply that because a man holds any immoral doctrine, therefore he intends to be immoral himself. " This certainly contradicts our "experience" and " the moral sense. What is a man to be judged by, if not by his principles ? Do not our principles actuate our conduct ? We cannot conceive of a man being "

in love with immoral doctrines, and at the same time a pattern of moral decency and honour. The whole assertion appears to us so utterly preposterous and absurd, that we are filled with wonder as to how any sensible man could utter it.

Further, Secularism, gasping for a comprehensive definition of its own views of the atonement, finally cries, " It is hurtful and immoral, because it gives us notions of Deity

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which contradict our ideas of humanity." In other words, because no man would manifest such a deep love for another, as to sacrifice his son, for his salvation, therefore God could not so love the world as to accept the sacrifice of Christ as a remedial provision ! Again and again have we charged the Secularist with presumptuously elevating himself to the position of the Deity, and pronouncing his own verdict as though he were an infallible guide; and in this case we do so once more ; if the atonement is an object of wonder, and a subject of inquiry among the angelic intelligences if it is the profoundest of all profound problems-if it required God himself to devise the wondrous scheme, is man to turn round in opprobrious denunciation, because he cannot grasp its amplitudes, and fathom its inscrutable depths? We implore men to recognise the difference between Deity and humanity, otherwise all discussion will be lost in confusion, and inquiry will terminate in despair. Men must regard God in the various relationships which he sustains towards the human family as Creator, Father, Moral Governor, and Judge; to mistake the one for the other will lead to permanent indistinctness of thought and faith ; and to expect from the Father that which belongs to the Moral Governor is to oppose our reason, and to violate the simplicity of nature. We cannot accept the teachings of Secularism. Christianity gives us more glorious hopes and thrills us with nobler desires. Secularism practically says to the working classes, toil on-spend your days and nights in the darkest slavery-work your nature to its utmost extremity, and when you have so done, you shall have the reward of eternal annihilation ! Christianity, on the other hand, speaks of rest and comfort; shows how the weary pilgrim may find repose, and how the desolate mourner may be consoled and blessed. Secularism says to the tyrant, go on ; there is no God to judge or punish-sway the iron rod of cruelty -drink the blood of the toiling multitude, for you are responsible to no Supreme Being. Christianity, on the other hand, tells of an approaching day when social injustice shall be rectified-when the oppressor shall be dethroned and the tyrant crave for the mercy which he ruthlessly refused to others. Secularism has no benefit to offer, which Christianity had not long before placed in our possession,

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whilst Christianity fills us with an abundance more, to which Secularism can lay no claim. We have tried what it is to do without God. We know what Secularism can really do for us, and in the light of conscience and eternity we tremble at the thought of abandoning the Christian faith. True, indeed, we have had our days of troubled thought and our nights of sore perplexity. Our hearts have yearned after clearer manifestations of divine truth; sometimes we have trembled on the verge of scepticism, and anon have shuddered at our imperilled position. Our tempest-tossed souls have found no refuge but in the ark of Christianity, our throbbing hearts have been alone consoled by the assurances of a hallowed faith. We have tried the enchantments of time, but have found that they are hollow mockeries ; we have appealed to the oracle of nature, but in its minstrelsy no music has charmed us to rest; our frail bark has been driven on the stormy ocean, but no help came from secular reliance ; in a word, we have been in tenthousand perils, and no delivering hand has been stretched out but the hand of the Divine Saviour.

We are content to confess his leadership We love the music of his voice, and ask for no light beyond the brilliance of his eye. We know that should Christianity prove a failure, we can at worst but share the fate of sceptics; but if it should prove-as prove we doubt not it will-its heavenly origin and its solemn realities, we have an abiding trust that through the merits of a crucified Redeemer we shall inherit an unbroken and perpetual rest !

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