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JOURNAL OF
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ORDINARY MEETING, JANUARY 21, 1878.

THE REV. ROBINSON THORNTON, D.D., VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following election was announced :—

ASSOCIATE :—G. H. Reid, Esq., New South Wales.

Also the presentation of the following Works to the Library :—

“Proceedings of the Royal Society,” Part 184.	<i>From the Society.</i>
“Brain and Intellect.” By J. Coutts, Esq.	<i>The Author.</i>
“Man’s Organic Constitution.” By the same.	<i>Ditto.</i>

The following paper was then read by the author :—

MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD AND MODERN CULTURE.

By the Rev. PROFESSOR LIAS, M.A., St. David’s College, Lampeter.

WE are continually being told that Christianity, to use a favourite word with modern society, is “doomed.” It is so utterly at variance, we are informed, with modern culture, modern discovery, modern science, modern enlightenment, that it is impossible that it can do more now than drag out the remains of a lingering existence. Expelled from among the cultivated and intelligent, it will soon be obliged to take refuge with the ignorant and superstitious, until the progress of education shall one day sweep the last vestiges of it from off the earth. It is true that neither modern culture, discovery, science, enlightenment, have enabled us to make much progress in the mental, certainly not in the theological—I use the word in its strictest acceptation—departments of philosophy. The latest discoveries in this last region are only a progress backward about two thousand years. The “unknown and unknowable,” or, as Mr. Arnold prefers to call it, “the unexplored and inexpressible,”* is, after all, only a new name for the Supreme Being of Epicurus and of the Gnostics.† The absolute reign of unchangeable law has been heard of before in

* *Literature and Dogma*, p. 58.

† According to Hippolytus, Basilides regarded God as pure non-existence like Schelling, Hegel, and others. Valentinus’ supreme deity was Bythus ; that is, depth “unexplored and inexpressible,” existing in silence.

the schools of the Stoics.* And the modern doctrine which identifies God with ourselves and ourselves with God, and all with the universe, is also to be found in many of the ancient systems. Yet, in spite of the inability of our modern philosophers to present us with anything but theories of the Infinite and Absolute which have been found incapable of meeting the wants of mankind, the blasts of the trumpets at which the walls of our Jericho are to fall flat are blown as confidently as ever. The danger is in fact considered so imminent, that a mediator between the combatants has appeared in the person of the gentleman whose name stands at the head of this paper. Christianity, he considers, is lost, unless she enter into a parley with her assailants. It is time that the conditions of peace should be decided, and he has drawn them up. It would be a serious thing for the world if Christianity and the Bible were to be entirely abandoned. Therefore they are to be suffered to exist.† But modern culture has had so indisputably the best of the conflict, that, in order to escape total annihilation, by far the greater part of Christianity must be sacrificed. The Bible is to be retained, but not all, only just so much as Mr. Arnold thinks we are entitled to keep. Miracles, prophecy, the authenticity of its books, its doctrine of a Personal God, all are to go; but we are to be allowed to retain as a residuum, that, and only that which, according to Mr. Arnold, has a "verifiable basis"‡—the proclamation of a "not ourselves that makes for righteousness." Christianity is to exist still, but she must be prepared to surrender her belief in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in God manifest in the flesh, in a Risen Saviour, in God the Holy Ghost. She must abandon her creeds—all of them§—as the product of "popular" or "theological

* Mr. Arnold imitates the Stoic philosophy in its uncertainty and inconsistency. He does not appear to believe in a law of necessity affecting actions (many of the Stoics excepted actions from that law), for he seems to conceive the possibility of man's resisting the "not ourselves that makes for righteousness." He does not identify man with the principle that "makes for righteousness," for he declares that principle to be "the not ourselves." But when he speaks of immortality, he seems to regard it as a kind of "remerging in the general soul," as Tennyson calls this idea in his *In Memoriam*. For immortality is a "living in the eternal order, which never dies."—*God and the Bible*, p. 393.

† Preface, pp. viii., ix.—"We regret the rejection [of the Bible] as much as the clergy and ministers of religion do." "Let us admit that the Bible cannot possibly die."

‡ Preface, p. x.

§ Ch. ix.—"Aberglaube re-invading."

science," and she must content herself with that exposition of the "stream of tendency whereby we fulfil the law of our being," which has been given to the world by means of what Mr. Arnold calls the "method," the "secret," and the "mildness and sweet reasonableness" of Jesus.*

2. This is a sweeping, and will be to many a startling, proposition. To most of us it will appear to refute itself. For it comes to this, that we are not only to sacrifice ninety-nine hundredths of the Scriptures, but all the distinctive features of Christianity. If all that the Bible does is to tell us that there is a "not ourselves that makes for righteousness," we can do without it, for conscience tells us as much, and conscience can surely stand in no need of assistance from a book, the greater part of which, if Mr. Arnold is to be believed, is simply very earnest nonsense. And the world, after all, can hardly be said to be deeply indebted to Jesus Christ, if all He has done has been to be "mildly and sweetly reasonable," to have suggested a "method" whereby the change of the "inner man" may be effected; and to have disclosed a "secret," namely, the value of self-renunciation as a way to peace.† But this is Mr. Arnold's way of saving Christianity, and if we do not accept it—if we do not reject the "glosses" which "the Churches put upon" the Bible, neither the Bible, nor Christianity, in his opinion, "can possibly live."‡

3. It is, of course, impossible, in the brief space to which my remarks must necessarily be confined, to do more than take a general view of his line of argument, and to point out, as far as I can, the fallacies which underlie it. To attempt to refute all the statements contained in the two books to which I am referring, would fill a volume twice the size of both together. But, inasmuch as Mr. Arnold's attitude is a fair specimen of that which men of culture are fond of assuming towards Christianity, without giving themselves much trouble to examine the grounds on which they have assailed it, it may not be altogether useless to examine how far such an attitude is justified by the facts of the case.

4. I do not deny that some portions of Mr. Arnold's book are true and useful enough. Judaism is not the only religion in which men have "made the word of God of none effect by their traditions." There has been, and is still, a traditional Christianity as well as a traditional Judaism. Bishop Taylor, in his treatise on Repentance, complains that the elementary truths of religion have been overlaid by human

* P. 215.

† P. 222.

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‡ Preface, p. ix.

glosses until it is almost impossible to ascertain what they are. And so we are constantly obliged to recur to the fountain-head to ascertain the true meaning, in the mind of Christ and His Apostles, of words which have been bandied about in various schools of theology, till scarcely a vestige of that meaning remains. Therefore, Mr. Arnold has done the cause of religion some service by recalling to our minds the original signification of several of the words we are accustomed to employ. He reminds us how far our modern use of such common words as "repentance," "self-denial" (p. 202), and the like, have drifted from the sense in which they were used in the Bible. If he is not always right, his method in this respect is worthy of our imitation, and we may derive much useful information from him on many points relating to the exegesis of the Bible,* which means, let us not forget, the ascertaining the actual mind of the original preachers of Christianity on many most important points of theology and morals.

5. There is another point on which I conceive Mr. Arnold, by insisting, has done good service. Though I am far from believing with him, that correct intellectual conceptions are unnecessary to the "ordering our conversation right," yet I agree with him, that the main object of Christianity, as well as Judaism, was not the acceptance by the mind of certain abstract propositions, but *conduct*. If he is correct in saying that "morality, ethics, conduct," are "carefully contradistinguished from religion" by theologians,† he is right in blaming them for such separation. For we are told by the Apostles, that God is love; that love is greater even than faith and hope; that he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him; and that he that hateth his brother is a liar, in whose heart the love of God cannot dwell. We are told that if we wish to know the truth we must wish to do God's will. Hence, then, the acceptance of theological propositions of whatsoever kind, or rather, as I should prefer to put it, the acknowledgment of certain facts which it is important for us to know, is but a means to an end,

* Especially in *Literature and Dogma*, ch. vii.—As an instance of this, I would mention the passage in p. 196, on "metanoia." "We translate it *repentance*, a mourning and lamenting of our sins, and we translate it wrong. The lamenting one's sins was but a small part of 'metanoia,' as Jesus used the word; the main part was something far more active and fruitful, *a change of the inner man.*" He is not so happy when he translates *χάρις*, 'grace,' by *happiness*.

† P. 19.

and that end the identification of our wills with His Will,* Who to Mr. Arnold's eyes is the "not ourselves who makes for righteousness," but Who, in the eyes of men who I venture to think were yet more enlightened than he, is not only the Great Personal First Cause, the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Father of our spirits, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but One the conception of Whose Being rises above and includes all these in the idea of Universal Love. Yet I may remark in passing, that Mr. Arnold does not seem to be altogether consistent with himself. "The religion of the true Israel," which he reminds us was "the good news to the poor" (p. 236), can only, he declares, be properly understood by means of "culture" (Preface, p. xiii.); that is, the knowing "the best that has been thought and said in the world." This was not the view of the first propagators of Christianity, for St. Paul tells us that not many wise men according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called. And surely, if "conduct" be the end of religion, it is as much within the reach of the poor man as the rich, or it is difficult to understand how the Christian religion can have been "good news to the poor" at all.

6. But to return. It must also be admitted that in Mr. Arnold's reply to objectors, which, originally published in the *Contemporary Review*, he has given to the world in a book entitled *God and the Bible*, his tone is far more moderate than in the book in which he first assailed the Christianity of the day. It would seem as though, occupying as he does an intermediate position between Christians in general and the Extreme Left of their sceptical antagonists, and having had personal experience of the methods of the latter, he had become more sensible of the grave faults of logic and temper which those antagonists continually display. He consequently turns upon them, and with that vigour which, so conspicuous in his other works, is conspicuous by its absence in *Literature and Dogma*, he lays bare all the shortcomings of their school, their extraordinary assumptions, their wonderful arguments, their habit of ignoring all that is likely to tell against the conclusions which they confidently present to the world as unassailable.† But inasmuch as

* Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Introduction, "Our wills are ours, to make them Thine."

† The book called *Supernatural Religion*, and M. Renan's late paper in the *Contemporary Review* on St. John's Gospel, are remarkable instances of this off-hand dogmatism on critical and historical points.

he has nowhere retracted the assertions made in *Literature and Dogma*, though on some comparatively unimportant points he has modified them—inasmuch as the difference between the two books, regarded from a Christian point of view, is one of tone rather than of actual principle,—I may fairly regard Mr. Arnold as still responsible for the opinions expressed in the former volume. Regarding most of those opinions, as I do, as dangerous and unsound, I have made an endeavour, in this paper, to call attention to them, and to the way in which they are established, or supposed to be established.

7. Before entering into an analysis of Mr. Arnold's volume I have a word to say on its manner. Nothing has more struck me of late than the marvellous disproportion in intellectual calibre of attacks upon Christianity, to the effect they produce upon society. The publication of "Supernatural Religion" was hailed as the birth of a prodigy. Its learning was immense, its arguments unassailable, its mental force extraordinary, and Christianity, exhausted by the wounds inflicted upon it by so doughty a champion, was destined to sink into an early grave. But another champion* appeared in the lists, and it soon was found that the combatant likely to perish was not Christianity, but "Supernatural Religion," and though the first two volumes were received with enthusiasm, a significant silence has hailed the appearance of the last. So in like manner it appears to me that Mr. Arnold's book, though it has attracted much attention, is hardly worthy of the high and deserved reputation of its author. Had a book, equal to it in ability, in logical force, in vigour of style, in clearness of arrangement, been written in defence of Christianity, few persons, I believe, would have been found to cut the leaves. For as regards logic, Mr. Arnold falls into precisely the same errors, as I shall endeavour to show, as those of which he complains. As regards style and plan, his diffuseness, and the continual repetitions to be found in his pages, are apt to become a trifle wearisome, while the personalities with which he sometimes tries to enliven them will not bear a moment's comparison in brilliancy, in piquancy, in originality, with the satirical touches which have rendered him, when writing on other subjects, so deservedly a favourite with the public. But this circumstance only serves to illustrate the fact, which I have often noticed, that the ability which will secure a man a front rank among

* Canon Lightfoot in the *Contemporary Review*.

the assailants of Christianity, would only give him a very subordinate place among its defenders.*

8. The first thing I have to remark upon in Mr. Arnold's method is his dogmatism. There is nothing, apparently, to which he is more opposed than dogmatism (p. 45), yet nothing is more characteristic of his teaching. "*Hypotheses non fingo*," he says (p. 176), but his work bristles with hypotheses from end to end. Thus, he asserts that "the language of the Bible is fluid, passing, literary, not rigid, fixed, scientific," but he never attempts to prove it. He asserts, again, that the language of the Bible is, as it were, "thrown out at a not fully grasped object of the speaker's consciousness";† but he brings no argument forward to establish his point. He asserts that the personification of "the Eternal" by Israel was the anthropomorphism of an orator and a poet, without the slightest attempt at scientific accuracy; that the Hebrews, though "by tradition, emotion, imagination," they learned to attach to the phrases of the Bible a meaning beyond the "plain sense" in which Mr. Arnold tells us they are to be received, did yet, originally, attach to them no such meaning (p. 62); that God is only a "deeply moved way of saying conduct, or righteousness," and that to this deeply moved way of saying conduct, or righteousness, the Israelites transferred all the obligations which, really, were owing to righteousness itself (p. 48); that to study with a fair mind the literature of Israel is the way to convince oneself that "the germ of Israel's religious consciousness" was "a consciousness of the not ourselves which makes for righteousness" (p. 51); that the history of creation was evolved by the Jewish historian from the idea of righteousness (p. 35); that "the monotheistic idea of Israel is simply seriousness"; that the author of the Gospel of St. John completely fails to apprehend one of the discourses he records (p. 174); that St. Paul is absurdly wrong in his interpretation of Scripture (p. 140‡); that St. Peter's argument in Acts ii. 25—35, "if

* There are many instances in which a man who has held a high reputation when regarded as a sceptical or semi-sceptical writer, has come to be thought a very ordinary person when he has been contented to accept the orthodox creed.

† P. 12. This statement is frequently repeated.

‡ St. Paul's "argument is that of a Jewish Rabbi, and is clearly both fanciful and false." Is Mr. Arnold entitled to correct so great a man as St. Paul in so off-hand a manner? Setting Revelation aside, St. Paul has largely influenced human thought for 1800 years, and his influence is hardly as yet on the wane. Will Mr. Arnold's last as long?

intended to be serious, is perfectly futile" (p. 228). But I need not multiply instances. From the beginning to the end, Mr. Arnold's book is full of unproved assertion, and this, I would beg my hearers to remark, is a common characteristic of the works which are directed against "dogma." But surely the least we have a right to demand from writers who write against dogma is, that they should be carefully undogmatic themselves; that they should call upon us to accept nothing on their own authority, but prove every position they take up with the strictest logic. If they fail to do this, their objection to dogma falls to the ground, and the only question that remains is, whether we will accept the dogmas of Christ and His Apostles, which have stood the test of time, or those of some very confident, but not of necessity very trustworthy writers in the nineteenth century.

9. The next point to which I shall invite attention is Mr. Arnold's definition of religion. He is ingenious in definitions, and his book abounds with them. Whether he is as successful as he is ingenious I cannot now stop to inquire. Those who are curious in such matters can study his definition of God.* But his definition of Religion can hardly be accepted. He describes it as "morality touched by emotion."† If we are to be as strict in our attention to the derivation of words as Mr. Arnold is, this definition will hardly serve. For religion is surely that which binds us back; keeps us, that is, from following the bent of our natural will, in deference to what we inwardly feel to be due to a Being, or beings, of a higher order than ourselves. And surely the idea of emotion is singularly misleading in connection with morality. For emotion is essentially fitful, irregular, transient, varying with our physical health and external circum-

* Pp. 41, 43, 57. "God is simply the stream of tendency whereby we fulfil the law of our being." He is "the not ourselves which makes for righteousness." His brief abstract of the Creeds (p. 229) is undoubtedly witty, but it may be a question whether in subjects so solemn the wit is not a little out of place.

† *Literature and Dogma*, p. 21. The "religion" of which Mr. Arnold speaks in *God and the Bible*, p. 135, does not seem to answer to his definition, though he declares there that he uses the word "in the only sense which our race can now attach to the word religion." In the next page he speaks of "the as yet irreligious religions." This is really very perplexing. Were they "morali ties touched by emotion," which were nevertheless immoral, and which no "emotion" had touched? At all events he goes on to say that the "ceremonial and rite" they "handed down" had "their proper origin not in the moral springs of man's nature at all."

stances ; whereas, if it is to be worth anything, the power which impels us to what is good should be above all things steady and enduring. It would be anticipating were I to enlarge now upon a third point, that one of the chief objections to Mr. Arnold's definition of God is, that it makes emotion impossible, at least in religion.* That "morality touched by emotion" is a sufficient definition of religion I am, therefore, not disposed to admit ; though I am ready to grant that emotion may have an important part to play in disposing us to religion, and that it ought to be capable of being evoked by the idea of God.

10. Starting with an incomplete and unsatisfactory definition of religion itself, Mr. Arnold proceeds to lay down the proposition, that nothing is to be believed which is not directly verifiable (Preface, p. x.). The reason that he gives (p. 42) for not believing in a "Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent governor of the world," is, that it is not "admittedly certain and verifiable." But before this can be admitted as a sufficient reason, it must be proved that nothing is, or ought to be believed, but what is "admittedly certain and verifiable by reason," in other words, that a revelation is an impossibility. No doubt it may be useful for those who have lost their hold on revelation to be reminded how many of its truths are "admittedly certain and verifiable." "I believe in *this*," says Kingsley's hero, Lancelot, in "*Yeast*," stamping upon the earth, and he is the type of a good many men ; but even his belief in "*this*," when carried into practice and corrected by the effects of an earnest attempt to follow his conscience and do his duty, is supposed to have led him, as it has led many others, to believe in much else beside. To such persons it may be well to say that even those truths which are thought least "verifiable," are capable of much verification ; that the experiences of the soul are as much facts as the functions of the body ; that the inner history of man, his cravings and how they were satisfied, his prayers and how they were answered, his beliefs and how they were formed, are as much real history as that of the Greeks and Romans, or that of the crust of the earth ; that the spiritual forces which produced prophets, apostles, saints, are as real, unless we entirely abandon our ordinary use of the laws of evidence, as the intellectual forces which have given us poets, philosophers, and statesmen, or

* "We can adore a *Person*, but we cannot adore *principles*."—Robertson, Lect. V. on Epist. to Corinthians.

the physical ones by which stars revolve in their orbits, and elements arrange themselves into their various compounds. Yet however much of Christianity may be capable of "verification,"—and I believe that far more of it is so than is generally believed,—still to assume that a revelation is impossible; that nothing is to be accepted as true but what is capable of scientific demonstration, that is, what has become practically certain by induction from a sufficient number of carefully ascertained facts,—is an assumption of the very gravest kind. We may believe, if we please, but we cannot possibly know, that man has no faculties beyond his reason for comprehending the unseen. We can have no certainty whatever that it is impossible for God to reveal Himself, apart from all argument, all logical demonstration, all evidence of visible facts, to the man who will purify his soul by the discipline of walking by the light he has, so as to become fit for the reception of more.*

11. Another very strong point with Mr. Arnold is that the language of the Bible is not precise or scientific in its character, but fluid, literary, indefinite. (Preface, p. xv.) There may be some truth in this statement, but it cannot be received without great caution. That all the terms in the New Testament were as strictly and rigidly defined as is necessary in a philosophical investigation, is more than we have a right to assert; but we have no right whatever to rush to the opposite extreme, and declare that they are loose and inaccurate. The writers of the New Testament must have been singularly unfit for their high mission, if they expressed what they had to say in any terms but those capable of being intelligently understood by those whom they addressed.† It is scarcely conceivable that the greatest intellectual triumph the world has known, the triumph of Christianity over the forces arrayed against it, could have been effected by a collec-

* See St. Paul, Epist. to Corinthians, ch. ii., where he insists on the existence of a spiritual faculty by which truths of the spiritual order were tested and examined (for this is the usual meaning of the Greek word he there employs).

† Aristotle (Ethics, Book I., ch. ii.; Book II., ch. ii.) says that terms ought to be defined with as much exactness as the circumstances require. The circumstances in this case demanded as much definition as may be sufficient in order that they may become a basis of action, *i.e.*, sufficient to enable men to comprehend their general drift and bearing. A closer definition may be necessary before they can safely be assumed as postulates for argument. In the above-cited passage Aristotle expressly asserts that less rigid accuracy in definition is necessary for practical purposes than for theoretical researches.

tion of hazy ideas, expressed in indefinite language. Religion, if it be chiefly an affair of the heart, has for its object the conquest of the mind also, and what is of more importance still, the direction of the will. But it could hardly have attained those objects if its fundamental ideas were incapable of being practically realized,—if all the utterances about the Fatherhood of God and the Redemption of Man, about Salvation through Christ's Blood, and life through His Resurrection, —were mere loose rhetorical phrases, to which no precise meaning could be assigned. If there be anything which St. Paul was not, it was a "literary man" in the usual sense of the term,—that is, one who takes up literature as a business or an amusement, who writes either for pay, or for his own amusement, or that of others. If he had any object in life, it was a severely practical one, to bring every one with whom he came into contact into obedience to the law of Christ. It is hardly probable that with this intensely practical aim before him he would have employed "fluid, passing, literary" language, the language of a man not in earnest, but only desirous of attracting a temporary attention. Moreover, as a matter of fact, it has not occurred to the majority of the readers of St. Paul, for instance,—indeed to any of them until lately,—that he did not know what he meant by the words he used. It has generally been supposed that any difficulty of understanding him arises from the depth of his thoughts, rather than from any vagueness or indefiniteness in the language in which he conveyed them. It seems at least probable that if there be any vagueness or indefiniteness in our apprehension of the great truths contained in the sacred writings, the fault is all our own. We have approached them fettered by traditional prejudices of one kind or another, instead of with a full desire to unlock their inner meaning. We have but to go back to the time in which their words were uttered, to study the meaning they bore in that age, and there will be quite sufficient to enable us to form a conception of the main doctrines of our faith,—sufficient, at least, for the purpose for which they are designed, namely, to guide us through the dangers, the difficulties, the otherwise unsolved problems of our earthly life. I might say more. I might add that so infinite is the wisdom contained in the sacred Scriptures, that men who approach them in the proper spirit, men who are desirous to be enlightened by them, rather than with patronizing airs of superiority to point out their blunders, have advanced, and are still advancing, in the comprehension of their meaning. Faith, patience, self-renunciation, freedom

from prejudice, earnest search after truth, have found the key to many a riddle which has baffled previous ages. And where the man of "culture" only sees a set of enthusiasts who are putting their own interpretations upon language which is "fluid, passing, literary," utterly and entirely indefinite, the "spiritual man," to use St. Paul's words, sees only a band of earnest labourers, busy in digging out from an inexhaustible mine, fresh stores of precious material wherewith to build or to adorn the Palace of Truth.

12. I proceed to consider Mr. Arnold's mode of dealing with the Bible. I have already treated of two of the subjects on which he remarks, namely, Miracles and the Fourth Gospel, in two volumes, which are in the possession of the Institute.* I need not, therefore, take up the time of the meeting in repeating what I have there said. But I may be allowed briefly to refer to his mode of dealing with those subjects. He says, and we have already admitted it, that in the Jewish and Christian Churches alike there has been a tendency to what he calls Aberglaube, or extra-belief; that is, that there has been a tendency to mingle the human with the divine, the conclusions of reason with the truths of Revelation. But when he proceeds to tell us what this extra-belief is, we are forcibly struck with the fact, that not only does he sweep away at once the greater part of New and Old Testament alike, but he supplies us with no definite principles by which we can separate the real original revelation or belief from the human accretions wherewith it has been overlaid. Thus he dismisses with equal contempt the first disciples of Christ, whom He chose to disseminate His doctrines, and the theologians of mediæval and modern times. He eliminates by a stroke of the pen all Miracles, Prophecy, belief in the Fatherhood of God, Messianic ideas from the Old Testament; all Miracles, fulfilment of prophecy, creeds, eschatology, and even the Resurrection of Christ, from the New. Yet when we come to inquire how this extremely difficult task of separating the true from the false, the extra-belief from the original revelation, is accomplished, there is not a single word to guide us. Mr. Arnold's method is charmingly, it is refreshingly simple. That is original Christianity, or original Judaism, which Mr. Arnold thinks is so; that is Aberglaube, or extra-belief, which it pleases

* *The Rector and his Friends*, Dialogue 6, *Miracles and Special Providences*, and the *Doctrinal System of St. John*.

Mr. Arnold to call by that name.* Now I venture to think that such a mode of dealing with the Christian, or in fact with any other religion, is not a fair one. Unless a man claims to be himself a prophet, to be a man endowed with a supernatural authority from on high—qualifications which Mr. Arnold would not only disclaim, but which he very distinctly affirms to be unattainable by man—he has no right whatever, as I have already observed, to require us to accept his *ipse dixit*.† His arguments must be like mathematical *formulae*, which can be applied, not only by their discoverer, but by all other men. And therefore, instead of asserting that this or that is original Judaism or original Christianity, and this or that is Aberglaube or extra-belief, Mr. Arnold should have furnished us with canons of criticism unfailing in their operation, by which we should be capable of “verifying” his conclusions for ourselves. Otherwise, it is quite possible that among the things not “verifiable,” and therefore not binding upon our acceptance, may be found not a few propositions advanced by Mr. Arnold himself.

13. Let us then observe Mr. Arnold’s mode of dealing with the Scriptures. First, he rejects Prophecy. Let us inquire on what grounds. First, he tells us that there is “nothing blamable” in men “taking short cuts, by the help of their imagination, to what they ardently desire, and telling themselves fairy tales about it.” Then he goes on to defend presentiments, and informs us that they “may be true.” But when he comes to deal with the question whether prophecy has really been uttered or not, he takes two or three prophecies which have been disputed, assumes that his own interpretation

* He admits the extreme difficulty of entering into a critical examination of the Scriptures, and excuses himself from the task by saying that he is not called upon to enter upon it (pp. 176, 180, 283, 287, 288). But, surely, if any one is called upon to undertake this task, and to carry it out most thoroughly, it is the man who insists so much upon the necessity of sifting the Scriptures, and of separating the bushels of chaff from the grains of wheat therein.

† He makes an attempt at some sort of demonstration in p. 335, but it resolves itself into an *ipse dixit* at last. “The more we know of the history of ideas and expressions, the more we are convinced that” the account of their faith ordinarily given by Christians, “is not, and cannot be, the true one.” Why? Mr. Arnold does not tell us. He goes off into an inquiry what Dr. Newman’s opinions might have been if that divine had been “born twenty years later, and touched with the breath of the *Zeitgeist*.” An interesting line of inquiry, no doubt, but hardly, one would think, germane to his subject. He next touches lightly and gracefully upon the Homeric poetry, and then winds up with the apophthegm, “Demonstration in such matters is impossible,” in which he is doubtless quite right.

of them is the true one, and then curtly dismisses prophecy to the limbo of exploded figments of the imagination! This is just as if a barrister, in conducting a case against a vast quantity of hostile testimony, were to assert that the character of three out of the one hundred and fifty witnesses on the other side had been called in question, to assume that the whole of the one hundred and forty-seven others were unworthy of credit, and then triumphantly call upon the jury to find a verdict for his client. Surely whatever "Aberglaube" there may be in the Christian Church of the day, it is not to be dispelled by such a method as this! Surely, moreover, the belief in prophecy, which has commanded the assent of some of the greatest minds that the world has ever known, can hardly be disposed of by how great a master soever of argument within the compass of nine octavo pages!

14. I may, however, be permitted to pursue one portion of his brief prophetical argument a little more into detail. Jesus, says Mr. Arnold, was not the sort of Messiah the Jews expected, and, he implies, not the sort of Messiah prophecy had entitled them to expect (pp. 79, 80). To "fuse together" the most antagonistic prophecies into an application to one person is, in his opinion, a "violent exegetical proceeding" (p. 92). Yet he mentions, in another part of his work, that the Jewish prophets, in their anticipations of the future, proceeded on three lines of thought (p. 217). The first spoke of a Lion of the tribe of Judah, who should restore the kingdom to the seed of David, and go forth to conquer the earth. The second spoke of a light to lighten the Gentiles, who should set judgment in the earth, and for whose law far lands should wait. The third spoke of one who was oppressed and afflicted, whom it pleased God to bruise, whose soul was made an offering for sin, who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities, by whose stripes we are healed. Well may Mr. Arnold say, at the close of each description, "Who is this?" He does not answer his question, he cannot answer it. There was One and One alone who answers to either description, and it is Jesus of Nazareth. "The Jews did not identify the three"—probably not. But they are identified in Christ. He, the Son of David, *has* triumphed and *does* reign in the earth. The Gentiles *have* "come to His light, and Kings to the brightness of His rising." And the whole Christian Church for eighteen centuries has seen in Him the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, Whose sufferings and death have been the great Atoning Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Mr. Arnold does not dispute that these passages were written

long before there was any prospect of their fulfilment. He can scarcely, I think, refuse to admit that there is something not a little remarkable in the fact, that these apparently divergent and antagonistic lines of thought have been so strikingly reconciled in the life and death of Jesus Christ, as related by the Evangelists and explained by the Apostles.

15. The question of Miracles* is dealt with in a somewhat less summary manner than that of prophecy. Thirty-two pages are devoted to this subject. Yet even these contain so grotesque a misrepresentation of what Christians hold upon the subject, that it is scarcely possible to understand how it could have been written. We are told that if the writer of the pages I am considering were to change the pen with which he wrote them into a pen-wiper, he would thenceforth, in the common opinion of mankind, "be entitled to affirm, and to be believed in affirming, propositions the most palpably at war with common fact and experience."† I am not concerned to defend the "judgment of the mass of mankind," but if this is intended as a description of the grounds on which an intelligent Christian man believes in the miracles of Christ, it is singularly wide of the mark. The belief of the great mass of Christians is, that Christ was God manifest in the flesh, and that therefore, as the Creator and Governor of the world, He could at His Will, either by the suspension of the laws of nature, or by calling one force into play to counteract another, produce results at variance with our ordinary experience,‡ and that as thus manifesting Himself to

* Thirty-two pages are also devoted to this subject in *God and the Bible*, but they wander much from the point. A good deal of space is taken up by parodies of passages from the Old Testament in which the word "God" is replaced by "Shining," Mr. Arnold being apparently ignorant of the fact, that the word translated "God" has in the Hebrew no such meaning. In the Semitic languages the word "God" is derived from the idea of *strength*. In eleven pages only does he grapple with the real question, and his reasoning is but a repetition of that in *Literature and Dogma*. He avoids the real question, and attempts, by casting doubt upon a few of the New Testament miracles, to lead his readers to believe that he has disposed of them all. Not the slightest allusion is made to the cumulative evidence afforded by the immense mass of miracles reported in the New Testament, which are not only an integral portion of the story, and cannot be separated from it without destroying the whole, but which are the sole explanation of the sensation caused by the teaching of the meekest, and lowliest, and most unobtrusive of men.

† *Literature and Dogma*, p. 128.

‡ It must be remembered that this is a power which even man possesses, at least within certain limits.

be the Lord of Nature and Creator of the Universe, He had proved His right to call upon us to believe Him when He informed us on matters which are altogether outside the range of "common fact and experience." The strongest reason assigned for rejecting miracles appears to be, that "the human mind, as experience widens, is turning against them," an assertion which may or may not be accurate, but is certainly hardly conclusive.* It is true that all this is followed by an endeavour to put ecclesiastical miracles on the same ground as Biblical ones,† and that some prodigies related by the heathen historians are mentioned; but there is no notice taken of the entirely different nature of the evidence by which these prodigies are supported. We are told, again, that St. Paul was mistaken on a matter of fact, in supposing that our Lord's second coming would soon take place, forgetting that our Lord Himself is reported as having said that no man should know the day or the hour of His coming; and in a matter of argument, when he grounded a belief in the coming of Christ on the use of the singular instead of the plural number in the prophecy in Gen. xiii., though how these mistakes, if they be mistakes, which Mr. Arnold does not attempt to prove, can invalidate the plain statement that miracles were performed, which is repeatedly made in the New Testament and underlies the whole of it, I cannot exactly see. He tries to make out a contradiction between Acts ix. 7 and Acts xxii. 9, and dismisses without examination the explanations which have been given. And this is nearly all he gives us as a reason for abandoning altogether the belief in miracles.‡

16. We next come to his mode of dealing with the books of the Bible themselves. First of all, he refers to the theory that the writers of the Old and New Testament "were miraculously inspired, and could make no mistakes." I do not propose to enter upon this question, but will content myself with the remark, that if the writers of the Old and New Testament were wrong on the most important points—wrong in their historical narratives, wrong in their prophetical utterances, wrong in their conceptions of God, wrong in attributing miracles to Christ, wrong in believing Him to be God, wrong

* So we are told, that "it was not to discredit miracles that *Literature and Dogma* was written, but because miracles are so widely and deeply discredited already."—*God and the Bible*, p. 386. It is therefore "lost labour to be arguing for them."—*Ibid.*

† I have touched upon this objection in the dialogue above-mentioned.

‡ Save as regards the Resurrection, which will be treated below.

in believing Him to dwell in mankind through His Spirit,—wrong in declaring, as they all do, that He rose from the dead—there seems very little left in which they were right. And therefore it seems altogether unnecessary to try and save that infinitesimal residuum from the general wreck. If the writers of the Old and New Testament were incapable and untrustworthy on the great majority of points on which they wrote, including by far the greater part of their teaching concerning God, and by far the greater part of their statements on matters of fact, it would seem more natural to discard them altogether, and trust to our own consciousness to evolve the necessary power “that makes for righteousness.” But if, on the other hand, there be any real significance in the Bible and Jesus, as Mr. Arnold says there is,* it might be as well to treat both with a little more respect, and inquire a little more carefully into the declarations contained in the Bible which have been so hastily cast aside.

17. I can only pause to give one or two instances out of many of the manner in which the writers of the Old and New Testament are dealt with. We are told that the prophecy of the Judgment in the 7th chapter of the Book of Daniel “was written in the second century before Christ,” as though there could be no doubt of the fact. Not a word is said to remind the reader of the elaborate and able treatise of Dr. Pusey on the Book of Daniel, in which he shows—first, that the theories which assign a later date to that book are the fruit of an *à priori* assumption that prophecy is impossible; and next, that every attempt to explain the prophecy of the 490 years on the Maccabean theory has failed—that each has been raised upon the ruins of its predecessor, only to be supplanted by another yet more extravagant, and doomed to fail more hopelessly. Is it quite fair to the non-theological reader to give no hint of this? The excuse can hardly serve, that Dr. Pusey is an unknown or a contemptible writer. Whatever we may think of his teaching, there is no man who has left a more indelible impress upon the present generation than he. Nor can it be contended, that this particular work is unworthy of his high reputation; for there is none of his works that have commanded such general admiration as this one, and men who on other points maintain, most strongly, views antagonistic to those of the learned Doctor, have expressed in public their strong approval of this treatise, and their deep

* *God and the Bible*, Preface, p. xliii.

sense of the service it was likely to render to revealed religion. Under these circumstances, the calm assumption of the Maccabean origin of the Book of Daniel can hardly be regarded as characteristic of the earnest seeker after truth, but appears much more like an unfair attempt, of a kind unfortunately too common, to discredit Christianity in the eyes of those who are ignorant of its apologetic literature, by the insinuation that nothing has or can be said in its defence.

18. The question of the authenticity of the New Testament has attracted a larger share of attention. A large portion of the work *God and the Bible* is given to an examination, and a good deal to a defence of the Fourth Gospel. But the conclusion is, that our Gospels "were probably in existence and were current by the year 120 of our era at the very latest,"* and that they grew up by continual alterations and interpolations into their present shape. Now, this is simply a question of criticism. The narratives of the New Testament are as complete in their form, and have at least as early testimony in their favour, as any other books. They are consistent and coherent in their parts, proceed upon a definite plan, and the Gospel of St. Luke, as well as the Acts, is remarkable for its special claim to authentic information. If they be interpolated, it is impossible for any one to say where the interpolations occur. No break in the narrative, no interruption of its continuity, no strange and incompatible sequence of thought, betrays the hand of the reviser. Nor have we more than two or three remarkable variations in our copies. The story of the woman taken in adultery, that of the angel troubling the pool of Bethesda, and another passage of extremely trifling importance, in Acts viii., are all that can be advanced.† This is not the history of interpolations, so far as we have any experience of them. A narrative which has gradually grown up in this way would present us with a text in inextricable confusion. We should have manuscripts with and manuscripts without the added passages, longer and shorter recensions;‡ clumsy attempts at reconciliation and at a restoration of the true text, till the editor, bewildered by the confusion before him, would be compelled to abandon the effort to

* *God and the Bible*, p. 373.

† *God and the Bible*, p. 376. It is well known that there are several singular interpolations in the *Codex Bezae*, but they are confined to that MS., a remarkable confirmation of the argument above.

‡ As in the case of the works of Cyprian and the Ignatian Epistles. The latter have come down to us in three forms.

recover the original narrative in despair. There is nothing of the kind in our present copies of the New Testament. In the two cases which have been advanced—I may safely neglect the third—there are extremely probable, if not absolutely certain, reasons to be given for the omission of the passages referred to. Again, there is the argument from undesigned coincidences, so ably handled by Paley and Blunt, which makes it absolutely certain that we have the Gospels and Acts as they were originally written.

19. And there is another consideration of no slight importance which has been overlooked. There is a natural and absolutely insatiable curiosity for accurate details concerning men who have made a figure in the world's history. Putting aside the question of Revelation for a moment, it will hardly be denied that one of the most remarkable characters in history is Jesus Christ. Is it credible, that with the biographies and authentic accounts, published by their disciples, or, at least, compiled soon after their death, which have come down to us of Socrates, of Mohammed, of Dominic, of Francis of Assisi, of Luther, of Calvin, of John Wesley, of Edward Irving, that the thirst of Christians for biographies of their Master would have allowed them to wait nearly a whole century, and would then have been slaked by a clumsy *rifacimento* of old stories and new legends, a working up of authentic histories which were unaccountably allowed to perish, with later and invented details which, to the certain knowledge of most of the older disciples of Christ, were untrue? Verily, this is a remarkable deviation from the ordinary conduct of mankind! and a singular foundation for the success of a religion, one of whose chief boasts it was, that it proclaimed the truth, nay that He Whom it proclaimed was Himself the Truth!

20. I have but one remark to add concerning the genuineness of the Gospel history. If we compare the evidence for the authenticity of the Gospels with that for any other books, it is simply overwhelming. Schlegel is content to base his belief in the genuineness of one of Sophocles' plays on the fact, that it is quoted as his, nearly four centuries later, by Cicero.* Compare this slender evidence with the immense mass of testimony collected within two centuries in favour of the Gospels, and ask whether, on such principles, it were not utterly useless to attempt to write history at all, and whether it is not the determination to overthrow the strong array of witnesses in favour of Christian truth, and Christian dogma,

* *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, Bohn's Translation, p. 109.

rather than a desire for truth at whatever cost, which leads to a method of investigation so entirely at variance with the usual rules of criticism.

21. But it must be admitted that the conclusions Mr. Arnold has formed in his first volume, are considerably modified in his second. It is impossible for the careful and diligent student of the Fourth Gospel, for instance, to treat it as M. Renan does in the *Contemporary Review*, except he holds a brief for its spuriousness, and therefore it is no matter of surprise to find Mr. Arnold, after a closer study of St. John and his critics, writing in a much more respectful tone in his later work. It is an important admission which is made there, that “*if we had the original reports of the eye-witnesses, we should still have reports not essentially differing, probably, from those which we now use.*” We should, most likely, *not have a miracle the less.*”*

22. But Mr. Arnold cannot quite give up his favourite theory. The Fourth Gospel has more of Jesus Christ’s authentic sayings and doings in it than he was at first inclined to suppose. The First has met with a pretty general acceptance. But there was a “preoccupation” in favour of the marvellous in their pages, just as, it may be observed, in Mr. Arnold’s pages there is a “preoccupation” against it, which deprives their testimony, in the eyes of an intelligent thinker in the nineteenth century, of that weight which it would unquestionably possess did they only tell him that which he was previously inclined to believe. Since they lacked the wisdom to do this, they must be put peremptorily out of court, for “neither his immediate followers, nor those being instructed, could possess” “the pure and genuine doctrine of Jesus,” “so immured were they in the ideas of their time and in the belief of the miraculous, so immeasurably was Jesus above them.”†

23. The most startling example, however, of the manner in which this inquiry is pursued, is certainly the passage in which it is argued, that the Resurrection is a myth which has gradually grown up. In order to prove this, the narrative is most strangely distorted. We are told that Jesus was not known by Mary Magdalene, not known by the two disciples going to Emmaus, not known by His most intimate Apostles on the Sea of Galilee. There is no mention of the many occasions on which he *was* known; no reference to the manner in which on the occasions specified He made Himself known; not the most distant

* *God and the Bible*, pp. 383, 384.

+ *Ibid.*

allusion to that most striking and life-like, perhaps, of all the incidents in the Gospels—"Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned and said unto Him, Rabboni; that is to say, Master." Nor is there a hint that the Apostle St. Paul, in his explanation of the theory of the Resurrection, laid it down that the Resurrection body would not correspond in outward form to the natural one; that the one would bear about the same resemblance to the other as the seed to the plant; that "it was sown a natural body, it was raised a spiritual body"; and that, therefore, recognition might naturally be supposed to be only possible in the way described in the Gospels.* The Resurrection has been often attacked, and has been often defended, but if it is to be ultimately overthrown, it must be by a careful and accurate examination of the evidence, and not by an incorrect statement of the facts, and a pre-determination to ignore the one supreme fact that every writer in the New Testament proclaims the Resurrection; that it is made the basis of the whole Christian system, and that one of its chief teachers declares that if Christ be not risen, his preaching is vain, and the faith of his hearers is vain also. It is absolutely contrary to the law of evidence that a community can have been founded on the faith in a certain fact, and that fact a legend so palpably invented that we can "see it growing under our very eyes." A distinct and irreconcilable schism must at once have severed the genuine disciples of Christ's doctrine from His credulous and fanatical adherents, had Mr. Arnold's theory been true. We should have been able to trace the growth of an extravagant and fanciful belief, the divergence between the reasonable and unreasonable followers of Jesus, as we can trace the history of every other remarkable intellectual movement which occurred in a civilized country and a civilized age. But as there is no such evidence of the growth of the legend, not the slightest sign of such divergence; as the testimony of Christ's disciples was as clear at first as at last; as we find neither among Jews nor Gentiles, Judaizers nor anti-Judaizers, the followers of St. Paul or the opponents of his authority, any attempt to deny the resurrection of Jesus,† the laws of

* Compare also 1 Cor. vi. 13, Phil. iii. 21, and the saying of our Lord recorded in St. Matt. xxii. 30.

† Neither Hymenaeus and Philetus, nor the persons refuted in 1 Cor. xv., denied the Resurrection of Christ, or some of St. Paul's arguments in the latter chapter would have been absurd. And it is to be remarked that even the early heresies, the systems of Cerinthus, Basilides, and Valentinus, all bear

historical evidence give us only two hypotheses to choose from. Either the first preachers of the religion of Christ were guilty of a deliberate imposture, or Jesus Christ is actually risen from the dead.

24. I now come to the most important feature of the volumes which are before us. The one conviction which Mr. Arnold pursues with the most inextinguishable ridicule is that which regards God as a Personal Being. The only description of Him which Mr. Arnold will allow to be in any way "verifiable," is that He is the stream of tendency whereby all things fulfil the law of their being, or, since righteousness is very properly acknowledged to constitute the primary law of man's true being, "the not ourselves which makes for righteousness." This conception he admits that Israel by degrees personified for itself, but he repeatedly denies that this personification formed any portion of Israel's original idea of God. He tells us that the Jews called this perception of a something without us, urging us to righteousness, by the name of the Eternal. But he forgets that, according to the best authorities, the unutterable name Jehovah is only the third person singular of the verb "to be," and is therefore simply the expression of the truth revealed to Moses in the Bush. He says, and he quotes Gesenius as an authority for the statement, that the explanation of the word Jehovah, which would confine it to the assertion of God's Existence without adding the conception of His Eternity, would be a frigid and unsatisfactory one, and he is quite right. But he omits to inquire which is the primary and which the secondary idea implied in the word. He does not observe that the *word* implies self-Existence—the "great Personal First Cause" which Mr. Arnold dismisses with such contempt, while the *tense*, which implies a continuous or unfinished action,* is the portion of the word which implies Eternity.

25. And then we are led off to a disquisition on the derivation of the word "is," "essence." It signifies originally *to breathe*, and thence we are invited to conclude that the idea of existence, or rather, essence, in early times was nothing but the idea of

witness to the fact that the Resurrection of Christ was the doctrine of the Christian Church, though they invented all kinds of strange myths to account for it. This is the precise opposite of "a legend growing under one's very eyes." On the contrary, it was a stubborn fact, the evidence of which the early heretics would have evaded if they could, but they found it too strong for them.

* See Ewald's *Hebrew Grammar*,—Tenses of the verb.

breathing! The substitution of the one word for the other, which Mr. Arnold attempts, would lead to some very singular results if applied to his own pages.* But the fact is, that the derivation of the word is only another instance of what is so common in the language of children, and of races of men in their infancy, the employment of the concrete for the abstract. There seems some reason to suppose that the language of man in early times was confined to a few words, and those words connected with his most pressing wants and the ordinary phenomena around him. By degrees, as those phenomena were often seen to be the result of some invisible power, the word which originally referred to the external manifestation was transferred to the hidden principle within, and another word (generally equally onomatopœetic) took the place of the former to denote the external action.† To forget this, to attempt to define every word that is used, without admitting the existence of some primary intuitions which are antecedent to demonstration, is to make all language and even thought impossible, to reduce ourselves even below the level of the brutes by rendering us incapable of communicating with one another.‡ We may puzzle ourselves with Mr. Arnold,

* A few instances may be given at random. "God breathes here at bottom a deeply moved way of saying conduct or righteousness."—*Literature and Dogma*, p. 47. "But God is not a Person, and such a "terrible abstract" (*God and the Bible*, p. 77) cannot breathe." Again (*Literature and Dogma*, p. 199), "God breathes an influence"—Mr. Arnold's version of "God is a Spirit." Compare Mr. Arnold, in *God and the Bible*, p. 77, and observe how the abstract becomes the concrete, and the concrete the abstract, at his bidding.

† Mr. Arnold declares (*God and the Bible*, pp. 80, 81) that the word *is* signifies to *breathe*, and the word to *exist* means to *grow*, to *step forth*, and that all these denote certain *activities* belonging to humanity. This is one of his improved sayings, for which it would be well if he would advance a little proof. There is at least some ground for the opposite assertion in many languages. Thus, in Hebrew, נָשַׁם signifies originally to breathe, but it became in the end the recognized word to represent that which was the *cause* of the phenomenon, while other words, as פָּנָא, פָּרָא, נָשֵׁב, נָשֵׁם, פָּרָא, &c., sometimes kindred and sometimes not, were used to represent the visible action. The same is the case in the kindred Semitic languages. So the Greeks used *εἰμί* and *φέω* to represent the cause, i.e. *existence*, φυσάω, πνίεω, and αὔξω for the phenomenon *breathing*, *growing*. The Latins have their *sum*, *es*, *fui*, and their *augeo*, *flo* and *spiro*. The Germans their *bin*, *ist*, *seyn*, as well as their *blasen*, *athmen*, *hauchen*, *wachsen*: and we ourselves our *be* and *is*, as well as our *puff*, *breathe*, *blow*, *grow*. Dr. Curtius, Mr. Arnold's authority, may have "succoured a poor soul whom the philosophers had driven well-nigh to despair." But Dr. Curtius only tells us what the root of our word is. He does not tell us that *ero* means, "I will go on operating," though no one denies that it means, "I will go on living."

‡ The truth of this may be easily proved. Ask any one who addresses

by analyzing Descartes' proof of existence;* we may bewilder our minds about the existence of matter; but unless we take something for granted, unless we consider ourselves entitled to assume that the phenomena of the visible world and the forces that obviously underlie them are facts, which we may regard as the basis of all argument, there is no other conclusion open to us than that of the philosophic poet in *The Rejected Addresses*, that "nought is everything and everything is nought."

26. When Mr. Arnold contends, in defence of his position that there is no personal God, that the words used in the Bible are not capable of scientific demonstration, but are "thrown out," as it were, at "something beyond our power to grasp," he is on safer ground. No one, not even the most illiterate of the believers in His Personality, believes that he can comprehend God. But, because we are unable to comprehend God, it does not follow that we can comprehend nothing about Him. We speak of a mountain, and, when we do so, we form a definite conception of what we mean, but we do not say that we know all about the mountain. We see it from one point of view, and it impresses us with an idea of size and form which is definite, and true so far as it goes. We travel round it; we obtain glimpses of it from different points of view, we correct and improve our first impressions, but still we cannot form any idea of it as a whole. Yet will any one assert that we have no idea of it at all, or that the idea we have is incorrect? We proceed further. Since the whole of the interior of the mountain is still unknown to us, we collect specimens from various parts of its surface, and form conclusions as to the materials of which it is composed. We have made another advance in our diagnosis, we have learned something, not only of its form, but of its properties, and that something is indisputably true. Still, we have formed but a very inadequate conception of the great reality which stares us in the face, and which transcends our powers to comprehend as a whole.

27. Or we may take an instance from the heavenly bodies. There is much in the conditions of existence of the sun that is entirely beyond our conceptions. Of the properties of substances exposed to the enormous pressure and intense heat to which they are exposed in the sun, we can form no idea. Yet do

you to define every word he uses, and every word employed in his definition and conversation is at once reduced to a ludicrous absurdity.

* *God and the Bible*, p. 66.

we therefore know nothing of the sun? Is it altogether impossible to form a definite conception of him? Are our ideas of him, as the great vivifying power of animal and vegetable life, whose threefold beams diffuse light, heat, and chemical influences throughout the earth, merely inexact ideas "thrown out," at something which we have no power to grasp, or are they not perfectly exact and true in themselves, though they by no means exhaust the properties of that to which they belong?

28. The late Dean Mansel, whose powerful treatise Mr. Arnold, as is usual with the assailants of present day Christianity, ignores,* points out the intellectual difficulties in the way of combining the idea of the Personal with the idea of the Eternal, yet he shows that we may be able to form a true conception concerning some of the attributes of God which the word *personality*, inadequate though it be, is the only one capable of expressing.† And if it be asked, why insist upon the use of a term which, if confessedly inadequate to express the truth in all its fulness, is sure to be also misleading? we reply, because, to omit to use it would not only be misleading also, but would lead us much farther from the truth than the other horn of the dilemma. In the former alternative we use language which is insufficient to express all the truth, in the latter we use language which is actually contrary to truth. And there is no third course open to us. We must either affirm of God those attributes, of

* Mr. Arnold gives a kind of reason why he does not answer the Bampton Lectures of Professor Mozley, in *God and the Bible*, p. 41. It is ingenious, but hardly satisfactory. It has since been done, he says, by the author of *Supernatural Religion*. That is to say, that some one else has done what Mr. Arnold ought to have done himself. Or, if Mr. Arnold contends that it would be "vain labour," because "the human mind is losing its reliance upon them—*i.e.* miracles," it may at least be asked whether it is not the duty of the human mind to give the whole matter its fair and candid consideration, and whether it can be considered either fair or candid to ignore altogether what is said in arrest of judgment upon the most important questions in heaven and earth. As far as Mr. Arnold's treatises are concerned, a stranger to the whole question might imagine from them that all the writers on the Evidences were Butler and Pascal, and those extremely ridiculous and contemptible persons the "Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester."

† I am aware that Dean Mansel's volume led to a lively controversy, even among the defenders of Christianity. Whether Dean Mansel were right or wrong, it is not my present intention to inquire. I only wish to call attention to the fact that his brilliant and masterly treatise is as utterly ignored by Mr. Arnold as if it had never been written, a very convincing proof that the attitude of modern "culture" to Christianity is not that of thorough, honest, impartial inquiry.

which the word personality is the best expression, or we must implicitly deny them. We must either speak of God as "He" or we must speak of Him as "It," that is, in spite of all Mr. Arnold may say to the contrary, we must either give the impression to those to whom we speak of Him, that God is a Person, or that God is a thing; that He is something higher than ourselves, to which we instinctively look up, or that it is something of an inferior order of being to ourselves, on which we as instinctively look down. For complain as we may of the notion of limitation attached to the word personality, it at least serves to bring before us the higher and nobler qualities of our humanity. Personality implies the idea of a Free Agent, who acts, not from blind necessity, but by the counsel of His own will, which in God's case operates, we believe, in accordance with the dictates of Eternal Reason. And when we apply the term to God, we mean also to say that He is capable of those moral attributes of love, pity, care, guardianship, providence, which are infinitely higher than the mere mechanical action of an impersonal power. Tell me that my idea of a Personal God is anthropopathic, and I reply that we can only approach to the idea of God by contemplating the noblest attributes of the noblest being we know.* Tell me that God is infinite, and that He, therefore, is incapable of being conceived by man, and I reply that space, too, is infinite, but that this does not prevent me from knowing that it is peopled with stars and star dust, and that the part of it within my ken is capable of being conceived, and is governed by the simplest and most intelligible of laws. Tell me that the God of our Thirty-nine Articles binds me to regard God as "without passions," and I reply that the attitude towards His creatures implied by any one of the words I have just used, is possible without the emotions which in us finite beings are usually supposed to attend it, and that the emotions of our finite humanity presuppose something in the Infinite to correspond to them.

29. And, lastly, I would observe that God is represented to us throughout Scripture as our Father, as one to Whom prayer can be addressed, and Who will condescend

* Forgetting that superstition supposes a real and undeniable desire in human nature, the spirit of Deism casts away from it all notions of God's anger, judgments, or punishments as representations arising only from the limited nature of the human understanding.—*Neander, Church History*, vol. i. Introduction.

to hear and answer it. Mr. Arnold has endeavoured to represent this as part of Jewish and Christian Aberglaube, though to assert this is to rend both Old and New Testament asunder, and to present us with a few disjointed fragments, as the whole of Jewish or Christian belief. He declares* that Israel, *whatever our Bibles may say*, said from the first that God was “the Eternal not ourselves that makes for righteousness” and nothing more. But why should not the two ideas be united? Is there anything incompatible in them? Does not Moses † combine them when, after speaking of God as “a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He,” goes on to say, “Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is He not thy Father that bought thee? *hath He not made thee and established thee?*” And does Mr. Arnold seriously mean to maintain his *obiter dictum* that the “account of creation” with which the Bible opens, and the truth of which is assumed throughout, “all came to” the writer “from the idea of righteousness”? ‡

30. The truth is, that if we once surrender the doctrine of the personality of God, however inadequate the term may be to express our meaning, we have robbed religion, even according to Mr. Arnold’s definition of it, of its mainspring. Mr. Arnold may expurgate the Bible, and enlarge on the immense practical advantage those will gain who adopt his method; but what is religion without an All-Father? What is it in the hour of strong temptation, when the “stream of tendency” whereby we fulfil the law of righteousness seems almost to have ceased to flow? What is it in the hour of trial, of sickness, of despondency—what in the agony of fruitless remorse? Men in old time often died by their own hand, and that because they believed either in Mr. Arnold’s God, or else in the irreversible decrees of a Fate by which Jupiter himself was bound. What but the belief in a Father, merciful and gracious, who loves those whom He chastens, can preserve us when pressed down by accumulated anxieties, from giving way to despair? And what is left, I would further ask, to train up a child in the ways of that righteousness which Mr. Arnold has so much at heart? I have elsewhere remarked, § that the poets have ever recog-

* *Literature and Dogma*, p. 38.

† Mr. Arnold does not impugn the Mosaic origin of the book of Deuteronomy.

‡ Page 35.

§ *Rector and His Friends*, p. 178.

nized one of the most touching examples of what is beautiful and true in the spectacle of a child at its mother's knee, learning to lisp the words, "Our Father which art in heaven." But what the Gospel of modern culture, as represented by Mr. Matthew Arnold, would substitute for it is, "O not ourselves which makes for righteousness, be thou to me the stream of tendency whereby I may fulfil the law of my being."* Which will be the most potent method of training up a child in the way of righteousness, I leave to others to decide; but if they decide for the former—and I do not see how they can hesitate for a moment—I would remark that it would be strange indeed if the young were most successfully led into the way of truth by a way that is not true.

31. But I will not sum up my observations on this head in my own words. I will quote from that eloquent volume to which I have already referred, and to which I wish Mr. Arnold had devoted more study before he treated with such contempt the idea of a Personal God. "Personality," says Dean Mansel, "with all its limitations, though far from exhibiting the absolute nature of God as He is, is yet truer, grander, and more elevating, more religious, than those barren, vague, meaningless abstractions in which men babble about nothing under the name of the Infinite. Personal, conscious existence, limited though it be, is yet the noblest of all existences of which man can dream; for it is that by which all existence is revealed to him."† He shows how a morbid horror of what is called Anthropomorphism poisons the springs of much of our modern philosophy, and then proceeds in words which I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting‡ :—"Fools! to dream that man can escape from himself—that human reason can draw aught but a human portrait of God. . . . Sympathy, and love, and fatherly kindness have evaporated in the crucible of their philosophy, and

* Mr. Arnold uses a similar argument himself in the Preface to *God and the Bible*, p. xiv., against calling God the unknowable. The whole passage is singularly inconsistent with the tone of his former work. "God," he says, "the name which has so engaged men's feelings, is, at the same time, by its very derivation, a positive name, expressing that which is the most blessed of all boons to man, Light; whereas, Unknowable is a name merely negative." Compare *Literature and Dogma*, p. 58. "Concerning that which we will not call by the negative name of the unknown and unknowable, but rather by the [equally negative] name of the unexplored and inexpressible."

† *Limits of Religious Thought*, Lect. III.

‡ *Ibid.* Lect. I.

what is the *caput mortuum* that remains but only the sterner features of humanity, exhibited in repulsive nakedness? The God who listens to prayer, we are told, appears in the likeness of human mutability. Be it so. What is the God that does not listen, but the likeness of human obstinacy?* . . . Our rational philosopher stops short in the middle of his reasoning. He strips off from humanity just so much as suits his purpose, and the residue thereof he maketh a god-less pious in his idolatry than the carver of the graven image, in that he does not fall down unto it and pray unto it, but is content to stand afar off and reason concerning it."

32. I have selected Mr. Arnold's work for animadversion, because it is an admirable specimen of the manner in which modern culture, so far as modern culture is opposed to revealed religion, is accustomed to deal with that which it opposes. In the scientific sceptic, religion has an antagonist with which it is possible to deal. His arguments are definite, and, so far as they go, logical. Either Scripture, as he interprets it, is irreconcilable with the discoveries of modern science, or his inferences from those discoveries conflict with Christianity. But the man of culture is an opponent altogether intangible. He does not argue, he speculates; he gives, not his reasons for disbelieving revealed religion, but his impressions concerning it. From his point of view, nothing more is required to justify unbelief than that it is widespread; whether it ought to be widespread or not is a question he never thinks

* God is found not "to be a person as man conceives of a person, nor moral, as man conceives of moral, nor intelligent, as man conceives of intelligent, nor a governor, as man conceives of governors."—*Literature and Dogma*, p. 39. It might with equal truth be said that God cannot be conceived of as not a person, as man conceives of not a person; nor as not moral, in the sense in which we understand the word, and so on. But, in truth, the sentence refutes itself. Nothing could be more genial than the ridicule Mr. Arnold heaps upon Bishops and Archbishops for saying that God is "a Person," the "Moral and Intelligent Governor of the Universe"; nothing more emphatic than the language in which he asserts that He or it makes for righteousness. But were Mr. Arnold to assert that God is not moral as decidedly as he does that He is not a Person, not a Governor, and the like, the only conclusion his readers could come to would be that God most certainly did not "make for righteousness." All which leads to the very earnest wish that, in writing on subjects so deep and so solemn, Mr. Arnold had taken some very good advice, which was given to the world more than two thousand years ago, even according to his own computation (p. 69), in Eccl. vi.: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few."

of asking. If he disbelieves in miracles, it is because they are "discredited." If he rejects prophecy, it is because its possibility is "generally disbelieved." The "current theology of the day" must be surrendered because it is "doomed." The doctrine of a personal God must share its fate, because the awful infiniteness of the subject has enabled some clever dialecticians to suggest difficulties which are easier suggested than answered. "Dogma," as Christian doctrine is called, is unpopular just now; so the cultured man of the world cries "Away with it," and is entirely indifferent to the fact, if, indeed, he is aware of it, that the "dogma" he decries, which, at least, has some claim on our attention, must of necessity be replaced by dogma which can establish no such claim. And so the grave and solemn assertions of Christians about God, assertions supported by the most remarkable concurrence of testimonies of all kinds, internal, external, philosophical and historical, moral and spiritual, are lightly cast aside, and their place taken by the confident *ipse dixit* of the essayist, or the so-called philosopher of the present day. Nothing is more characteristic of the assailants of Christianity than the boldness and recklessness of their assertions on almost every point. The worn-out theories of schools of theology and criticism which are almost extinct in their birth-place; the "rusty tools" which have done their work in their day, and are now laid aside; these are "refurbished" and paraded as the weapons which are to give Christianity the *coup de grâce*. And the man of "culture," quickened into a languid enthusiasm by what he fondly deems to be something new, forgetting that what is new is not always true, and above all unwilling to expose himself to the exertion of a thorough and earnest examination of the question whether it be true or not, dismisses the matter with a courteous smile, politely waves aside the crowd of anxious apologists who come "between the wind and his nobility," and informs the world that the matter is settled; that Christianity has nothing to say for itself, and that the reign of enlightened intellect has begun.

33. A very remarkable instance of what I have just said is to be found in the volumes to which I have this evening directed the attention of the Institute. I do not wish my words to be applied in their full force to Mr. Arnold,* but he has supplied

* Mr. Arnold himself deprecates the tendency to identify the leaders of thought with their followers. "It is notorious," he says (*Nineteenth Century*, March, 1877), "that great movements are always led by aliens to the sort of people who make the mass of the movement."

us with abundant evidence, that even he wrote his *Literature and Dogma* with anything but a full acquaintance with what might be said in favour of Christianity and the Bible; or if he had such an acquaintance, he does not betray it, and still less does he condescend to intimate to those who hang upon his lips that anything has been or can be so said. Stung, however, by the criticism directed against his former volume from the more outspoken and extreme section of the opponents of Christianity, he has obviously, since writing it, devoted considerable time to the study of the evidence for the authenticity of the books of the New Testament.* The result is, that in his later volume he treats the Christian Scriptures in general, and the Gospel of St. John in particular, with a respect which differs in the most marked manner from the flippant and unjustifiable language which in his former volume he has permitted himself to use concerning it. It might possibly happen that if, at some future time, he would give the questions of Miracles and Prophecy, of the fact of the Resurrection and the theory of a Personal God, that close attention which they undoubtedly deserve, he might possibly find that it had been well to have treated "the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester" to a little less of his satire, and to have dispensed with a little of that freedom of assertion respecting the current theology of the day, which is so marked a characteristic of his book.

34. It is with a view of inviting attention to this want of thoroughness as characteristic of the society of our own time that I have written this paper. That the scepticism of to-day is very different in its tone to the scepticism of the age of Butler and Gibbon, I am perfectly willing to admit; but that it is always as different as some persons suppose I do not believe. That there is such a thing as honest doubt I have always granted, and I have ever regarded the claims of the honest doubter as deserving of the truest sympathy. But we must remember that now, as ever, there is a kind

* In *God and the Bible* Mr. Arnold appears really to have gained a mastery of this branch of his subject, though he can hardly be expected altogether to recant the opinions to which he had so rashly committed himself. He makes a serious blunder, however, when he says, that "even the heretics" received the first Gospel. The early heretics received *none* of the New Testament Scriptures, Marcion only the Epistles of St. Paul and a mutilated gospel of St. Luke, while Basilides and Valentinus display a greater acquaintance with, and a much higher respect for, the Fourth Gospel than any other.

of doubt which is not altogether honest. We must not be misled by a tone of earnestness which, if not exactly assumed, may be the result of self-deception. It is the fashion in this age to display at least a certain appearance of earnestness; but a man may easily persuade himself that he possesses that quality when he has it not. And in a time like our own, which is distracted by the variety of its studies, and overwhelmed by the amount of its evanescent literature, the habit of dealing superficially with all questions, however important, is one that is growing, and is likely to grow among us. It is a bad habit at all times, but it is especially dangerous when it invades the province of religion. That man incurs no light responsibility who without full consideration disturbs the religious convictions of his neighbours. It is no light responsibility, even when we are sure that they are wrong; it is a very heavy one unless we have excellent reasons for being sure that we are right. Before we put before the world that which, if accepted, will shake old beliefs to their foundations, we ought thoroughly to test and examine the grounds for what we say. Random assertions, like thistle-down, if given to the winds, will spread widely abroad, and will produce an abundant crop of weeds instead of a harvest of useful grain. And as a rule the works now published against the Christian religion are a diffusion of "trifles light as air," rather than of weighty and solid investigations into the grounds of Christian belief. They have a rapid circulation, and then they fall down and die; but not without doing their fatal work of destroying conviction in many a heart. Men will imbibe the poison, who will not take the trouble to employ the antidote. Such books are eagerly read, because they have a certain gloss of novelty, and often, it is to be feared, a flippancy to which replies on so solemn a subject could not possibly condescend. They produce conviction, such as it is, because men have neither the time nor the inclination to inquire into the truth of assertions so boldly hazarded. And the Bashi-Bazouks of scepticism,* the men who are glad to get rid of Christianity because it is a check to their evil desires, swell the ranks of its antagonists, and give an additional point to the cry, See how many are the opponents of Christianity—how few are its defenders!

* I am not indebted to Professor Huxley for this expression. It was written before the lecture of his, in which a similar expression occurs, was delivered.

35. Yet we need not despair of Christianity because once again the alarm is raised, as it was in Butler's day, that it is losing its hold upon the English mind. We need not accept the conditions of peace Mr. Arnold holds out to us. For in truth, the prevalence of scepticism that alarms us is only a result of the fact, that men are more real than they were. Men are no longer content to profess their belief in a religion because it has long tradition in its favour ; they will only accept it because they believe it to be true. And, therefore, we have no longer the nominal support of those whose mouths proclaimed the truths of Christianity, but whose lives belied them. As I have just intimated, they have gone over to our adversaries. And so we obtain the wish of Ajax.* We shall perish, if perish we must, in the light. We know who our friends are, and who our adversaries. There are but few remaining on our side who are not heart and soul the disciples of Christ ; few who are not ready not merely to argue for Him, but to devote their lives to His service. A minority the true believers in Christ may be still, as they always have been, but they have the strength of conviction and cohesion against a multitude of half-hearted and divided adversaries. The differences which separate Christians are as nothing to those which distract their foes. Therefore, we may boldly continue to preach the "traditional" Christianity which is "built upon the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." We may venture on the supposition that Christ's chosen messengers knew, at least, as much about Him and His doctrines as any acute critic of our own day. We may dare, on their authority, to maintain still, without hesitation and without apology, the reality of the miracles on which the world is "losing its hold." We may appeal to the prophecies in which men have ceased to believe, just so far as they have refused fairly to enter into the evidence for them. We may proclaim the Resurrection of Christ, because without it Christianity, the visible saviour of a decaying world, is reduced to a shadow—a name, nay, even an imposture, and nothing less. We may retain our firm faith in a Personal God, because it is the one central truth by which religion must stand or fall. We may continue to uphold the credit

* Homer, Iliad, b. xvii., 645-7.

*Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἀλλὰ σὺ ῥῦσαι νῦν' ἡρός σιας' Αχαιῶν
Ποίησον δὲ αἰθρην, δὸς δὲ ὁφθαλμοῖσιν ιόνθαται
Ἐν δὲ φάει κτιν ὄλεσσον, ἐπεὶ νῦν τοι εὐαδεν οὔτως.*

of the Scriptures, because they, and they only, give a coherent account of God's dealings with the world from its creation; because they, and they only, contain authentic details of the life of Him Whom God sent to redeem it. We may be sure that "fluid, passing, and literary" remarks on the "ignorance" and "superstition" of the writers of the Scriptures; grotesque perversions of their beliefs, their narratives, and the grounds on which those narratives are received, will not avail to shake the completeness of the greatest conquest that has ever been achieved over humanity. The belief in "God manifest in the flesh" * is now, as ever, the ground of the Christian religion. It is the rock upon which Christ has built His Church, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The CHAIRMAN, having conveyed a vote of thanks to Professor Lias for his valuable paper, added, that it was now open to those present to offer any comments upon it.

The HON. SECRETARY then read the following communication from the Rev. J. M'Cann, D.D., of Glasgow:-

" May I be allowed to express my thanks to Professor Lias for having so ably exposed many of the fallacies in the teaching of Mr. Arnold,—teaching which is rendered exceedingly dangerous by the very fluent style in which it is delivered, the wit by which it is embellished, and the extreme facility with which large and apparently solid structures are built on definitions which are altogether untenable. Here, I think, Professor Lias allows him sometimes to escape too easily, for, as accurate definition is the very basis of all sound reasoning, by examining and overturning his most strange definitions the fallacies of the superstructure would at once become apparent. He has also a misleading habit of coupling words as relatives which bear no relation to each other. We find an instance of this in the first paragraph of the paper, where 'unexplored and inexpressible' are substituted for 'unknown and unknowable.' Now, the terms 'unknown' and 'unknowable' are perfectly clear and distinctly related to each other, but 'unexplored' and 'inexpressible' refer to completely different thoughts. The former being nearly synonymous with 'unknown,' but the latter having no connection with 'unknowable,' because that may be very well known which is yet inexpressible; for example, the soul is accurately known in consciousness: few, however, will admit that the term 'soul' is an adequate expression for it. But once let such phrases as these pass, and countless mystic changes can be rung upon them till the reader becomes utterly bewildered, and fancies himself in a solid structure while he is only amid the clouds. Again, what can be said about his definitions of God? See note, para. 9. Is the stream objective or subjective? Does it bear us, or do we bear it? Can we resist the tendency, or is the

* It matters not whether we read ὁρ or θεός in the famous passage I have quoted. If ὁρ be the true reading, it can hardly agree with anything but θεοῦ ζῶντος in the preceding verse.

tendency compulsion? And, as regards the 'law of our being,' whence is it? Is it a mere bubble born of the stream, or is it a something apart from the stream, and independent of it? And who can extract any meaning from 'The not ourselves which makes for righteousness'? What is that which is the not ourselves? Is it a force, or person, or what? Such definitions are valueless until these questions have been answered. His definition of Religion is equally faulty; but as the paper treats of that more fully, it may be passed. I would, however, call attention to the proposition as stated in paragraph 10, that 'nothing is to be believed which is not directly verifiable.' And here I would partly agree with Mr. Arnold, but do we mean the same thing by verifiable? I hold that the only means by which we can establish the truth of any proposition is consciousness and the laws of thought, and that whatever is affirmed by these, is by that fact proved true. And surely if there be any one proposition more certainly affirmed by them than another, it is that the mind demands a 'Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent governor of the world.' The mind cannot rest till it finds an agent, himself unchanged, who is capable of producing all changes, and who must necessarily be intelligent and moral. I perfectly agree with the Professor when he says that the most important feature of the volumes is the denial of the Personality of God, but I must be permitted to differ from him when he quotes Mansel as having at all assisted in the establishing of this Personality (par. 27). It seems to me that Dean Mansel has done more than almost any other English writer to render a belief in the Personality of God impossible. He has so manipulated the terms 'unconditioned,' 'absolute,' and 'infinite,' that he deprives us of all knowledge of God of every kind. He says, 'we must remain content with the belief that we have that knowledge of God which is best adapted to our wants and training. How far that knowledge represents God as He is we know not, and we need not know.' This, however, is not knowledge at all, but ignorance. And if we be wholly ignorant of God, we cannot predicate of Him self-determining intelligence or personality. I cannot help feeling that while we continue to use the terms unconditioned and its species in their literal meaning, we present to ourselves a form of personality so vague as to be incomprehensible and useless; but that if we speak of God's infinity and absoluteness, as simply His knowledge of all that is to be known, His power of being able to do all that is not inherently impossible, and His freedom from all necessary relations, we express all that can actually be meant by the words, and present an unassailable front to antagonistic metaphysics. But may I also be permitted to add that I believe the only practical view of God's personality that can be presented as a sufficing thought to our intellects, as a power to influence the world and reform men's lives, was given to humanity when Christ said, 'He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.'

Rev. J. FISHER, D.D., in congratulating Professor Lias, said that a paper containing an examination of so large a number of works must have been no small task. At its commencement the paper referred to a statement made by Mr. Arnold and his friends, that Christianity was "doomed." But this had been said by the enemies of Christianity 1800 years ago, and had been persistently declared ever since, yet Christianity has survived. It was "doomed" in its cradle by the Jewish High Priests: it was "doomed" by heathen philosophers and idolaters generally, so much so, that before the time that Constantine renounced heathenism, a medal was struck with the in-

scription "*Nomen Christi deleto*"; and, indeed, the very name of Christianity did then appear to have been blotted out from the face of the earth: it had been doomed by Continental atheists and by English deists, but it had survived all—Christianity lives because its Head lives. With regard to religion being "conduct"; whatever theologians might have said about "morality, ethics conduct," the Bible did not say that they were religion. The word of God as it had come down to them, was all that they had to contend for. Mr. Arnold's book, he considered, had too much of hypothesis and assertion in it, and his attempt to prove certain passages in the Acts irreconcileable, failed altogether. As to the personality of God, if He was not a Person, what was He? It was difficult to comprehend Him, no doubt; but, as had been said by Richard Sibbes 250 years ago, "If we cannot comprehend Him we can apprehend Him." We could lay hold of Him by a living faith as revealed in the Gospel.

Rev. C. L. ENGSTRÖM would offer a few remarks rather in corroboration of the paper than against it. He supposed that the central thought of Mr. Matthew Arnold's theory was, that certain races of men were gifted with certain characteristic powers, such as the Greeks possessed in matters of art, and the Jews in the matter of spiritual insight; but he drew from that the mistaken inference that we were not to receive the testimony of the latter. He (the speaker) should have thought that the highest in any sphere which expressed man's aspirations were most likely to be correct. In music, for instance, Germany, which was the most forward nation in that respect, had laid down certain canons which were actually true, as the teachings of Science showed. Then, on a kindred question, how, he asked, were they to judge of all such matters of spiritual aspiration? Were we, who were beneath them, to judge them? We know that, when Shakspeare first wrote, his writings were condemned by many persons. The French nation for a long time condemned them, because they did not agree with the canons laid down by Aristotle. We found such authors as Racine holding Shakspeare in small esteem. But now the world had grown wiser, and, having had that colossal intellect before it for centuries, had learnt that the canons, which were in force when Shakspeare wrote, had to be revised when they came into conflict with him. In like manner the Bible was not to be judged by lower canons, but, when the latter conflicted with it, they ought to give way. With regard to the Personality of God the reverend gentleman pointed out that *Christ* had never given His disciples to believe that The Father was a "something outside ourselves which makes towards righteousness." He also laid great stress on the early date of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which would have been meaningless, had it been written after the Romans began the siege of Jerusalem.

Mr. D. HOWARD asked the meeting to bear in mind one point, namely, that the differences which distracted the foes of Christianity were infinitely greater than those which existed amongst Christians. He considered that

the paper which had just been read gave a much clearer conception of what Mr. Matthew Arnold might be supposed to mean than could be obtained from reading his most fluid book. The scientific argument against Christianity was, that it was not sufficiently defined ; but what did the literary argument give them ? Could anything be more utterly unscientific and impossible to define than Mr. Matthew Arnold's own definitions ? What was the meaning of the "not ourselves who make for righteousness" ? He had often puzzled his mind to find out whether the verb was in the active, middle, or passive voice. Altogether, the controversy between the defenders of the Scriptures and those who belonged to Mr. Arnold's school of argument was simply the old story of the trident and the net : the latter was the more awkward thing to fight because they never could hit it.

Mr. L. T. DIBDIN said that the paper which had been read found fault with Mr. Arnold's definition of religion, namely, "morality touched by emotion," on account of its obscurity. Might not he have meant religion as applied to an individual ? Mr. Arnold probably would not say that morality itself was a shifting thing. Probably his opinion was that it had nothing to do with emotion, which was something in us which led us to take hold of righteousness, and which gave the latter an influence over us. As Professor Liás said, emotion was "essentially fitful, irregular, transient, varying with our physical health and external circumstances," and for that reason, in Mr. Arnold's opinion, religion had a different hold upon different persons, and a different hold upon the same person at different times. Morality was fixed, but the power it had over us depended upon the emotion of each person.

The CHAIRMAN was glad Professor Liás had called attention to the fact which was lost sight of by a great many people, that there was a negative dogmatism just as much as a positive dogmatism. It was as dogmatic to say "There is no God," as to say "There is a God" ; and it was as much so to say that God was "the not-ourselves which makes for righteousness," as to say that He is a Personal Being infinitely just and powerful. The fact was that where we had belief and science we must have dogma. The reason people were afraid of the word was that "to dogmatize" was used to signify "forcing unproved opinions on others." The Chairman, then referring to the difference between the mode in which Christianity was attacked in the present day, and that in which it used to be assailed during the last century, said : years ago the method was coarse—God was slandered—whilst in the present day the method was refined. He remembered a story told with reference to Voltaire. The Mayor of Brest was invited to meet M. de Voltaire, and the civic dignitary, when he heard to whom he was about to be introduced, expressed himself thus : "He is the Voltaire who has permitted himself to employ disrespectful words about God; well, I would recommend him not to use such expressions about the magistrates of Brest !"

Professor LIAS said that in writing his paper he had found it necessary to steer between rocks and quicksands,—he had to avoid matters upon

which Christians themselves differed, so that they might have a pleasant and not an acrimonious discussion. He remembered an anecdote of a well-known professor at Cambridge, who expressed his wish that German metaphysics and German theology were all at the bottom of the German Ocean. He (Professor Liás) did not altogether join in that wish, because he thought that we were considerably indebted to German theology ; but if there was anything he wished at the bottom of the German Ocean it was the bitterness of their religious differences. As to what had fallen from Mr. Dibdin, to his mind the proper definition of religion was that it was a "restraining power." He would not undertake to explain Mr. Matthew Arnold's "morality touched with emotion." He found it extremely difficult to understand what was meant. How could morality be touched by emotion ? He should have imagined that it was we who were touched by emotion, and not morality, and that morality was independent in itself from emotions, and was a principle which, under all circumstances of our physical state, would still bind us down to do the one thing which was right. He thought Matthew Arnold's definition was very unsuitable, but, if he were asked to explain, he could only say that he gave up the task in despair.

The meeting was then adjourned.
