

this poor world—the numerous and comfortable ‘well as we are’ class, both sacred and profane history admonish us. Cain, doubtless, thought sacrifice an innovation and so murdered Abel because of its success. The Ark of Noah was a huge innovation to an infidel race which for a hundred years manufactured much laughter out of the enterprise of the man who believed God. The undertaking of Moses, his sublime code and institutions, all a stupendous monument of Divine wisdom and power, were perpetually resisted by that disobedient generation, who could never forget the brick-kilns of Egypt, and the flesh-pots and the onions and the garlic, till their carcases fell in the wilderness. The time would fail to speak of Joshua and Gideon and Jephtha and Samson, and Samuel and David and Solomon and Elijah and Elisha and Nehemiah and Ezra and Daniel, who were all daring innovators. The conduct of Nehemiah in particular is very remarkable; for at the close of his book, where he enumerates some of the changes or improvements, which in spite of opposition he had introduced, he concludes each head: “Remember me, O my God, concerning this for good” or such like—indicating that he had done much good service which, as men hated him for it, he prays may be remembered to his credit by God. In the New Testament, examples are numerous of the way in which good things are often received, because they are either new or esteemed new. The first preacher of “the kingdom of heaven” was viewed as an innovator and severely interrogated by the conservatives of his day. Even his name was a daring innovation; for the people, who visited Elizabeth at his circumcision, and who were, like all ladies, sticklers, for ancient usage, objected to his name, and remonstrated that: “there is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.” They would have called him Zacharias, “after the name of his father.” The Great Redeemer’s life, doctrine and actions, were a great innovation throughout, for which he encountered severe, unintermittent and malignant persecution. Jew and Gentile, opposed in all else, were agreed in stigmatising the proceedings of the apostles as presumptuous innovations. The things that Paul preached were “blasphemy against the holy place, the law and the customs of our fathers.” The Athenian philosophers “encountered” this great missionary with the analogous reproach: “he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.” The silversmith of Ephesus was of the same mind, for saith he: “ye see and hear that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and

turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands.” Everywhere they were viewed as “the men that had turned the world upside down.” Thus Christianity itself was viewed as a gigantic innovation, though all the inspired wisdom and eloquence of its advocates were employed in showing that it was a grand necessity for mankind, an immeasurable blessing, and a faithful development of the will of God, as embodied in the institutions of the Old Testament.

The apostles of science have been sufferers by the same cry. Roger Bacon, the greatest genius of his age, the inventor of telescopes, spectacles, microscopes, &c., was decried as a magician, and cast into prison, whence he emerged an old man. Sir Michael Scott, who lived in the same century, and occupied in Scotland the same place as Bacon in England, was stigmatised in his own and future times as a magician, on very familiar terms with the enemy of mankind. Wickliff, the morning star of the reformation, who first translated the Bible into the vernacular, escaped death solely by the friendship and power of John of Gaunt. The name of John Faust, the inventor of printing, came to be a synonym in Germany for the devil; though there is no invention of modern times of which we can say with more confidence: “this is the finger of God.” Astronomy, chemistry, geology; the Copernican system, the circulation of the blood, vaccination, power-looms, stocking frames, stage coaches, railways, chloroform, &c., have been so characterised. The study of Greek was proclaimed as a sure provocate of paganism. Even fanners, that common invention for cleaning grain, were prayed and preached against as “devil’s wunt.” The church has been the greatest offender in this respect. Many passages in her history relating to great improvements, subsequently adopted, are humiliating. At one period the man who did not believe in hunting up decrepid old women, and burning them for witches, would be in danger of being burnt himself. Improvements have almost always been denounced by the churches—though christianity has, on the whole, done more to civilize men than any other influence, and it has never wanted liberal representatives to speak the truest word even in the darkest times. Yet we must lament that her civilising influence has been so largely unconscious, unintentional and involuntary. It has generally been in spite of herself. So that the observation is very true; that of the two great evils in the world—unchristian ignorance and ignorant christianity—it is hard to say which has done most evil.