

FORCES ANTAGONISTIC TO CHRISTIANITY.

NO. I.

EXPLANATIONS.

BY forces antagonistic to Christianity we mean hostile forces, in so far as they are hostile. The qualification is important. Positivism, for instance, may well be regarded as an antagonistic force. But then the stream of Positivism is not unmixed. There blend with it certain elements of good; and these, of course, are not against the Christian religion. A similar remark might be made of all non-Christian systems. They are clouds rather than lights, but still they have some light. Here we have the principle, broad as the earth—whatever is good, under whatever name, is friendly; whatever is evil, under whatever name, is hostile to Christianity. We say under whatever name; for, unhappily, good is sometimes called—even believed to be—evil, and evil good. For example, on the one hand, the early Christians were often by the Romans called atheists, and Christianity was commonly regarded by the Jews as worse than a blasphemous fable. On the other hand, many Christians at one time called slavery a Scriptural institution, and regarded persecution as a perfectly legitimate weapon against heretics. To-day there are sceptics who call Christianity a worn-out superstition, and Christians who believe all scepticism to be only an attempt to overthrow a religion that condemns the profligate life of the sceptics. Thus it happens that if anything good or evil is only labelled with this or that name, there is some chance of its being accepted or rejected without inquiry into its true nature. Hence the warning, that we must not only note the name but also carefully examine the thing itself.

Having thus explained the meaning of the title, we now ask, How far have we the right to demand from opponents, opponents from us, the definition of the terms employed?