

a patient rector, would reflect dignity and honor upon the Church in the eyes of an on-looking world, and would quicken the life and efficiency of the parish more than all the tricks of speech or sensational charms that both preacher and parishioners could possibly insert.—*R. N. P. in North-East.*

SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF.

'The favourable position for an Infidel is that of an objector. When he is forced to recognize the necessity of having something positive on his own side, he finds his own difficulties greater than those over which he has been exulting in the case of his antagonist.'

BISHOP FITZGERALD in *Aids to Faith*.

Christian Apologists have generally confined themselves to answering the objections of unbelievers. It may be well, however, to require unbelievers to answer the objections to their own scheme. We must carry the war, in fact, into the enemy's country. Our Lord, we find, though perfectly prepared to give an answer, often thought good thus to turn the table on his adversaries. 'I also will ask you a question,' we hear Him say. To the teachable, to those who simply ask for information, to the really honest inquirer and seeker after truth, we cannot be too considerate; but to those who, in the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees, of the Sadducees and Herodians of old, try to entangle us in our talk, or seek to justify their own unbelief, we may well point out the weak places in their own armour, which they imagine so impregnable. It may, at all events, serve to show that they are not so secure in their position as they fancied, and that there is more to be said on the other side than they supposed. With this view, we have here brought together some of the things which the unbeliever must be required to explain before we can be expected to abandon what, at least, seems to us more probable and reasonable than the system he offers to substitute for it:

I. We may ask him, for instance, to explain the present condition of the Jews, so exactly answering to the predictions of their own Prophets; fulfilling prophecies proved to have been uttered centuries before the event; prophecies which were guarded, as they still are, by the Jews themselves with jealous care; as that they should be dispersed among all the nations, that they should become a proverb and a byword, that Jerusalem should be overthrown, and the rest.*

II. We may ask him to explain how the Jewish Sabbath, the Passover, Circumcision, and other religious rites, still observed by the nation of the Jews, in whatever lands they may be dispersed, and observed long before the coming of Christ, as we know from other testimonies than the Bible, came to be observed on any other grounds than those recorded in the Bible.

III. We may ask him to explain how the writers of the Gospels, known to have been published shortly after the events they narrate (they are quoted in the two Apologies for the Christians addressed by Justin Martyr in the earlier part of the second century to the Senate and people of Rome, and to the Emperor Antoninus Pius) how these writers could state that certain things notoriously happened, and make mention of the names of certain well-known persons, as Annas and Caiaphas, the chief of the priests among the Jews at a certain

date, or Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator, in connection with those events, without being at once confuted, as, if these things had been all a fiction, they must needs have been. The statements were made at the time; they were not confuted (as they could not have been confuted) at the time. The inference is that they took place as related.

IV. We may ask him to explain how St. Paul could have written several published letters full, according to the unbeliever, of falsehoods, without having been at the time convicted of the falsehoods; how he could have appealed to those to whom he wrote with reference to certain events which took place in their presence, if those events had not taken place. The inference must be that what he said was true. He need not be a knave, he would have been a fool, to challenge thus his own easy confutation.

V. We may ask him to explain how those who emphatically taught men to speak the truth, who chose to die (and many of whom did actually die) rather than be guilty of falsehood, could unite to palm off upon the world the most elaborate system of falsehood (which if it is not truth it must be) that was ever invented: how, in a word, good men could all agree to do so bad a thing. *Bad men could not invent the Gospel, and good men would not.* The inference can only be that it is no invention, but a true narrative.

VI. We may call upon him to explain how Jewish *Publicani* and fishermen, with such very different models before them of what was then most esteemed among them, could have sketched the marvellous portrait and personality presented in the Gospels if they had not had among them the living Original.*

VII. We may call upon him to explain, on any other hypothesis than that of a Divine inspiration, the difference between the Gospels and all contemporary Jewish and apocryphal Christian literature.

VIII. We may ask him to explain how it comes to pass that the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Supper of the Lord have been celebrated in various parts of the world for upwards of eighteen hundred years, from the time, that is, when Jesus Christ, even according to the independent statements of contemporary heathen writers, was on earth,—celebrated as we know they have been from the statements of other than Christian writers,—if the account of their origin as contained in the Gospels be not the true one.

IX. We may ask him to explain how the Lord's day, commonly called Sunday, has been universally observed in the Catholic Church as a weekly memorial of the Resurrection of Christ; and how other days, such as Christmas, Good Friday, Ascension Day, have been likewise observed in memory of certain events from the earliest times of Christianity, if the events of which they are memorial never took place.

X. We may ask him to account for the existence of a distinct body of clergy from the time of the Apostles to the present day.

XI. We may ask him to explain, for example, the letter of Pliny to Trajan, † a letter from a heathen philosopher to a heathen Emperor, testifying to the customs and character of Christians in those early days, on any other than the Christian hypothesis.

XII. We may ask him to explain how Christianity, unaided as Mohometanism was by the

* It is such that no human being could have invented; it must have been copied from an actual original. . . . No one can invent after this fashion. . . . And least of all could Jews have done so, for this was not by any means the ideal of their minds. . . . How comes it that men, not even learned, contrived to represent a character every way departing from their national type?—LUTHARDT, *Fundamental Truths of Christianity*, lect. x.

† That the mind of sinful beings should conceive even the general notion of such a man would be a miracle; while that such a notion should be carried out with such vividness by authors who were, at all events, originally uneducated, and at first independent of each other, would have been, unless the Man had really lived, and had been seen by them, not merely a miracle, but an impossibility.—WATTS, cited in Luthardt.

‡ The 97th Epistle of the 16th Book. A translation will be found in most histories of the Church.

sword, and forbidding, as Mohometanism did not, all sensual gratifications,* should have spread in the way it has among all the most intelligent races of the earth, without supernatural aid.†

XIII. We may ask him to point out what other cause but Christianity put an end to gladiatorial combats;‡ mitigated the barbarism of war, raised the condition of woman, prevented polygamy, proclaimed the sanctity of marriage, abolished slavery, and finally, established on a true basis the rights of man.‡

XIV. We may ask him to show how it is more unreasonable to believe that God existed from all eternity than to believe that the world so exists; if there is, in fact, anything more unreasonable in believing in a First cause than in a first man, or even in a protoplasm.

XV. We may ask him to show how it is more unreasonable to believe that a world full of design had a designer, than that a watch or a steam-engine had an intelligent maker.**

XVI. We may ask him to prove how, though the watch or steam-engine must have had a maker, the maker of it himself never had one.

XVII. We may ask him, finally, to explain how it is, if it be not divine, that 'the Christian doctrine,' to use the admission of one of its bitterest assailants, †† 'has a power of cultivating and developing saintliness which has had no equal in any other creed or philosophy.'

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* See Luthardt, *Fundamental Truths*, lect. ix.
† They that had overcome the world could not struggle Christianity; . . . and Christianity without violence or armies . . . did insensibly turn the world into a Christian, and persecution into victory.—JER. TAYLOR, ser. ix, on *The Faith and Patience of the Saints*.
‡ The first Christian Emperor may claim the honour of the first edict which condemned the art and amusement of shedding human blood, &c.—GIBBON, c. xxx.
§ Out of no philosophy under the sun has the idea of the "rights of man" issued. . . . For any force they [the words of ancient philosophers] had, the world might have gone on in its old way till now. Even the sanguinary sport of the gladiatorial shows was not interrupted by them, and it was of a heathen philosopher, but a Christian devotee, who leapt into the circus, and by the protest of his death stopped that one triumph and exaltation of Satan.—MOZLEY, lect. x.
** Heb. iii.
†† *Lemonde m'embarasse, et je ne peut songer, Que cette horloge existe, et n'a pas d'horloger.* VOLTAIRE.

†† Mr. Colter Morrison, quoted in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1887.

ST. STEPHEN.

The fact that to St. Stephen was accorded the honor of being the first martyr, has tended to withdraw the eyes of the Church from another singular honor granted him, that of being the sole eye-witness of the ascended Christ—Christ at the right hand of God. The Martyr of the Ascension he might properly be called. To him was reserved the honor of witnessing to the fulfilment of the words of Christ, "Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God," before the very council which had condemned Him for uttering them. Standing in the presence of that same council, "he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and said, Behold, I see Heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. And all that were in the council looking steadfastly upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Beholding the glory of God, he had been changed into the same image, God Himself thus setting His seal upon His servant, in manifest token of the truth of His servant's words.

The Church has no more beautiful type of the heavenly minded Christian than St. Stephen. Surrounded as he was on all sides by enemies who "gnashed upon him with their teeth"—fitting symbol of the foes and temptations which beset the child of God in all ages—he firmly and deliberately "shut his eyes from seeing evil," and "looked up steadfastly into Heaven." The result was that the promise to those who thus shut their eyes from seeing evil, was fulfilled to him: he "saw the King in His beauty, and beheld the land that was very far off."

* Mozley, in his *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*, Lect. i., refers thus to the promise made to Abraham: "There is the prophecy before us, supported by the whole history and tradition of a nation. Nor could it be otherwise than gratuitous for even a sceptic, however he may object the inspiration, to deny that this prophecy existed, that it was of the nature here described, and that it dates from this primitive era. Abraham in that early dawn of history, with polytheism and idolatry all around him, saw his own creed triumphant in the world; he predicted his triumph, and the prediction has, as a matter of fact, come true. It is triumphant. The Creed of Abraham has become the creed of the civilized world."