

which are various and apt, there is hardly anything in his work which may not be found in the writings of Mr. John Morley, who, I think, must have been strangely misled by paternal fondness for his spiritual offspring, when he pronounced this to be "an epoch-making book." Alas for the "epoch!" I think that Mr. Morley under-rates the age. Assuredly I do not myself overrate it. It is an age of loose reading and writing, and of looser thinking, in which the public—"how many fools does it take to make a public?" Chamfort gravely asked—agreeably flattered by being styled "judicious," supposes itself capable of deciding the gravest and deepest problems, without being in the least able to understand their essential elements or necessary conditions.

The late Mr. Mills was of opinion that there never was an age in which any book embodying the results of profound meditation had less chance of finding appreciative readers. On the other hand, commonplaces addressed to the average intelligence or unintelligence, in a taking journalistic style are sure to command wide popularity. Such, to instance a recent example, was Mr. Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World." Mr. Morison's book is of the same calibre. It is not conceivable that either should make an epoch, or even leave a permanent impression upon the mental history of the age, debased as its intellectual standard undoubtedly is. It is not my intention to criticize Mr. Morison's work in detail; all I shall do will be to set down a few observations upon the chief topics with which he deals. I take the author's object to be twofold. First, he desires to show that Theism in general, and in particular that form of it embodied in Christianity, is outworn, and will have to be discarded by the world. Next, he wishes to recommend a new religion, "The Service of Man," in the place of the service of God. "The *Civitas Dei*," he holds, "is a dream of the past, and we should strive to realise that *Regnum Hominis* which Bacon foresaw and predicted," to put off belief in Deity, and to put on belief in humanity. Let us consider in such brief, but I trust not inadequate fashion as the opportunity allows, why, and on what grounds Mr. Morison would have us quench the old lamps which for so many centuries have lighted the foremost generations of men through the world's darkness, and what he offers us in exchange for them. First, I will glance at the case urged by him against the form of Theism which specially concerns us—I mean the Christian. Subsequently I will deal with his objections to Theism in general; and then I will examine the new religion which he proposes for the adoption of mankind.

Now, why should we give up our belief in Christianity? That is the first question. "Swear by the fortunes of Cæsar and have done with Christ," the Proconsul urged St. Polycarp. "Eighty and six year's" the saint answered, "have I been His disciple, and He has never wronged me, but has ever preserved me; and why should I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" The Christian King peremptorily summoned by Mr. Morison to a like apostacy—not indeed under pain of the stake, but under penalty of intellectual reprobation, so to speak, may surely echo this "Why?" Well, Mr. Morison gives various reasons, all of which may be briefly summed up under two heads, one natural and the other moral. "The current faith," he writes, "has come increasingly into conflict with science in proportion as the latter has extended in depth and area. The isolated points of collision of former days have been so multiplied that the shock now is along the whole continuous line between science and theology, and it would not be easy to name a department of inquiry which has not, in some measure, contributed aid to the forces arrayed against the popular belief. More important still is the changed tone of feeling with regard to this subject. Time was, and even a recent time, when the prestige of Christianity was so great that even its opponents were over-awed by it. But now men are ready to openly avow that they find a great deal in the Christian scheme which is morally shocking; and in the estimation of many minds now a-days, probably the moral difficulties out-weigh the intellectual." Now, if we go carefully through the first class of Mr. Morison's objections, we shall find a most lamentable want of precision and clearness. If

he were in a position to say, "Christianity, or to be more explicit, the Catholic Church, its most dogmatic form, asserts such and such propositions as a part of a divinely revealed message to the world, and these propositions have been demonstrated to be false," his argument would be unanswerable. Certainly, I for one, would attempt no reply to it. But that is precisely what he has not done. We have instead vague generalities about Geology and Genesis, Evolution and Creation, fictions of primitive cosmogonies and facts of modern science, Biblical miracles and legends, and the like, I have myself gone over the whole ground in a work sufficiently well-known, and there is nothing in Mr. Morison's book which leads me to retract or qualify any word which I wrote in the fourth chapter of my *Ancient*

*Religion and Modern Thought*. I may, perhaps, venture to cite here some words from it, by which I desire to stand or fall. "Let me say that, so far as I am concerned, I appeal in defence of my religious creed to reason, which, indeed, as Butler admirably says, is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge of anything, even religion itself. If Christianity, if Catholicity be irrational, if it can be received only upon condition of our shutting the eyes of the understanding, its doom is sealed. To me it seems that Christianity, and in particular that form of Christianity which teaches the supernatural most dogmatically and most uncompromisingly, requires of men nothing which is contrary to reason, nothing which has been, or can be, shown to be false or incredible, or even improbable." I have given in the pages from which I quote, my reasons for so thinking, and for the conclusions to which I am led, that "the achievements of the modern mind, whether in the physical sciences, in psychology, in history, in exegetical criticism, have not in the least discredited Christianity. I must refer to those pages such of my present readers as would follow me farther in this grave matter. As to the moral argument against Christianity, it assumes, in Morison's work, two forms. First, he dwells upon the corruption of manners, and especially upon the degradation of the clergy, at certain periods in the history of Christianity. But really, history so treated may be made to prove anything, and such ratiocination hardly seems to merit a serious reply. Mr. Morison's historical studies must have been slight indeed if they have not shown him that, even in the darkest times, the Church was the corrective, befriending, opposite of the world; exercising a great magistracy of humanity. Yes, even in those darkest times, she was the legal protector of the wretched, the patron of the slave, the mother of the orphan, the defender of the widow. In her beneficent action throughout the ages is a sure mark of her celestial origin, which a most eminent ecclesiastic, the late Cardinal Baluffi, has well drawn out in his learned work, *The Divinity of the Church Proved by her Charity*. The other form of Mr. Morison's ethical argument against Christianity is derived from what he terms "the great number of theological dogmas which are felt to be morally repulsive and horrible to the more humane conscience of modern times." "The more humane conscience of modern times" I take to be a euphemism for that sickly sentimentality which shuts its eyes to the more stern and distressing aspects of human nature. The theological doctrines which Mr. Morison has in view all centre round the colossal, overwhelming fact of sin. It is all very well to ridicule the mysteries of theology. But you cannot get rid of the darker mysteries of sin and suffering, of sin actual, of sin inherited; of personal and vicarious penalties. The moral evil in the universe is even more appalling than the physical, and raises problems not less terrible and insoluble. Vainly do we try to put them aside as relics of first education. They come back unwelcome visitants when we least desire to see them. We cannot bury them deep enough. In the hour of our greatest successes, of our most cherished happiness, *apparent diræ facies*. And what is their practical meaning? In what direction shall we seek the solution of the enigma? Kant tells us that the moral law inevitably humiliates every one who compares it with the sensual tendencies of his own nature. Why? Whence that moral law which cannot be the expression of my own