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When the new Society was launched, the names of the two Archbishops (Tenison and Sharp) appear among the founders, as well as Bishops Wake, Potter, Compton, Patrick, Burnet, Beveridge, Hough, Gibson, Gastrell, Wilson; and Dean Prideaux, Evelyn and Robert Nelson. Burnet gives praise, not undeserved, to the King for the zeal which he displayed on behalf of the new Society. But it must be confessed that the Society bore one sign of its time greatly to be lamented. There was no provision for a Colonial Episcopate, though one of the cries of the Colonists was for supervision and union. For many a long year the American clergy had to come over to England to be ordained.

W. BENHAM.

*(To be continued.)*



## ART. V.—NATIONAL REPENTANCE.

### II. MATERIALISM.

THE Bishops of England, in the united call to prayer during the last year of the dying century, to which I drew your attention in the last paper, used the following language :

“The spirit of materialism which has invaded national and social life, the consequent relaxation of the sense of personal responsibility, the power and influence of sins which lower national character, such as intemperance, gambling and self-indulgence, and the thoughtless and indolent acquiescence in grave public evils—these things, which sadly contrast with the blessings and advantages given to us by God, loudly call us to prayer.”

It is to Materialism and its moral consequences that I would address myself in this number.

The Bishops do not mean that a great number of persons have consciously become Materialists. Materialism is so terrible a doctrine, and so few people think things out for themselves, that it is most improbable that many would take such an awful step as that. But there is generally some particular philosophy that prevails in the centres of thought of any particular country, such as the Universities and the scientific schools; and about thirty years ago, when the last generation was flourishing, there was a school of materialistic teaching in England which has greatly affected, and is still greatly affecting, the life of the country. That school has, thank God, given way to a wiser and better school, which does not think that an account of matter and its laws is a

sufficient answer to the puzzle of life. But a very considerable number of our scientific teachers and writers continue to speak as if matter was everything; and this certainly has the effect of seeming to put God away out of the minds of their readers and hearers. So the idea of the present, the material, the visible, the tangible, the sensuous, has taken possession of the minds and hearts of a great many men and women of all ranks and classes, to the exclusion of the future, the spiritual, the invisible, the ideal; and the change in the conduct of people who put aside all thoughts of things higher than the things of earth is very great indeed.

There is another consequence of the materialistic philosophy of thirty years ago, which has the same results. Many people have found that Materialism was too strong in one direction, just as they thought belief in God was too strong in the other, and therefore they have said: "We really cannot be certain about any of these things at all; so we will put both Materialism and belief in God aside, and we will call ourselves Know-nothings and Agnostics. We will investigate every kind of science, but beyond scientific investigation we will make no inquiry whatever." Now, these people have not understood that directly you come to the border of scientific investigation you come to the province of faith. Even science itself requires a great deal of faith behind it, because you can never say why things are, but only that so they come about; and you can never be absolutely certain that things are going to happen as they have always done, but only that there is a strong probability that they will happen. But, at any rate, when you get to the end of the province of science there is the domain of faith. You do not know how life began, or what it is; you do not know whether matter is eternal, or whether space is infinite. Directly you leave the things that you can touch and see you are surrounded with mysteries. And then a strong, manly faith takes you by the hand, and tells you that it is not reasonable for human beings to go through this momentous epoch of their earthly life without forming any suppositions or conclusions which will supply the most satisfactory account available for the riddles of existence, the most trustworthy guide that can be found for their principles and conduct, especially when there is so much real, solid, true ground on which to rest those conclusions. Faith is not demonstration, but faith is just as much a duty of the human intellect as knowledge, and it must always rest on reasonable foundations. Life without some kind of faith is impossible, but life with a poor, shrunken, distorted, misguided, impoverished, unspiritual faith is shipwreck.

I will not trouble you with a very long account of Materialism.

It is the attempt to account for every development of the Creation as we see it, even the mind of man, without God. Even thought itself, even the consciousness of thought, is supposed to be merely the movement of material atoms in the brain. It is an old and clumsy theory, and really accounts for nothing. The first Materialist was an ancient and distinguished Greek philosopher, Democritus, who lived about 460 years before Christ, and was shocked by the polytheism of his countrymen. This theory, therefore, has been before the world for upwards of 2,300 years, and its absurdities have been over and over again pointed out. "Materialism," says the Italian reformer Mazzini, "the philosophy of all expiring epochs and peoples in decay, is, historically speaking, an old phenomenon, inseparable from the death of a religious dogma. It is the reaction of those superficial intellects which, incapable of taking a comprehensive view of the life of humanity, and tracing and deducing its essential characteristics from tradition, deny the religious ideal itself." It is, briefly, that matter existed originally in countless minute particles or atoms all over space; that these touched each other; that thus there grew a wider and wider movement among the whole mass: and that consequently all the complexities of the universe began to grow. The Materialists taught that there was no Mind to guide them, but that all these movements came by Necessity. What Necessity was they cannot say. They really explain nothing at all. Why the atoms moved they cannot say. Where they came from they cannot say. Whether they began to fall down, or fall up, or fall to the side, or whirl round, they cannot say. All they want us to believe is that somehow or other they were there: somehow or other, without a Power to direct them, they fell together and combined, and formed suns and constellations all over the Universe, with all their marvels and glories, both of beauty, grandeur, and variety in nature, and splendour and power in the mind of man—in fact, formed Moses, Socrates, Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, Bacon, and even Jesus Christ Himself. "The doctrine of the Materialists," said Sir Humphry Davy, the greatest of chemists, "was always, even in my youth, a cold, heavy, dull, and insupportable doctrine to me, and necessarily tending to Atheism."

Such a theory needs only to be stated in order to see that it bristles with difficulties for which it offers no apology.

For instance, some constellations are much older than others. If all the atoms were there, equally governed by necessity, why did some begin earlier than others? Why did they not all begin before, and before, and before, an infinity of before? Some are not yet begun. You can see the

unfinished constellations any clear night in the nebulae, or masses of stellar vapour which are studded about amongst the completed stars. Why are these not yet begun? Or what gave the atoms their original right to be, or to fall, or to whirl, or to join, or to produce such marvellous results as Light and Heat?

Another difficulty: How can you think of matter at all without some mind to realize it? Unless you think of mind, witnessing, observing, noticing matter, how are you to know that it is there at all? Or how is matter, evidently unconscious itself, to evolve mind?

There is another difficulty: How can you get life out of matter? Men of science have tried every combination of atoms, under every variety of conditions, and they have manufactured compound substances, but obtained no sign of spontaneous life. The great naturalist Cuvier said that it was quite inconsistent to suppose that life could be produced by atoms, however perfectly arranged according to their relationships. The influence or action which life exercises on the elements composing any organism is exactly contrary to what would happen to them if there were no life. How, then, could life be produced by them? It is something mysterious, higher, of altogether a different kind, breathed into matter by some higher Power. In a word, matter is itself lifeless: life is spirit. "Materialism," said a thoughtful American writer, "teaches in defiance of all reason that Matter is capable of producing Mind. But let us for a moment inquire how. Matter has one set of properties, mind another; they are so entirely different as to have nothing in common between them. To mind we cannot ascribe the properties of solidity, extension, figure, colour. Of matter we cannot predicate understanding, will, affections. How, then, is Matter to produce Mind?"

Once more—and this difficulty is most serious: Materialism of course does away with the immortality of the soul, as well as denying the existence of God. But if there is no God, and if your soul utterly perishes at death, where do you get any sanction for morality? How should we secure any respect for each other's rights and feelings, such as would insure at any rate some amount of happiness? There are, alas! certain sections of society, people that are reckless and unprincipled among the rich, who have no fear of God before their eyes, and others down in the very lowest depths of the social scale who are steeped in vice and every kind of moral squalor. In neither of these sections is there anything that deserves to be called happiness. The one set find their only relief in the excitement of gambling and sin; the other set drown their

misery in the gin-shop. They are an example of the kind of change that would take place if the great truths of the Being of God and the immortality of the soul were hidden from the thoughts of the whole race of men alike. At present the vast majority of mankind believe them in some sort of way and in varying degrees, and the standard of moral conduct is raised in accordance with such deep and far-reaching truths: once take them away and there would be no difference between right and wrong, except merely what was held to be useful, nothing to protect the honour of your wives and daughters, no check on universal selfishness. The whole tone of the moral standard would be altered, and a race of men without hope would lead lives of mere self-pleasing, shadowed throughout by the unhappiness that is inseparable from sensuality and worldliness. St. Paul has summed it all up: "What advantageth me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

When the mind of man goes back towards the beginning of things, towards the thought of Creation, it is met by the idea of an Almighty, self-existent Being, the boundary, if we may say so, of human thought and knowledge, without which human thought and knowledge would seem to be impossible. Here we lean on scientific faith in no greater degree than we do when we speak of atoms, of space, and of other scientific ideas, which are necessary, but which we cannot prove. It is only possible for us to form an analogy about God and creation from what we know of our own active and productive powers. We can mould and dispose of matter, and that is what the Self-existent Being did originally in an infinite way, and on a universal scale. God's Divine activity distinguished the ideas He thought of producing from other ideas; then He realized these ideas in Creation. The world is in space, and space is in God. God is the absolute Cause of everything, God is absolute goodness, absolute love, absolute power, absolute wisdom: from Him everything derives its existence, its maintenance, and its purpose. Goodness exists: we know it: from whence did it come? It could only come from absolute eternal goodness, the true goodness, the glorious ideal of perfect goodness; and that is God Himself. So with every other quality and attribute of existence. Creation is not aimless, not merely a wonderful, sublime display of power and force; it is working out its way to perfection as His thought designed. Lower forms of existence lead to higher ones, from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, from animal to intellectual, from intellectual to spiritual. The community of man's life with God, so far as this can be attained, is the end of all creation. And so the

whole glorious plan and working of the great Self-existent Being is dimly seen in outline; and it is realized that what we can see and understand of it is entirely in harmony with reason where materialism is impossible and absurd. Belief in God and the soul gives an account of the facts which explains them, and which we can receive.

And so the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton concludes his scientific creed: "This admirably beautiful structure of sun, planets, and comets, could not have originated except in the wisdom and sovereignty of an intelligent and powerful Being. He rules all things, not as the soul of the world, but as the Lord of all. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient—that is, His duration is from eternity to eternity, and His presence from infinity to infinity. He governs all things, and has knowledge of all things that are done or can be done. He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite. He is not duration and space, but He is ever, and is present everywhere. We know Him only by means of His properties and attributes, and by means of the supremely wise and infinite constructions of the world and their final causes; we admire Him for His perfection; we worship and venerate Him for His sovereignty. For we worship Him as His servants; and a God without sovereignty, providence, and final causes, is nothing else than fate and nature. From a blind metaphysical necessity which, of course, is the same always and everywhere, no variety could originate. The whole diversity of created things in regard to places and times could have its origin only in the ideas and the will of a necessarily existing Being."

I have given you a very brief and imperfect sketch of Materialism; but with the wise and, I think, decisive pronouncement of Sir Isaac Newton—one of the very greatest, most independent and least biassed names in the history of Science—we will leave off, because my real purpose in these remarks is not to offer you a philosophical disquisition, but to put before you what the Bishops speak of as the invasion of national and social life by the spirit of Materialism—that is to say, in its moral and religious consequences.

Now, as I said before, a great many easy-going people, inclined to worldliness and to sensualism, are glad enough to borrow the general principles of Materialism, without understanding the absurdity of the premises on which it rests, or the disastrous nature of the results of those premises. They have a sort of vague, hazy, borrowed notion, which suits with their own natural predilections, that an effective belief in God and the soul and revealed religion is obsolete, and set aside by those whom they style thinking, practical, reasonable

men. They pass the conception of God into the region of the unknowable. They treat the idea of the soul as a quantity that may be neglected. If the notion of immortality presents itself to them at all, they think it will be all right with such respectable persons as themselves, or they decline to think about it at all. As to any theory of responsibility, they are entirely the creatures of convention, and are satisfied to do as other people do about them, so long as they do not transgress the artificial social code by which their set is bound.

The result of this unthinking complaisance, so largely prevalent in the world of to-day, is this: The great mass of men and women who are not religious treat material prosperity as the great thing to be aimed at. The ordinary man on the Stock Exchange, the ordinary promoter of companies, the ordinary man of commerce and business, regards the making of a fortune as the chief object in life. I need hardly remind you that this is a most enervating and degrading pursuit. It is well symbolized in the "Pilgrim's Progress" as the occupation of the Man with the Muckrake. It tends to obscure, and finally to exclude, all the ideas that make life noble and truly enjoyable: unselfishness, self-restraint, generosity, kindness, sympathy, idealism, thirst for progress and improvement, and the tender, heartfelt, practical care for all forms of sorrow and suffering. The passion for amassing treasure on the part of those who are working, and the determination to spend treasure on amusement on the part of those who have received fortunes from those who have gone before them, are two of the most marked features of the age.

And the tendency has been helped by the marvels of discovery. Brilliant as they have been, they have tended more to the increase of material prosperity than to the elevation of the mind. Steam travelling by sea and land, the miracles of machinery, the triumphs of electricity, the charms of photography, all the manifold and almost infinite appliances of science to labour, have worked in an absolutely incredible degree to the increase of material comfort, of systematic luxury, to an exaggerated estimate of the value of riches and to the habitual pursuit of pleasure. Now, these are just the very influences which, if not watched and corrected and dominated, tend to create clouds of self-satisfaction and physical exuberance which combine to exclude God, and the higher and noble life, and self-denial, and sympathy, and the spirit of love, and chivalry, and purity, and idealism, and duty, and all that has made our country great.

I would urge all who know what the true life means, that they should not allow it to be obscured by the reflex and unsuspected influence of Materialism. The true life means

trust in the great Creator and Ruler of all things, in whom we live and move and have our being. It means recognition of the truth of the immortality of the soul, and its supreme value as responsible after its earthly time of probation before the judgment-seat of the Most High God. It means the cultivation of high and pure thought on the mysteries of existence, the marvels of the Creation, the possibilities of man. It means an earnest and determined refusal to submit to the general, unthinking tendencies of the world, which end where all unthinking movements must end, in shipwreck and disaster. It means the cultivation of benevolence instead of selfishness; of self-restraint instead of irregular impulse; of self-government instead of yielding to every tide of human passion; of universal love instead of a cold, unsympathetic, exclusive regard for self-interest; of self-sacrifice instead of that unlovely ambition which at every step makes new enemies; of Divine law instead of human conveniences; of hope for the future instead of the dull dismal horizon of finality and extinction which is all he is able to look for who limits his views and principles to Materialism; no reunion with lost friends, no completion of imperfect aspirations, no realization of ideals dreamed of here below, no gathering up of tangled threads, no rationalization of mixed and disappointed earthly existence, no reward for virtue and endurance, no punishment for vice and mischief and ruin.

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.* I believe that for none of my readers has the dreary and hopeless creed of the Materialist any attraction whatever. I am sure that with all their hearts and souls they believe in God, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise, whom no man hath seen or can see, whom no man hath heard or can hear. Such a belief is the only reasonable account of our own existence, and it is supported by universal and most convincing testimony. Then, I ask them not to submit to the influence of the Materialists—to think little of wealth and luxury and comfort and pleasure, and much of duty, responsibility, faith, pure life, high thought, charitable sympathy and benevolence. Here they will find exercise for their noblest faculties. Here they will be co-operating with the Almighty Ruler of all things, and they will be conscious of His approval. Here they will be providing for their own happiness, both in this life and the next, for happiness is the inseparable reward of virtue, both for the life that now is and for the unending hereafter.

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

