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THE BEAUTIES
OF
THE PRAYER-BOOK.

PART III.



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THE
BEAUTIES OF THE PRAYER-BOOK.

A COMMINATION ;

OR, DENOUNCING OF GOD'S ANGER AND JUDGMENTS
AGAINST SINNERS.

THIS service is too beautiful to be passed over without a word of homage ; the spectacle of the Church raving and cursing is too edifying to be ungratefully ignored. " Brethren, in the primitive Church there was a godly discipline that, at the beginning of Lent, such persons as stood convicted of notorious sin were put to open penance and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved. . . . Instead whereof (until the said discipline may be restored again, which is much to be wished), it is thought good," &c. That is, in other words: " In days gone by, we were able to bite, as well as to bark ; now that our mouths are muzzled we can only snarl ; but, until the old power comes back, which is much to be wished, let us, since we cannot bite, show our teeth and growl as viciously as we can, so that people may understand that it is only the power that is wanting, and not the will, and that, if we could, we would torture and burn as vigorously as we curse and damn." And promptly the priest begins with his curses, and all the people say Amen : what a pretty sight—a whole church full of Christians with one consent cursing their neighbours ! Then comes an exhortation ; as so many curses are flying about we must take care of our heads : " Let us, remembering the

dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, and *always ready to fall upon us*, return to our Lord God." Always ready to fall; but is God, then, always lying in wait to catch us tripping, and crush us with his judgments? Does he punish gladly, and keep his blow suspended, to fall at the first chance our weakness gives him? If so, by no means let us return to our Lord God, but let us rather try to put a considerable distance between himself and us, and endeavour, like the prophet Jonah, to flee from the presence of the Lord. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: he shall pour down rain upon the sinners, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest." And who made the sinners? Who called them into the world without their own consent? Who made them with an evil nature? Who moulded them as the potter the clay? Who made it impossible for them to go to Jesus unless he drew them, and then did not draw them? If God wants to pour fire and brimstone on anybody, he should pour it on himself, for he made the sinners, and is responsible for their existence and their sin. "It shall be too late to knock when the door shall be shut; too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice." How utterly repulsive is this picture of the popular and traditional God: how black the colours wherein is painted this Moloch; surely the artist must have been sketching a picture of the devil, and by mistake wrote under it the name of God when he should have put the name of Satan. If, however, we submit ourselves, and walk in his ways, and seek his glory, and serve him duly—that is, if we acknowledge injustice to be justness, and cruelty to be mercy, and evil to be good—then we shall escape "the extreme malediction which shall light upon them that shall be set on the left hand." On the whole, brave men and women will prefer to do rightly and justly here, caring much about serving man, and nothing about glorifying such a God, and leaving the

malediction alone, very sure that no punishment can befall a man for living nobly, and that no fear need cloud the death-bed of him who has made his life a blessing to mankind.

Of course, after all this preface, come cringing confessions of sin. The 51st Psalm leads the way, the congregation having by this time become so thoroughly confused that they see no incongruity in saying that when God has built the walls of Jerusalem he will be pleased with burnt offerings and oblations, and that "then shall they offer young bullocks upon thy altar." As a matter of fact, they have no intention of offering young bullocks at all—bullocks having become too useful to be wasted in that fashion—but they have so thoroughly left the realm of common sense that they have become unconscious of the absurdities which they repeat. The gross exaggeration of the concluding prayers must be patent to everyone; they are full of the hysteria which passes for piety. "We are grieved and wearied with the burden of our sins," although most of the congregation will forget all about the burden before they leave the church: we are "vile earth and miserable sinners;" we "meekly acknowledge our vileness." One longs to shake them all, and tell them to stand up like men and women, instead of cringing there like cowards, whining about their vileness. If they are vile, why don't they mend, instead of saying the same thing every year? They should be ashamed to tell God of their miserable condition year after year, when his grace is sufficient for them, and they might be perfect as their Father in heaven.

The Church in all this service reminds one of nothing so much as a wicked old crone, who whines to the parson and scolds all the children. In days gone by the old woman has been the terror of the village, and her sturdy arm has been shown on many a black eye and bruised face; now she can no longer

strike, she can only curse; she can no longer tyrannise, she can only scowl; her palsied tongue still mutters the curses which her shrivelled arm can no longer translate into act, and in her bleared eye, in her wrinkled cheeks, in her shaking frame, we read the record of an evil youth, wherein she abused her strength, and we see descending upon her the gloom of a dishonoured age, and the night of a fathomless despair.

FORMS OF PRAYER

TO BE USED AT SEA.

There is now a special service used at the launching of her Imperial Majesty's war-vessels which has not yet found its way into the Prayer-Book; curious thoughts arise in the mind in contemplating that fashion, conjoined to the office to be "used in her Majesty's navy every day." How does God protect "the persons of us, thy servants, and the fleet in which we serve?" Does prayer make bad ships more seaworthy, or supply the place of stout iron and sound wood? If the ship is not safe without prayer, will prayer make it so? If not, what is the use of praying over it? Either the ship is seaworthy or it is not: if it is, it will sail safely without prayer; if it is not, will prayer carry the rotten ship through the storm? If prayer be so efficacious, would it not be cheaper to use less wood and more prayer? Bad materials roughly put together, would serve, for a curate would be cheaper than a shipwright, and much prayer would enable us to dispense with much labour. In "storms at sea" a special prayer is to be used: "O most powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof:" "O send

thy word of command to rebuke the raging winds and the roaring sea." Is not this the prayer of utter ignorance, the prayer of an unscientific age? For what does the prayer imply? Only the modest request that the state of the atmosphere round the whole globe may be modified to suit the convenience of a small ship! And not only that, but also that the whole course of weather may be changed during countless yesterdays, the weather of to-day being only an effect caused by them. Such prayers were offered up in former days by a people who knew nothing of the inviolability of natural order, and who imagined that the weather might be changed at their bidding as the clerk may push on the hands of the church clock. The sailors are very frank in their confession: "When we have been safe and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgot thee, our God. . . But now we see how terrible thou art in all thy works of wonder; the great God to be feared above all." At any rate they cannot be accused of hypocrisy in their dealings with God! Nor is this all. Short prayers are provided for those who have no time for the long ones; and if the danger grows very pressing, everybody who can be spared is to join in a special confession of sins, taken from the Communion Office. It would surely be well to avoid a very pious crew, as they might be wasting the time in prayer which might save the ship by work. One serious thought presents itself for consideration in connection with this supposed power of God to smooth the turbulent billows. Many ships go down year after year; many thousands of lives sink in the pitiless ocean; many a bitter wail goes up from drowning crews; how wickedly cruel to have such power and to see the ship sink in the storm; how icily stony to have such power and to watch unmoved the agony of the perishing.

The prayers against the enemy are beautiful effusions; some of the children praying the All-father

to enable them to slay his other children: "Stir up thy strength, O Lord, and come and help us." What a curious request. Does the All-strong require to stir up his strength before he can crush a few men? "Judge between us and our enemies." But suppose the enemy is in the right, what then? Suppose English sailors are on the wrong side, as in the dispute between George III. and the American Colonies, such a prayer then becomes a prayer for defeat, not an encouraging thought with which to go into battle. The prayers are also offensive for their cowardice of tone: "Let not our sins now cry against us for vengeance; but hear us thy poor servants begging mercy, and imploring thy help." The praises after victory are as objectionable as the prayers before: "The Lord hath covered our heads and made us to stand in the day of battle." And what of the poor wounded, groaning below in the cockpit, whose heads the Lord hath not covered? "The Lord hath overthrown our enemies, and dashed in pieces those that rose up against us." How thoroughly savage and bloodthirsty the thanksgiving! Is God supposed to rejoice over the sufferings of the defeated? Is he to be thanked for slaying his creatures? And then the victory is to be improved to the "advancement of thy gospel;" the gospel of so-called peace and goodwill is to be advanced by cannon-ball and torpedo, by sabre and cutlass. Truly they must believe that Jesus came to send a sword through the earth. And yet this is the true spirit of Christianity; of the creed which has shed more human blood than any other faith; of the creed which won its way through Europe with the crucifix in one hand, and the battle-axe in the other; of the creed that tortured innumerable victims on the rack, and which lit the funeral pyres of the martyrs; of the creed whose cross has ever been crimson-red, not with the blood of one who died to save humanity, but with the blood of a humanity sacrificed to the glory of God.

Ordaining Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. 9

THE FORM AND MANNER OF
MAKING, ORDAINING, AND CONSECRATING
OF
BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND DEACONS,
ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF
THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND
AND IRELAND.

If the Church of England confined herself in her ministrations to offices which had some demonstrable effect, her occupation would be gone. These Ordination offices stand on a par with that of Confirmation. In both, the Holy Ghost is given by imposition of episcopal hands; in both, no appreciable results follow the gift. The preface to these offices says: "It is evident unto all men diligently reading the Holy Scripture and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." The "evidence" of this appears doubtful, seeing that all Presbyterians acknowledge no such triple order, and regard bishops as an invention of the devil, and "the pride of prelacy" as "a rag of the scarlet" lady. The three offices before us may, to all intents and purposes, be treated as one, for they are the progressive steps of the ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, from the poor deacon-curate on 70*l.* a year at the bottom, to the archbishop luxuriating on 15,000*l.* a year at the top. There is much of solemn farce in the opening: the archdeacon presents the candidates for ordination to the bishop, and the reverend father in God, who has had them examined, who knows all about them, and has probably dined with them the night before, gravely responds: "Take heed that the persons whom ye present unto us be apt and meet, for their learning and godly conversa-

sation, to exercise their ministry duly, to the honour of God and the edifying of his Church." For the learning of some young clergymen, the less said about it the better, but those presented have at least scraped through the bishop's examination, and will not now be turned back. The question is simply a sham, and both candidates and bishop would be thoroughly astonished if the archdeacon replied that any one of them was deficient.

The Litany follows after this, and then the Communion Office, with special Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. After the Oath of Supremacy, the bishop examines the candidates for the diaconate: "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" is asked of each, and each answers: "I trust so." This ought to be a solemn question: to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost is surely an important thing; and when one remembers how very little many of these young men, fresh from college, seem to think of the matter, and how one chooses the Church because it is "gentlemanly," and another because there is a fat living in the family, and another because he is too stupid for any other profession, we can scarcely help wondering at the workings of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man. They are also asked if they "unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures." If they really do believe them at their ordination much change must take place in after life, judging by the amount of scepticism among the clergy. Much of the fault lies in pledging young men of three-and-twenty to absolute belief in what they have probably studied but little; at college all their instruction is in *Christian Evidences*, not in attacks on Christianity; they really know but little of the anti-Christian arguments, and therefore are naturally shaken when they learn them further on. Then the deacon is to read Homilies in Church, and promises to do so, although he never

Ordaining Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. 11

fulfils the promise, and he vows to obey his "Ordinary and other chief ministers of the Church . . . following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions." How well the deacons and priests keep this pledge may be seen in the daily struggles between them and their bishops, and in the necessity of passing a Public Worship Regulation Act for the easier suppression of rebellious priests. A year must intervene between the diaconate and the priesthood, and when this year has run, the youthful aspirant to the power of the keys presents himself once more before the Father in God, and the same farce of question and answer is repeated. The service runs as in that for deacons, save the special Epistle and Gospel, until after the Oath of Supremacy; and then comes a long exhortation, wherein what strikes us most is the complete contrast between the priest in theory and the priest in practice: "If it shall happen the same Church, or any member thereof, to take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue . . . see that you never cease your labour, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." Now change the scene to six weeks later, and our young priest is playing croquet and flirting meekly with his rector's daughters, oblivious of the "horrible punishment" he is incurring from Hodge at the public-house getting drunk unrebuked. "Consider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures . . . and for this selfsame cause how ye ought to forsake and set aside (as much as you may) all worldly cares and studies."

Alas for the special vanities of country clergymen; this one botanizes, and that one zoologizes, and another one geologizes, and a fourth is devoted to his garden, and a fifth to his poultry, and a sixth to his farming, not to speak of those who adorn the bench of magistrates and sternly sentence wicked poachers, and sinful old women who pick up sticks, and children who steal flowers. It may be urged that no set of men could possibly live the life sketched in this exhortation: granted; but, then, why pretend that they are bound to live it, and threaten horrible punishments if they do not perform the impossible? Besides, the bishop expresses his hope that they have well considered the whole matter, and have "clearly determined, by God's grace . . . you will apply yourself wholly to this one thing, and draw all your cares and studies this way." When the time comes to put the questions to the candidates, this very point forms one of them: "Will you be diligent in prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same, laying aside the study of the world and the flesh?" And the candidates solemnly promise to do that which they must know they have no intention of doing. One might further urge, that the perpetual meddlingness enjoined in this Office on the priest would make that individual a perfect nuisance to his parishioners if he tried to carry it into practice, and that he would probably very often find his ministrations cut short with unpleasant emphasis. The consecration follows in due course: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and work of a priest in the Church of God . . . Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained." And yet some people pretend that the Church of England does not sanction an absolving priesthood! If these words have any meaning, they mean that the young men now

ordained have the most awful power given into their hands, that they can, in very truth, lock and unlock heaven, for by their absolution the forgiven sinner may enter, while through their retainment of his sins he may be shut out. How tremendous then is the authority thus given into hands so young and so untried. And surely such power is not to be wasted? Surely it is the duty of these priests to be continually urging people to seek, and continually to be giving absolution. Why should one sinner die unshriven, when such death may be prevented by the diligence of the priest? Life would be impossible were all this really believed; what priest could live in reasonable comfort if this were true and were realised? All earthly things would sink into insignificance, and life would become a desperate struggle to save and absolve the perishing; real belief would end its days in a lunatic asylum.

The Consecration of Archbishop or Bishop is somewhat more ceremonious, but is one in character with the preceding offices. The promise to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word is one the fulfilment of which brings unfortunate bishops nowadays into much trouble in the flesh. For when a Colenso "comes down like a wolf on the fold," and a faithful Bishop of Oxford forbids him to tear the lambs of his flock, immediately people mutter "bigoted," "narrow-minded," "tyranny," with sundry other unpleasant adjectives and nouns. Yet can there be no doubt that he of Oxon was only obeying his ordination vow. In truth the present spirit of liberty is thoroughly at issue with the spirit of these offices, and the only effect of maintaining them is to create hypocrites and vow breakers. Nor is it fair to judge too harshly those who break these foolish vows, for a man may honestly think that he can best serve his generation as clergyman, and may have a general belief in

Christianity, and he may then argue that he cannot permit himself to be kept out of a wide sphere of usefulness by a few obsolete vows. The pity is that men, whose common sense is too strong to be bound by foolish promises taken in ignorance in their youth, do not join earnestly together to remove this stumbling-block from before the feet of the next generation, so that, if they deem their church valuable, they may preserve her by adapting her to the realities of the nineteenth instead of the sixteenth century, and may make her services something more than a farce, her ceremonies something better than a show.

THE ARTICLES.

It is a little difficult to make out how far the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England—"the forty stripes save one"—are binding or non-binding on her members. There is, of course, no question that they accurately sketch her doctrines, and that all her faithful children should accept and believe them with devout piety, but scarcely any dogma can be enforced by law against the laity, the whole spirit of the time being directly antagonistic to such enforcement. But there is no doubt that these Articles are both legally and morally binding on the clergy, as they voluntarily submit themselves to them, and declare their full and free belief in them when entering upon the enjoyment of any benefice of the Establishment. The Royal Declaration, prefixed to the Articles, is sweeping and decisive enough. "The Articles of the Church of England do contain the true doctrine of the Church of England agreeable to God's word; which we do therefore ratify and confirm, requiring all our loving subjects to continue in the uniform profession thereof, and prohibiting the least difference from the said

Articles." After this distinct declaration we are commanded "That no man hereafter shall either print, or preach, to draw the Article aside either way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense." When any outsider has read this declaration it becomes to him one of the mysteries of the faith how it is that English gentlemen, honest, honourable men in everything else, manage to accept livings on condition of declaring their full concord with these Articles, and then deliberately twist them into non-natural meanings, in order that they may be Roman Catholic or Latitudinarian, according to the opinions of the readers. It may, certainly, be conceded that the "literal and grammatical sense" is very often nonsense, and therefore cannot be believed; perfectly true: but these honest men have no right to give the weight of their culture and their goodness to bolster up this falling Church, whose dogmas they can never accept, except by transfiguring their unreason into reason, and their folly into wisdom. Many who are ignorant, and careless, and uncultured are kept as nominal members of the Anglican Church because a glamour is thrown over it by the Broad Church clergy; but their position cannot be too strongly reprobated, *so long as they make no effort to alter that in which they do not believe, so long as they silently support superstitions which without their aid would, long ago, have crumbled into ruin.*

Article I. deals with "Faith in the Holy Trinity." Most creeds, certainly all Oriental creeds, cluster around a Trinity; the root of the worship of the Trinity is struck deep into the nature of man, for it is the worship of the life universal, localised in the giver of the life individual, under the symbol of the phallic emblem, the creator of each new existence. The Christian Trinity has, naturally, outgrown the

primal barbarism of Nature-worship, although preserving the Trinity in unity: "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions . . . and in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." So far have we travelled under the guidance of the Church, and we have before our mind's eye, one God, uncorporeate, passionless, indivisible, and yet divided into three "persons," thus implying three individualities, separate the one from the other. Let us remember that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, but that since there is but one God, the Father is the Son, and the Son is the Holy Ghost, and since the Father is the same as the Son, and the Son is the same as the Holy Ghost, the Father and the Holy Ghost must necessarily be identical. Article II. teaches us that "the Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance;" the Son: that is, the Second Person in the undivided and indivisible Trinity: "begotten from everlasting of the Father;" but the Father is one with the Son, for both are God, and yet there is but one God, and therefore Son and Father are interchangeable terms; the Son then is begotten from everlasting of himself, for in the one true God no division is possible, and "such as the Father is such is the Son;" and further, the Son, being the Son, and at the same time identical with his own Father, takes man's nature: then the Father and the Holy Ghost must also take man's nature, for "such as the Son such is the Father, and such is the Holy Ghost:" and God, "without body," takes man's body, and "without parts" is crucified, and "without passions" suffers. But the Son dies "to reconcile his Father to us;" but he is his Father, and his

Father is himself. Can the one living and true God die to reconcile himself to himself, and to offer himself up a sacrifice to himself to appease his own wrath? The bodiless is nailed on the cross: the impassible suffers: the undying dies: the one God on earth is offered to appease the one God in heaven, and there is but one living and true God. If this be so, either the God in heaven or the God on earth must have been a false God, for there is but one true God: and the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who must be kept indivisible in thought, hang upon the cross, as a sacrifice to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and cry, being the one true God, to "my God, my God" who has forsaken himself. And all this "to reconcile the Father to us:" the Father who is "without passions," and who therefore cannot be angry or need reconciliation. "As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also it is to be believed that he went down into hell." *Down* into hell; which way is down from a round globe? In the ancient conception of the universe the earth was flat, with heaven above and hell underneath, and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when the earth opened her mouth, "went down quick (alive) into hell:" did Jesus do the same? But, hanging on the cross, he said to the penitent thief: "*To-day* shalt thou be with me in Paradise:" is Paradise the same hell? and is heaven identical with both? Jesus ascended, went up, not down, to heaven: if this be so, might not some confusion arise on the way, for a soul starting downwards from Australia on its way to hell, might be found soaring upwards from England after a few hours' journey. Are heaven and hell both all round the world, and if so, why is one "up" and the other "down"? Rome was right and wise when she set her face sternly against the heliocentric theory; a revolving globe destroys all the old notions of the "heaven above," and of "the water under the earth," and of hell below; and it was a strong argument

against the sphericity of the earth that "in the day of judgment, men on the other side of a globe could not see the Lord descending through the air." The Fourth Article teaches us that Christ "took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature; *wherewith* he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth." Body, flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to man's nature; wishes, and appetites, and needs, heart and lungs, for instance; and he took these beyond the atmosphere? lungs to breathe where no air is? heart to pulse where no oxygen can purify the blood? flesh and bones among pure spirits? the form of man sitting on the throne of God? and this flesh, bones, &c., all one with the indivisible, from the God without body and parts, and Jesus the Son of Mary, the crucified man, sitting in his flesh and bones in heaven, not to be separated in thought from the one living and true God, without body, parts, or passions.* Such is the "literal and grammatical sense" of the first four Articles, and to analyse the Fifth, "of the Holy Ghost," would be simply to repeat all that has been said above, since "such is the Son, such is the Holy Ghost." May it not justly be said that belief in the Trinity in Unity is the negation of thought, and that faith is only possible where reason ends?

Article VI. deals with "the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation," and lays down the Canon that anything not capable of proof from the Bible must not be "required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The converse of this proposition, that dogmas that can be proved therefrom *are* necessary to salvation, is said not to be binding on the Church, and some notable "depravers" of the Scriptures have successfully slipped through this Article. The list of books given as those "of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church"

* 1 Cor. xv. 50.

seems open to grave objections, as the authority of many of the books now accounted canonical has been distinctly challenged. "The history of Jonah is so monstrous that it is absolutely incredible." "Job spake not therefore as it stands written in his book." "Isaiah hath borrowed his whole art and knowledge from David." Thus, among many other staid criticisms, wrote Luther. To go further back, is to find much sharp challenging. The Epistle to the Hebrews is of most doubtful authenticity. The 2nd Epistle of Peter and that of Jude are debateable. The Revelation of St. John the Divine was very slowly received, and the two shorter Epistles which bear his name are dubiously recognised. If only the books are to be received of which there "was never any doubt in the Church," the canonical list must be shorn of most of its ornaments. When Article VII. tells us that the ceremonial and civil precepts of the Old Testament are not binding upon us, it seems a pity that some test is not given whereby unlearned people may be able to distinguish between the "Commandments which are called moral" and the others. Is the command to persecute non-believers in Jehovah (Deut. xiii., xvii. 2—7) binding to-day? Is the command to put Witches to death (Lev. xx. 27) binding to-day? John Wesley said that belief in witchcraft was incumbent on all those who believed the Bible, and if witchcraft was possible then why not now? or has God changed his mind as to the proper method of dealing with such persons? Are the commands enjoining and regulating Slavery (Ex. xxi. 2—6, and 20, 21; Lev. xxv. 44—46; Deut. xv. 12—18) intended for the guidance of slave-holders to-day? What is there to make the "Commandments which are called moral"—by which we may presume are meant the Ten Commandments—more binding on "Christian men" than the other parts of the law? The Fourth Commandment

is essentially a Jewish one, and is not obeyed among Christians. The Second Commandment is invariably ignored, and the Fifth promises a reward which is not given. The Commandments touching murder, adultery, stealing, lying are not peculiar to the Mosaic code. They are found in all moral legislation, and are binding—not because taught by Moses or by Buddha, but—because their observance is necessary to the existence of society. Of the three Creeds of the Church we have already spoken, so pass to Article IX., “of Original or Birth-sin.” It seems that a fault and corruption of Nature are naturally “engendered of the offspring of Adam,” and that this fault “in every person born into the world deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.” That seems scarcely fair, since the infant’s consent is not asked before he is born into the world, and the fault of being born is, therefore, none of his. How, then, can the babe *deserve* God’s wrath and damnation? And seeing that the very next Article (X.) informs us that our condition is such that a man “cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God,” it appears terribly unjust that either child or man should be held accursed because they do not do what God has made them incapable of doing. It would be as reasonable to torture a man for not flying without wings, as for God to punish man for being born of the race of Adam, and for not turning to God when the power so to do is withheld; for “we have *no power to do good works . . . without the grace of God by Christ*,” and when that grace is not given we lie helpless and strengthless, unable to do right. Nor can any deed of ours make us fit recipients of the grace of God, for (Article XIII.) “works done before the grace of Christ and the Inspiration of his Spirit *are not pleasant to God . . . neither do they make men meet to receive grace . . . yea, rather, for that they*

are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, *we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.*" So that if a good and noble heathen, who has never heard of Christ, and whose good deeds cannot therefore "spring of faith in Jesus Christ," does some high-minded action, or shows some kindly charity, his good deeds are of "the nature of sin," and in fact make him rather worse off than he was before: as Melancthon said, his virtues are only "splendid vices" because done without faith in a person of whom he has never heard. For (Art. XVIII.) they "are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature:" "we are accounted righteous before God (Art. XI.) *only* for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and *not for our own works and deservings.*" Thus we learn that God cares not for righteousness of life, but only for blind faith, and that he sends us out into a world lying under his curse, without any chance of salvation except by attaining a faith which he gives or withholds at his pleasure, and which we can of ourselves do nothing to deserve, much less to obtain. To crown this beautiful theory we learn,—Article XVII. "of Predestination and Election:"—predestination to life, it seems, "is the everlasting purpose of God whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour." But if this be true, man has no choice of any kind in the matter; for not only is grace to do right the gift of God, but man's acceptance of the gift is also compulsory. God has arranged, before he made the world, how many and whom he will save. What, then, becomes of man's

boasted free will? Before the creation God drew the plan of every human life, and as the potter moulds the ductile clay into the shape he desires, so God moulds his human pottery after his own will into "vessels made to salvation" or made to dishonour. To talk of man's freedom is a mockery. What freedom had Adam and Eve in Paradise? "They might have stood:" nay; for was not "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world?" Before the sin was committed God had made the atonement for it. If Adam were free not to sin, then it would be possible that he might not have sinned, and then God would have offered a needless sacrifice, and would have a Saviour with no one to save, so that it would have been necessary to provide a sinner in order to utilise the sacrifice. All idea of justice is here hideously impossible; God has predestinated some human beings *out of mankind*. These "in due season" he calls; "through grace they obey the calling;" "they be justified freely . . . and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity." And the rest—those who are *not* predestined; those who are *not* called; those to whom *no* grace is given; those who are *not* justified freely; those who have no God's mercy to aid them;—what of them? Made by God, the creatures of his hand, the vessels of his moulding, the clay of his shaping, are they cast into the lake of brimstone, into the fire that never shall be quenched, simply because God in "his sovereignty" put them—unconscious—under his curse and left them there, adding to the cruelty of creation the more savage cruelty of preservation? No! whether such deeds should be wrought by God or man, they would be wickedly wrong. Almighty power is no excuse for crime, and the God of the Articles of the Church of England is a gigantic criminal, who uses his Almightyness to make life that he may torment it, and to create sentient beings foredoomed to bitterest

agony, to keenest woe. Such frightful misuse of power can only meet with strongest reprobation from all moral beings; unlimited power turned to evil purposes may trample us under its feet, crushed into helplessness, but it can never force us to worship, it can never compel us to adore.

These first eighteen Articles of the Church may be said to contain the more salient points of the Church's teaching, and it is needless to point out the utter impossibility of reasonable and gentle-hearted men and women believing in the "plan of salvation" sketched out in them. They are instinct with the cruel theology of Calvin and of Zwingli, and imply (though they do not so plainly word) the view of the Lambeth Articles of 1595, that "God from eternity hath predestinated certain men unto life; *certain he hath reprobated.*" These Anglican Articles must be taken as teaching predestination to damnation as well as to salvation, since those not called to life must inevitably fall to death. The next section—so to speak—of the Articles deals with Church affairs, defining the authority of Churches and of Councils, and explaining the doctrine of the Sacraments. It is with these that the High Church party chiefly fall out, for the Twenty-first Article, acknowledging that General Councils may err and have erred, strikes at the root of the infallibility of the Church Universal, so dear to the priestly soul. The Articles on the Sacraments also tend somewhat to the Low Church view of them, and dwell more on the faith of the recipient than on the consecration of the priest. The Article (XXXIII.) levelled against "excommunicate persons," commanding that such an one shall "be taken of the whole multitude of the faithful, as an Heathen and Publican, until he be openly reconciled by penance," is duly believed and subscribed by clergymen, but has no real meaning to-day. If the Thirty-fifth Article were acted upon, some curiosities of English literature

would enliven the Churches; for this Article bids the clergy read the Homilies: "we judge them to be read in Churches by the Ministers, diligently and distinctly, that they may be understood of the people." It is really a pity that this direction is not carried out, for some of the barbarous doctrines of popular Christianity would then be seen as they are described by men who thoroughly believed in them, instead of being known only as they are presented to us to-day, with some of their deformity hidden under the robes woven for them by modern civilisation, wherein humanity has outgrown the old Christianity, and men's reason chastens their faith. The last three Articles touch on civil matters, acknowledging the Royal Supremacy and dealing with other matters pertaining to Cæsar, but on the borderland between him and God.

Such are the Articles of the Church; believed by few, unknown to many, winked at by all, because religion is practically a matter of indifference to most, and while custom and fashion enforce conformity with the Church, the brain troubles not itself to analyse the claim, or to weigh the conditions of allegiance. Men have become so sceptical as to regard all creeds with indifference, and the half-conceived unbelief of the clergy, signing with mental reservations, and formally asserting belief where the thought and the lips are at variance, appears to have eaten the heart out of all religious honesty in England, and men lie to God who would revolt at lying to man. If belief in the Articles is now a thing of the past, then the Articles themselves should also pass away; if Churchmen have outgrown these dogmas, why do they suffer them to deface their Prayer-Book, to barb "the shafts of the sceptic, and to give power to the sneer of the scoffer?"