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THE REV. CHARLES VOYSEY.

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MR. VOYSEY is a very bold man. A priest of the Church of England, he has stood forth audaciously to preach and to teach in public views which the most hardy even of the laity scarcely dare more than whisper among themselves in private. The grounds upon which he bases his rebellion against the accepted religious beliefs cannot but seem to the orthodox to be manifestly insufficient. He declares that the Bible, whose truth we all admit, represents the Divinity as being accustomed to "deceive" a prophet into telling lies, and then to "destroy him" for being deceived, while it also describes Him as commanding the destruction of thousands of innocent persons, and as distinguishing with especial favour such men as David, who shamelessly betrayed his friend; Solomon, the notorious profligate—Abraham and Isaac, who bartered their wives' virtue for their own safety—and Lot, who invented drunkenness and worse. Yet for no better reasons than these Mr. Voysey refuses to accept the Biblical account of the Divinity as correct. Again he remarks that the New Testament represents the Founder of our Faith as making a mistaken prophecy that heaven and earth would pass away before His own generation; as failing to "honour and obey" Mary, His mother; and as being a descendant of David only through Joseph, who was not His father. Yet for such reasons Mr. Voysey refuses to believe in the Divinity of Christ. Nay, more, the Old Testament, so Mr. Voysey informs us, assigns two different and conflicting reasons for the giving of the Fourth Commandment; in the New Testament one gospel represents Jesus as being at the marriage of Cana at the very time when the others declare Him to have been in the desert; and St. John places the Crucifixion on a Thursday, while the others place it on a Friday. And yet for such trivial reasons as these Mr. Voysey rejects the Bible altogether as a revelation, accepting it only for a "very curious and interesting" work. With the aid of what are called Rationalism and Natural Religion he has elaborated a new Divinity and a new faith of his own, wherein neither the Trinity, Original Sin, the Atonement, the Devil, nor Hell have a place, and wherein even Heaven is but scantily recognised. For this faith he has even compiled a service without including in it the anathemas of the Athanasian Creed. It is shocking to think to what lengths men will go when they assume the dangerous privilege of thinking for themselves, and of criticising statements and teaching which have always claimed to be received without question or examination.

The one consolation afforded by so mournful a spectacle is that the offender has not gone unpunished. Had he been content merely to preach to the rustics of Healaugh he might, unmolested, have sent them all to the bottomless pit by his teaching; but when, not content with that, he insisted upon publishing that teaching to the world at large, the Church was constrained to interfere. He had already been driven from every curacy but one that he had ever held, with nothing but the testimonials, in coin or writing, of his flocks to console him; and now the "Sling and the Stone" with his other writings was made the ground of a prosecution which, passing through every stage, at length ended a year since in Mr. Voysey's condemnation by the mouth of the pious Hatherley, and in the deprivation of his last living. Such, however, are the deplorable tendencies of the age that the dealings with him have but added to Mr. Voysey's authority and importance as they have added to his boldness, and have enabled him to say as he has said when reviewing his career, "I have much to be thankful for."