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CHRIST  
VERSUS  
CHRISTIANITY.

The Christian Church Cross-Examined  
by a Modern Lawyer.

INTROITE, NAM ET HIC DEUS EST.  
(Enter, for here too is God.)

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## P R E F A C E.

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**I**N the following pages the author has endeavored to give his candid opinion as a layman upon subjects which few laymen comparatively have considered. He has no apologies to offer. No one is obliged to read or entertain his opinions, though he frankly confesses that it is his hope that many will do both. Ideas have been taken freely wherever they have been found. The author is debtor to the wise and the foolish. He hopes none will feel offended because acknowledgments are not made; he will feel complimented if any shall make use of his ideas, poor as they are, without thanks or acknowledgment. If some statements seem severe, yet no malice has entered in. It will be remembered that there is no intrinsic evil in severity; the judgment is to be blamed, if it is misapplied. He recognizes that honesty largely prevails among those who hold to the beliefs and customs which have received the severest condemnation; perhaps the same honesty of motive will be granted him.

Some one has said that sarcasm is the scourge of folly ; as such it has been used here. Sarcasm seems oftentimes to reach what nothing else will ; still, the author has but a qualified belief in it. Scourging he deems vastly inferior to reason, even going so far as to spare the rod altogether, believing that his children — and all children are his — are not thereby spoiled, but rather improved. Harshness often confirms the erring in their wrong, creating obstinacy from very spite. Love and kindness always correct error, and leave no sting behind to fester. Love always gains a hearing. The author loves men, and will feel amply repaid if but a few derive benefit from these poor but honest pages. A long life is well spent, if by it men become better. Life *is* noble, is worth living, is worth loving ; and to do good is the highest religion.

JANUARY 25, 1892.



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*Do right, and fear no one: you may be sure that  
with all your consideration for the world you will  
never satisfy the world.*

# CHRIST *vs.* CHRISTIANITY.

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## I.

### TESTIMONY.

“It’s so, because my father says it’s so; and when my father says it’s so, it’s so, whether it’s so or not.”

**M**EN are but children grown older, and a surprising number, men grown, reason with the same easy dependence of childhood. Not only the Jews, but all people, have placed more credence in the tradition of their ancestors than in the evidence of their own senses and the decision of their own judgment. A well-known contemporary Episcopal clergyman furnishes a perfect illustration of this fact in the words: “I had rather have a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ than all the teachings of modern philosophers.”<sup>1</sup>

Testimony is a magnetic needle,—it always tends to point to the polar star, truth; but like the magnetic needle it is always more or less in error. The needle is always swayed a little to one side or the other by sundry bits of steel; oftentimes it is not quite at equipoise on its pivot; and again electrical or atmospherical conditions affect it. So testimony is often misdirected by prejudice; oftentimes it proceeds from those whose mental balance needs adjustment,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hall, 1891.

for deep, intense feeling or enthusiasm occasions a temporary mental dethronement; and again it is affected by education and environment. Habits and customs rule us, and consequently rule our testimony. With the enlightenment which four thousand years of education has given us, it is still a difficult thing to describe adequately current events; to give a perfect description seems impossible. To-day, as four thousand years ago, we look through a glass darkly, though surely our glass is considerably better than that which the ancient writer was in the habit of using. We are still, however, apt to find what we seek wherever we look. Especially is this so if we have strong feelings on the subject in question.

If there is any one subject concerning which men have made up their minds without knowing why, it is that of religion. We inherit our religious opinions even more truly than we do our political opinions. Custom and fashion exercise an almost unbounded religious influence. Current opinions are thrust upon us, and for the most part we accept them without question. It is perfectly natural to do so, and I think we all do accept such common opinions, to a certain extent at least. Every great religion is based on those which precede it. Knowledge itself is so acquired, and religion must follow. Religion is largely the accidental result of birth and education.

One's opinions are like one's language. We learn to think the thought of the fatherland just as we learn to speak the language of the fatherland. We take pains to bring up a child in a certain prevailing faith, — is it strange that he should cling to it as he grows older? Religious faith, too, has a great tendency to retain a permanent, unchanging form. It always involves something intangible, something un-

seen and remote, not to say unintelligible. We have been taught to approach so-called sacred writings with bated breath and submissive veneration. Perhaps few people have not heard statements like the following, which was made to me recently by an individual of superior education and general culture: "When I read the Scriptures and find something which seems unreasonable, I simply conclude that my reason must give way to my faith." Sir Thomas Browne puts it in this way: "I can read the history of the pigeon that was sent out of the ark and returned no more, and not question how she found out her mate that was left behind; that Lazarus was raised from the dead, yet not demand where in the interim his soul awaited."

The whole spirit of criticism has been vastly different from that of religion. Criticism is interrogation, is reason, is judgment; religion has been faith, humility, submission. Religious triumph has been submissive obedience; critical triumph is reasonable conviction. One is from the heart; the other is from the head. The tender, sensitive believer is shocked by doubt. What! shall God take the witness-stand? Must the Creator submit to the examination of the created? "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say unto him that fashioned it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?" Would that the clay might rise up and instruct the moulder; at least many such have needed sadly some kind of instruction, and I suspect, if the begotten might have had a previous hearing, there would be vastly less woe on earth to-day. Such has

ever been the state of the believing mind. The faithful of all ages have ever thought of their god only in holy adoration; his awful presence is sought only on bended knees. Thou shalt not take the name of thy god in vain, has always been the rule. Doubt is sin, and faith is really the only virtue. Live a pure life, if you will, but your case is hopeless without faith. How spirits so sensitive with their god, so submissive, can be so harsh with men, is a mystery. "Faith," defines the Scriptural writer, "is the evidence of things not seen;" and he might have added, "pretty poor evidence too."

An honest, pure faith is beautiful indeed. It is like youth which looks confidently, calmly, trustfully out upon the world. No hero-worship in earth below or sky above is more beautiful than the worship of a tender wife who cherishes unswerving faith and loyalty to her dissolute husband. This very devotedness is one of the greatest elements of excellence, withal one most likely to lead astray. Reverence is good, but how much more so when its object is worthy? For our own good we must question the spirits whether they be of God. Progress is impossible without doubt. We are what we are to-day largely because of the questions of previous ages. Our spiritual growth has come more by tearing down the old than by upbuilding the new. Submission always ends in servitude. Never a slave but found a master. On the other hand, too much doubt ends in absolute scepticism and abject pessimism. The well-balanced mind has elements of both. He that has the greatest faith is also very careful in what he places it.

Religious criticism is dangerous ground to traverse, beyond a doubt. The critic is slandered and vilified by many or most believers. His motives even are

pronounced vicious. Read what an authority in the early part of the present century said of Hume: "From a mere fondness for speculation, or a love for philosophical applause, the least harmful motives we can attribute to Hume, it was the business of his life to extirpate from the human mind all that the good and wise among mankind have concurred in venerating." And what is even worse, if worse can be, the writer in conclusion finds it a source of regret that he died in a pleasant frame of mind. Thus it has been with every great independent thinker, not one of whom but proved his cause. Socrates, in whom was mingled a little divine with the animal clay, drank the cup of hemlock; Jesus Christ, the soul of Christendom to-day, perished ignobly on the cross as a heretic; Galileo, who proved the falsity of the old theory of the universe, twice suffered the terrors of the Inquisition, and the horrible anxiety in which he passed the rest of his days was infinitely worse than these; Luther threw off the yoke of a bigoted and lying priesthood, and all but lost his life for it. But it is needless to search antiquity for examples. Have we not our own Paine and Ingersoll? Is there an educated person that has not known instances of shameful scurrility and abuse directed against Darwin and Huxley?

As was said before, reforms are generally more directly destructive than constructive. And this is just where men stand in their own light. Society has little and great men, just as the earth has mountains and valleys. The sun lights up the hilltops while it is still dark in the valleys below; so truth is discerned by great minds before it becomes manifest to the multitudes. But how stubbornly do men persist in facing the darkness! Every new truth has

been steadily resisted. We are made uneasy under powerful light; we are dazzled; oftentimes we are shocked. Furthermore our interests are destroyed, or we think they are. We, like the Ephesian artisans who denounced the apostles because their trade was injured, must surely look out for our own sweet selves.

Whoever opens up new lines of thought, and disturbs the prejudices and interests of his contemporaries, must suffer for his research. The Inquisition has passed away, but its great underlying principles of dogma and prejudice still remain. One who knew from painful experience said that he who in this most important of all subjects, namely, intellectual and moral progress, strikes out a new path for himself, may as well realize, first as last, that little will be his reward save the consciousness of an honest, earnest effort to the highest end. Most of his discussion will end in scurrility, the general resort of the disputant who cannot answer and will not be convinced. Cynicism and sarcasm, on the other hand, are not the best offensive weapons. I am sure that the truth must come sooner or later, and every earnest effort can but hasten the day. Sincere believers I approach with the kindest intent. If their faith rests upon sound principles, whatever I shall say will only tend to strengthen it. If it prove unsound, I am sure they cannot wish the fact to be unknown. Old oft-repeated assertions may as well be abandoned. Authorship is of no account. We do not believe the testimony. The world is no longer in its primitive childhood. It has for the most part laid away those early childish things.

At the outset we may as well trace in brief the history of religious thought. Men found themselves



living in a world of which they had no knowledge. Their own lives, too, were a puzzle to them. Differing from the animals only by an increased capacity for gaining and desiring knowledge, at first perhaps unconsciously, then consciously and laboriously, they began to observe the things about them, and later to examine themselves. Limited on all sides by innumerable barriers, they recognized a great force beyond themselves, ruling them, the world, and the universe. Nature excited them to veneration and awe. Some things, at first few, they understood; other things seemed beyond them. What they understood, they obeyed; the rest they worshipped: things of use and beauty they made of the one, of the other they made gods.

All religions have the same essential characteristics. Gods are not meaningless. A fundamental truth lies behind every god that the world has ever seen. Every god means an earnest striving for the unknown. We have sun-worship, one of the earliest religions known. The sun is apparently the source of life. Then we have water as the real god, perhaps for the same reason. Every theogony, every legend, has an element of truth in it. Cronos, Time, is the child of the heavens. Is not time measured by light and darkness, and are not these from heaven apparently? Time devours its own children in death. Yet Zeus, Life, conquers Time; and here we have a gleam of immortality. Water is the father of all things, and yet he has an ancestry,—Ouranos and Gaia, Heaven and Earth,—the production of water being from the clouds above and the earth below. His wife was Tethys, Mother-earth, for she was a nurse. Their offspring were the little rivers whom Mother-earth nurses on her bosom, and the ocean

nymphs. Ouranos becomes enamoured of Gaia, and settles down upon her in clouds; she conceives, and the fruits of the earth are her offspring. Thus Paganism was cumulative. A new discovery was a new god. Paul says he found at Athens an image inscribed to the unknown god, so great was their reluctance in omitting any.

Soon men perceived that after all the force in Nature was single rather than multiple; otherwise they had continued multiplying their gods until now. Indeed, after this unity was recognized, the Pagans continued to retain their outward faith at least. Finally the old ceremonies became a mockery. The Roman priests used to laugh and jest about sacred things before the populace. The augurs used to exchange winks. Public sacrifice was a joke. Paganism became an institution, not of religion, but of policy. A comparison between the gods of Paganism and the Antonines would be an impertinent insinuation, says Gibbon. The morality of Cæsar and Augustus was perfection compared with that of their gods. People could not accept and respect as gods beings whom they rejected and despised as men. Paganism became a lie, a shaking of the head to the nations. To-day we admire it, as realized among the Greeks, as a beautiful mythology. At its best it is the most beautiful system of religion the world has ever seen.

The Hebrews early broke away from Paganism, and developed their faith on a different line. They based their religion essentially on moral principles. Yet the Hebrew faith was influenced by Paganism, and this influence continually exerted was a source of infinite trouble. Professing one personal god, they left the road open to many, and we find them continu-

ally recurring to polytheism. Their god at best was the great lawgiver, a mighty judge who had appointed a veritable *Dies Iræ*. Their religion was expansive like Paganism, but in a different direction. As moral law became better defined, their god grew to embrace it. And the god of Christianity to-day is this same old Hebrew god, propped and patched up, improved and expanded to meet our present ideas of morality. There is scarcely a single denomination to-day that is not revising its creed, remodelling the old god to fit the niche which the age has designated.

There is much in common in these two systems, one expanding to meet physical ideas, the other expanding to meet moral ideas. No system is complete for all time. And yet the masses of every age regard their creed as the sum total, to which nothing may be added, from which nothing may be subtracted. It is mathematical infinity. No one knows it, yet all talk about it as if it were a well-defined certainty. With this we are ready to examine the testimony. What is the evidence of our faith?

The Bible! Never book was more truly worshipped. Never book so penetrated the manners, the literature, the imagination, the occupation, the very language of people. In it millions have found their God and their King. For no written word was there ever such heroic sacrifice. No other word shall stand beside it. It is from Almighty God himself; it is with God; it is God. Nothing shall prevail over that word. To it they have submitted their reason; by it they have governed their conduct; for it they have given their peace, their prosperity, ay, their very lives. There it stands in every house in Christendom to this day; approached with sanctified veneration; read with blanched faces and with a

strange, slow, solemn intonation; ever kept with watchful care in the best room and in the place of great honor, be it a costly gilt and morocco volume or a cheap and dirty pamphlet, resting on an elegantly embroidered cushion or on a rude bench; in it are sacred records kept. Here is the sweetest and most touching example of loyalty and unswerving trust the world has ever seen, withal sad enough to move a god to pity.

The great question which I wish to raise at present concerning this sacred book is, Does it differ essentially from other ancient testimony? Throughout the Old Testament, and in much of the New, we find the peculiar ineffaceable impress of Paganism. Despite the great apparent difference, the gods of Paganism and the god of the Hebrews are wonderfully similar. Especially is this true when both are at their worst, though sufficiently so at all times to establish their common source. All the cosmogonies are strikingly alike. All have a peculiar uncertain ring, though stated most solemnly. It seems as if doubt were slightly present to the writer's mind, and he is all the stronger in his asseverations, just as disputants wax angry, tear their hair, and pound the table at their weak points.

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM, and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”

“Ye shall do my judgments and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord.”

A grim humor seems ever present. We are reminded of masks, from which proceed all the various accents and tones of the human voice without change of expression. They laugh with wonderfully long-drawn faces; they cry with never a pucker or a tear;

they converse with the same quiet, decorous gravity; and the bitterest rage never ruffles their calm serenity. As one reads some of the solemn statements of the Old Testament, one knows hardly whether to laugh or to be serious. The childlike simplicity of the thought, like that of Homer, has a peculiar charm. One smiles at times involuntarily, as he does in reading any ancient story. Some of the transactions related recall vividly to mind our acts in childhood while at play. The world is indeed in its childhood. Again we are children, and join with it in the play.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. . . . And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them. . . . And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

Now we have the quaint, pretty story of the Temptation, one of the prettiest of antiquity.

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her. And he did

eat, and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons."

When they are discovered, the writer adds a fine touch, showing that he was observant of human nature, and that in his day it was not unlike that of today. He makes them shirk the responsibility. The man lays the blame upon the woman, and she in turn blames the serpent. Then God, to punish the crime, with captivating simplicity punishes all connected with it, — a precedent followed at least once by an English judge who in a case of false testimony, determined to reach the crime, gave sentence against plaintiff, defendant, and witness. I repeat, this simple tale is as quaintly and whimsically artistic and beautiful as any story of antiquity.

The old cosmogonies and mythologies are full of just such pretty tales as this. In itself the story seems to be an attempt to explain the origin of sexual knowledge, a crime punished by the pangs of childbirth in woman, and by the curse of work in man. Here again we find the common impress of antiquity and of barbarism of all times. Work is a curse. The golden ages of all peoples are ages of ease and freedom from all toil and care. Paradises are regions of eternal bliss and endless harmony; lands flowing with milk and honey, rich in women and wine. Even to this day a great portion of mankind are patiently awaiting just such a paradise as this. Some, however, have learned that work is the great blessing of humanity.

From frequent allusions throughout the Bible, it is made a certainty that this old story is the Hebrew solution of the sexual relation, as well as the fact

that original sin is sexual intercourse. Indeed the two great evils which the Old Testament specially denounces are promiscuity of sexual intercourse and idolatry. Again and again these two crimes are referred to. The most horrible punishments which the age could conceive of, and the bitterest curses that could be imagined, were pronounced against both. Little else would remain in the Old Testament, if these allusions were omitted, than the Psalms.

Another unique story appears in Genesis, doubtless invented to account for the difference in language existing among the different races : —

“ And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. And they said to one another, Go to, let us make brick and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and lime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven ; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold this people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do ; and nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth ; and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth ; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

In this story another characteristic common to the gods of every race appears ; namely, they are all jealous of men. God visits the site of the famous tower

to see what the children of men are up to, and so enlightening is his visit that he concludes that nothing will be restrained from them, and so he says, "Go to, we will confound their language." Again and again in other parts of the Scriptures the statement is made that God is a jealous God. Just so the Greek deities were ever envious of some action or attribute of men. Niobe boasts of her children, and angers Leto, who sends Apollo to kill them all with his winged darts; Prometheus steals fire from heaven, and for punishment, since the gods do not wish men to use or understand the use of fire, a vulture eternally feeds on his entrails; a goddess, because her beauty is spurned for that of a shepherdess, destroys a nation after a ten years' war. Says Horace: "We aim at heaven itself in our folly, nor do we suffer, by our wickedness, Jove to lay aside his wrathful thunderbolts." There is not a single instance of a god that does not conspicuously exhibit this characteristic of jealousy towards humanity.

These simple-minded, primitive people found themselves and those about them existing in certain conditions, and so they set to work to explain it. Communication between the different races was not so common then as now, so each race had its own theories. Every nation made its own world, and generally limited it to themselves and the neighboring races. Now and then strange stories would come of a wonderful people afar off at the end of the world. Some few of the race, venturing farther from home than the rest, or swept to unknown shores by tempests, would be captured by unknown men, and after years, perhaps, would escape and bring home accounts of the strange people. Fragments of the stories they had heard and faintly comprehended would linger.



Ideas would become confused. Out of it all we have numerous and confused traditions.

The Biblical story of the Creation seems to be of Persian origin; the names of the first pair are certainly Persian, and it is well known that the Hebrews were freed from bondage by Cyrus of Persia. The Talmud makes Adam by sections out of earth from different parts of the world, though the Jews at that time knew but a small part of it. The Mahometan tradition causes man to be created from the seven different strata of the earth. Thus man seeks to explain his origin. The one great object of science is to discover the life principle. Without doubt the ancient writer who told his ingenious story of the Creation was actuated by the same motives that caused Darwin to broach the theory of evolution. Only the methods of the two were different. The first dawn of literature is always poetic and imaginative. Cold scientific facts do not appeal to infant minds.

But the Hebrew faith did not end with the creation any more than that of other nations. It pervaded the events of daily life. Whatever happened was due to the direct influence of God. The voice of the murdered brother's blood cries unto God from the ground, and God responds to the murderer with an awful curse; he places the rainbow in the heavens in eternal promise; he sends the plague and pestilence upon the Pharaohs; he comes in a dream to Jacob, and gives him promises of land and prosperity; he appears to Moses in the form of a fiery bush, and promises to deliver his chosen people from bondage; after a lengthy conversation with Moses, to convince him of his presence, he changes a rod in his very hands to a serpent, and again, at his com-

mand, it assumes its former shape; all the first-born of Egypt he slays in one night; he tells the Israelites what food they shall eat; he guides them on their journey out of Egypt by night and by day; he causes the sea to part and give them dry passage; he sends them food from heaven; he tells them he is their God, and to him alone must they bow down; he gives them his commandments; he warns them of idolatry; he prescribes their law,—eye for eye, tooth for tooth; he limits their marriage; he sends them an angel for a guide; he orders Moses up into a mountain, and gives him the law on tablets of stone; he stays with Moses forty days and forty nights; he repents of the evils he intends; he orders sacrifices to be burned in his honor; he sets the days of uncleanness for man and woman; he describes the leprosy, and defines the measures to be taken to avoid it; he orders just weights and just balances; he prescribes the limits of slavery; he threatens, he rages, he storms at his obstinate people; he sends them water from a solid rock; he cures them when they are bitten by serpents, if they glance at a brazen image; he inspires an ass to rebuke his own prophet; he reasons with his people; exasperated at their stubbornness, he pronounces a curse upon them, descending to the third and fourth generations; he will make his arrows drunk with blood; he pronounces a list of curses against them unequalled for severity in the history of the world; he warns them against false prophets; he forbids interchange of garments between man and woman; he commands Joshua to destroy the kingdom of Ai, and the sun to stand still, lengthening the day for this bloodthirsty tyrant; he accepts the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter; he orders frightful massacres, of man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass; he

permits polygamy; he sends a stranger to confound his specially anointed in adultery.

When the waves of death encompassed his people, and the sorrows of hell and the snares of death way-laid, him they sought for comfort; he gives Solomon the reward of riches and honor and wisdom for his faithfulness and shrewdness, and then, because he became an adulterer, punishes him by destroying his kingdom, strangely enough after his death; the ravens bring another prophet food from heaven; God sends him rain and fire, and speaks to him in a still small voice; finally, he sends a chariot and horses of fire to bear him in triumph to heaven; he sends two she-bears out of the forest to devour a crowd of mocking boys and girls; the prophet lies on the body of a dead child, and the child sneezes and returns to life; a carpenter loses a borrowed axe in a stream, and his prophet, throwing in a stick, causes the iron to swim; a dead man cast into the prophet's grave, revives on contact with his bones; he defends many cities for the sake of his prophets; he causes the shadow to go backwards ten degrees for a sign of healing; he tells his prophet that he will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down; he sends a pestilence upon Israel, because the devil tempted David to number the people; to try his servant, he causes his children and cattle to die, and sends upon him terrible sores, so that he curses the day that gave him birth; upon his resisting temptation, he restores him twofold pleasure and prosperity.

Another sign he gives unto his people: a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call him Immanuel; when this son is born, there shall be an era of peace and good will, the wolf shall dwell

with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the young fatling with the lion, and a little child shall lead them; in one day shall the women of Babylon suffer loss of children and widowhood for their sins; idolaters he orders to be slain, old and young, maids and little children and women; his faithful, increased in number, walk uninjured in a furnace of fire seven times hotter than usual, and not a smell of fire taints them; he writes an awful judgment against Belshazzar's kingdom in the form of a puzzle on the walls of his banquet hall; he keeps his prophet safe in a den of lions maddened with hunger; in a vision, typical of the future, his prophet sees a he-goat and a ram engage in combat; he causes his disobedient prophet to be cast into the sea by strangers, and a whale to swallow him; seeing that he is resolved to obey, he orders the whale to cast him up on dry land; he orders a gourd to grow for a shade to the prophet who sits waiting for the destruction of a city that has displeased him, and then orders a worm to destroy the gourd for a moral lesson.

The new dispensation fulfils the greatest prophecy. In truth, a virgin bears a son to God, while a star stands over his birthplace for a sign to wise men seeking the son; a dove alights upon his head, and a voice from heaven hails him Son of God; the devil tempts him, and flies with him to the top of a high mountain; the son rules the winds and the waves; he heals the sick, he feeds the hungry, he changes water to wine, he prophesies, he works miracles by the hundreds, he escapes from the midst of an angry populace again and again; he appears to his companions, and they know him not; after a short, trying life he is crucified, and then the heavens are

darkened, the mountains are shaken, the tombs are opened, and the dead walk forth, and the veil of the temple is rent; in three days he returns to life, and shortly, in a cloud of fire, he ascends to God, his father in heaven. This is but a short summary of the strange things that are told in this work, but a sample from the body of evidence.

Is there now anything peculiar about this evidence? Are its characteristics, in general, at all surprising? Does it differ at all essentially from any other ancient history? We are compelled to answer these questions in the negative. The Bible, taken as a history, is in no way peculiar or remarkable as compared with other writings of its own times. Its age is no proof of its truth; rather it is an indication of its falsity. This unreasonable respect for antiquity has been one of the most costly indulgences of the world. Antiquities generally come high. This confidence in the past seems to be the result of a kind of chivalrous sentiment. In ancient days, when impulse was great and reason little, these sentiments were more active than they are at present. Undoubtedly they are growing weaker, and the rapidity of their disappearance in a degree marks the rapidity of our progress. In this we find the source of the poetic golden age of the ancients. The divine finds here the conception of human innocence and perfection, and traces, alas! the fall. In this veneration people have found men not only great in morals, but great in age and in stature.

The literature of the Bible is just the same as that of any other ancient work, — full of marvels, of superstition, of miracles, and of curious old legends. When these occur in any other book, we of the present age hate the terrible, and praise and admire the

beautiful and the true; people of that ancient age believed them wherever they saw them, and they saw them everywhere. How shall we account for this strange inconsistency, that the superstitious, the miraculous, and the ridiculous is absolutely true, the Word of God, only when it occurs in the Bible? In such belief as this we are not guided by reason. Even supposing that the Scriptural miracles are better authenticated than others, — a supposition which is absurdly false, — we cannot on this account conclude that in the one case there is no reason for doubt and in the other no reason for belief. Why should we give faith to the early disciples, and none to the later saints? We want the reason why Scriptural miracles and no others are true. Where is the line drawn? Were all miracles true up to the end of the first century, and all false after the opening of the second? Why do we believe that the Red Sea opened to let the Israelites pass, and ridicule the idea that the Sea of Pamphylia opened to give Alexander and his army passage? Every miraculous tradition is rejected unless it be found in the Bible. However strong the evidence, no other shall stand. Yet from the time of the early proclamation of John the Baptist, that voice crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord,” down to the last of the saints, Christian testimony offers a long, uninterrupted succession of martyrs, prophets, and miracles. Superstitious progress was so gradual and its decline so imperceptible that no one can say when the charm was broken, or that it ever has been broken. Every age bears testimony to its power. Can we deny to the Venerable Bede or the holy Saint Bernard a credence implicitly given to Paul and Luke? Consistency forbids.

But, to return to the literature and thought of the past, it was intimated that these miracles, common to us in our worship, were once a part of daily life. They happened everywhere; they convinced everybody. The literature of the Bible covers a period from the earliest times down through the Middle Ages. Many will claim that this period is about a thousand years too long; but enough evidence has been brought forward by such eminent scholars as Strauss, Weiss, Renan, Volkmar, Baur, and others to convince most that few of the Scriptural writings now remain as they originally were written, or that scarcely one has been assigned to its real period, and few to their real authors. Chronology I do not care to discuss, authorship I care nothing about, — the testimony, I maintain, is incorrect; and this testimony is little if at all more incorrect than any other during this long period to which I refer. That it differs not in the least essential from other contemporary testimony, examples will best illustrate. We shall find that both Christian and Pagan writers, historical and religious, practise the same methods and tell practically the same idle tales. History takes its character from the period of its composition. The mind is like the surface of the sea, which distorts objects by its undulations.

Examples of extreme longevity are by no means purely Biblical. Old age is the only chronicle of others than Methuselah. All races offer instances innumerable; but the Hindoos lead both in number and in length of age. Among these curious people eighty thousand years was a common age of men, while their priests lived over one hundred thousand years. King Alarka, says the Vishnu Purana, reigned

sixty-six thousand years, and he is spoken of even then as the "youthful monarch."

If one looks into any of the early Pagan historians, he finds countless old stories and traditions of a similar nature. It is needless to quote them. A few historical names do stand out in striking contrast, to be sure. Herodotus, Thucydides, Zenophon, Livy, Sallust, and Tacitus are the only historians of antiquity whose works bear anything like the stamp of credibility; yet each of these tells most remarkable stories. The heroes of Herodotus slay thousands of men, yes, tens of thousands. He tells of strange birds and beasts, dwarfs, giants, and gods, rivers as large as seas, enormous walls, temples, pyramids, obelisks, and the secrets thereon inscribed. Thucydides with his *verbatim* speeches, like the stenographical notes of an associated press reporter, hardly convinces us. This habit of putting words in the mouths of famous personages is common to all writers of antiquity. Zenophon becomes foolish over his dreams, omens, and prophecies. It is a good deal easier to prophesy than it is to narrate. He even finds in a sneeze a powerful omen. A great English historian says: "The nonsense of Herodotus is that of a baby; the nonsense of Zenophon is that of a dotard." Coming to the Roman historians, we find no essential difference. Livy and Sallust are by no means superior to the earlier Greek historians. Their works are full of contradictions. Anomalies and wonders still exist. Tacitus easily leads the Roman writers. "It was thought more pious and reverential to believe the actions of the gods than to investigate them," I find in the "Germania." As a portrayer of character he is great; but he too has his authentic speeches, which were probably never delivered. He



is clearly a creator, and the same statement applies to the Scriptural writers.

Nazarius, a later historian, tells of an army of warriors who swung down from heaven to aid Constantine at Milvian Bridge. He describes their beauty, their courage, their great size, and the resplendent glamour of their arms. They kindly talked with the common soldiers, and declared that they were sent to aid Constantine. Just so at an earlier date a similar army of spectres aided Aurelian at the battle of Fano. So again the Greek gods used to aid their favorites in person. Eusebius, pillar of the Church, describes the glorious cross which he saw in the sky on one of the marches of Constantine. It was inscribed with the words, "By this conquer." The army was somewhat surprised, and its appearance confirmed Constantine in his choice of faith. Eusebius also finds the victories of Constantine undoubted evidence of his piety and inspiration.

But the Middle Ages is the great trysting-place of the imagination, not necessarily because men were governed by it more than earlier, but because we know more about this period of history than we do about the earlier periods. The historians commonly trace in unbroken connection events from Noah, or even Adam, down to their own times. We are told that Paris received its name from Priam's son, who fled to France after the sack of Troy. Jerusalem is traced from King Jebus, a great man whose identity succeeding generations have not been able to fix. Silesia comes from the prophet Elisha, and the Silesians were his direct descendants. The exact founding of Zurich is a little clouded, to be sure, but unquestionably it occurred in the time of Abraham and Sarah. Naples was founded on eggs. With consider-

able reason it was asserted that the Tartars came from Tartarus, or, anyway, from hell.

Matthew Paris, the great historian of the thirteenth century, not to say of the Middle Ages, explains clearly why the Mahometans refuse to eat pork. Mahomet, having gorged himself with food and drink, in his stupidity fell asleep on a dunghill. A herd of pigs attacked and suffocated the prophet while in this condition. Consequently his followers have ever since abhorred the flesh of swine. Matthew of Westminster explains another curious custom, that of kissing the Pope's toe. He says that once the custom was merely to kiss the hand of his Holiness. But one day away back in early times a certain woman visiting Pope Leo not only kissed his hand, but, oh horrors! pressed it. The holy father, seeing his danger, cut off the hand, and thus escaped pollution. If any doubted the historian's account, he was politely referred to the Lateran, where the hand was preserved in its original state, uncorrupted.

Another history — an authority, by the way, sanctioned by the Pope and recommended by one of the most celebrated writers of the times — gives us excellent examples. He tells us that the brother of Saint James directly incited Charlemagne to invade Spain. It describes how the walls of the city of Pamplona fell to the ground in ruins at the prayer of the invaders. A giant, Fenacute, descendant direct from Goliath, opposed the successful Charlemagne. He was a giant indeed. We are reminded of Dante's celebrated description of Nimrod, whose face was as big as the ball of St. Peter's. His strength was as that of forty men; his face was a cubit in length, his arms and legs four cubits; and his whole height was twenty cubits. The great champions of the victorious army

he easily conquered; twenty of their chosen men only suffered defeat at his hands, he taking them off to slavery under his arms just as nowadays a burly policeman might take two small boys off to jail. At length one Orlando comes forth, not he of Shakspearian fame, and challenges the giant to mortal combat. In the fight which ensued, Orlando, somewhat disconcerted, but blessed with a happy thought, changes his tactics, gets into a hot theological discussion with his valiant opponent, and secures the victory by getting in a telling thrust at an unguarded moment. This victory was of course the crowning triumph of Christian arms in Spain, and I think will long remain without a rival.

Another great man, Comines, known to many through the charming novel of Scott, tells us that war is a mystery, a weapon of God to accomplish his ends. Many modern luminaries in this respect have followed in the wake of Comines. This same light made politics a branch of theology.

But a more familiar authority may be cited, the great Bossuet. De Foe with all his exactness never equalled this great Frenchman. He knows, and knows he knows. He gives us the exact date when Cain murdered Abel, setting it at 3875 B. C.; the Flood occurred in 2348 B. C., and Abraham was summoned to God's work in the year 1921 B. C. He omits Mahomet absolutely from his great history, mentioning dozens of men possessed of astounding ability, workers of miracles, saints, statesmen, and writers, of whom the world nowhere else has learned. This great Frenchman, whose funeral orations have excited the world to admiration, was more ignorant of the commonest affairs of his times, and of things of general importance, than a grammar-school boy is to-day; indeed

his real knowledge was less than that of many a street gamin. Such are the great historians of the Middle Ages.

The theologians are worse still, if this be possible. Their stories easily take the palm. Omitting the Apocrypha, — which really has as much right to a place in the Bible as the Gospels, the question having been decided by the vote, with a small margin at that, of an extremely fallible ecclesiastical council, — all the theological works extant, from the first century down to modern times, contain altogether the most unreasonable stories, *truths*, the world has ever seen. Paganism, at its worst, offers no story not based on some reasonable ground of fact or fancy, no story that does not symbolize something beautiful or heroic, or gross and sensual. Every trivial story in the Grecian mind became a subject for literature, or an incentive to the creation of immortal works of art. This is the explanation of the incomparable admiration which we feel for ancient Greece. Not a discovery but adds to her glory, not a reflection but swells the chorus to her praise. Fanaticism, scholasticism, and dogmatism were practically unknown to her.

The legends of these historians are utterly meaningless, stupid, and empty. Their minds ran riot. They were not fools, nor yet were they crazy. They were in a worse condition. They have not even the excuse of imbecility. The world has never seen such an example of mental barrenness, such a horde of learned dunces. The problems of the schoolmen hardly need repetition. It seems incredible that questions like these were really and seriously argued, — whether Christ had digestive organs, whether the human race in its primal innocence was composed entirely of males, whether the Virgin Mary was a virgin

in conception, and whether she remained so after gestation. What a pitiable heap of rubbish! Yet this is the *Summa Theologica*, these are the mighty Atlases that support the burden of Christian tradition.

Lucian, of earlier date, a presbyter of Jerusalem, relates a dream which he had, and its verification. In the silence of midnight a venerable figure stood before him, with a long beard, a white robe, and a golden rod. He announced himself as Gamaliel, and assured the holy presbyter that his own body, with those of his son Abibas and friend Nicodemus, and the famous Stephen, was secretly interred in a neighboring field. The spirit impatiently informed the holy man that it was time for him to be up and doing, and that he should not lie there helpless and useless to himself and friends. Other visions succeeded, and finally the bishops opened up the field at his request. Sure enough, there were the coffins of the persons mentioned, with the exception of his own. When that of Stephen came to light, the earth trembled, and a fragrant odor like that of paradise suffused the air, which instantly cured the infirmities of seventy-three of the attendants. Augustin, a bishop of the early Church, relates above seventy miracles that happened within two years in his own diocese. He omits many prodigies, and solemnly declares that he selected only those miracles publicly certified and beyond dispute.

Is the story of the Immaculate Conception in any particular more reasonable or credible than the dream and verification given above? Here it is in brief. An angel, Gabriel by name, is sent by God to Mary, an ignorant, simple countrywoman of Nazareth. He tells her that she is in great good fortune, for God has experienced a passion for her. He allays her fears — it would seem that God satisfied his passion by proxy

—by assuring her that she shall conceive a son who will become a famous king, acquiring a sway not less grand than that of his ancestor, the great David. The innocent maid is convinced, and replies, “Be it unto me according to thy word.” The angel departs, and in due season the son is born, great indeed, but hardly acquiring the throne of David. Candid minds can but find one story as incredible as the other, with all the immorality against the Bible.

Again, take examples from Luther, that champion of religious freedom, — for he advocated the very same thing that heretics to-day advocate, namely, freedom of interpretation of the Scriptures. He was buried in superstition like his age. He saw witches and devils and fairies; he had visions from God; he had tussles with the devil; he had beatitudes with angels. Satan called him names, taunted him, reviled him; but he gained the victory. He says the devil is proud, and does n't like to be laughed at. One night he heard a rattling in his room; he got up and searched for the source of it, found nothing, concluded it was the devil, and muttering, “Oh, it's you, is it?” returned to bed, rolled over, and went to sleep. This was no laughing matter. To him it was God's truth, terrible and earnest.

With all his common-sense there is a kind of paradoxical inconsistency about his statements. He ridicules the astrologers. How can there be anything to their system, he asks, since Jacob and Esau were born under the same star! A monster is found in the Tiber with the head of an ass, the body of a man, and the claws of a bird. Melancthon and Luther, after searching the Bible to learn what the prodigy meant, conclude that it presages the fall of the papacy, and publish a pamphlet about it. So every prodigy means

just what people wish it to mean. A dream or vision means whatever comes after it out of the ordinary line of events.

Bunyan, too, tells many stories, taking care to state that he was eye and ear witness of what he says; and these tales give striking proof of the ignorance and superstition of his times. One man, an alehouse-keeper, was possessed of a devil, and the doctors attempted to cure him; and this is what they did. They laid him on his belly on a bench with his head hanging over the edge, bound him, and set a pan of burning coals under his mouth, first putting on something which caused a dense smoke. They proposed to smoke the devil out, just as a country boy to-day would smoke out a woodchuck. The remedy, of course, only killed the victim. Again, a woman stole some pennies from a boy, and when charged with the theft wished that the ground might open and bury her if she touched the money. Some other children near by saw the ground shake, and cried to her to look out; but too late, — the earth opened and swallowed her up. Such things were common events a century or two ago. King Charles of England is said to have touched a hundred thousand persons during his reign, and the testimony as to the cures effected is astonishingly convincing.

There is another beautiful story told. A great painter, one of the masters, wished to paint a Virgin; and lo! the sainted lady herself appeared and posed for the artist. And this was real, for his friends declared that there was for months afterwards an aureole about his head clearly perceptible in a darkened room. So it is; the imagination always has some foundation in fact. The artist from it paints a picture, the statesman inscribes a tablet of laws,

the priest fashions a theology. The imagination is most powerful in dark ages. Dreams always occur in uncertain, restless sleep. In intellectual twilight, when night is coming on or day is breaking, the imagination assumes its sway. Sceptre in hand, it rules its own. It dreams of gods, of demigods, of heroes; it sees visions of the omnipotent, hears his voice, feels his gentle presence. Who has not seen apparitions, dreamed truths, felt the touch of God's own hand? Words and ideas familiar from childhood sink out of sight in our minds, just as the gold falls slowly to the bottom of the stream. Suddenly in a fit of aimless musing, we know not how, the great truth behind these long-forgotten words flashes upon us; the water runs off, and carries with it the dross, leaving a shining nugget of the precious metal, truth.

Sometimes it takes a more violent course, and it seems as if our souls were torn and bleeding. The enthusiast suffers internal anarchy. Paul of Tarsus, eager defender of the faith of his fathers, accomplice in the cruel murder of the gentle Stephen, guarding the clothes of those engaged in the terrible work, perchance himself casting a stone, and still eager in the cause of his people, finds himself on a solitary way to Damascus armed with the powers of an inquisitor determined to hunt out and crush the growing heresy. But with ample time for reflection on the lonely road, with the midday Syrian sun streaming down upon his heated head, with no more congenial company perhaps than his troubled thoughts, the better element so long dormant in the soul of this finely cultured intellectual man, disciple of Gamaliel, and not without the refinements of Greek literature and art, is roused to active operation. He begins to



reason within himself. Reflection unravels not a few things hitherto a little clouded and mysterious. Perchance the last dying look of Stephen, gently reproachful in its forgiveness, returns to his mind, and connects itself with the strange stories he has heard of the life, death, and resurrection of the great teacher of the new faith. His heart is touched; hesitation takes the place of resolution; cruelty softens to pity; and on a sudden, behold! there where but now was only limitless sky and suffocating heat, the holy Christ himself takes form to his dazzled eyes, his thought finds expression, and he hears the still small voice of remonstrance unheard by others, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" and falls to the ground self-vanquished as if smitten by a thunderbolt. Just so a famous Roman confessed that he often saw the angry forms of his murdered father and brother rising into life to threaten and upbraid him.

These visions and voices are confined to no age or century. A person in the common walks of life once told me of his conversion. He had been deeply moved by exhortation to become a Christian, but was only thoroughly perplexed rather than convinced. Finally he hit upon the scheme of letting God solve the riddle for him, as many another has done. Of course the real victory was gained right here in this conclusion. If God would give him a sign, he would believe. That very night a man dressed in the ordinary costume of the times stood at his bedside, and said, "I am the Christ, believe thou on me." This was enough for him.

The imagination, even in waking hours, often enlists the eyes and ears in its delusion, and persuades us to believe that we see spectres and hear voices when neither god nor devil has troubled himself

about us. Many an old woman has seen more devils at noonday than Galileo ever did stars. The trouble is, we make our gods and devils by daylight, and see them in the dark. One thing is quite certain: people will not often see devils or gods worse than themselves. Rarely is the created better than the creator. Mistaking the devil for an ass, we believe in the saucer eyes of a pink-eyed bear, and take the night-cart for a fiery chariot when fear has affected our noses.

It is entertaining enough to read a few of these old tales and wonders, but to run through a thousandth part of them would be a tiresome task. It is a hopeless detail of leaves without flowers and of branches without fruit, exhaustive to the patience, and ultimately disappointing to the curiosity of the investigator. Ever since people have depended on revelation from God, ever since they have made the Almighty speak and act, each race has made him speak and act in its own way and to its own liking. Princes and tyrants have been the ministers of heaven. The sceptre and the sword of God were intrusted to Moses, to Joshua, to Gideon, to David, to the Maccabees. Innumerable prodigies ever occurred. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature suspended to benefit the Church. Earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses have been given as signs to believers; and again, floods and pestilence and tornadoes were the ministers of God's wrathful justice. It did not seem true at first that the sun could shine equally on the just and the unjust, or that the unfortunate city overwhelmed with an earthquake or consumed with fire could be quite as sinless as its more fortunate neighbor.

A singular instance of this old method of thought appeared but a short time ago in our own country. Soon after the horrible disaster in Pennsylvania, the pastor<sup>1</sup> of one of the most famous churches in our metropolis felt called upon to investigate the character of the flooded city. He concluded, as he told his people, that the inhabitants of Johnstown were no worse than other people, and that therefore the flood could not have been a judgment from God. And this is at the very end of the nineteenth century! There are times when one cannot help feeling ashamed of his species.

To the common mind of the past, miracles were not only possible but probable. They were of common occurrence. There were none who had not seen them. When one was related, it caused no surprise. People believed it with quite as ready faith as if only a shower were mentioned, or a frost, or a fever. If cattle died, it was because the devil possessed them, or the eye of a witch had beheld them. It is useless to ask why these stories were not denied. Such was the popular belief. No one questioned it, save now and then a speculative heretic in the seclusion of his closet; and his penalty was death, and descent to posterity as a rogue, a scourge, an imp of the devil, an atheist steeped in crime, — epithets not altogether unfamiliar to modern ears. Why, these same methods of judgment pervaded the whole legal system of ages, as is manifest in ordeals and trials of strength. The king on the throne, the judge on the bench, the statesman in the council, and the peasant in the field interpreted literally by such rules the things which they experienced or heard. The oath of two or three witnesses meant sure death as a sorcerer. In Salem,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Talmage, 1889.

we of this country saw this very process consummated before the legal tribunal of the Colony. There is nothing strange or peculiar in Biblical narrative. The same wonders stand in the most profane works, so considered.

Nor are the Scriptures unique in their prophecies. These have been with all peoples, for all purposes, in all times. If the divine archer's arrow sped within a thousand miles of the mark, an applauding people praised his skill, and swore it pierced the target dead in the centre. Divinity is not the sole privilege of one man. Prophecy is the monopoly of no nation or sect. Virgil, as well as Isaiah, foretold the immaculate conception, the birth of the godlike Christ, who should suffer for the sins of the world. And no prophecy was ever more accurate than Lord Chesterfield's prognostication of the French Revolution.

Stories like those mentioned above are not put into men's minds as revelations from God; they are, rather, startling revelations or manifestations of ignorance. They were attributed to God, because it was impossible to explain them otherwise. Just as the Pagans constructed their different gods out of the various natural phenomena which they could not understand, so the Hebrews, and later the Christians, attributed to their god whatever was incomprehensible to them. This became customary; and whenever anything out of the ordinary line of events happened, people said, "Lo! it is God," or, "Saints defend us! it is the devil," without another thought. Bitter experience has taught us that the iron bands of custom are hard to break.

The Middle Ages, as a whole, present in many respects the most melancholy spectacle of any period in human history. The scientific spirit was quenched,

and after smouldering awhile seemed utterly to die away. We have to look through and beyond a vast, silent shadow to perceive the quite respectable work of the ancient Pagans. Thus human progress seems to ebb and flow, and the tide seems to have gone away down below low-water mark during this period. Standing in the middle of the sixteenth century and looking backwards, one beholds only a barren, sandy desert, in which hardly a green thing, a leaf, not to say a flower, appears to intercept the vision to the fruitful fields beyond.

The truth is, that in all those ages of faith credulity has stood for reason, and submission for loyalty. Whenever men have known little they have imagined much. Failing to comprehend common things, it is natural that they should fear the uncommon. Veneration and worship and submission are ever the offspring of wonder and fear. And the indirect result of all this is worse than the direct result. A credulous rather than a critical spirit is formed, a disposition to refer all uncommon or striking events to supernatural causes. Wonder at it if you will, believe it you must, it has taken all those years, from primal man to the present, to this very moment when I write, to remove the taint of superstition from the common affairs of life,—mark me, our daily work, not our weekly worship or our profounder reflections; and even to-day the frequency and power of superstitious influence, made manifest from time to time, compels the lamentable confession that the victory is not yet altogether won.

The effect that custom and environment have had upon Christian testimony has been indicated quite sufficiently, and of course it is clear that this effect in ages of ignorance is much increased. Theologians

strenuously maintain that if these stories are not true, the prophets and the faithful generally who told them are a set of most shameful impostors. But this is an idle statement, and wholly unreasonable. The only imposition these men and their contemporaries exercised was self-imposition. Their only crime, if it be such, was ignorance. True, there may have been, and doubtless were, individual cases of wilful lying; but such probably were the exception rather than the rule, especially in earlier days. It is not that these men alone believed and saw miracles; everybody experienced and believed them. When witches were burned in Scotland years ago, no one protested, because all believed the punishment just. We have now but to examine the two remaining corrupters of testimony, enthusiasm and prejudice.

Religious wars have ever been atrocious. The influence of enthusiasm or excessive zeal is remarkably potent in religious affairs. One has but to enter a country church during a revival to be convinced of this fact. Religious truth appeals more to the heart than to the head. Such influences are almost invariably intense. It is all but a common thing to-day at country revivals to see men, women, and children indiscriminately grovelling in the dirt, groaning and moaning over their sins. I have seen such sights myself, where the feelings of simple country people were so intensely excited by a blatant, illogical, and unreasonable evangelist as to render them utterly foolish and irresponsible for their actions. I have seen a Salvationist become so intensely affected while in prayer as to fall to the ground foaming at the mouth, all the while raging and uttering incoherent cries and confused mutterings; and the audience deemed it a spiritual sight. There is considerable

evidence in the New Testament to raise the presumption that the disciples were at times likewise affected. The gift of tongues is suggestive, as well as the charge of drunkenness which was brought against them.

In considering this question of the effect of enthusiasm, it must be kept constantly in mind that Christian evidence is for the most part that of ignorant men in the lowest conditions of life. Was not the kingdom of heaven promised to the poor in spirit especially? To the common mind the poor in spirit means the poor in worldly goods. Minds afflicted by misfortune, suffering from infirmity, chafed by the contempt of others, readily entertain hopes and suggestions of future happiness. The fortunate, on the contrary, are quite well satisfied with this world. It is well known that the learned men of the apostolic era viewed with supreme contempt the ideas advanced by the zealous followers of Christ. They had not the nobility and attractiveness of their great master. The philosophers laughed at their wonderful stories, and considered them unworthy of refutation. It may be a fair presumption that these early zealots occupied the same position of pitying contempt in the minds of the learned and well-to-do Pagans of that period that the Salvation Army holds to-day in the opinion of the upper classes of society. Certain it is they exercised the same spiritual recklessness and practised the same general ceremonies as their modern imitators. Paul is, to be sure, an exception. He was not ignorant, yet whether siding with or against Christ he was pre-eminently a zealot. The claims of Christianity exhibit forcibly this characteristic.

Gibbon gives a pointed example of the absurdity of Scriptural claims. He recalls the fact that the preternatural darkness mentioned in the Bible, which

covered the whole earth for the space of three hours at the death of Christ, — an event which would naturally excite the wonder and curiosity of all men, — passed utterly without the notice of hundreds of learned men eager to discover and investigate just such phenomena. Neither Seneca nor Pliny, who mention innumerable other natural phenomena, as earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, noticed this remarkable event, or even hints that he ever heard of it. We may go even farther. While that great sacrifice on Calvary was scarcely consummated by the resurrection and crowned by the glorious ascension, while the importance of this great victory over death was scarcely comprehended by the faithful, the Docetes declared that the theory of the immaculate conception was false, and asserted that Christ sprang into perfect manhood on the banks of the Jordan; that the enraged Jews had vented their spite on a phantom Christ; and that his followers extended their credulity to a visionary resurrection and ascension.

This is sure: the disciples, carried away by the lofty principles of their great master, found all else utterly contemptible. And when their noble teacher was no more, their enthusiasm, freed from its restraint, carried them to astonishing extremes. During the life of the master even, their zeal oftentimes was manifested. Indeed, one of Christ's greatest difficulties was to curb the fiery ardor of his followers. After his death all this pent-up energy burst forth like an avalanche, and left that which but yesterday was reasonable order and prosperity a hopeless entanglement of chaotic confusion. How little faith we should place in a history of the Republican party written by an ardent Republican! Yet political zeal



never has led men to extremes common to religious enthusiasts.

In this apostolic worship affection did not stay to scrutinize. A fine thought passes easily from the pen, and serves to glorify a hero though deviating from the truth. Nothing too wonderful could be related; no absurdity could be too apparent. Martyrdom was sought. Crowds of the faithful forced their way into the courts of justice, and extorted from the judges sentences of execution against themselves. The glory of martyrdom was easy to win. They forced travellers to strike them dead, threatening mortal punishment if they refused. Failing to secure envied death at the hands of another, in the presence of crowds of their friends many plunged headlong from lofty cliffs. Numerous precipices were famous for the number of martyrs who had leaped from their heights. Each new disaster became an infallible indication of an expiring world. Men sought to get out of the world before the last day of conflagration should overwhelm them. They provoked and irritated the wild beasts let loose upon them; they taunted their executioners; they eagerly burst from their attendants, and leaped into the flames prepared for them, and shouted for joy in torture. "Unhappy men," says Antoninus, "if you are thus weary of your lives, is it so difficult for you to find ropes and precipices?"

Those who were inclined to be sober were carried away by the enthusiasm of their associates. But this could not continue long. A reaction came. Personal interest became a source of belief and practice. People who had scorned an ignorant, proscribed sect soon learned to esteem a religion embraced by a great emperor and a civilized and powerful empire. People are

governed chiefly by names. Imitation is all-powerful. Later the new sect became rent with disputes, rivalry, and jealousy. The enmity and bitterness of the Christians towards each other equalled the fury of wild beasts. The peaceful serenity of heaven became a turbulent tempest of hell.

It is easy to bring to mind an infinite number of illustrations of this despotic sway of zeal aside from religious lines. It is the cause of hero-worship. It magnifies virtues and minimizes faults; or it may take the opposite turn, and intensify slight failings, until we have an atrocious, horrifying example of depraved humanity. A number of great historical characters have borne both effects. Napoleon presents to many minds a perfect incarnation of all that is bad in humanity. He is called the cruel, vindictive, tyrannical, treacherous, lying scourge of Europe; while to the minds of many more he appears almost faultless, — a hero, a demigod. We Americans idealize our own Washington. We are sure he never told a lie or uttered a curse; and when his correspondence is brought to light as evidence of his humanity, and historians dare assert that he had faults, we are ready to denounce them all as slanderers of the fair fame of our hero, without fear and without reproach.

Another striking example of the tendency of this affectionate zeal appears in the current belief in the cruel imprisonment of John Bunyan. His place of confinement is characterized as a den where there was not room for exercise even, — a dreary dungeon vault, cold, damp, and clammy. A little chink in the wall does admit a solitary beam of sickly sunlight; but this one scant ray is cheerless, revealing only a sad abode of woe. The prisoner is pale and wan, too weak to earn his bread, too sick to eat it. A group of pale,

feeble children, and a wife worn down to the very brink of the grave with care, combine to increase his suffering. All this, endured for ten long years, affords a picture of woe that makes the heart sick. Such is the common account of Bunyan's imprisonment, and the one that obtains general belief. Full-page cuts in Sunday-school papers represent the scene. I have in mind the one I saw in childhood, agreeing well with the historian's description given above. And yet this picture is absurdly false. Bunyan's imprisonment during its entire duration was little more than formal. Friends were constantly admitted to him; even strangers, hearing of his fame, were attracted to him. He was even permitted at times to preach to his fellow-prisoners and outsiders. During a portion of the term he spent his nights away from the prison with his family, and his jailer told him he might go out when he pleased. Nominally in confinement, he attended meetings away. In poverty he never was, if the most hearty assistance of many firm friends, in no way forbidden, be not considered poverty. And after his trivial confinement, not a hundredth part so severe punishment as many greater men have suffered, he became a man of considerable property.

But oftentimes it is more than mere blindness of affection that clouds such testimony. First, there is a slight coloring of events. Little facts are concealed or blurred, and then actual misrepresentation and wilful lying follow. That this last element entered into religious testimony during the early centuries, and finally pervaded it in the Middle Ages and later, is unquestionable. Involuntary misrepresentation we can easily excuse, but wilful, premeditated, and constant lying, though pardonable, becomes fixed in our

memories. Every religion, every sect, has favored investigation so long as investigation favored its ends. Every one has also denounced it when it was deemed dangerous to religious purpose. People admire reason favorable to themselves. When the argument leans our way, it is easy to cry, "Another Daniel come to judgment!" Sects do not openly and honestly bring forward their charges; they are generally too shrewdly consistent for this. No persuasion ever denounced education, — never; only damnable heresy. Education, they insist, is grand; only they quite as strongly insist that it is for them to define education. They cannot permit individuals to outstrip them; they restrain the very freedom which they represent. How often has the Church expelled those who would do her most honor! Wrangling over the Bible they call understanding it. The subterfuges of the wolf in *Æsop's* famous fable are as nothing in comparison to the artful contrivances on which different sects have depended.

Prejudice is the most unworthy corrupter of testimony, withal so common as to be quite respectable. Each faction tells the story in its own way, and insists that all the rest are wrong. Anything is good and credible as long as it tends towards what it calls truth; everything is false which suggests or intimates its falsity. Thus we have a peculiar standard of truth. The question seems to be, not what are the facts, but how will they affect our creed. "Heresy, blasphemy, lies!" says the Protestant; and an eminent modern Catholic replies: "Protestant tradition is based on lying, — bold, wholesale, unscrupulous lying." The truth, without doubt, at present lies chiefly outside of both.

In 1378, owing to a faction in the Church of Rome, Europe beheld the spectacle of two rival Popes, each

claiming to be the sole infallible head of the Church, and denouncing the other as a pretender. As a natural consequence people began to question the claims and infallibility of both. Just so the continued rivalry and recrimination of Protestant sects has probably been the chief cause of modern scepticism. People reason that all cannot be right, conclude that all are wrong, and construct another hypothesis of their own, which in turn generally becomes another dogma.

The Jesuits, perhaps the most noted example of intolerant bigotry and tyranny, afford a good illustration of this sect-prejudice. When this great sect was originated, it rendered inestimable service to civilization. One of its principal features was its well-directed activity and energy in establishing a system of education. One of the greatest of modern historians says that no university existed at the time whose scheme of instruction was so comprehensive as theirs, and none displayed such skill in teaching. Early Jesuitism was a firm ally of science and literature, and welcomed speculation. But in the inevitable progress of society Jesuitism was gradually left behind, owing somewhat, however, to the changed spirit of its followers. In the sixteenth century it was leading the age; two centuries later it was lagging behind. To-day that is a stumbling-block which but yesterday was an eager guide. The great-souled teachers of 1650 became the bigoted inquisitors of 1750. They favored education as long as they thought that by it they could subjugate conscience; and when they saw their error they did not change their purpose, — they concealed it. They found that the fault lay with an obstinate, stiff-necked generation. Education and knowledge became heresy when ecclesiastical authority began to decline through their influence. And this

has been, in brief, the history of every sect — and sects are the outward manifestations of religion — which down to this day the world has seen.

From the earliest times the effect of prejudice was apparent among the Christians. The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of reason and fancy, the practice of cheerful games, were all frowned upon by the early Christians as well as by the later Puritans. All knowledge that dealt with things not in accordance with their ideas of salvation was carnal; all language that told not of spiritual affairs was a gross abuse of the gift of speech; worldly delight was sin. Pleasure indicated the abuse of sensation. Mortification of the flesh was divine. If the eye lingered over beautiful paintings, it trespassed; if the ear became ravished with harmony, it offended. Pride and sensuality only sought gayety and magnificence. Piety despised the earth and its affairs. Whoso would follow Christ must hate the world. Should the layman repose on a downy pillow when the prophet's head rested on a stone? God forbid! Did not the holy Master want even a stone on which to lay his head? The Christian had one certainty, sin, and one doubt, salvation.

Despite the extreme frequency of miracles for the most trivial reasons, despite the statement that miracles were given to aid conviction, when a noble Grecian promised his allegiance to the new sect if he could be gratified with the sight of a single person who had been raised from the dead, his reasonable offer was rejected. A whole body of philosophers made a standing offer of their allegiance, if they might be convinced by a single resurrection from the dead. It was of course refused. Just so modern spiritualism must work in the dark.

The Christians scorned the Pagans. Salvation was for the Jew, not for the Gentile. They never turned the leaves of a Pagan author without fear and trembling. The contagion of Pagan literature was deadly sin. Thus they superseded the original masterpieces by their miserable compilations. They copied from one another the most lamentable nonsense. A Christian tradition was infallible; a Pagan history was unquestionably a lie. The Middle Ages recognized only two duties, — to worship the king and to revere the Church. Literature was not only frowned upon, but forbidden and suppressed. The extent of this suppression can hardly be realized or appreciated. The accusations are well known, the punishments are familiar. Torture was common, imprisonment was general, and other penalties — from the imposition of heavy fines to banishment — were universal. I should be glad to learn the name of a single author, scientific, speculative, historical, or literary, whose works are known and valued to-day, who did not during some period of his life suffer one or more of the penalties mentioned. The Church held absolute sway. The proudest monarchs humbled themselves before the popes, and the people cringed before a tyrannical priesthood. Henry IV. was the first king who dared to change his faith on the ground of political expediency. We are familiar with his penalty. The head of the Holy Roman Empire, the successor of the Cæsars and of Charlemagne, standing for three successive days in sackcloth and barefooted in the snow of the courtyard to Gregory's palace at Canossa, a rejected penitent, is one of the strangest spectacles history presents.

This suppression of heresy extended thus from the mightiest king to the humblest peasant, and embraced

all orders of society. Christian testimony from first to last consists almost solely of the statements of friends of the cause. Eusebius himself, the greatest of the early historians, admits that he has suppressed whatever could tend to the disgrace of Christianity, relating all that would redound to its glory. The later historians blindly copied from their predecessors, and into their compilations crowded all the faults, omitting the slight virtues, of their authorities, as is usual in such cases. This method, usual with theologians and suitable to their purpose, is fatal to knowledge. Sects, forgetting the right of individual judgment to which they owe their own existence, become zealous to protect the innocent from error, and accordingly forbid any work to be published without ecclesiastical sanction. Literature thus guarded assumes the characteristics of its masters. The clergy, generally speaking, have at all times concentrated their energy upon the enforcement of belief rather than the encouragement of inquiry, and the spirit of their teachings reveals the habits of their profession. Surrounded by all these influences, the wonder is, not that prodigies are related, but that any resisted the excesses and rejected the superstitions of the times. The prevailing belief in wonders so common, in stories and legends so mysterious, and in superstitions so unreasonable, is not surprising. The remarkable fact is that a few disbelieved, and it is almost astounding that any dared to express or admit their disbelief.

All these old descriptions of miracles and omens, prodigies and wonders, are far from convincing to our times. If people do not reject them, they still do not accept them. All the new creeds that have risen into being, every year, every month, to explain



unintelligible mysteries, really affect us but little. Our calmer reason rejects these idle theories of the past. We conclude that the ancient mind, like a child that always remains an infant from too close confinement and too constant guidance, fettered by the prejudices and customs of the times, unable to expand through its own efforts or attain respectable greatness, relapsed into a state of helpless mediocrity, and what is worse, became perfectly content and even proud of its own stupidity.

Against all this superstition what can prevail? There is but one thing, knowledge, — carnal knowledge, if bigots please. The devil in Eden was right: there is something divine in knowledge; there must be something divine in it to make men strive so for it, and treasure it so highly when acquired. Every institution is the effect of public opinion; its establishment is an open announcement of that opinion. Never was any established institution changed but by changing the ideas behind it. Education is the only weapon which can destroy superstition. When men are ignorant, they are superstitious. If you seek to restrain the superstition without removing the ignorance, you attempt an impossibility. The form may be changed, but the spirit remains. It is like removing the warning rattle, and leaving the serpent his deadly sting. It is idle to remove superstition by removing the symptoms by which it is known. Every active institution is a representative of its era, a mirror in which the age may behold itself. The dormant institutions of the past are pictures only, which tell the story of the past with greater or less accuracy.

The longest and darkest night finally yields to day. We find modern generations questioning opin-

ions which have withstood the test of ages. Doubt springs up everywhere. Proof is demanded. The clergy no longer occupy a position of pre-eminence. Great progress was that, — the bigot became a hypocrite !

If much is studied, much is understood. Ecclesiastical instruction has passed ; ecclesiastical threats no longer terrify. We no longer assume the truth of religious and moral ideas ; nor do we care to be the borrowers of antiquity. The constant, laborious activity of man has made us what we are ; not gods nor angels, not prophecies nor prayers. While we reverence our great leaders, let us not forget the labors of the masses. We conclude that divinity existing apart from humanity reveals few things to humanity. In our syllogisms we do not assume the major premises. The ancient assumed supernatural communication ; we question it. The Christian says his theology is a revelation from God ; the Jews say theirs was given to Moses by God in person ; the Turks say theirs was conveyed to them by an angel from heaven ; the Persians say Zoroaster went to heaven to get theirs : each of these peoples has declared the beliefs of the rest false, and to-day the educated of all peoples conclude that all are false, while recognizing much truth in all. While the heavenly bodies are gods and angels, while Boötes literally drives his herds to pasture in the skies, while the stars are prizes in the strife of the gods, there can be no astronomy. As long as people listen to the dispute of Michael and the devil over the body of Moses, there is no likelihood of their questioning the existence and inspiration of the prophet.

But we have learned that our religion depends upon ourselves. Established religion is not the cause, it is

the effect, of civilization. A highly educated people does not accept an absurd religion. Nations change their religions; but no growing, intellectual nation ever adopted a degraded and unreasonable religion. While a good religion will aid civilization, yet it is evident that the civilization must be superior, else it would never have accepted the new or perceived that the old faith was bad. Stationary races have stationary religions, while progressive races are constantly modifying their religious beliefs. Ignorance loves the marvellous. Was there ever a child but loved a fairy tale?

Simple faith would never have made America what it is to-day. Our ancestors had faith in the largest extent in their own work. He was a wise architect who replied to the clergyman's complaint of the neglect of God in that a defective arch in his church had broken: "The Almighty will never hold up an arch that is not built on scientific principles; and one that is does n't need his assistance."

Knowledge first, then, and religion afterwards; or rather in knowledge we have religion. The soil will never quicken seed unless it is ready for it; so an ignorant people will never accept an advanced faith, — only one full of marvels, one which finds a god behind every trivial occurrence. The religion is not to blame; it is the fault of the people who originate and believe its absurdities.

Despite the millions of dollars and hundreds of lives that have been sacrificed in supporting denominational missions in heathen lands among barbarous people, not a single permanent Christian colony can be cited. Temporary conversions and professions of faith do result, but experience shows that these results have never been permanent. If the field is

abandoned, the people relapse into their old faith. Look where you will the whole world over, no permanent advance has ever been made by any kind of religious instruction, pure and simple. Wherever schools have been established, and reading and arithmetic taught, improvement has never failed. Wisely did our forefathers build our government on the solid foundation of the school-house and the town-meeting. The heathen adopt only the faults of the new faith taught them. They may fill the rude chapels, they may submit with their families to baptism, they may offer prayer to the new god ; but this is only the substitution of one superstition for another. They bend their knees as to the old idols, they superstitiously submit to ecclesiastical rites, they flock to the chapel as they did to the bank of the river. Rituals and ceremonies are plainly seen and quickly learned ; but these are superficial. The real meaning lies deeper, and only too often escapes the notice of the teachers themselves.

The Israelites whom Moses led out of Egypt afford a striking example of this fact. A barbarous people, influenced by Paganism as they were, they could not master the idea of one god. They craved for wonders. They were continually recurring to their old faith. The punishments related in the Scriptures had no effect upon them. Anon they bowed down before the golden calf, they worshipped the brazen serpent. The descendants of these people are no longer influenced by the old superstition. The pillar of cloud by day has vanished like mist before the morning sun ; the pillar of fire by night is quenched ; the great law-giver has abandoned the summit of Sinai, and his voice no longer rolls in thunder over the cliffs of Horeb. Why is this ? Simply because

these people like others have changed, and the old faith fails to satisfy their minds. The great God is in the world as much as he ever was, but their idea of him has changed. Religious doctrine has nowhere produced a permanent effect upon people unless preceded by intellectual advancement. Ignorance is infinite belief and infinitesimal knowledge.

It is difficult for the ordinary reader of the present to appreciate the ignorance of the past. Few people realize what scepticism has done for mankind. Doubt is the mother of reason and thought. Certainty never asks questions. Natural-born slaves rarely think of freedom. As long as men know that the only true religion is their own, and are sure that all who are unfortunate enough to die in other opinions are doomed to eternal punishment, there is no hope of religious progress. But when they realize that religion is quite as much a matter of reason as of faith, the thought also follows that human reason is not infallible.

Is the Bible the worse for being understood? Does it lose by being proved human? Far from it. Its beauty and power are but increased, portraying humanity on moral lines striving manfully to work out its own salvation. Believe the Bible as the inspired Word of God or not, as you please, but at your peril accept and believe the testimony of universal progress. This is the eternal Bible and Word of God. To disbelieve this is infidelity, — greatest to others and self, least to God.

We must derive our beliefs from ourselves, not from tradition or imitation. A revelation cannot come at second hand. Every man must think for himself, if he would be enlightened. Others cannot do this for us; if they do, we are really as ignorant as ever. We

cannot ride to wisdom. Moral principle speaks for itself, and always will. The principles of geometry are always provable. It is nonsense to quarrel over what is not so. We must not judge what we fail to comprehend, nor submit to the rule of mere words and names, slaves to fashion and form. Determining to examine our belief for ourselves, we find that ecclesiastics have not only deceived us, but themselves as well.

I repeat, the present is not an age of superstition. A man is valued to-day according to his knowledge. The greatest men of the Middle Ages knew but little, and can teach us little or nothing. People generally are not so cultured as the best of the past, but they are vastly more enlightened. Written words bear no evidence of being other than human. When we say they are divine, we throw up all reason and progress for a bauble. No religion will stand much longer among a civilized people that is based on the supernatural. The moral truths of any religion, ancient or modern, are for no single age, but for all time. The time has never been when truth was a lie. Fully appreciating that our present condition, social, intellectual, and moral, is the natural result, pure and simple, of all that has happened in the past, and that the admission of any miraculous influence would render uncertain all that we are and hope to be, — in short, understanding ourselves and our growth, a future radiant with reasonable hope stretches out before us. The very fact that we are in the position in which we find ourselves at present, with great opportunities, wonderful prosperity, well advanced in education, and best of all, in a frame of mind open to conviction, ready to learn and willing, yes, eager to use what we learn, is the best possible proof that our progress has

been the result of one simple, constant principle not subject to outside interruption.

Whoever asserts a miracle must prove it, and that conclusively. On him who denies the unerring regularity of natural law rests the burden of proof. No longer can people be damned any more than hanged by any preponderance of evidence. The evidence must be beyond reasonable doubt. We reject all ancient evidence of supernatural interference. It is the invention of superstition; it is the inheritance of ignorance. Its acceptance indicates intellectual stagnation, and the remarkable inveteracy of custom and prejudice. If nothing else, epitaphs on tombstones teach us that sincerity is not always truth. The apostle Thomas disbelieved, and claimed the opportunity of personal contact and observation. The age is simply following in his footsteps. It may be foolish to question certain events of history, but who shall call it sinful? It was the great God himself, according to Christian testimony, who first cried, "Let there be Light."

## II.

## CHRIST.

*Sum, non sequor.* (I lead, I do not follow.)

“ARE you also of Galilee?” queried the inquirers of Nicodemus. “Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet.” No, one greater than a prophet arises from Galilee. Christ is a greater man than he is represented to have been. The prophets have been; I am. I lead; I do not follow. Tradition is of the past.

The subject of these remarks presents a unique figure, and plays a singular part in the civilization of the world. Concerning the incidents of the life of Jesus, the Christ so-called, perhaps quite as little is known as of Socrates. In their different fields of action each did much the same work, and indeed each suffered much the same fate. Neither was appreciated or understood by his own contemporaries. Both subsequently reached the highest glory of man. One was naturally the precursor of the other. Christ — for we shall apply to him the name which the world has given — is probably better understood at present among men in general than he ever has been from the day of his birth. There is a good deal of truth in the remark of Thoreau, that a Christian cannot appreciate the beauty and significance of the life of Christ. The real Biblical Christian, however, is by no means so common as he once was.



Poets, religions, passions, and women, says a noted German novelist, live three ages: first, we despise them; then our contempt changes to deification; and finally, after a long time, we honor them. The statement well applies to men of genius generally. A moment's thought will convince one of its truth. Genius is always difficult to understand. "If truth you tell, all fear, none aid, and few understand." Says Kepler on his death-bed: "But one man ever understood me;" and then he added the painful reflection, "and he did n't." Wisdom beyond the masses, says Euripides, is always flouted at; the rabble hoot and call it nonsense. Genius is above common talent, and for this very reason cannot be understood by it. Furthermore, it is always hated. We admire it, we bow to it, yet we hate it. Somebody has said a genius is an accused man. He is crowned, but generally with thorns.

He who raises himself to the highest in anything common to humanity incurs the penalty of a solitary life, a life rather from within than from without. This retirement is a conspicuous characteristic. Of course it is clear that great result requires great work, and great work requires seclusion. But this characteristic seclusion is more than retirement to arduous work or profound reflection. It has a more positive element. It is by no means one of the mere incidents to hard work. It seems to be one of the elements, almost, of genius. When Seneca said that he always felt himself less a man after entering society than before, he did not mean merely a cynical aphorism, though it was dangerously near the verge of it. Every genius, without regard to his special calling, has positively sought retirement; oftentimes

this withdrawal from society has been some kind of communion with Nature.

These three characteristics will aid our judgment in its conclusions with regard to this particular genius under consideration, one of the greatest the world has ever seen. I say one of the greatest advisedly, for supremacy is equality. I cannot call Christ greater than Michael Angelo, Phidias, or Shakspeare. Genius has a dynasty of its own. It is the only successful kind of communism known.

We of this age find it doubly difficult to judge this great man, because we have nothing absolutely his own from which to infer. In judging Shakspeare, whether we deem that individual to be Bacon or not, is of no consequence; whoever he was, his great character appears with absolute certainty in his own authentic writings. We find Michael Angelo's genius in his own paintings. But in judging Christ we have no such authentic reference. Everything depends upon others in the latter instance; in the former instances nothing depends upon others.

This enhanced difficulty, then, is apparent. It may be said that we have Christ's own sermons and conversations; but it must be borne in mind that these are but reports, all made probably years after they were given orally. Furthermore, these sermons themselves are very short, and far from numerous. Considering the New Testament a volume of evidence as to Christ's character and work, the great bulk of it makes no pretence of being his own words; this claim is made by but very few pages. Example is better than statement: a half-dozen ignorant men in the lowest walks of life become deeply interested in an individual, and after hearing him speak, together, or each separately, conclude to set

down what they have heard. It is plain that little of the report will be verbatim. Also it is evident that if the person in whom they are interested is profound, often giving a long sermon in a short sentence, much will not have been comprehended. And the omission of a few of these little clauses, not understood and so not deemed essential, may change the entire meaning, or misdirect the underlying spirit. When one considers that our account of these events was written not only years after their occurrence, but in a language not understood by the people among whom they really transpired, who can attempt accurately to number or designate the errors?

Again these accounts may have been created largely from qualities and sentiments long familiar, as it is generally thought Tacitus and Thucydides were in the habit of doing. This evidence is like any other testimony, to be taken for what it is worth. Each individual constitutes a jury to examine into the facts and render a verdict, and this is exactly what is attempted in this chapter. We are forced to use our judgment in the daily affairs of life. A negative and an affirmative cannot be true of the same statement; and when testimony contains such qualities, we reject one or the other, or parts of both, according as it satisfies our judgment. The supernatural, of course, is rejected altogether. I do not think it worth more consideration than it has had. Indeed I am a little ashamed to feel the necessity of its consideration at all in the opening chapter.

Deification has lowered Christ, as it has lowered every other great man who has been so unfortunate as to have it thrust upon him. It was the custom among the Greeks and Romans to deify their heroes,

and it is a curious fact that they always made worse gods than men. The Christians did the same with Christ. Deification among Christians only made men worse. Falsehood is always inferior to truth. It seems to me quite easy to separate the essentials of Christ's teachings from the weak, ineffectual attempts of his followers at interpretation and elucidation. The ineffaceable impress of genius seems apparent. There is a peculiar ring to a genuine coin not attained by the imitation. The essential truths insisted upon by Christ are as clear as if written in red ink; and it is only the essential that is worth discussing.

The circumstances of Christ's birth are not known with any degree of accuracy, and it would be of no consequence if they were. That he was illegitimate cannot be claimed with certainty. He seems to have come from poor parents, like almost all men who have attained lasting fame. As is generally the case with regard to distinguished men, precocity is claimed for him. It is easy to find elements of superior ability in the youth of those who in maturity acquire superiority.

He entered into Jewish society at a time when reform was most needed. The synagogue was all bound up in the old Mosaic law. The letter was all in all, the spirit nothing. According to religious custom, his people were bound to refrain from eating certain kinds of meat; they had to observe certain religious forms and ceremonies; they must practise circumcision; certain feasts must be kept with extreme scrupulousness; they might not eat with unwashed hands; worship was conspicuously public; they had many peculiar customs with regard to the Sabbath; according to the rabbis, they might forgive one sinning against them until seven times, and no

more; they might swear by the temple, but not by the gold of the temple; and a hundred other curious laws had they, all of which they felt bound to observe to the letter, regardless of the spirit, or their inward lives. It did not take profound education to perceive the absurdity in all these customs. Exact scholarship, on the contrary, had explained the application of the old law and framed these absurdities. A keen, active perception was all that was required, — keener indeed than would to us seem necessary; but it will be remembered that nothing so imposes upon men as habit, and nothing so blinds the intellectual eyesight as custom.

The experience of hundreds of years proves that nothing short of genius rises above the conventional rules of life. Living among a people who received the usual training, whose endeavor seems to be to resist and utterly quench progress, and whose laws were unmeaning words, he felt from youth, probably, irresistible contrary impulses. There was an inward perception of the great reality, an uprising of mysterious thoughts. Those old false certainties were perplexing at first. Little by little the truth becomes manifest. One day this unrest culminates; the spirit burns, and suddenly bursts forth, and the light falls upon all about. From this moment we have a reformer, one whose life is no longer his own, but consecrated to God and humanity.

Though his people were blinded by superstition and imprisoned by the barriers of bigotry, an instinct inborn seemed to guide him to great and good things, of which no man had taught him; for none — no, not one — from among all his people knew. Thus it is ever. Always in bondage, though of a thousand years' duration, some Moses rises, with the instinct of free-

dom, and leads his band up out of the land of Egypt, and the world knows not his resting-place; ever in the tangled maze of a senseless, know-nothing philosophy of idle words, some Socrates instinctively catches the absurdity, and sages, tangled in their own web, vote him a demon; some Christ ever tears the veil from a superstition, bigoted and hypocritical, and suffers the death of a heretic.

We now reach a point where the evidence guides us. Christ is a great teacher and reformer. One great quality we must notice at the outset. He is a reformer of the highest type. He is no mere extremist or theorizer, no hot-headed enthusiast. Rarely have we had a similar example. He perceives the evils of his times, and exposes them without fear or mercy; but he never denounces the good. He sees both sides of the question. Here is one of the surest indications of his greatness.

One of the most striking characteristics of real genius is that it has a double reflection. If you take a bit of Iceland spar and place it over a single dot on paper, strangely enough you see two. The crystal has double refraction. These two phenomena are precisely corresponding, one in the mental, the other in the physical world. This faculty of seeing both sides of a thing belongs to genius. Rarely if ever has one possessed the faculty to the degree that Christ possessed it. "O ye fools," he cries, "you make clean the outside of the cup indeed, but within is all manner of evil and uncleanness." He does not, like so many reformers, decry the outer cleanliness. "Good," he says, "well enough; but remember that there is an interior more important, if anything, than the outside. Did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?"

There is another story told in which Christ's thorough appreciation of both sides of life appears. The story contains too profound and characteristic a thought to be the work of any but a genius, and this is the only guide we have to the authentic teachings of Christ. It is that short, sweet story of Mary and Martha that I refer to, to me one of the sweetest and purest teachings of Christ. Mary lingered to hear Christ talk, instead of helping her sister, perceiving doubtless uncommon purity and beauty and truth in his words. When Martha, who was a typical busy housewife, requested Christ to command Mary to help her, his gently reproving answer, doubtless unsatisfactory to, and uncomprehended by Martha, contains a great truth and reveals a master: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

Christ did not say that one was wrong and the other right. He perceived that one, in the worry and fret of domestic cares, found no time for the higher things of life, for mental reflection, or the contemplation of beauty as in the flowers and birds, or the enjoyment of music; that the other had chosen that good part, and it was right for her to love it, perhaps, better than for her sister to find her happiness only in work. Perhaps, as the reflecting young maiden rose from her seat at Christ's feet to aid her busy sister, she pondered over these words, and found in them a complete solution of life as manifested in her little family circle. Martha, maybe, hardly awaited the answer, but bustled away to her work forgetful of all else.

In this simple, reasonable way he unfolds the mys-

teries of life ; and when he separates right and wrong, his words, like sword-thrusts, cut clean and sharp. He wisely avoids discussion, and ever when attempts are made to catch him in some theory, or to trip him in some special expression, flies back to the main point with a suddenness startling and confusing to his questioners. How different is this from what we are accustomed to find in reformers ! One has but to recall the unreasonable words and actions of the antislavery agitators in our own country, and mark the contrast. It would be difficult to find another great reformer who has so little of radicalism and dogma. This single fact shows his pre-eminence.

There is little or nothing specially new in Christ's teachings. The thought was old, but utterly lost in a maze of rules and forms. Deep truths had become completely lost in a labyrinth of words. At a certain famous cathedral in England there is a beautifully painted window, which is said to have been made by an apprentice out of the fragments of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to all the rest in the church, that the vanquished artist is reported to have hanged himself out of mortification. Christ, in the same manner, used the fragments of truth which the theologians had lost sight of in the construction of a grand ethical and religious system, beside which their institutions sink into utter insignificance. He brought out these old hidden truths, and infused new life into them. He awakened sleeping virtues, and revived lifeless bodies in very truth.

In the work and teachings of this great soul we shall find his true character. A man's work portrays his character better than all the biographies ever written, if they fail thoroughly to comprehend this work. We have no reason to complain because



Christ gave us no account of his life. He gave his work and his life to humanity, and that is enough. The only lamentable part is that none then understood either his work or his life. But his teaching enables us to know him well, — at least, all that it is important that we should know. Christ belongs to humanity, not because of the incidents of his daily life, but because of the lasting greatness of his teachings; and these we do know or can trace with sufficient clearness.

A man may be said to resemble a machine. To understand it you must find the source of its motion, and then you can trace its appliances throughout all the various complicated mechanisms to the final result or function. What, then, is the underlying principle of Christ's teaching? It is easy to apprehend this mainspring and source of all his work and teaching. It is his whole theology. Simplicity itself, it embraces and contains his whole theory of life. A single word often used by him, understood by few or none of his own time or since, completely satisfies the inquiry, — Spirit.

It seems clear that Christ meant by this word just what we to-day mean when we use it in our common conversation. One has committed a wrong, but without intending error. The *spirit* was right, we say, and we agree with Christ when we conclude that the person has committed no real crime. We may despise his judgment; we can but admire his principle. The spirit in this common sense of the word was ever Christ's standard of judgment in every human relation; and I question whether or not it was his divinity. I am inclined to think that in Christ's mind both the human and the divine met in this simple idea. To use a mathematical figure, which after all

may confuse rather than enlighten many, humanity seemed to merge through this idea of spirit into divinity, just as plus merges through zero into minus. It is clear that Christ's idea of God was rather abstract than concrete. The great principle of his theology is apparently but the change from real to ideal.

Let us examine first, then, Christ's theological teaching. We shall find it as simple and plain as anything can be. He never propounded a theory. He never insisted upon a form, or haggled over a subtlety. He seemed to realize that disputation generally amounts to nothing, and always avoided it. A plain statement of a truth is better than an analytical, exegetical discussion of it. If the truth is too profound or ideal for the age, the simple statement is a better receptacle of preservation than the subtle discussion, and will be the sooner comprehended, if indeed the discussion ever is. Shakspeare well expresses this when he says, an honest tale "speeds" best plainly told.

It was said before that Christ's idea of God seems to be that of spirit. Spirit is his whole theology. The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. The kingdom of God is within. In his reported conversations we find this idea plainly indicated. Christ is athirst after a long walk in the heat of the day, and seeing a well near by approaches it, and waits in the shade for some one to come to draw water, from whom he may obtain enough to slake his thirst. As he sits there reflecting alone, he thinks, maybe, how like this cool spring at his feet, which satisfies the outward thirst, is the spirit of love and charity and purity which satisfies the inner thirst; and as he is buried deep in this reflection, a woman comes to the well to draw water, and

when asked to give she hesitates, and inquires how a stranger Jew can make such a request of a Samaritan. The natural surroundings and previous line of thought suggest the answer and the sublime lesson that follows. The woman shrewdly brings up the dispute between her people and the Jews, saying, Our people worship here in this mountain, and your people say we are wrong, and that Jerusalem is the only place of worship for true believers. And then Christ strikes the key-note of all his theological teaching. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Christ did not attempt ever to define his idea of divinity any further than this. He did not specifically paint the features or describe the attributes of his God. This was left for the theologians and philosophers. On the contrary, he distinctly says that he knows not, nor does any one know, what the spirit is. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the spirit." As Paul says later, God dwells not in temples made by hand. Christ felt God within himself. He did not need to see him. God's temple is the soul. Furthermore, he distinctly states that God is the God of the living, not of the dead. The only sin is a disregard of the spirit. "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Again, whoever shall speak against the son of man shall be forgiven, but he that

speaks against the spirit shall not be forgiven. He is self-condemned.

Christ rarely spoke without using figurative language, and this has led to gross misapprehension from its very simplicity. Figurative language must be interpreted in connection with the thought it illustrates. There never was a figure known but had a false side to it. It is a common saying that a metaphor cannot "go on all fours." Theologians have tried to do this very thing, and ecclesiastical absurdities are the result. Christ loved to speak of the spirit which seems to incline to the right within us, as a father who guides us to all that is good and pure. He often spoke of it in the first person, a figure commonly used by writers and orators of his own time, and even at present. These common familiarities of conversation have proved a constant stumbling-block since Christ's time. Indeed, his very hearers failed to understand him, thinking he spoke of himself. And this was, in a sense, a natural mistake, because of the advanced ideas he intended. But Christ knew he was not understood, and tried his best to lead people to his true meaning, all to no purpose, as will appear. His common expression "son of man," taken to refer to himself and so begun with a capital letter, clearly means only man in general, and is a common instance of the stupidity of his interpreters. Let us trace some of these sayings of Christ and the apparent misapprehensions.

The misunderstanding began from the very first. It began with the story of the Temptation. Christ experienced this alone, and consequently the story we have is founded probably on accounts which he gave to his followers. In the calm of some evening when the little band was gathered together, — perchance in

despondency, who can tell?—Christ may have told his simple listeners how he had been tempted to abandon his project of becoming a teacher, how he too had experienced hours of sorrow and doubt and nights of anxiety. He may have told them how in his hunger it occurred to him that God ought to send him food, for he was working in his service; and then he thought perhaps the very stones at his feet would change to bread did he but speak the word. Severe temptations always come in hunger and weariness and trouble. He might have said that the kingdoms of Judæa, yes, of all the world, seemed in his grasp, if he would but give rein to ambition; that it seemed to him that it would be a grand way to rise suddenly to the highest pitch of favor by some miraculous descent as if from heaven, say from the temple, when the crowd was thronging in and out; and then how the good spirit came and told him not to yield, and some way the old words came to mind, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God.” At the familiar words these homely, honest fishermen and laborers start, and, rising, exchange quick glances, and a feeling of awe comes over them. “This is the Son of God,” they whisper; “he himself just said so.” Strange, wonderful delusion! and yet as natural and true and simple as life, when one remembers that the Jews had long been awaiting a Messiah, Son of God.

Christ did not mean that a devil had come in bodily form and tempted him, the Son of God. No, the words were in self-rebuke. He himself, by such unworthy thoughts of shirking duty to gain power, and by yielding even in thought to sacrifice of principle, was tempting God.

Those beautiful words immediately preceding the resurrection of Lazarus offer a good example. Christ

said: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." This was the great resurrection, greater than a mere bringing of the dead to life. Martha at once responds: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Christ himself explains fully this expression "son of God;" for their own law said, "Ye are gods unto whom the word of God come."

Christ spoke often of being sent by God, as Socrates spoke of being dissuaded by the demon. Once he is reported as saying: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And many people said, This is the prophet; and more said, This is the Christ; and they divided, and began to quarrel. At another time Christ said, "I and the Father are one," clearly showing that he spoke figuratively. And the people asked, "Where is thy father?" Christ then plainly told them that they were mistaken in his meaning. "Ye neither know me nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father." And then he added in apparent disappointment: "Whither I go ye cannot come. . . . Ye are from beneath, I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world." Once more he shows the keenest disappointment occasioned by this continual misapprehension. Christ said: "I am the way, the truth; and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." Philip requests him to reveal his father, and he sadly replies: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" And

finally all he can say is, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," the burden of which was love, adding that they shall in a little time understand and know him.

But he went further than this. He not only tells his disciples and people generally that they are mistaken, but often explicitly denies the claim of divinity, and rebukes those who thrust it upon him. When one came to him and said, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" he quickly and sharply responded: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God; but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." When the Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven to test his power, he said almost in vexation: "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." On another occasion a woman cried, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked;" and he corrected her thus: "Rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." When his disciples quarrelled among themselves as to which was greatest, his words are not to be misunderstood: "Which is the greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? But I am among you as he that serveth."

When Peter in response to his inquiry said, "I believe that thou art Christ," he charged him to tell no man that. There is a convincing denial of divinity in his continual warnings to people as to the falsity of prophets and signs. The law and the prophets have been, but now is the word of God preached. Priest and prophet he repudiated. The great characteristic of Christ's teaching is an utter disregard of form and ceremony, and all outward worship as of

gods. His bitterest denunciations fall upon those who practise these very things ; in short, he denounces none but these. Throughout his reported sayings there is an utter abhorrence of dogma, and any form whatever of open worship. He cries, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."

Christ thoroughly realized how utterly useless it is to satisfy the human mind by any dogmatic insistence upon special doctrines or creeds. For this reason he never propounds any theory. His rules are general. He knew that people will find faults in creeds, and with reason, for they are there. He likens sectarians to children sitting in the market-place calling to their mates, "We have piped to you and ye have not danced, we have mourned and ye have not lamented." As if everybody should dance because two or three lightheads pass the time in whistling hornpipes ; or all assume long faces because one is so silly as continually to wear mourning !

It is surprising to notice how many people expect just this acquiescence in others. This feeling has even entered into fashion. Little children and even whole families are dressed in mourning for years, because of the death of one for whom oftentimes they have entertained nothing like regard. Anger wishes there were no feeling but pain ; love sighs for universal sentiment ; grief moans for an ocean of tears ; pride haughtily demands a world of bent knees. As long as men are men, they will not be satisfied with any one prevailing sentiment or quality. Those who try to satisfy the world remind us of the fable of the Old Man, his Son, and the Ass. Christ illustrated this weakness of humanity very forcibly when he reminded the people that when John came neither eating nor drinking they said he had a devil ;



and yet when he himself went about eating and drinking, they were quite as ready to cry: "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And he adds, with characteristic insight, that wisdom is justified of her children.

Christ always avoided those extremes into which common reformers are apt to fall. He will not discuss theories. When his hearers demanded what authority he had for his acts and speech, intending to catch him in some blasphemy, he in turn offers a similar question in regard to the baptism of John, and thus escapes an answer. He will not meddle with the unseen or unknown, either. When he is questioned about heaven and the future life, he points out the absurdity of the questions when men will not accept his views even about earthly things.

But he is not content with a merely passive attitude toward the absurd formalism and bigoted hypocrisy of his day. It is against this prime evil that he spends the greatest energy. This is to be expected. It is only putting the statement of his essential idea in another way, conversely. Insisting that spirit is the only God, the only truth, the only life, he must of necessity specially denounce that which is the exact contrary; and as a matter of fact this is just what he does do. He loses patience and becomes almost bitterly angry over the prevailing absurd ceremony of worship. What a fiery ardor there is in his merciless denunciation!

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

“Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it and by all things thereon. . . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?”

The whole life of the sect of Pharisees was bound up in their whimsical ceremonies. They were eter-

nally muttering a prayer, or making a sign, or observing a fast. Their descendants flourish to this day, proud of their antiquity and their bigotry. On one occasion when Christ neglected to wash his hands before sitting down at a table to which he had been invited, his own host was rude enough to make comments on this omission of due form. Now, there is nothing bad about washing the hands. Would that more people were scrupulous about it to-day! But it is better to eat with never so dirty hands than superstitiously to insist upon washen fingers. And this was the very point which Christ made.

All these sayings of Christ are familiar, and scarcely need repetition. But it may be well to say here that Christ never dreamed of a Bible, an infallible revelation, a Word of God, to be published over the earth and to be read in church, and to furnish priests with texts. We often become so familiar with words that we utterly lose the meaning behind them. This is especially true of Biblical writings. There is nothing so useless practically as a text or a maxim. I do not believe either ever kept a single individual from doing a foolish act. The meaningless versification of the Scriptures has done more to conceal the real teachings of Christ, than all the inspired interpretation of apostles and teaching of priests put together. To offer the idea another way, in the words of a modern divine, the revised version of the New Testament has done more to undermine Christianity than all the infidels that ever lived. The greatest cause of this is nothing more nor less than the simple omission of versification. Hence I think it well to offer full quotations of particular passages.

A single other passage I wish to offer in this connection, as showing Christ's attitude towards the

dogmatic tradition of the Jews. "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, . . . making the word of God of none effect through your tradition." This witty example of the prevailing tradition of the times is one of the brightest sarcasms that Christ ever uttered; and perhaps it reveals best the utter contempt with which Christ looked upon the elaborate tradition, subtle reasoning, and bigoted and hypocritical dogmatism of the times. There was as little of the priest in Christ as in any man that ever lived. He scorned all such foolishness, and referred to it with that kind of contemptuous ridicule which it richly deserved.

Christ's words with regard to immortality may well be regarded as a part of his theological teachings. We find Christ's immortality a vastly different thing from that of Christianity. When he said the kingdom of God was at hand, he meant a vastly different thing from that final dissolution which theologians teach. Indeed his words cannot be understood as referring to a material kingdom at all. In his early conversation with the woman of Samaria, he states that God's kingdom is not a thing of the future, but of the present. It has already begun. Every good man who is true to the spirit within him has himself realized this great kingdom, — a spirit-dynasty, an eternal monarchy, absolute, of pure and upright intent. The good enthroned forever in the mind of man is God and heaven. It is the spirit that quickens, the flesh is nothing. But what

is this spirit? We have a very satisfactory and conclusive definition: "The words I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life," immortal.

In speaking of the future life Christ used only the most general terms. He avoided any explicit teaching in regard to it, for how indeed would people have comprehended his ideas on the next world when they failed so ignominiously to understand his reflections on this world? The question is his own, and by it he avoids with relation to immortality the very thing he shuns in all his teachings, namely, dogmatism. His God rules the living, not the dead, he says; and the statement is made apparently in flat contradiction of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. This is the only explicit teaching as to the future life which we can attribute to Christ. Incidentally many little ideas do appear, all of which go to confirm the notion that he repudiated the theory of a personal objective life hereafter. Immortality is abstract like his God. "For when they rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels [literally, messengers] which are in heaven." When James and John begged that they might sit on either hand of Christ in the glorious kingdom of the hereafter, he told them that they knew not what they asked. "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" "We can," they reply; and then Christ responds, Well and good; "but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give."

But what is this kingdom of heaven of which he speaks? Who are the angels there? Plain and simple is his beautiful thought. It is a kingdom of little children. But does he mean even this literally? Far from it. All the good, the true, the pure in heart,

are little children ; and all shall see God, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Childhood, that age when thought is speech and speech is truth, is all sincerity. He places a little child in the midst of the people, and says : Whoever shall be as this little child, pure and honest and true, shall become great in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever is kind to children is kind to me. Woe to him that offends them ! Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for in heaven their messengers ever behold the face of my Father, who is the spirit of truth and purity. If we forgive men their trespasses here in this life, in death the Heavenly Father will wipe out ours. If we are so careful of our lives, we shall lose them altogether. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Here is his life immortal, — one that thinks not of self, the bodily and the sensual, but one that lives for others and for right. What a grand immortality this, a life of good works and of noble thoughts ! Surely Christ has won it.

The political teachings of Christ are of no importance, though great stress has been laid upon them during certain periods, giving them a position second only to his theological doctrine. He cheerfully recognizes political authority. The humbug of spiritual and temporal power later developed was none of his, but was the invention of a tyrannical and greedy priesthood. Christ says, Render to Cæsar his due, and to God what is his. He takes the lofty tone of the ancient Greek tragedian : —

CREON. And thou didst dare to disobey these laws ?  
 ANTIGONE. Yes, for it was not Zeus who gave them forth,  
 Nor justice dwelling with the gods below,  
 Who traced these laws for all the sons of men ;

Nor did I deem thy edicts strong enough,  
 That thou, a mortal man, shouldst overpass  
 The unwritten laws of God that know not change.  
 They are not of to-day nor yesterday,  
 But live forever, nor can man assign  
 When first they sprang to being.

Not through fear

Of any man's resolve was I prepared  
 Before the gods to bear the penalty  
 Of sinning against these.

It may be that Christ in a sense despised politics and civil government. I am inclined to believe that the mock triumphal entry into Jerusalem was intended as a burlesque of the show of greatness, magnificence, and dignity of the government prevailing at the time. In the midst of a great concourse of people, shouting, "Hail! King of the Jews!" Christ appears riding on a miserable ass, the most undignified of God's created animals, over a road strewn with palms and olive-branches. As if to heighten the absurdity of this great triumphal progress of the people's king, and to make the scene more ludicrous, if this were possible, a shambling ridiculous foal is seen trotting behind. Here is a masterly sarcasm on the government of the age, not to say civil government in general, and worthy of a master mind.

What a satire is this! Christ always spoke of kings as "clad in soft raiment," and he will be a king to please the people; so, clad in his coarse, homely dress, he rides an ass in triumph, crowned with a wisp of olive leaves. Without doubt great men do find so much pettiness and chicanery and folly in politics and government as often to eradicate all feeling but that of sarcasm and contempt. I do not believe this is right. It may be that parties are as

bad as they are partly because these very men have no respect for government. But that the feeling has existed in all ages, and does exist at present, is beyond dispute; and this burlesque, if intended as such, was a masterly expression of the feeling.

The moral lessons of this great master are quite as simple as his religious instruction. Indeed it is hard to separate the two: one is but the application of the other. Out of it all we have a spiritual morality. His God, as was said, is spirit. Thus his theology is abstract; his morality is concrete. His morality consists of spirit practically applied in the world. His theology is a change from the concrete to the abstract; his morality is the abstract becoming concrete. To illustrate, take any quality which is abstract, as virtue; changing abstract virtue to concrete, we have good man. Only Christ did not offer any such theory as this: he never propounded any theory. Could he read this he would probably laugh at it; and, as was intimated before, perhaps this explanation, really intended to aid, may prove a stumbling-block.

We hasten at once, then, to Christ's practical morality. He starts out with the eminently practical idea of not putting old wine into new bottles. The old law has been. Truth and right is. Tradition is a thing of the past; let it bury itself. Do good regardless of law and tradition and day. Man is not made for the law or the Sabbath. But if people must have a rule to go by, he will give his commandments, than which there is no other: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. The second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."



As in his religious instruction, the standard of judgment is spirit. A man's real intent is his act, and the act is right or wrong as the intent. We often have a mistaken idea of intent. We cheat ourselves by this idea. We let a careless, slovenly thought or half-formed purpose take the place of intent; and then we hug ourselves for our virtue. So far we have not begun to intend. We are too apt to say one intends to do right when he has never made up his mind what is right, but is only at that hesitating point between a dim, unconscious right and wrong. A real active intent, no mere passive drifting, rules its object. Christ lays down the rule with some emphasis.

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

Continuing, he says: Let your conversation be “Yea, yea; Nay, nay,” — that is, straightforward and frank, for whatsoever is more than this is evil. How often do men deceive themselves, and claim honesty because, indeed, they do not lie outright, but indirectly! What enters into a man does not defile him, but what comes out of him. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theft, false witness, blasphemies.”

One day Christ happened to be standing by the treasury when the people were dropping in their offerings, and as is natural he noted casually the gifts of the people. Many that were rich put in quite liberal sums of money; but soon along came a poor widow and dropped in two mites. Christ noticed the offering, probably because of its insignificance, and doubtless glanced at once to the giver to see who could have cast in such a small sum. That glance was enough. Turning to his disciples, he said: "Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." He perceived that these two mites came from the heart, while the larger sums of the many came but from the purse; and with this quick intuition he saw the opportunity for a moral lesson and seized it. It may be well to notice that Christ did not approve the gift.

This is the way Christ always taught, from incidents of daily life, and generally as they happened or caught his eye. One day a person requested him to divide an inheritance over which he and his brother were quarrelling. Christ refused with contempt; he looked upon the contention with loathing. There is nothing strange about this contempt, for people of all ages have felt it. All have heard some acquaintance perhaps speak thus contemptuously of such things, and persistently refuse to contend about them, though he were the rightful owner. This is just the feeling Christ had when the quarrel was brought to his attention, and he scornfully refuses to be a judge between the brothers. But he takes advantage of the opportunity for a moral lesson. "Take heed and be-

ware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not of the abundance of things which he possesseth." And then he gives a parallel, showing how foolish it is for one to think only of sensual pleasures, regardless of the higher things of life, when life itself is so uncertain.

Christ was no pessimist. He did not go about with a long face or a cynical leer. He loved to see people happy. He loved mirth and simple, heartfelt joy. Shall the children mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? Rarely indulging himself, doubtless, in pleasure as the world goes, or in open sport, yet it is clear that he in no wise denounced it, but rather commended it; and frequently he brings the happy, blithesome things of Nature into his parables. Look at the birds, how they sing throughout the long busy day; the lilies of the field, how joyful and bright they look! Without doubt, in another sense, he himself might again have said with right good heartiness: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." But gluttony is not feasting, nor drunkenness gayety. Eat to live and enjoy life, not live to eat, would be his lesson. Not the meanest drunkard or the lowest glutton or the basest sot but knows, even as he knows his own folly, that moderation and temperance in all is happiness. No, this is no pessimistic grumbler, no cynical misanthrope, that has come down to us through the ages. Believe me, it is one who loved men, and one who appreciated the beauties of life and its relations, that speaks to-day as two thousand years ago to mankind.

The ideal, the soul, is life. The little things are those that count in its relations. A smile, a kind word, or a look will brighten the gloomiest heart. Whoever gives a little child a cup of cold water does

that which will not be forgotten. These little kind acts and the feelings which prompt them somehow get lost in the affairs of the world. In our business cares and in our social enjoyments we are apt to forget all about others in general. In fact, as one grows older, unless the utmost care is taken, one grows ever narrower and more selfish, thinks more of self and less of others than he did once. Why, in youth how readily one will part with his last penny for a friend, or to aid a poor stranger in distress! The poor are more apt to retain this kindly sympathy for others than the rich, who forget amidst their luxury and cares that they too were once poor and needed sympathy, and that others remain so. And this, it seems, is one of Christ's own teachings.

One day a rich youth of noble blood came to him, and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ, half in ridicule and half in earnest, tells him to go and sell his possessions, and labor for mankind, — a thing which he knew the youth would not do, and from the very manner of his life could not practically do with success, accustomed as he was to lines of thought and action vastly different from those of the people whom he would teach, and whose life-wants he probably could not, even with the most earnest effort, comprehend. The young man shows his typical breeding in his very words as they stand to-day, which is the best internal proof of their authenticity. In a boasting manner, yet not so much so to him probably, — for we must consider that he was a noble youth, presumably accustomed to flattery and to hear his praises of himself gravely acquiesced in, — he states openly that he has kept all the commandments from his youth up, and haughtily demands what more is wanted. Christ sees the egotism which

is a second nature to the young man, and coolly rebukes it in an off-hand sentence. Oh, go sell thy possessions and give to the poor, and follow me. Then as coolly turning away from the rich aristocrat to his disciples, — the best rebuke which the youth could receive, — he expresses his true and deeper feeling: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Hoffman has well pictured the scene, with ready insight catching the idea, and with remarkable skill and feeling expressing the conception.

Wealth is not condemned. Thrift is one of Christ's primary teachings. Man must grow morally and intellectually, or he is already condemned. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," reveals the truer meaning of the master. This is a terrible condemnation of the rich, to be sure, but absolutely true. People say that a man who has wealth ought to be good, because there is nothing to hinder. Short-sighted, blundering dunces! as if added opportunity did not mean added responsibility. The story of Lazarus and Dives again illustrates Christ's idea of riches. This story cannot have been intended as a sweeping condemnation of the rich; it is wrong to take it so. "Remember that you in your lifetime received good things and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented," is absurd on its face, if taken in such a way. It is nonsense to punish a man because he has been happy. Christ never intended such an absurdity.

A rich man has a thousand temptations to the poor man's one; he experiences a constant pressure that the poor have not. Indeed, a man gifted with intellectual brilliancy is rather more likely to end in utter

failure of the true ends of life than men of more mediocre ability. There is a solemn truth in the witty statement of the French novelist, that any stick, stump, or clod may make an honest man; but it takes brains to make a rogue. If it is true that men must go to hell because they are rich, must suffer pain because now happy, then all criminals, sinners, and cutthroats may congratulate themselves: it is the good and the pure that have had true happiness who are to be damned hereafter. Riches are not condemned in themselves; but their abuse is condemned. Heaps of idle money, or money serving only sensuous pleasure or miserly gain, is despicable, though respectable and honorable even in the eyes of the world.

Christ realized that progress is morality itself. Not only should a man answer for what he has, but his possessions should be increased. He tells the story of the talents to illustrate his meaning. There is no such thing as moral inactivity. Morality is progression; its opposite is retrogression. All is motion in this world of ours. Men are either pressing onward and upward, or slipping backward and downward. Here is a fig-tree that has run to leaves: let it die, it cumpers the ground. Another tree bearing fruit should be trimmed and fertilized, that its product may increase.

Christ was ever alive to broad charity, to attain which no rules can be given. Once when he stood among the people teaching, some one told him that his mother and brethren were a little way out of the crowd waiting to see him: he seized the opportunity to offer the grandest moral idea the world has ever heard, withal not first broached by him, — one that sends a thrill through every man, and makes **him**

nobler for the thought. I wonder that no artist has grasped the conception and given us a masterpiece. I think sometime some one will. It is the grandest theme, without exception, to be found in the Bible, — a noble, moving scene, in very truth a magnificent word-picture. “But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward the multitude, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” I repeat, this is a grand theme, noble and lofty as any immortalized by the hand of art. In the same spirit Thomas Paine said his country was the world, and his religion to do good.

The spiritual brotherhood of man was Christ's great moral lesson, — a thought advanced long before his time, but never so broadly extended and persistently urged. He pictures the spirit-father of loving kindness choosing those whom he will have to share his kingdom; and this is what the king says to those rich in worthy deeds: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Then the righteous for answer ask when they did all these things. They have no memory of ever seeing the noble speaker an hungered and giving him food, or thirsty and giving him drink. They remember no kindness whatever showed to him, and this is part of their virtue. Listen now to the answer: “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of

the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And the wicked he pictures as condemned to lasting reproach, because they have not done these very acts of simple kindness.

It is no credit, he says, to favor those who favor us; the meanest give loans to receive as much again in return. But we should love our enemies, and do good regardless of the return, hoping for nothing again. Is not the Father of all kind to the good and to the bad? Does not he send rain upon the just and upon the unjust? Be like him, then, for you cannot be more perfect. Be merciful as he is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. Yet these things are not to be done in the hope of reward. The reward will come, to be sure; but a spirit that thinks not of reward is greatest. Why should we hatefully speak of the trifling notes in our brothers' eyes, when our own are full of beams? A man is known by his acts, and they speak for themselves, little needing our sarcastic spite.

Kindness is not born of rules. If there was anything Christ abhorred, it was a rule, a subtle law. When a noted lawyer asked him to define the word "neighbor," as occurring in his commandment, here is the definition he gives: —

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a



Levite, when he was at that place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan (despised of all men), as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. Which now of these three thinkest thou was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?"

Who can give a better definition? Does Webster or Worcester, think you? In our practical lives what do narrow definitions amount to? What is the letter of the law? Shall it stand before the spirit? Christ responded with a thundering No, which has increased in intensity since his day, so that many over the whole earth have heard it, and re-echoed the sentiment. Viewed in this light, that old custom of the Adventists of responding to the sentiments of the preacher, rendered comical oftentimes by its absurd abuse, becomes quite meritorious and worthy of imitation in spirit and daily act by the more fashionable sects. An honest, helpful life proves a man good. It is better to feel compunction than to be able to give the most accurate definition of it.

Christ would have us keep our virgin lamps ever well filled and trimmed, for we know not when we may have occasion to use them. Opportunities may come to us unexpectedly, and find us wanting. The real spirit of goodness never sleeps. Its light is always burning. Oftentimes we mistake its manifestations and deem them erroneous, as the disciples often did. When loving women break alabaster

boxes to pour precious ointment on the heads of the great in noble deeds, too often we raise the hateful, envious cry of indignation at such waste. What might not these hundred pence have bought for the poor? In our extremely practical charity to the poor, we forget that oftentimes examples of devotion produce an hundred-fold harvest of good deeds. Again, on the contrary, one may become so devoted to principle as to be thoroughly bad.

On one occasion a woman taken in adultery was brought to Christ for judgment, it being suggested that the law of Moses provided that in such cases the woman should be stoned to death. At first he stooped and wrote upon the ground as if he did not hear the woman's accusers, and then, rising, answered with startling suddenness and a quick, piercing glance, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," and quietly resumed his writing. The guilty accusers seize the opportunity afforded by his inattention to slink off unseen, so that when Christ rose up again, not one appeared in sight, and he found himself alone face to face with the woman. He asks her if any condemned her, and she says, "No one;" and then he responds: "Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way and sin no more."

Punishment inflicted by those more guilty than the unfortunate victim is but poor correction: the unfortunate might better go free. Shakspeare has well expressed the thought, —

"He who the sword of heaven will bear  
Should be as holy as severe;  
Pattern in himself to know,  
Grace to stand, and virtue go;  
More nor less to others paying

Than by self-offences weighing,  
Shame to him whose cruel striking  
Kills for faults of his own liking!  
Twice treble shame on Angelo,  
To weed my vice and let his grow!  
O, what may man within him hide,  
Though angel on the outward side!  
How may likeness made in crimes,  
Making practice on the times,  
To draw with idle spiders' strings  
Most ponderous and substantial things!"

But the morality of this great leader appears in its most beautiful light in his last days, after he himself realized that any day he might lose his life at the hands of an enraged populace. It stands forth in simple grandeur in his last conversations with the devoted few, when he seeks to set them right, to correct their mistaken views of himself, and guide aright their erring hopes. Mindful of the probable shortness of the time yet left to him, he earnestly strives to make his followers see the great truths he has taught in their right relation. He realizes that the ideas which they have gained are far from his real thought, and uses the very simplest language to lead them to his real meaning. What a great, single-minded man this was! What a pure, noble, simple heart! I love to linger over those last few pages of Saint John. To read them is ennobling. Those thoughts are pure and sweet as a fragrant rose, radiant in their simple loveliness.

Christ could not understand why people failed to comprehend his thought, or comprehending, refused to live according to the light they had. And it is truly one of the strangest things in the world why we do what we know is wrong. *Meliora video et pro-*

*boque, deteriora sequor*,<sup>1</sup> is one of those strange phases of life which no one would believe possible, were it not so constantly manifested in the lives of each and all of us. Christ did not perceive how hard it is for men hampered by the iron rule of custom to see with unbiassed eyes. Free from such influence himself, he could not understand its power, nor place himself in the position occupied by his hearers, and from their standpoint view the world and its life. It is always so with great men. A highly cultured man cannot conceive of the barbarous delights of cannibals, — their gluttony, brutality, and bloodthirstiness. Does it seem possible that but a few years ago in this cultured civilization of ours, blessed of God indeed, an educated, liberal-minded clergy could find moral right absolute in the institution of human slavery?

This great fact dawned upon Christ late, yet ere his death, and best of all, in its true light. Weak minds call it stubborn perversity of men, and seek to force truth. A great soul quietly bows its head in humility, content to wait for a brighter day sure to dawn sooner or later. Conscious of harshness to mankind in its earlier vehemence, it humbly cries *mea culpa*; and when abuse and scorn and ridicule are heaped upon it, patiently submits. Oh, how noble are those words from the cross, wrung from a body in anguish, but rising unconscious, like the fragrance of a flower, from a soul so sweet and pure and gentle: "Forgive them, for they know not what they do!" It brings tears to the eyes; yet we feel a sweet sorrow, like the noble woman of Shakspeare who, on learning of the sad death of her poor, broken-hearted father, smiles through the first passionate outburst of grief.

<sup>1</sup> The better I see, and approve, but I do the worse.

To err is human ; to understand error and correct it, is genius ; to forgive error, is divine.

Disappointment chastened and purified him, if indeed he really needed it. Christ expected an early victory ; of course people would readily accept truth so patent. The fact that his ideal was too high for the age to comprehend, brought home to him and thoroughly appreciated as it was, softened and subdued his sterner feelings. He grows milder and milder. In this almost overwhelming disappointment his real greatness and nobility are most prominent. His humility displays his grandeur. He no longer chides the failings of his followers ; bitter denunciations are forgotten. "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." Where is now that early sarcasm and fierce invective ? Behold this man who with his whip of cords drove the hucksters and gamblers like sheep from the temple, now again and within sight of this very scene washing the feet of his simple followers ! Hear the gentle words that accompany, so noble and kind that we can almost judge of the cast of features : "Do you know what I have done to you ? You call me master and lord ; and you do well, for so I am. If I, then, your lord and master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

Christ seems to have known of the plot laid against him. Perhaps even Judas himself had told him about it, and then had been enjoined to play his part or carry out the intention already formed. It certainly seems that there was some understanding, some common ground, between the two. And it seems to have been

Christ's intention to submit calmly to the plot and cheerfully await its issue, perhaps not thinking at first that he would have to suffer death, but determined to have patience till the end. This determination, and the anticipation of trials more or less severe induces a softened, kindly affection for those about him, who, though far beneath him in ability and firmness, have yet, like faithful mastiffs, ever looked to him for guidance, and more than once stood faithfully at his side in adversity. He feels as if he were in a sense their protector, and fears for them in the future. After saying that man is glorified in him (for, like all geniuses, he has a proper appreciation of his own greatness, and constantly asserts it, though with becoming grace), and that God himself was glorified in man, — a statement which they probably failed to understand, — he assumes a touching fatherliness toward them, treating them with tender affection, like little children. His own words, as they are reported, are best: "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Peter breaks in, with his usual boasting manner, full of bluster, and yet, like his kind, a moral coward, and receives a stinging but just rebuke in the presence of all. Christ resumes his parting conversation. He seems to have some doubts of the exact character of the future. He warns them not to be troubled. There are many mansions in the Father's house. Men are not all alike; and the great guide of

life knows it, and gives to each a place that he can fill. If he shall prepare a place for them, he will come again and receive them, that they may share his joy. He tells them that they already know the way and the place, for has he not always taught them the ways of virtue, — hers is a place of peace, and her paths are the paths of pleasantness? He responds in the same vein to their questions: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

And then he frankly tells them, in answer to their continued questions, that they have failed to grasp his meaning, half in sorrow and pity, and half in rebuke, — a touching thing this, the painful efforts of a great, simple man to teach minds slow to comprehend, and ever grasping at the outward form or expression and losing the inner meaning, sad enough to bring tears to one's eyes though it happened ages ago. Do I say ages ago? It happens anew, then, every century, every generation. Every age may witness painful, patient, fruitless efforts of its great souls to make simple and plain their thoughts to the masses; and after all, when death unloads them of their burden borne but a pace, they find that only one of all mankind understood them, — yet no, not one.

Believing, as he undoubtedly did, like Socrates, that he was specially guided by the good spirit, he speaks with authority: —

"If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will make our abode with him. He that loves me not will not keep my sayings: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. But the comforter, which is the spirit that the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all the things

that I have said to you to your remembrance. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, and not as the world giveth. You have heard me say, I go away, and come again to you; if you loved me you would rejoice because I say I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit he purges, that it may bring forth more abundantly. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bring forth fruit except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in me and I in him brings forth much fruit; without me you can do nothing. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit. So shall you be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue in my love. If you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does; but I call you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you and ordained you: go, and bring forth fruit. Only one command I give you, that you love one another.

“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, it hates you. Remember that I said to you that the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept my word, they will keep yours also. If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. They shall put you out of their synagogues: the time will come when he that shall kill you, will think that he does God’s service. And this will they do because they have not known the Father nor me. I have



told you this, that you may remember it when the time comes. But now I am going my journey to him that sent me, and none of you ask whither I go? Because I have said this, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is good for you that I go away; for were it not so, the comforter would not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. I have much to say to you; but you cannot bear it now. Howbeit when the spirit of truth is come, it will guide you to all truth. It shall glorify me, for it shall reveal the truth I have taught. A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while and you shall see me, because I go to the Father, and my spirit will live.

“You mourn at this? You shall, indeed, weep and lament; but the world shall rejoice. But your sorrow shall be turned to joy. A woman, when she is in travail, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she is delivered, she remembers no more the anguish for joy that a child is born into the world. And now, therefore, you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you. I came into the world from the Father; I leave the world, and go to the Father. Behold the hour now is when you shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have said these things to you that you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.”

In this conversation he gives a summary of all his teaching. He claims to be greater only in degree than his hearers. He states plainly that he has told them all he knows. By love alone shall they be worthy of the name of his disciples. He will have no form, no ceremony, — only love. Spirit is everything. Were people only ignorant of crime, there were no sin. The great comforter will come to the good and the true; and this great consoler is the spirit, the consciousness, of truth. And this spirit is from God himself. His forecast of the future is not surprising when we con-

sider that what he foretells is nothing but an easy conjecture from what he himself has suffered. People will commit crime because they have not the spirit of truth in them. Such things have been from time out of mind, and appear to-day, now in American Boards, now in Episcopal conferences, and again in Presbyterian revision. All this is as far from Christ as north is from south.

The Last Supper is over. After this touching conference all rise and pass out in silence. Perhaps now and then a whisper is heard, or a motion seen. The faces of all tell their suffering. The mental strain has been intense and almost too severe. The refreshing night air, peculiar to the far East, and the starlit heavens lighten the load, alas! too heavy for mortal man. But the mental anguish has been too protracted to be thrown aside and forgotten readily. In silence the little band wander out into the hills, their leader buried in his own sad reflections, brooding maybe over his disappointment, perhaps gaining somewhat upon his lingering, heart-sick companions, or turning aside, from the path scarcely perceptible in the darkness. The final scene is familiar, — the ghastly band of cut-throats, the mock trial, the scattering of the faithful, the great master crowned with thorns, alone and silent. Oh the shame and the agony! Alas! the cry of anguish and disappointment: "Oh, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

The cruel deed is done. The conscience-stricken rabble slink away in the darkness; and the faithful, filled with terror and foreboding, imagine all manner of strange things and conjure up fearful omens. I care not to discuss the particulars of this awful death. A thousand and one things probably happened that nobody now knows about, a thousand things were said

that have not come down to us. I cheerfully consign all this to the commentators and critics. I am concerned only with the burden of this great life. I care not for subtle discussion or philosophizing. The essentials are clearly apparent. He who runs may read. The details, uncertain at best, are of little or no account. But I cannot refrain from offering a slight summary of his character, as it appears from these prominent teachings which have been offered at some length.

Christ's liberality and breadth of thought have been touched upon before. He was anything but a radical. He teaches by no theory of divinity. He is a graduate of no theological school, disciple of no Gamaliel. His morality knows no set rules, his theology no creed or dogma. The simple words, love and spirit, take the place of creeds. He does not seek to revolutionize current opinions. He is rather a simple teacher. Like Socrates he talks with whomsoever he meets. Little groups form about him, and these swell to large crowds. He did not care to gain distinction as the world goes. He thought not so much of founding a sect as of inculcating a moral. We can trace in his teachings the simplicity of a man who knows only Nature and what he has seen of men, and who draws from either source as it happens with the greatest freedom. Scholasticism and philosophy so-called are far removed. He had no more theoretical instruction than the humblest peasant. He preached from the fulness of the heart. When other words of sympathy for fallen virtue repentant and humble were wanting, he would only say, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." If he was not in the mood for preaching, he would dismiss the people with his blessing.

His disciples were like him, very unorthodox, very untheological, — only simple fishermen there by the lake, with whom he loved to associate. He tells them with rare wit that they shall have larger game, for he will make them fishers of men. Christ had no fear of men. Doubtless outcasts, repentant thieves, and arrant knaves obtained his grace and his sympathy without distinction. His very chosen may number such among them.

He was of a roving disposition. He loved Nature, and found her a tender mother. Ever when oppressed with care and disappointed in his hopes, he would retire to the beautiful shores of Galilee, or to the hills round about Jerusalem. Wherever you find a man ardently fond of natural beauty, you will always find one of superior ability in his special vocation.

In Christ's mind everything took a practical, concrete form. He rarely offers an abstract reflection. Though much if not most of his teaching is abstract, yet he puts the ideas in concrete form. And this has been a fruitful source of misapprehension. It was so when he lived, and is so now. His mind was simple; "untutored" just expresses it. He created those primitive images of speech which are so common in early language and mythology. This simplicity is one of the beauties of early literature.

He sought solitude, and loved it. But a love for solitude is not necessarily a desire for absolute isolation. He does not cut the knot of human existence; he unties it. He retires indeed to the hills or the lake shore to think and commune with himself, but what is the burden of his reflection? Mankind. From the flowers he obtains lessons for men. Suffering humanity was always his care. Rise, take up thy bed of affliction and care and sorrow, and walk,

full of joy and good cheer, — this is his command to men. And the church, with little understanding and much clumsy, humorous obedience, proceeds to shoulder its couch and travel, making slow progress, however, burdened enough with the defective consciences, without the clumsy furniture of its members.

Christ's parables are all drawn from affairs of daily life that came to his notice. And when he speaks of God he likens him to a king choosing his people from a vast throng, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. It is clear that Christ really had no such idea of a personal God. It is only a simple, homely figure that he uses. Such figures came on the spur of the moment, and served to illustrate a particular phase of thought. He used them with this single purpose, without regard to the possible inconsistencies and falsities, just as is always the case with one speaking without preparation. He loved to speak of the flowers and the birds and the foxes. Scientific classifications of animals never occurred to him. He did not consider that there were distinct classes, or that man was separate from all. With him Nature was one: all the universe was a great brotherhood and sisterhood.

His language and his life seem beautiful, pure, and chaste. Not an unworthy thought or an unworthy motive appears. This is not so singular as at first it seems. All of us have known such characters. It has been my pleasure to know a few simple souls who, I believe, never entertained a selfish or unworthy thought, and never stooped to meanness. And their memory I cherish. But this simplicity and purity and singleness of life are almost impossible to one whose whole life becomes antagonistic to current lines of thought and action. And it is right

here that Christ's pre-eminence appears. He seemed rightly to appreciate all sides of life in a general way.

His nobility was one of the most prominent characteristics. He must have been a man of great personal dignity and magnetism. No picture of him seems to succeed like that grand conception of Hoffman, Christ with the Doctors, though no theme presents more varied artistic opportunities. Hoffman himself fails adequately to picture his manhood. Lifelessness seems to be mistaken for mildness and humility. If ever any man was thoroughly in earnest, it was Christ. Humble, honest, and simple, it is true, but withal in sober earnest. Indeed, his intensity of purpose and action is at times almost fearful.

Christ seems to have exerted a peculiar influence over men. He speaks with authority. He is decisive, and men obey instinctively or involuntarily. Sometimes this authoritativeness is startling and almost self-assertive. One day he went into the synagogue to preach, and chose a text from the Old Testament: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Then he closed the book, and handed it to the minister, and sat down. And when every eye was intently fixed on him to hear what he would say, he quietly begins thus: "This day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Another similar statement is reported, after the condemnation and just before the crucifixion. It seems that a number of men and women followed

Christ to the place of crucifixion; and so great was the grief of the women that they gave way to tears on the short journey. Christ turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." And he might have added, like Anaxagoras when banished from Athens, "I have not lost Jerusalem, but Jerusalem has lost me."

Every genius possesses this peculiar quality, this self-assertive authority, in a greater or less degree. Oftentimes it seems but a bombastic self-assertion, but it is rarely such. As a matter of fact, the Jews considered Christ subject to this very vice, and said that he called himself God, and made himself equal with God. Blasphemy was imputed to him, and for it alone, ostensibly at least, he suffered death. This peculiar quality has always been misunderstood. Mediocrity becoming envious of the influence of superiority, and charging it with conceit, — it is a common thing, and it is not surprising. But the instinctive authority of genius is far from this conceited self-assertion. Its essence is always external, not internal; objective rather than subjective. It is authority directed, so to speak, to the particular point under consideration, and not to self, — an earnestness which loses self in contemplation of other things. The underlying thought remaining undetected or uncomprehended leads people to misapprehension. They grasp at the form and not the substance. Individual peculiarity they perceive, and not the important truth it contains.

Christ was conscious without doubt of this power over men. He may have enjoyed it. It is right that he should. One has a right to have a proper respect for and estimate of his own ability. Yet he never

gloried in it. And only once do we find anything like triumph displayed. There seems to be a little of this near the closing scene. It is another subject worthy of a great artist. When the Jewish rabble appear armed with sticks and stones, Christ displays a noble dignity worthy of the greatest of the ancients; and as he rises to his full height and boldly confronts the band of cut-throats, the words rise to his lips unbidden: "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves, for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hand on me."

But this triumph rarely appears, or if it does, yet in a different way, no longer really triumphant. He reaches the highest dignity in common things. In being the servant of the world he is its master. Forgetting mortal life, he wins immortality. Getting beyond the vain things of the world and finding resources from within, we reach his fundamental idea. And yet the world is not despicable. Christ would be the last to say so.

In his last days his manner seemed changed. He became a man of sorrows indeed. He did as before whatever came across his path, but his heart was well-nigh broken. High hopes and warm enthusiasm for the practical realization of lofty ideals are commonly blighted. A noble, high-minded, deep-souled man can never be happy as other men are. To retire alone among the hills with his disappointment,—this was his prayer, and it gave him new strength. Yet he did not fear death. A great purpose nerves the soul it lives in, so that no terrors can intimidate nor any woes overcome.

He was loved and known by few. The repentant prostitute Magdalene loved him more than his family



apparently. He was understood by none. His clear eyes penetrate your very soul in a rather confusing way, and at times they burn and there is a terrible flash of anger in them. Free from affectation of speech, he seems to have been manly in bearing and dignified in gesture. He was valiant for the truth, and bold in asserting it, patient in suffering for it, unwearied in laboring for it, unmoved as a rock. Though a severe reprover of hardened sinners, he was a mild and gentle admonisher of the erring. Above all, he recognized that fine thoughts and moral dissertations from those who have not worked and suffered are of little consequence; that the example of an upright life will teach a more efficient virtue than many sermons. Christ realized that in this short life of ours little is learned from precept; that experience teaches a good deal, and example most of all. His great heart is to this day a sanctuary for all the wretched.

Whoever does much in this world will do something wrong. It has been said that great men are made chiefly of faults, — it might be better to say, by faults. It is somewhat difficult to judge of the failings of Christ, vastly more so than to judge his virtues. The one side is conspicuous, and bears, as has been said, the peculiar impress of genius; the other side, being common, has no such distinguishing mark. It is idle to deny that Christ was influenced more or less by the opinions and manners of his age; but just how much, is the question. It would be pleasant to say of him as Marlborough said of Bacon, he was so great a man that we do not remember whether he had faults or not.

I am unwilling to attribute specific failings when I cannot satisfy myself of their reality as applied to

Christ. I am sure that by far the greatest number of faults that appear in the records which we have, reflect rather upon Christianity. Christ was not understood by his age or century, and his contemporaries and successors related many *truths* about him that never happened. Divinity as commonly understood was no claim of his, but the claim of his successors. He never assumed it; but it was thrust upon him, and it has lowered him. That he ever claimed to work miracles is extremely doubtful. I am inclined to think not. It seems to me utterly inconsistent with the general character of his teachings. That he wittingly took advantage of existing conditions more or less peculiar, and permitted a superstitious people to think he had such power, I reject as unworthy of serious declaration, for the same reason. That he claimed to heal the sick and comfort the afflicted, I admit; and I believe that he did so then, and that he has continued to do so down to this very day, but in a vastly different way and spirit from that in which the word was taken.

There is an element of truth in all tradition. Christ's figures the people interpreted literally. His disciples constantly expected some great favor for their devotion. Had they not his promise of twelve thrones, and the judgment of the twelve tribes of Israel? Already their hands itched for the reins of government, and they began to dispute among themselves as to who should be greatest and sit next to the great throne of the Master. One asked for the throne at the right, and another for that at the left hand, as if they were all arranged before their eyes. They constantly reminded Christ of their self-sacrifice and devotion in leaving all for him. They will fight to the death for him. And

soon they have a chance, and then "they all forsook him and fled." One does enter the crowd and look on at the trial; but he conceals his identity, and thrice denies his chosen master, to whom he had sworn such faithful allegiance. Things had not turned out as they expected. Their twelve thrones, upon which in imagination they delighted to sit in judgment, came toppling down about their ears, and they no longer cared for seats on the master's right and left, though they might have had them for the asking, ay, without it had they been detected. His kingdom they little comprehended, nor his life eternal. Poor unfortunate fishermen and laborers, they expected principalities as rewards for faithfulness, though after all at heart faithless!

That Christ expected a better and quicker appreciation of his lessons seems clear; and that he died in bitter disappointment is indisputable. That he fancied that he was led by a spirit, a loving father, yet rather impersonal than personal, is certain. It is evident that this spirit was very similar to the demon of Socrates; and I doubt if Christ really made more of it than Socrates did of the demon. That he ever pretended or sanctioned such nonsense as the immaculate conception, is unworthy the thought of one who has even a little appreciation of his general teaching. He continually denies the popular opinion concerning his identity. Indeed deification came after he had passed away. Then it was that his mother became famous as the Virgin Mary.

The charge of communism is brought against him, but it is idle to insist upon it. I challenge any one to find a single specific theory attributable to Christ. In this very absence of all theories of religion, morality, and government, I find the surest indication of

his greatness. If there is anything that is worthless in human affairs as a guide to right living, it is a set rule, an invariable maxim. Here is Christ's religion, — spirit; here is his morality, — love. And he never specifies further; he only gives examples of both. It is ridiculous to argue communism as his theory, because his little band seems to have shared its scanty earnings or contributions.

There is but one other theory worth mentioning in this connection; namely, the theory of the atonement and forgiveness. A word will explain sufficiently this humbug. There is no reason to think Christ meant any more by forgiveness than we mean to-day when we use the word, — a renewal of love temporarily withdrawn. He states himself, in a sentence which remains to this day in common use, the unfailing certainty of what we call the law of cause and effect. "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap," is repeated hundreds of times daily; and the words were probably Christ's. No, Christ is never coming in the body to judge us. He is enthroned indeed, and rules the mightiest kingdom, the mind. Seeing, our sin begins and judgment comes; and that too according as we see, and in proportion as we fail to live up to what we see.

The real faults of this great man are forgotten, and a hundred absurdities, ridiculous virtues, ascribed to him, not one of which but would have been eagerly caught at for an accusation, and rightly, had he pretended to claim it, or even hinted its reality. Christ is so belittled in this way that it is well-nigh impossible to tell what he was. So it is ever: what the great ones do the less will prate about.

Grant that Christ was hasty at times, suppose he was erratic, what of it? Genius is always so. Faults

are mere rags, and not the man at all. Men should be judged by the magnitude of their virtues, not by their faults. If all the flaws carping sceptics and bigoted priests ever laid at this great man's door are true, every one of them, together they would be but as a grain of sand in the mighty ocean of his virtues. The grand and sublime in morals, in art, in literature, or in any field is apt to produce an abnormal exaltation, and I have no doubt that this appeared in the great master. It certainly does in the accounts given of him in the Scriptures, and its appearance there is a great argument for the general truth of the narrative.

We of this age are too apt to decry originality. We call it eccentricity. Our social customs and forms tend to lessen individuality, and cause all men to be alike. It is a well-known fact that great men rarely come from social centres. We are too apt to consider mere faultless manners or gentlemanly graces the sole elements of real manhood. In truth, manly virtue is least in this. If one is to do great deeds, he must lay aside evening dress, so to speak. Real talent despises all such outward shams, and tends to err in the opposite direction. True noblemen rarely have titles or patents of nobility.

There is a great deal of truth in the statement that great minds are apt to be too intense. Reproaches aimed at them have at least an apparent justification. Genius is likely to offend. It isn't agreeable to be conscious of another's superiority. Our ladies teach this truth well in the envy, bitterness, and petty hatred a beautiful woman will excite. The beautiful is apt to be humiliating as well as enchanting. As was said at the outset, we admire genius, but still we hate it. With the kindest intent, the tempest

would only moisten; it overwhelms. In general, reforms and reformers are harsh. An immense tract of land would be a desert but for the Nile; yet in the overflow there is woful destruction. Genius is excessive. Christ displays these extremes in the least degree, judged from a modern standpoint, but still they are apparent.

If we can place ourselves contemporaneous with Christ, we may see this fact plainly. There is a peculiar shock in his statements. The multitude, and especially learned doctors, are startled and draw back involuntarily at times. Surprising in everything, in manner, in dress, in speech and thought, in images, in emotions and faith,—whatever might be the subject of his conversation, he astonished men. “Never man spake like this man” was the universal comment. People expected only an ordinary man, and they found a god. We offer our hand to a stranger, and are shocked when a Hercules seizes it and almost wrenches it off. Finally when we regain equilibrium, we assume a bold face, and, like the child raised to its father’s shoulders, cry, “See how tall I am!”

Supposing even that Christ really uttered all the seemingly extravagant sentiments that are related of him, we must bear in mind that his whole life and energy were completely given to the work he had taken upon himself, and it is possible that temporary infatuation may have dethroned his usually calm judgment. The exaltation of a moment is magnified to the spirit of a life. Such excess is common among speakers, especially among those who are not in the habit of preparing their addresses.

He seems at times to carry his ideas of faith to extremes, though I am of the opinion that much is

said of faith in the New Testament that is the invention of generations later than that of Christ. Logical, scholarly argument is not to be found in Christ's conversations or sermons. Like every one who seeks to persuade simple-minded, ignorant people by word of mouth, he depended more upon rousing their feelings and gaining their sympathies than upon convincing their minds. Reading over these brief parables in our calm, sober leisure, we naturally find inconsistencies among them. Each parable is not meant to be a complete, concise statement of his theology and morality. On the contrary, each is meant to illustrate but a single phase of life, or to inculcate a simple moral principle, as love or forgiveness. The conception of an instant is illustrated by an image that happens to be near at hand. It is comical to witness the laborious efforts of theologians to find inner meanings and concise dogmatical doctrines in these simple tales, the birth of an instant.

At times Christ is represented as harsh and horribly cruel in his sentiments. He realized that men would quarrel over his teachings. "I come not to send peace, but a sword," he may have said; but this sword was a weapon against crime, though often becoming criminal itself in the hands of his successors. That gentleness of his best moments, peculiarly his own, may have been lost at times, and no wonder. Sometimes strange things, incomprehensible to his hearers, are reported, and strange, inexplicable acts. Doubtless the more he saw of the world, the more its spirit nettled him. His experience was beyond a doubt painfully enlightening. He may have become irascible at times. The Jews considered him possessed of the devil. He calls himself the son of God, and they

pick up stones to throw at him. Towards the end he seems to have suffered people to think that he had performed miracles attributed to him, weary of fruitless attempts to set their minds right. But what does all this amount to, even at its worst? It is no part of the real teachings; it is only the failings of his weaker moments.

The sublime, noble thoughts of his better moments ring out clear and strong above all these irritable statements, which, if true, were worried from him by his stubborn, intractable enemies. These Jews reasoned as conservatives of all ages and times have reasoned. Here is a man who sets up his opinions against all the world; and so plausibly does he present his views, mixing much truth with error, that the ignorant believe him, and threaten anarchy: we will put him to death to avoid political and social ruin. This is conservatism of all times. It imposes a penalty upon progress. The Locrians, actuated by the same feeling, placed a halter about the neck of the proposer of a new law, by which he was to be hanged in case his measure failed of adoption. "Crucify him, crucify him!" is the conservative watchword. "He is dead; now we shall have peace."

Thus these great minds, having finished the work given them to do, in death join the mysterious group of those who live in the tradition of man. Being no more present with us, we call them dead; being unseen, they no longer live. Ah! that is a vast mistake. Once dead, these men enter upon life. Oh, what a life is theirs! That old chrysalis period we called life is forgotten; its incidents are worthless. These men have vastly more influence over us than they had. They were; now they are. Common men, having fallen asleep, rest free from all care and



toil ; great men begin a never-ending work, a ceaseless toil. They establish nations ; they construct literatures ; they upbuild societies ; they teach moralities. Once dead, these great spirits are working, working, never ceasing.

Crucify him ! Let him die the death ! He saved others ; himself he cannot save ! This is all very well for you, conservatives, fools, slaves. By this your own rule shall you receive righteous judgment. Come, it is time to die. It is your turn now. Take your bed of final disease ; summon the doctor, the coroner, the undertaker ; toll the bell a half-hour while the widow weeps ; put those flowers on the coffin ; there now, go to your rest, sleep, lie in the grave, rot. So be it.

The great thinker begins life after death, rarely before. The body is indeed a prison. Death is the glorious resurrection of genius. The body somehow seems to stand between humanity and genius. Death comes, and simply sweeps this dust away ; and the light of genius, no longer obstructed, shines full and resplendent upon all men.

It generally takes a few years, or perhaps centuries, for this light, quick as light travels, to reach and open the eyes of the multitudes. People persist in facing the darkness. If we have been accustomed to pray facing the east, it is hard to turn around to the west, though we know that the sunset is as grand as the sunrise. Still harder is it to pray only in spirit, regardless of east, west, north, and south, without beads, book, or bell. When one tells us that all these things are silly nonsense, we are apt to take a little more pains about the direction, and scrutinize the compass a little more carefully. If he insists, we kill him, and spitefully turn our backs to the light

reflected. Finally we die, — quiet, simple, natural deaths; and some of our children, unfortunate enough to be born with the light shining square in their eyes, multiply and in time replenish the earth. The sun sets, but in his going down he leaves a trail of light which guides the weary traveller to his distant home. Christ dying leaves a light which shall never dim, but always brighten. Henceforth he is king, not only of the Jews, but of all mankind. His sway is universal, his authority without limit, his power omnipotent.

In this great man the world has one simple lesson, his own teaching by word and act. How glorious it would be if mankind would master this simple teaching! A genuine, heartfelt love for goodness is above all speculative doctrines and theories. Purity of heart, not brilliancy of intellect, shall gain grace. The spirit is the act. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they see God. It is a grand thing to have such a soul once a century or millennium. The vision is magnificent, the ascension glorious. He led a short, trying, troubled life, and passed away, leaving only a word behind him: that word enkindles and becomes a guiding-star forever.

## III.

## CHRISTIANITY.

*Sequor.* (I follow.)

AFTER Christ, Christianity; but far, far removed. It was born of the prevailing idea among the humble followers of Christ, that a great kingdom of God was on the point of establishment, a kingdom where these faithful followers should find rest and eternal happiness, a place of primitive simplicity and innocence, a reward for the sufferings and labors of saints. The disciples had declared that Christ said that many of his hearers would never taste of death; that he would come again within the life of man, and crown his triumph by the founding of an eternal kingdom, more lasting and more powerful than that worldly empire whose proud capital, built on seven hills, assumed the sounding title of the Eternal City. So the early Christians believed that any day, any moment, might enthrone them on the seats of glory, the only goal, the only worthy culmination, the only righteous hope, of human existence.

But the dream was not fulfilled; the promise, if such there were, failed, and the prophecy has never been accomplished. The holy kingdom has never yet been consummated. Nevertheless an uninterrupted line of the faithful, running down through the ages, has looked and hoped and waited for the end. Every generation of the true believers has announced the

near realization of the prophecy ; most have fixed the date. So prominent a part, indeed, has this great feature of Christianity taken, that many profound and far-seeing students of civilization have found in it alone the source of the long-continued and vigorous life of this great religion.

The mighty master, the great seer, about whom is woven the web of Christianity, had passed away. Many great things he had spoken to his disciples and to the multitudes of ignorant people. Little did he realize the profound effect of his words, or the many ways in which they would be taken. Instantly putting the thought of the moment, readily using the image nearest at hand to throw its added light upon the quick-born conception, he never dreamed such would create a theology ; seeking by simple stories to impress individual minds, he never imagined such would be gathered in a great sacred book to sway the world as the divinely inspired Word of God.

After a few years had elapsed, Christ, like all other great men of antiquity, not to say of all times, became traditional. He became the subject of countless legends, most of which Christianity has been forced to reject. Affection did not linger to question these stories : the more wonderful and mysterious they were, the better. To surround anything, be it never so silly or monstrous, with the veil of a mysterious secrecy, is to invest it with an irresistible charm which humanity has always failed successfully to resist. False prophets and false gods, requiring curious ceremonies, working strange miracles, have been from the beginning, and probably will endure to the end. Whoever can win people to his views, and lead them to think he knows a secret road to heavenly bliss surely kept from common knowledge, and that

he possesses the key, as it were, of heaven itself, and can let in or keep out whomsoever he will, — such an one shall be master indeed. Everything that man holds dear, — freedom, honor, fortune, even life itself, — all sink into utter insignificance compared with this sweet dream. People love the marvellous. Credulity certainly has been more powerful than reason. It is so to-day, though occupying a different field than in the past. People moreover seem to love to be humbugged. There seems to be a peculiar fascination even in awakening to deception.

It is not to be inferred that the successors of Christ ever realized that they had been mistaken. Quite to the contrary, they died as strong in the faith as they had lived. Once having thoroughly mastered an idea, ignorant people never lose it. Having thoroughly made up their minds, you can no more convince them of a mistake than you can change the course of nature. Much good sense lay at the bottom of Christianity, and to it is due the real credit. Philosophy and logic never convince masses. Positive natures, even in greatest men, reason without logic. The early Christians did not seek to convince reasoners and scholars; they addressed common men. People of low estate in life easily despise the manners of the high; the poor in spirit easily entertain hopes of future greatness. Hence these simple people were already partisans.

Among such people the point is to make an impression, to rouse their feelings, and stir up their prejudices. The early audience had not mind enough to comprehend a subtle argument, nor had their teachers mind enough to frame one. Proof is the last thing to use with such material. It is the very thing to leave out. Repetition of the same things again and again,

the formation of watchwords, mottoes, and party cries, the use of symbols forcible and striking, examples that catch the eye and ear, — such are impregnable arguments to the populace. Once gaining their attention, conviction follows, and in a moment they will continue on in the line indicated of their own accord. They will shout and yell, talk you blind, say anything, do anything under the sun in the range of their vision. If there is opposition, answer is not necessary. Scorn and ridicule are better. Opposition, real, good, solid argument, is the very thing to strengthen their opinions, and they will get angry, double up their fists, and fight for their truth. Such is the reason of the revivalist, ancient or modern, and it never yet has failed to convince. Of course there is a foundation of truth in all this, though often very slight; and it must be said that Christianity is remarkably rich in truth, considered apart from its mere theories.

The old Hebrew faith attracted few recruits. An uncreated and, to the multitude, unseen, incomprehensible, though omniscient and omnipotent, god gained few proselytes. Common men will have rather the old gods of Paganism, real and tangible, if immoral. Christianity borrowed from Paganism in part, and supplied what was wanted. God, in human form, born in a manger, laboring at a trade, walking and talking with men, sharing their sorrows, healing their infirmities, promising a heaven of rest and bliss, dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and ascending in glory on high, — triumphed here below over the bigotry of theologians, the pride of Stoics, the pomp and show of royalty, and the gleaming arms of legions.

Christianity borrowed from Paganism. So every

faith borrows from its predecessor. There has never been a religion that has not had a demigod, — a being half god and half man. Mary is but a remodelled Pagan goddess; Christ but a more moral Jupiter. Ancient gods were always having illicit amours among the children of men. The idea of an immaculate conception is as old as time itself. Indeed, the Greeks had a goddess of truly spotless purity, for Minerva sprang full-grown from the head of Zeus. And this, I think, is the greatest personal deity that has ever been created by the human mind, certainly in its primal conception. But an immaculate conception like that which the Virgin Mary experienced, has its perfect counterpart in the remote tradition of the oldest known race. Buddhistic Maya-Devi, foreseeing her destiny, retires to seclusion. Bodhisatva enters her womb in a semi-conscious dream, and when she awakens, she is filled with joy, — truly blessed of women, like her later imitator. And indeed Bodhisatva himself is much like Christ. There is little difference in divinity of all ages and races. Christ himself never hinted at any such story of his conception. He seems to have cared little for his people, slighting rather than honoring them. From what we know of him, he would probably have laughed such a theory to scorn. As a great truth, it is too ridiculous and stupidly absurd to occupy the serious attention of an intelligent mind of the present.

Christianity, though established after Christ, runs a long way back of him. Its founders naturally adopted the theories of their fathers when they had not Christ to draw from, and so we have the old Hebrew faith at foundation. They merely tacked on to this old traditional history the new dispensa-

tion as they understood it. The Jews had long been awaiting a Messiah, just as every nation has in one form or another; and though, as a people, they rejected Christ as such, and continue to do so at present, yet the disciples of Christ persisted that he was the promised king, and in candor it must be confessed that they won the day.

It is important only to notice the prominent theories and features of Christianity. While a religion is made up of details, yet each minute accretion reflects but little of the real characteristics of the aggregate. A palace may be built of pieces of wood, but still one would hardly imagine it possible, were it not a matter of common knowledge, from the sight of a growing tree or a floating log. We may best gain a comprehensive, practical view of Christianity by standing off and looking at its teachings in the aggregate.

We shall stand on better ground in dealing with the Christian system than we do in attempting to determine the doctrines and ideas of Christ; for while there must be considerable doubt as to what and how much we shall attribute to Christ, there can be none as to the doctrines attributable to his followers as a body. Whatever we find in the Bible, at least, is Christian, whether it be of Christ or not. With abundant reason, I think, we believe that much is asserted in the New Testament that is without precedent or sanction or suggestion on the part of Christ. But whether this be true or not, there can be not a shadow of doubt that it is all Christian. If Christ said all, why, then it was adopted by his followers, and the Church has set its seal upon it; if he said part only, they adopted that part, and invented the rest; if he said none of



it, then they invented it all, and sealed it as the word of God.

First, then, it adopts bodily the old Hebrew theory — for that matter, the general theory of antiquity as well — of a golden age, paradise, or period of absolute innocence, purity, and worldly perfection. It differed essentially from Paganism only in an enhanced morality. It has been said before that in Paganism morality was secondary; in Christianity it is promoted to the first place. On consideration, it is apparent that there is no real change of absolute principle here. The difference is only in degree. Understanding that morality appears in both systems, however insignificant it may be in one, such a conclusion must follow. Christianity is but the natural successor of Paganism.

In the beginning the world was all purity and loveliness, — a paradise, or garden of Eden, wherein flowers blossomed and fruits ripened spontaneously, needing no cultivation or care. The lion and the lamb lay down together. Death was unknown, and passion and change. But the first man sinned, it matters not how; and death is the wages of sin. Thence follow all worldly calamities. The whole world, but now a paradise, becomes a hell. Lusts and passions wrought woful destruction. Still, the nobler nature of mankind is not utterly lost. The fruits shall no longer grow without cultivation, but by the sweat of his brow man may conquer external nature; and so by watchful and persistent exercise of the will he may conquer unruly passions. Man is fallen, but is left with a rope by which to climb. This necessity of physical work is a curse; this requirement of mental exertion, a penalty.

This, without doubt, is one of the features of Bib-

lical Christianity. Of course it is clear that many advanced and liberal theologians deny that this is Christianity at all, though I have little doubt that many might be found to admit it a fair statement. And right here it may be well to point out the fact that Christianity is a growth. The Bible is the constitution of Christianity; but constitutions oftentimes undergo a development which is extensive. This development is rarely the simple and direct effect of the constitution. Christianity is quite as much what civilization has made it as what its constitution has made it; so we have to thank or revile ourselves for its present form.

The apostle Paul, Calvin and Luther, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Phillips Brooks, and Minot J. Savage all represent different stages of this development. The word "Christian" has acquired a meaning peculiarly its own. It hardly means "like Christ," in its ordinary acceptation. Mr. Savage would strenuously deny that vicarious atonement is like Christ, yet freely admit that it is "Christian," as the word is ordinarily understood. The Christian of to-day, like Christ or not, though consigning heathen to the bottomless pit of hell, is yet rarely the same man as he who paved hell with infant skulls, or he who literally had tussles with the devil years ago. In other words, Christianity proper is not to-day a living faith. It is a dead form; and this must be so as long as the Bible is its infallible constitution.

Christianity is not Christ-like, and never was; and, I think, never can be with its present constitution. Christianity comes from the authors of the Bible, not from Christ. Biblical Christianity, or at least the new dispensation, is of much later date than people

are apt to think. It dates from the Council of Nice, when the constitution and by-laws were settled upon and fixed for all time. It is not the work of Christ, nor yet that of the apostles. Doubtless they did much toward it, but the mighty Christian Church really established Christianity. Protestantism changed the faith but little. It merely substituted its peculiar ideas for other and older and oftentimes better ones. Christ never laid down such a theory of life as has just been stated. He offers no explanation of the origin of the world, or of sin or death. The old Hebrew law which he denounced gives this explanation. He says that sin is death, moral death; and no one will deny it. How sin came into the world, he does not attempt to explain. The Scriptures do not even claim that he offered any such explanation, or any at all. The later Fathers make the statements after the ancient traditions rejected by Christ. Theirs is the claim. Christ does not even define sin. He often gives examples of it. It is clear that sin to his mind was a choice of the wrong when the right was evident and comprehended. The idea that sin is an inherent quality of mankind is a vastly different thing. The idea that man is born into this world a sinner and a criminal belongs to Christianity, not to Christ. He flatly denies it.

Christianity, considering man sinful by nature, and the world miserable and forsaken of God, quite naturally despised both. The world and life had come to be so unbearable to the early Christians that they determined to have nothing more to do with either. Neither was worthy of attempts at improvement; and so they abandoned both to the devil, concentrating their hopes on the world to come.

Christianity believes the world is ever growing

worse, and will continue to grow worse, until such a state of corruption shall be reached that God in rage shall blot it out forever. This is the general teaching of orthodoxy at present. "Beautiful as the world can be, and fair to the external eye, yet to the eye of God its inner life is wicked and corrupt. When sin came, heavenly purity and holiness fled. When man fell from God, he fell unto himself. We all have this burden laid upon us ; none can escape. When a Christian becomes assimilated to the world, the evil communications corrupt his piety. Paul understood this, and said : 'Be not conformed to the world. The world is anti-Christ, and friendship with the world is enmity against God.'"<sup>1</sup>

In order to be consistent, Christianity must teach mortification of the flesh. In order to inherit the perfect kingdom of God, it is necessary to forsake the world, to hate one's mother and brethren. Marriage itself is an evil ; human life and pleasure are but a curse, a trial, a test of righteousness. Real life comes afterwards. So fully convinced of this were the early Christians that thousands of them — real, true believers, and no half-hearted parasites — sought death often at their own hands.

All this is as far from Christ as anything can well be. Yet this statement is said to have been made word for word by Christ : "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." For one, I do not believe he ever said it. I believe he is misquoted, or that the statement is a pure invention, because it is wholly out of harmony with his general teaching. Without doubt, he said and did a thousand things

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cuyler, 1891.

we know nothing about, and never shall. We have to use our judgment in just this way day after day in our business or pleasure. . But men judge differently. Judgment depends largely upon environment. I merely give my opinion, asking for it only what seems reasonable, seeking to force it upon no one.

It is unreasonable to hold that Christ ever expressed any such idea as these words convey, and they are perfectly plain, because it is in flat contradiction of his general line of thought. Honest, earnest men do not declare a positive and a negative of the same thing in a breath. And this is false rather than its contradictory, because the evidence against it is overwhelming. It is the idea of a narrow, bigoted radical and misanthrope, while the other belongs to a great-souled genius. Other sayings of like effect are attributed to Christ, all of which must be rejected in the same way.

It is needless to enter into details. The substance is all that is essential. The New Testament makes practically two declarations as to what Christ said of human life. The one appears in numerous characteristic stories, represented to have been told by Christ to the multitude. The ideas to be gathered from these short tales are highly optimistic. They are grand, noble sentiments, such as appear in the highest literature of all times and all races. They are expressions concerning life of that peculiar nature and class which have always tended to make mankind better and nobler. Cheerfulness, love, and helpfulness appear in this class of sayings.

The other class is to be found in explanations of these characteristic stories, and incidentally in reported conversations. They often appear in such a way as to create discord, noticeable and violent at

times. This latter class often suggests interpolation; often they are the frank, open explanations of the writer. Their character is rather pessimistic, even extremely so at times. The two cannot stand together. Both cannot be true of Christ. He cannot have been an optimist and a pessimist at once. It may well be that he expressed harsh opinions at times, but Christianity has made this the pervading spirit; not that Christianity is all pessimism, but it rather belittles life than appreciates it. It disregards life as of little or no account, rather than cherishes it as worthy of righteous desire. This is rather Christian than Christ-like.

The atonement theory, the second feature of Christianity to be noticed, naturally follows the interpretation of life already given. Christ came into the world, sent by God, — in fact, the son of God assuming human form, — solely to save the world from utter damnation; on his part a free, voluntary sacrifice temporarily of the delights of heaven and divine, everlasting bliss. He proposed to bear the sin and crime of the world, if the world would permit him, so that it might be spotless, without sin, absolutely pure, as if it had never known evil. Though sin has made us scarlet, we shall be whiter than snow.

This is a fair statement of the theory. It sprung from words undoubtedly uttered by Christ, who in all probability said again and again, in form or substance, that his mission was to save the lost, to heal the sick, and comfort the afflicted. From general statements like these, this great Christian theory arose, and it finally became the corner-stone of the true faith. Without this theory of atonement, Christianity loses its characteristic mark; it is no longer Christianity, but ethics.

Christ, then, came to save the world. But on what condition does this salvation depend? Let us read the law. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This has come to be the criterion. This is the oath to which we subscribe. Christianity is not only offered to all, but each individual must accept it, or woe be to him. It has the peculiar character at once of a gift graciously bestowed, and of an obligation solemnly enjoined.

Curiously enough, this word "damned" did not mean half so much as it came to signify. Damnation, to the mediæval or modern mind, means really a pretty serious thing. It suggests fire and brimstone, torment and torture unceasing, pain and sorrow without end,—an awful, everlasting punishment. Indeed, so significant is it to-day, that when we fairly lose our reason and judgment in bitterest passion against our enemies, we wish them "damned." This is truly an awful word. The Scriptural writers have given it this awful signification.

By faith alone we may be saved. An examination into this salvation reveals a peculiar and ingenious preservation. Christianity seems to have carried its doctrine of faith to its logical, or illogical, extreme. It has the merit of consistency at least. By faith we are saved, and by faith alone. We must accept grace on the terms prescribed. No matter what kind of lives we lead, if only we have faith in the inspired gospel of Christianity, we shall inherit eternal bliss. He who denies this gospel—that is, disbelieves it—be his life never so pure and helpful, shall inherit eternal punishment.

Some will find this statement too limited. They will insist that faith without works will not win

grace, and that this is expressly declared. But after all is said about works and the necessary co-existence of faith, we are forced to the conclusion that faith is the redeeming virtue. If not, how can repentance come at the point of death? How about the poor thief on the cross? Eleventh-hour repentance absolutely fixes the standard of redemption. A dead man can do little work. By faith we are saved; without faith we are damned. In this Christianity is like all other religions; it assumes that one's belief is in one's power, whereas belief must follow judgment. This is a point at which dogmatic Christianity signally and completely fails, and abandons the simpler teaching of Christ. It deems that meritorious in the highest degree which is worthy of not the slightest commendation, because beyond our volition.

But this is not all. It is enough, indeed, for those who disbelieve. Let us see what salvation is for believers. Have they been sinful in life, has every day been a day of crime, every hour an hour bringing sorrow and suffering to others? Nevertheless, the moment they have faith in the inspiration and truth of the words printed on this paper, all is washed away at death, and they are as sinless as babes; yes, even the taint of original sin is washed away. All the responsibilities of crime are taken away. One wonders what can become of the effects of this same crime upon innocent sufferers. There seems to be no provision for that. Perhaps it is lost in the joy of redemption. This is not Christ, and none but a bigot will call it so.

Repeatedly in other passages Christ is made to say that he does not judge man at all. That is not his place; he comes to save. But there is a judge, he



says, and what is it? "He that rejects me and receives not my words has one that judges him, — the words I have spoken, they shall judge him in the last day." A very Daniel come to judgment! And what does he say of baptism? Is that one of his dogmas? Was he ever baptized as the word goes, think you? They say he was, and tell a pretty story about it. But what do they make him say on another occasion? "Can you drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" Does this refer to water? Is it total immersion, or sprinkling? Is there anything about infant baptism here? It seems to me there can be no doubt here as to what we shall ascribe to Christ and what to Christianity. It seems a very simple question.

As has been said, this great theory of salvation was constructed undoubtedly from what Christ really did say, and his thought is clear and distinct. It appears again and again in his reported sayings. It is forgiveness pure and simple, as we forgive our brothers. Nothing more nor less than this has been the source of the great stumbling-block of the faithful and infidel alike. Christ's forgiveness is no suspension of law. It is merely an ideal renewal of love, a beautiful conception. It is a grand exercise of that common, simple charity of which we see so many examples day after day. Our little children are disobedient at times, and with all the love that mothers only know, they are punished by a withdrawal of love. "Mamma won't love you any more," — how much it means to a child! The little fellow drops his head and repents. And then there is a brightening up; smiles appear through tears; the disobedient child is restored to love, and shares

mother's sunshine with the other children, — a pretty sight, a sacred punishment.

And this is Christ's own story, that of the prodigal son. The prodigal is not placed above his brother, but "this thy brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." "What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house, and search diligently till she find it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." To be sure, more or less is said about silver here; but there is no bargaining with angels, or friends and neighbors. I can find nothing good said about a great church and a powerful priesthood. I do, indeed, hear wonderfully vigorous denunciation of both.

Oh, no! Christian redemption is nine tenths trumpery and nonsense, though extremely convenient and lucrative for priests. That word "redemption" is really a good word. There is a real sanctified ingenuity about it. Pagan priests used to laugh in the faces of their audience: is there not a peculiar Christian smile or a Christian wink in this? "Here," cries the priest, "Paradise for sale!" The people crowd up and buy, without covenant or memorandum or warranty, though they know they cannot gain title to real estate but by written deed or devise. It is not law; the Statute of Frauds intervenes, and they know it. Nor is it reason; for who wants an undefended, a bogus title? Yet they crowd up and purchase.

This is no way to gain real estate in heaven. Most purchasers are swindled, shamefully cheated. And yet there are some fine speculators in these heavenly

lots. I do not mean the priests. Quite generally they are but auctioneers, and sell for a commission or on salary, though now and then you find a shrewd one who is both speculator and auctioneer, retaining both commission and profit. But there is a large class of speculators here who buy low to sell high; and I am told their profits are enormous at times. The time was, indeed, when this kind of brokerage was open and conspicuous. Speculators were not ashamed of their trade. Tetzels, reputed to have been one of the greatest of such, scorned concealment, and his trade was enormous. In late years the thing has been covered up. A mysterious air has prevailed over the business, which has sternly forbidden question. The bucket shop has made its appearance, and is full worse than that which it supersedes. The trade has spread far beyond mere indulgences. It is not confined to any class or sect. Selling doves in the temple? This is a bigger trade than that.

Christ's death, then, has enabled or aided a massive swindling enterprise. Not that religious gaming was not known before; the sale of doves for sacrifice just mentioned, to say nothing of "tithes" and "laborers' hire," was before Christ; and Christ is on record as overturning the tables of these early traders, and driving them before him like sheep. And yet Christianity points to this still as the great highway to salvation. We hear a good deal about trusts nowadays, though not half enough in praise of them; few will believe me when I say there never was such a gigantic, greedy, grasping trust as that mighty corporation, Christianity, more stupendous if anything than Paganism.

After the atonement comes the resurrection. One of the narrators of this great curiosity states with

a charming simplicity, which argues well for his sincerity, that about five hundred saw this remarkable life in death, most of whom, he honestly states, have fallen asleep. One cannot help thinking that all were dozing when they saw this vision.

Now, it is upon this alleged resurrection and ascension largely that the Christian doctrine of heaven and hell rests. Christ is to come to judge the quick and the dead. Of course there is nothing new about this, nothing peculiarly original with Christianity in the idea. Christ's doctrine of the future was very general. He has little to say about it explicitly anyway. He rather avoids it, rightly concerning himself about this life, which he tried to make better and nobler. His idea of immortality has been spoken of before, and there is no need of repetition.

He may have spoken of heaven and hell; he may have used the very terms, and added the popular conceptions. But this is by no means a valid indication of his implicit belief in either. Many people now speak of both who have no faith in either. They furnish very convenient figures at times, and as a matter of fact most people of all times have so used them. Very few have given much credence to either since time began. Most people would give more for a day of earth than for a thousand years of eternity.

It seems advisable to treat these two theories together. Though infinitely far apart, they are yet inseparable. It must be understood that the Christian, Biblical heaven which the faithful have sworn by, is a very different place from the idealized, abstract conception of the present. Of heaven the only full description to be found in the Bible occurs in Revelation.

Here is a fair description of the paradise which

awaited the faithful believer of antiquity: a heaven physical or concrete, sensuous, full of marvels, with streets studded with gems and paved with gold, and palaces of silver and precious metals. This is the heaven which many people now expect to enjoy after death. It is what the Bible promises. What a curious place of absurdities! I am sure I never could be happy there, and I do not want to go to such a place. To the uninspired it appears to be a peculiar place of speaking animals, and of monstrous shapes of enormous size and remarkable character. There seems to be a good deal of singing without much harmony.

Joined with this is a strange, insipid bliss or happiness. The angels all have the same cast of features, meaningless, and stupidly beatific. To be sure, they have wings, — a convenience for which mortals have ever craved, — but a pinch of common-sense is worth all the wings that ever helped man or angel to fly. This one characteristic of wings is the only addition to humanity that can be found. Most of the other qualities are detractions. I have never yet seen or heard of an angel half so interesting or enlightened as the average woman here on earth.

Hell is a better place altogether than heaven. There is some heart, some real feeling here. It is now a lake of fire, now a bottomless pit of burning sulphur, now an endless void of impenetrable darkness, and again a seething caldron of red-hot pitch, a horror undying, unquenchable, eternal. "There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," "Their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," — these expressions are full of meaning. There is no namby-pambyism in hell. This is Christianity, this is orthodoxy.

Christ's heaven consists of those whose natures are pure and true, like the nature of childhood. An objective eternal life he denies. The reward of the good shall be the consciousness of right; the condemnation of the bad shall be the reproach of their own lives. God is for the living, not for the dead. Whenever Christ speaks of any other kind of heaven or hell, it is clearly figurative. The separation of the bad and the good is like the separation of the wheat and the tares, one to be saved and the other to be burned. The world is like a net containing good and bad fish, — the good to be gathered into vessels and the bad to be cast away.

But it is not to be denied that other sayings are attributed to Christ. It is said that he gave many signs by which his coming might be known. The sun shall be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, stars shall fall, and the earth shall be shaken. Then the Son of man, so called, shall appear in clouds and glory, amidst hosts of angels, attended with sounding trumpets. Or again Christ is made distinctly to promise his disciples, those that have toiled and suffered with him, thrones of glory, yea, twelve thrones of judgment, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Woe be to Israel if it is to appear before these judges!

Christ again is made to deny all these things. He declares that no sign shall ever be given, and angrily chides people for expecting such silly manifestations. He tells his disciples in all earnestness that they may indeed undergo the baptism he has experienced, one far different from what they imagined, but thrones and principalities are not his to give. Christianity is full of inconsistency. It simply amounts to this: the zealous authors of the faith

overreached themselves in their enthusiastic desire to glorify one who needed no such praise as they could give. This conduct is as common as the air we breathe. The only strange thing about it all is that cool heads and experienced should be so easily deceived.

Prayer is one of the principal doctrines of Christianity. It seems to have entered the system from the earliest days, but during the Middle Ages it was probably greatly extended. It became a great source of church revenue. When one of the faithful died, prayers were continually said over his dead body. When a notorious villain died, prayer would lessen his torment. For a specified sum of money a certain number of prayers would be repeated. A price-list was generally understood. It would be difficult to overestimate the important part which prayer assumes in the Christian system. Eradicate the atonement from the system, and it is ruined theoretically; eradicate the form of prayer, and the whole religion is practically destroyed. No established religion the world has ever seen but would prove a failure without this form of prayer. In Christianity the command is given to pray without ceasing. The efficacy of prayer is especially prominent. Nothing can withstand it. Christ is made to say: "Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, it shall be given you."

But Christ never taught prayer in that form which has come down to us, in the form common to Paganism. His prayer took the form of an inner communion, not that of an open petition to a king. Retire to the secrecy of your closet, and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. Prayer in his mind was well formulated as only communion, reflection alone and free from interruption.

The intended bride sits alone at twilight, not idly and listlessly musing, but deeply pondering, earnestly wondering of the future. Just so the young man who sees duty before him, harsh, uncompromising, sits in retirement buried in reflection, his head in his hands. "‘To be or not to be, that is the question.’ Shall I meet this trial and overcome this temptation? It is hard, it will cost me friends and prosperity. To yield is easy and pleasant, and who will know? I can hide it by a simple deception, not a palpable fraud. Fie on honor! everybody has it but he who deserves it. There is time enough later, and perhaps it will be easier then. I wonder if anybody has heard me; I’ll steal away out of this silence, and then I can settle it. No, now is the time; it’s a mean thing, and here I am skulking away afraid of silence and myself. It is right, and that is enough. I will do it, cost what it will; and I care not who knows it or hears it, or who hates me for it."

This is prayer. This is what Christ went through alone in the mountains at night. And in the morning he came down to the lake shore, pale but decided and immovable, his mind settled, and not a thousand devils could shake it. After that fearful communion in the hills about Jerusalem, he goes bravely to death, calm with the conviction of right; but feel his hands and forehead, they are icy after the mental strain, and he is almost faint, but never more collected, never so decided and courageous.

This is real prayer, if indeed I have given any idea. It is hard to express my real meaning, yet it is as clear to me as day. There are things which we all experience, but which no one can describe to his satisfaction. Few will understand fully my meaning. I am conscious of the fact that I fail to express it



clearly. It is not strange that such ideas become lost, and that words convey no meaning. It is perfectly natural that people should fail to comprehend Christ's prayer, and yet probably every one of us has really gone through this same process, has really prayed like Christ alone in the hills, and come out of it weak and chill but determined. Retire to your chamber alone, go back into the past; you may not like to, but do so, and you will know what I mean by prayer.

Ask anything you will, and you shall have it. I do not believe any one ever walked out of his chamber after this inner communion with refusal. Many have slunk away on tiptoe with negatives. The Christian prayer is a very different thing. No man ever prayed in a crowd; no man ever prayed aloud, and conscious of the presence of others; alone and in silence every one has prayed at least once in life. If there is anything men fear in the universe, it is themselves. Men cannot be alone. If they are forced to be alone, they become crazy. Alone, face to face with conscious truth, evil men are cowards, no matter what that truth is. Solitary confinement is the most dreaded punishment of criminals. Only now and then we learn of a man who can live alone. We call him crazy; he is a hermit, a wizard, an atheist, a devil. Common men cannot conceive of the abstract. To such prayer is petition. They address a man like themselves, who will be moved by things which move them. The Christian god made man in his own image. The fact is, the Christian man made god in his own image. No gods make men.

Christian prayer is a superstition, just as silly and senseless as any that ever existed. The Chinese merchant consults his Joss in the morning to learn whether he shall trade or not during the day. Upon

the fortuitous turning of a cup depends his action. Many a Christian does practically the same thing. The man who petitions God, or he who asks counsel of the Devil, or consults a Joss, or confides in Allah, is, after all, the same superstitious being. Each will say that he is answered; each will derive comfort; each will die for his idol. The more superstitious a man is, the more he will do for the object of his superstition, and the more he will claim for it.

Christians frankly admit nowadays that the time of miracles has passed; and yet, whenever one of them offers a prayer, he asks for a miracle. One would think from the prayers offered in the world daily, that civilization, after all, was a pitiable superstition. A closer investigation reveals the fact that the world is not so very superstitious, but very hypocritical. Men pray, or rather women pray, and that is the end of it. They do not expect an answer. It is a form, a fashion; it is respectable. The utter indifference of worshippers to their gods is one of the most hopeful signs of the times, because hypocrisy is better than superstition. The next step is truth. "Lord, teach us to pray."

Miracles and prophecies are important elements in Christian faith. Is a thing impossible? Enough, — with a wave of the hand it is done in the twinkling of the eye. It requires little skill, intellect, or industry to concoct miracles, and still less intellect to believe them. Christian prophecies and signs are even more equivocal than the words of the oracles of the heathen. The greatest sign to be found in the whole Bible is that of the prophet Jonah, and the one to which reference is most often made. It is referred to many times, and in the same way. What is it? Some sailors threw a prophet into the sea during a storm, believing

him the cause of the hurricane; and a whale opportunely comes along, and obligingly swallows the poor fellow, who remained alive three days and three nights in the whale's belly. He proved too indigestible, and the whale goes inshore and casts him up.

Now, this sign may mean a thousand things. Christianity says it means that Christ shall be crucified, and pass one day and two nights, not alive but dead, not in a whale's belly in the sea, but in a stone sepulchre on land. I do not think Christianity is right at all. The true sign, or moral, is as plain as the nose on one's face. What fools men are to believe in prophets, failing to detect a fraud so palpable as even to sicken a whale! Men should spit out such silly stories and omens, even as Jonah was spewed up by the whale.

But one more feature of Christianity shall be noticed here. It is curious how the teacher has become a teaching. This runs all through the system from highest to lowest. Christ goes about teaching a great and glorious morality, for his theological instruction as such is very limited. This Christ, the teacher, becomes a teaching. He had pupils whom he sent about to preach after his own ideas; these teachers too become teachings. These disciples found churches which are to disseminate their lessons; and they in turn become teachings. The very words themselves finally become sacred. Christianity declares not only that we must find Christ divine, but his instruction the absolutely perfect command of God. The disciples, too, are inspired of God, and their lessons are infallible revelations. The Church also is infallible, the fount of virtue and honesty,—deny it at your peril. The word itself is from God, is with God, is God. Here is Christianity, and here

is nonsense. These are things that ought to shame priests, and yet not priests, for it is we who believe them. People need never worry; priests in general will never preach what their hearers do not believe.

From this latter characteristic we have peculiar developments. Among other creations, we have the great theory of the *logos*, in which Saint John becomes involved. The absolute divinity of the word is asserted. The Trinity is a Christian absurdity over which generation after generation of learned dunces have argued, and have damned and cursed one another. Christ taught that spirit is the guide of life. Of all the nonsense that has ever been written, there is little that will compare with the foolish, stupid theories that have been constructed about this word "spirit." The transformation is apparent in the very word itself, — indeed, the change appears in the very first letter, which theologically is a capital. The word is a part of the Trinity, the great three in one. Not content with this, we find a synonym, which, to give the theologians their due, conceals the original thought absolutely. Such absurdities deserve only a sarcasm or a sneer.

It has been said that an absurd religion does not gain credence among a progressive, energetic people. The declaration that parts of Christianity are the height of absurdity seems contradictory, since all must admit that this faith is accepted by the most highly civilized and most progressive nations of the present era. But there is no contradiction, there is no discrepancy. In the first place Christianity is not a creation, it is an inheritance of our times. But be this as it may, the great fact remains that civilized nations do not believe what they accept. We have no faith in the god we worship. The laity do not care anything

about the theories of Christianity, and only shrug their shoulders while the priesthood quarrel. The clergy themselves really have no faith, though they think they have, in a half-hearted way. Many find this an amusing spectacle; others consider it disgraceful: all repudiate it inwardly. The great moral principles of this wonderful religion we do believe, thank God, and we are living up to them better and better as the years roll on. But I shall have more to say on this subject presently. Not less have Christians insulted Christ, thinking to glorify him, than the Pagans, intending dishonor. His simple teaching they confounded with the folly of superstition.

A simple, primitive religion Christ taught, — one not hampered with ceremonies, nor taught in temples, nor celebrated by priests. But in vain did he, and his early followers to a certain extent, teach this simple goodness. In vain was simple worship enjoined. Men craved for the marvellous, that which was more sounding and more striking. The age was not ready to comprehend such a belief as Christ taught; nor indeed has any age since been able to comprehend, even in a limited measure, the real greatness and truth of the master's word. Individuals have lived in all times, to whose vision truth, or a good portion of it, was manifest; and the last decade shows great signs of a deeper appreciation of the truth of Christ. But humanity now as four thousand years ago loves the marvellous.

Greatness is always largely ideal, and to the common mind its life is rendered completely so. Imagination creates from impressions. Invention slips in among the images which become fixed in our minds, and creates them anew. Men love to tell of the wonders and the wonderful persons they have seen, and

you may be sure nothing is lost in the telling. Love finds what it seeks. Affection, like all our passions, is blind. We love to find what we admire beautiful in all, just as we are apt to blacken in every particular that which we hate. Furthermore, absolute sincerity, perfect honesty, and purest intent have not saved us from mistakes.

For years and years a deep, sad reflection clouded the soul and overweighted the mind of men. This world is lost, and all we can do is to get out of it: this is the burden of Christianity. This evil world was what it sought to avoid. It invented a hundred theories, evasions, redemptions, to gain salvation. "Shall I be damned?" was the great question; and people paid their money, sold their conscience, and traded their reason to escape the awful calamity. Moral fervor yields to religious practice, heartfelt earnestness gives place to outward form and show. Faith becomes changed, or rather a specific faith is fixed.

The fundamental theory of Christianity is false, and it is surrounded with a mesh of creeds and doctrines and theories varying from the monstrous to the ridiculous, and from the truthful to the unreasonable. Christianity as such never rose above persecution; toleration is not a Christian virtue. It is a low and debasing falsehood that man was perfect once, but is now bad by nature and lost without Christian salvation, a falsehood altogether mean and contemptible. The morally good and the bad are not equally lost forever. When this standard prevails, moral death is certain, and history proves it to the letter. Theological sophistry cannot permanently prevail over truth. Real, true men always have loved and always will love goodness apart from theology, and in spite of theology. And Christianity, founded upon the moral

teachings of Christ, has lived, not because of its many theories and doctrines of salvation, but in spite of them. There is no more vital moral truth for mankind than this ; not that we were once perfect, but that we are growing better.

The teaching of Christ is overlaid with creeds. Theology, insisting upon its rule and catechism, places a yoke upon our necks which we cannot and will not bear. When we are told that we cannot reason on God's wisdom, and that we must accept what we find or be outcast, we are mocked, though with never so honest intent. Our reason is all we have to guide us, and he who rejects it deserves nothing : he has thrown away his only talent.

Virtue is its own reward. This is the truth, and he who hopes for recompense is doomed to disappointment. A pure conscience is the highest glory. This is not Christianity, of course. The typical Christian abstains from evil for fear of losing heaven. How many of our clergy might be mentioned who have said that were it not for their belief in the Bible they would at once give up trying to live virtuous lives, and spend their days in sensual pleasure and excess. I do not care to attempt to reckon up the number I have heard say this in form or substance. These men, typical Christians, do good like the disciples, because they expect rewards. The more difficult and unpleasant it has been to be good, as they call it, the greater will be the prize, — perhaps a principality, or the rule of ten cities, or maybe only five. They tell their god they would not obey him if they did not fear him ; and this is the way they gain proselytes, whose only recommendation is that they are Christian. What if the proselyte is a sot or a gambler, this is no reason why he should be an infi-

del. That old allegation contains a vast deal of truth : "It is the pride of these not to be men, but to be Christians." They care nothing for the deeds of Christ, but only for his name. A Christian! — ample apology for years of crime. A Believer! — what an epitaph for a miserable, contemptible wretch!

Christianity was largely a protest against Paganism. Its teachings are negative rather than positive, passive rather than active. We should abstain from evil and keep out of the world, rather than live for good in the world. Abhorring the sensuality of the Pagans, the Christians made an idol of asceticism. Christianity approaches with heaven in its right hand, and hell in its left. Thus we have a reward for right living. Paganism was above this. Christian morality is utterly selfish. Salvation is but for the Jews anyway, and it was extended to the Gentiles as a punishment for the unbelief of the chosen race. Who wants such a second-hand gift?

But the system is by no means devoid of merits. I do not think there ever was a religion, a sect, or a party, no, nor an individual, that had not faults. It is time to reverse the medal and see what is on the other side. It is not necessary to mention specially the good traits of this great faith. We should look rather at its great distinctive results. Appreciating its meanness, we ought to understand its greatness.

I suppose I have heard quite a number of educated men say, that, in their judgment, Christianity is one of the greatest calamities that have befallen the world. Some assert that religion of any kind is altogether a curse. Intellectually, I have heard it called an absurdity, ethically immoral, practically a stumbling-block. Such is the opinion of men who



fail to understand their own condition. They fail to grasp the great fact that their own habits of life and thought depend, after all, upon the very thing in which they find not an atom of reason, virtue, or utility. Our present condition is the result of *all* that has happened in the past.

Behind every tradition there is truth. At the foundation of every work of any kind there is purpose and idea. Whether the originators and builders know it or not, it is there; they strive and toil but to exhibit it. Every line they trace, every blow they strike, reveals in some degree this great truth which is the real source of their action. Only give men ideas, and you shall see them striving with might and main to express them; the eye quickens, the fingers move, the heart leaps, all to one end. Let them be without ideas, and you shall see dull, filmy eyes, unmeaning faces, sluggish bodies, and silent lips.

That great man who left the little hamlet on the shore of Galilee to walk up and down among his people preaching a truth that he could not contain, that he must preach or die, — yes, and die, — was no idle enthusiast, no impostor, no mere fool; that web which his successors have wound about him so thoroughly and carefully as to render it well-nigh impossible to know anything accurately concerning him, — that, too, is not altogether nonsense, nor bigotry, though containing much of both. Without a Christianity the world had not known Christ; without a Christ the world had known nothing.

The world must have leaders, it must have parties and sects, it must have creeds. As long as human nature exists there will be bigots. Bigots, inquisitors, and tyrants are a part of the great scheme of civilization. Practice makes perfect. I have learned

more from mistakes in my life than from anything else. Christianity is not perfect, but he who finds nothing but evil in it is without reason. Ignorance and superstition of the past! You of this enlightened nineteenth century who find this all, you who are clogging the wheels of progress more than those for whom you express such contempt, — what shall future generations say of you? I tell you, in all that ignorance and superstition was downright truth and right sought. In all this there was tremendous labor; and we, forsooth, who have only contempt to offer, are reaping untold benefits. People for whose benefit others have spent their lives are often the most ungrateful of men. A patient who has been cured always grumbles at his doctor's bill.

What appears so great and noble in the past, running in unbroken line, though often faint, is this, nothing more, — only an earnest striving for truth. We see the stupid, patient, toiling, suffering masses of all ages, with bedaubed, dog-eared, tear-stained book, trying so hard to work out the problem of its poor existence. God be praised, those masses in America to-day reveal a noble progress. Work on, sturdy laborers! you have many schools and books now, many willing, earnest teachers; work on, never heeding the scoffs of fools. Salvation will surely come if only you keep an honest, brave heart. How proud you ought to feel of the great men of the world! They are the sons of fathers like you. The only mean and low in this world are those that fail to live up to what they know, including those who neglect their opportunities.

To be willing to do one's duty, this is morality; to know how to do one's duty, this is wisdom. Having brought these two together, we have perfection.

Thus far the world has been more moral than wise. The great masses are moral. In crime itself, and evil, is still morality. How great a man was that old heathen, how far in advance of his age, — he who said that crime was ignorance! That ignorant, suffering, sinful, superstitious past, how moral and true it was, and how faithfully it lived up to what it knew!

Searching for truth, how eagerly they listened, and how earnestly they believed and cherished those old stories! Their very hunger for truth itself created legends and fables. Wherever church was founded for the instruction of those who lived for truth; wherever ground was consecrated to the repose of those who slept in the faith; wherever the sweet vesper chimes were heard in the twilight, charming the unquiet world to rest and remembrance of God, or the early matin bell, awakening to prayer and duty at morn, — there lived the memory of some priest who had performed holy deeds of charity; there under that altar rested the sacred dust of some martyr who had suffered death, — sweet sacrifice to Christ, — some dreaming sister who in the silence and isolation of voluntary expiation had woven a ladder there of prayer and penance, on which the angels of God ascended and descended to minister to the sainted recluse.

There is much that is false here, but yet there is great honesty and singleness of purpose; and this is what we admire in the superstitious past. It is what we admire in any and all times. We admire their principle, if we despise their judgment; and thus will coming generations speak of us. Education has enabled us to understand these characteristics of the past. On the bleak western coast of Ireland a rude old bell may be seen, and a carved

piece of oak, which mark the devoted labors of Saint Patrick. A path worn smooth in the solid rock by the bare feet and bleeding knees of pious pilgrims, who to this day, it is said, drag their weary bodies over the hard stone way, tells significantly the story there. A hundred such places may be found in Europe, silent monuments of heroic devotion.

All these things have lost their old meaning. Those who practised the old ceremonies and mortifications would not do so if they were living to-day. We cannot rightly appreciate the spirit of those times. We are apt to attribute base motives to ancient practices, while many of the sentiments of antiquity fall flat upon the ear. In the tower of an ancient building in an old town where I spent many months of my childhood, hangs a bell which was placed there when the building was erected. It has a peculiar tone, quite common to very old bells, I find. People say it is cracked, though it is as sound a bell as ever tolled the hour.

There is a good deal of difference between politic reason and earnest faith. Reason says right is better than wrong, because it makes us happy and prosperous, and should prevail because it is right. But it goes no further. Men do not die for policy's sake. Faith says right and wrong are forever contradictories. One is of God; the other is of the Devil. One shall have an immortality of glory; the other an eternity of damnation. The Christian had faith, and who can wonder at any measures he took to win heaven? Are any inventions he devises to avoid hell surprising? Astounding would it be in very truth if Christianity offered no hope, invented no theories of salvation, created no heaven of repose from this bitter, interminable strife and error.

There is a grand truth here. What if it is at times totally buried in the labyrinth of theological isms? There have been ages when this great truth seemed hopelessly lost, and yet it has returned when least expected, to comfort and strengthen. After all, the great sustaining, upbuilding force of Christianity lies in its morality. There is a religion of morality itself, a worship deeper and truer than metaphysics knows. We all admire and love goodness. Christianity has lived, not because of, but in spite of, its faulty doctrines. The source of its unparalleled strength lies in its moral grandeur, at times at fault indeed, but on the whole much truer, purer, and nobler than that of any other religion the world has yet accepted.

Let us consider just a moment that superb morality at its best. Is happiness the great end of human existence, after all? Is human greatness and excellence to be measured by any such rule of content? If so, then we shall have to pull down our monuments, tear the eulogies from our histories, and obliterate the memories in our minds. Few of our great and noble ever gained happiness. We shall, then, praise littleness. Inferiority shall be our god. This is not it at all. Not in the possession of enjoyment, not in the charm of happiness, nor in the wealth of content, but in the consciousness of right, lies real greatness. True, we may be happy and right, perhaps we ought oftener to be both; but happiness is not the certificate by which we enter into the kingdom of God, much less the object of such entrance. Prosperity, comfort, and luxury tend to selfishness. To wear them, like the fair waving tresses of maidenhood, as the ornaments of virtue, is triumph. To serve the right and to love it, to worship, if you please, this great spirit, is higher and nobler than enjoyment. Be

right, though with never so wounded feet and bruised hands and bleeding heart. This is the glory of glories, really to live in the world, to hold integrity unsullied, not to know the guilt of self-reproach, in kindness to others, — what a triumph!

The reward is not a state of happiness and bliss. There need be no reward, there is no reward. Thousands of good men have died in sorrow. They are dying all about us now in lamentable grief, and will so die to-morrow. Sorrow lingers and loiters on the parched lips of the righteous, — or if moistened, only by tears, — willing to depart indeed, but not suffered to go. Grief falls alike upon the good and the bad; sometimes it seems rather to choose the good. There is no reward, nor is any wished for. The virtuous care only to continue so. Be right, unmindful of happiness and reward. If you do right, life will yet be sweet, though sorrowful. The great spirit of right somehow makes the afflicted heart to sing for joy. Pleasure may depart, fortune may flit away, friends may fail; but to worship in spirit and in truth is, was, and shall be.

I suppose it is given to all of us, at one time or another in our lives, to know a pure affection, a love that thought not of self. In childhood it may have been; some of us have loved as lovers; many have loved as wives and mothers, and a few as husbands and fathers. Such a love there may be of right, pure and hallowed, like that of Christ.

This brings us back to Christ, whose teaching forms the strength and truth of Christianity. Christ preached no moral or political economy, no enlightened prudence, but purity of heart. He held out no promise but the certainty of the final triumph of his word, and the contempt of the world. How soon his

word was twisted all out of shape by theological dogmatism, and how quickly that contempt became subjective! Dogma became an infallible rule of salvation; contempt for the world, a Christian essential.

The ark of God was never taken, in very truth, till it was surrounded by the arms of earthly defenders. The security of Christianity rests alone in its beneficent morality, its exquisite adaptability to the human heart, the vast amount of truth it offers to the reason, and its remarkable adaptation to all conditions of life. The consolation which it offers in sorrow, and the light which it throws across the grave, are no better and no more cheerful than the comfort and hope of many other systems of religion. There is not much comfort in the belief that the vast majority of all men shall be eternally damned. As a matter of fact we do not believe it true. It is in our accepted creed, to be sure; but people do not have faith in half the things they accept. There are at the present day very few believers in the Christian religion, though thousands upon thousands of subscribers to its creeds. This is a most hopeful sign of progress, and a most trustworthy indication of enlightenment.

It seems as if there is no theory so moral and no goodness so pure as not to become at times, at least, disarmed and distorted by the weaknesses, or meanness, if you please, of human nature. The real conduct becomes but a rule of conduct; the live spirit dies, and becomes a dead formula. Finally we have a moral revolt, and then we begin anew.

In the Christian system the great prevailing feature is human worthlessness. The overpowering fact abides, and will abide as long as the Bible continues to be the infallible exponent of Christianity, that the great mass of humanity is the devil's own, and shall

be his eternally. When men really conclude that human effort cannot win perfection or merit salvation, and that Christ by his death has taken away the stain of crime for such as believe the word, moral progress will cease and mankind deteriorate. The Middle Ages afford a striking example of this fact. Then was our system of religion really believed. We know the characteristics of those times, and their lesson is plain.

The fact that Christianity contains much truth, and was in the past an earnest effort and valiant aid to right living, is no reason for its continued prevalence. Christianity was a moral revolution, and undoubtedly the best and highest possible to the times was gained. Fixing religion irrevocably by the infallibility of the Bible, we fall into error. The child's letter-box aids him to read; but he must abandon it soon, or remain always a child. We must not put general faith in a special theory. He is foolish in the extreme who embarks on a rotten hull because it has carried him on many a long and perilous voyage. The system is out of harmony with our times. It is practically an absurdity. As a theory, though once moral, it is no longer so in the enlightened understanding of the times.

Christianity offers a wholesale opportunity of salvation. Whosoever will may come, though curiously enough in the same breath we are solemnly assured that most of us will come only to be rejected. This opportunity, moreover, is given not because we deserve it, but out of a kindly condescension to our spiritual worthlessness. Had we meted out to us severe justice, none would be saved, because none were worthy. If we have faith, we may become numbered among the select heavenly pauperism. The Christian heaven is an eleemosynary institution, very select, for



we are assured that though many come, few will be chosen. I scorn such favor. Could I not feel sure of the ability to do right if I chose, had I not the conviction of the possibility to myself of a true and noble life, did I not know that I can live for truth and God, I would live for the devil.

It may be that hell awaits the vast majority of men because of Eve's sin; but I for one declare there is no justice in it. I assert that it is false, immoral, and utterly contemptible, in the face of God himself. If this theory be true, rather than receive such mercy as is offered, I will cheerfully go to hell and receive this pitiable punishment for my sin. In my dying breath I will cry to such a judge: "I forgive you, for you know not what you do."

"What! from his helpless Creature be repaid  
 Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd, —  
 Sue for a Debt he never did contract,  
 And cannot answer, — oh, the sorry trade!

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
 And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake!  
 For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
 Is blacken'd — Man's forgiveness give — and take!"

## IV.

## THE CHURCH.

“Which of the twain will ye that I release unto you? And they said, Barabbas.”

THE Church is the practical exponent of Christianity; the Church of to-day is its modern expression. It is the school in which Christian doctrine is taught; and, as has been said before, it has become itself a part of that doctrine. Christ never established it any more than he did Christianity. It was founded, like Christianity, by his successors, upon what they supposed or asserted to be his commandment. He probably never dreamed such would be the outcome of his teaching. Greatly surprised, unless I am much mistaken, would he be could he come on earth to-day and see the structures built in his honor, the sects established in his name, and the ceremonies performed in his worship; and not altogether pleased, I venture.

The Church began, doubtless, as a simple gathering of believers, as one of the Scriptural writers puts it, “in an upper room,” just as the Salvationists to-day gather in some poor cheap hall or other, there to preach their doctrine and win souls for heaven. As the faithful increased in number, many of these services were persistently conducted in various places. A regular organization was instituted, and a complete though necessarily limited system established.

During several centuries this system was gradually expanding from without and from within, and gaining power and wealth. The early Christian rightly thought his money nowhere better spent than for his god, and he gave with astonishing liberality. He was taught that it was more blessed to give than to receive; and such was his integrity that he lived firmly up to his creed. As soon as the new sect had a sufficiency of money, churches, or houses of meeting, were built and maintained for religious purposes. The catacombs were abandoned for more comfortable and elegant structures. With this prosperity quite naturally corruption crept in. When a sect is weak, it manifests little vice.

By and by it came to be no disgrace to be a Christian; and thousands who were already in sympathy with the movement, but who feared the scorn and ridicule of Pagan society, and consequently had hitherto kept aloof, now openly embraced the new faith. Later it became a mark of honor to be a Christian, and now thousands more embraced the faith, proud to be the parasites of a noble and wealthy Church. Yet a little later it came to be a reproach not to be a Christian; it became heresy, it became infidelity, it became anathema, maranatha, not to acknowledge allegiance to the Church only; and many more thousands swelled the mighty band, glad to gain peace and protection at the price of a little hypocrisy, a little money, and a little sacrifice of conscience. Finally, the mighty Church firmly established, opulent, powerful, and magnificent, the ancient of days, all people swelled its membership as a matter of course, as of custom or fashion or respectability, with scarcely a thought of the meaning of the step, or an idea of the significance of enrolment. And here is where we

rest at present; though another step seems about to be taken, and people are beginning to examine this costly, magnificent inheritance, to question its usefulness in its present form, while some are moved to scorn and ridicule it as a stupendous imposition.

In order to understand the Church of the present, it is essential to know something of its past. "Not to know what has happened before us is always to be a child," says Cicero; and it is undoubtedly true that it is impossible to gain a broad and comprehensive understanding of any institution — educational, political, or religious — from its mere present activity or decay. We find ourselves in the possession of a stupendous system, the correct enjoyment and use of which it is the suspicion of many we do not comprehend or exercise. We are in the position of the irresponsible and pampered heir to the vast millions of ancestors, without an appreciation of the meaning of wealth, or a knowledge of its proper use, to say nothing of an understanding of the vast amount of calculation and downright hard work it required to amass and preserve such a fortune. A brief examination into the past of the Church, if it does not teach us a righteous use, will yet at least instil a proper appreciation of the conditions and circumstances that have made it what it is.

The early Christian efforts scarcely merit the name of Church. They were rather missions, in the term of present use. Such was the labor of the apostles. Such was the toiling in the catacombs; and probably for some time after the catacombs had been abandoned, Christian work, broadly speaking, was rather of the nature of missions than that of an organized church. But the Church in all its pomp came quickly, and that, too, long before the Middle Ages.

In fact, during the Middle Ages it reached its culmination, and from this great period of history dates its decline. To be sure, one wing of this great religious organization, the Protestant Church, dates its beginning from the Middle Ages; but after all, this offshoot, now grown to the size, if not the power, of its parent, is really comprehended in the holy Catholic Church, as indeed many of its leaders insist.

We find before the sixteenth century a Church all but omnipotent wherever it was established. Priestcraft was a profession of infinite importance. It had become a consummate art. Nowhere else but in religion is such enormous privilege and power gained; and it is gained by every religion the world has ever seen. Explain the fact in whatever way we please, its reality we must admit. A large, well-organized body of men, dealing specially with an omnipotent, infinite power above the earth and outside the universe, ruling and directing it, and teaching a future beyond the grave, concerning whose absolute reality no living human being knows, has, in one form or another, for one reason or another, always exerted extraordinary power over men. This is the fact, and the fact is all that concerns us at present.

The ancient priest, from Moses down to within a century, had always been regarded a divine man, a prophet sent by God and under God's especial care. Omitting the time element, this is true of all religions. Here is really the source of church power. The priest, for thousands of years probably, was one from whose lips fell inspired words, thoughts divine, truth absolute from God himself; and such words, such thought, such truth, it is not for man to deny. The priest was the great inspired teacher of men, and

the infallible guide through this life and beyond to the eternal.

In the Middle Ages, when some priests denied the infallibility of the Pope, they set up either their own infallibility, or at least the injunction laid upon them by God to teach the infallibility of the greatest priest and prophet of all, the Bible. The resemblance, if not identity actual and real, of Protestantism to Catholicism hence is apparent. The only difference at basis lies simply in a change of method, — withal a change which renders possible, and probable in natural sequence, a rejection of the whole theory. And this final result is what we have actually come to in this century in the establishment within the pale of the Christian Church itself, ostensibly at least, of a new sect which takes the name Unitarian, and makes a spiritual morality its teaching.

Subjected to the influence of the line of thought just indicated, theology and metaphysics naturally flourish. The cumbrous, worthless learning of scholasticism is the proper commentary and the living moral lesson of this great system of an infallible, divinely inspired, and spiritually guided priesthood, — the semblance and, to a great extent, the reality of which we find in our possession to-day.

Before passing to particular consideration of this present possession, it will be well to observe carefully, if briefly, some of its ancient characteristics. The priest was the temporal as well as the spiritual ruler of the people. He was present, if not actually, yet in form, at the birth of every child; he attended him through youth and manhood and old age, comforted him in the hour of death, muttered a prayer over his grave, and sung masses for the repose of his soul. His vow of poverty brought him wealth; and

the priesthood, as a body, voraciously grasped at all they could or dared get. Nothing was too sacred for them to touch. Devoid of shame, they mercilessly extorted pitiful fees from the poor and the helpless; the widow's mite and the orphan's living they devoured and gloated over; they danced with glee at the welcome receipt of magnificent gifts of wealthy believers whose poor wits they had scared into this pious prodigality; at all stages of the road of life they extorted such fees as render the old English tax-gatherer kind and merciful indeed in comparison. If the poor victim refused to pay, or spoke a disrespectful word of the priesthood, he was fined for this neglect or disrespect itself; and if he dared to persist in his refusal, he was excommunicated. And this was woful punishment. None might sell him food or clothing, no friend might give him nourishment or shelter, none might offer the kind acts of charity, no, nor even utter words of compassion or sympathy, under threat of the same punishment; and he was cursed in heaven, on earth, and in hell with the most horrible and bitter anathemas human invention could frame into intelligible language. If you want priests to be reasonable in argument and logic, and moderate in their demands, you must take away their infallibility.

The American people never began to worship money half so assiduously as the ancient clergy of the great Christian Church. Nothing but money could wipe out sin. Charity and mercy had no place in this stupendous system. If a layman erred, it was a simple matter so long as he paid for it; but woe to him if he refused. Religion was thus a very simple thing; its meaning could be understood by the merest child, and it was just this: The Church held the keys

of heaven and hell. If a person committed crimes worthy of hell, a suitable present to the priest would nevertheless open to him the gate of heaven. If another were ill, a pilgrimage to some sacred place, a shrine, a holy sepulchre, or a wooden Jesus, with the enforced privilege of paying numerous fees at every hand and at all times, was recommended; and never was recommendation more a command. It was of no use to go to church or to confession, or to a saint, shrine, or crucifix without money. This is the Christian Church, the very ark of God, which established the Bible as the infallible constitution of Christianity.

To say a *pater noster* forward was a powerful charm, a talisman with which to win heaven; repeat it backwards, and the blackest devil in hell is powerless against you. And this, I believe, has come down to modern times in one form of the Church, together with the confessional, which if not abused is really a good institution. Rich and poor alike submitted to this galling yoke of priestcraft. The Emperor of Germany held the stirrup for Gregory the Seventh to mount his ass. Henry Plantagenet walked barefoot through the streets of Canterbury, and crawled on his knees like a whining puppy while the monks flogged him. Alas for a people ruled by a child, doubly alas for a people ruled by a priesthood! We are disgusted at finding so much superstition and chicanery, such low, contemptible arts, and such arrogant and unbridled insolence as the clergy manifested at this time. They had wealth, they had sounding titles, they had all the pomp and magnificence of royalty, — these wretched subscribers to poverty; and for such a palpable fraud and delusion people bartered their independence and stultified their reason.



But there is another characteristic of this ancient Church more agreeable and wonderful, and more fruitful to reflection than that which has been mentioned. The purse of mankind lies next to its heart. Men may sometimes pay their money hypocritically or disingenuously, but on the whole such expenditure is *alto pectore*. And when the nature of the expenditure is manifest, the real heart of man is laid open, as it were. I refer to the architecture and art embodied in the ancient Church.

The priests and leaders of every religion have sought to raise man to the comprehension of his divine origin, and celestial destiny by the outward symbols of art and architecture. Before men could read they scrawled a god on the smooth sand of the shore; before they could talk they hammered a god from the chipping stone. These likenesses and images vary all the way from the hideous and monstrous to the sublime, from the terrible grinning faces of the heathen to the lovely forms of the old masters, from the weak vacillation apparent in the eastern pagoda to the grand substantial sublimity of the European cathedral. It is upon the more favorable of these forms that we may linger a moment. While this great church exhibited all this petty meanness and contemptible insolence, it was still straining its energies and lavishing its wealth in the attempt to create fitting symbols of the religion of which itself was the manifestation.

The mediæval cathedral is one vast symbol, speaking from every turret, arch, and gable, breathing from every pore the great story of its underlying faith. Men have always been good at heart if dogmatic in theology. Some of these massive piles unite in a grand anthem, a swelling *gloria* to the mighty

Creator, the God of heaven and earth. Others chant mournfully of a *dies irae* to come, yet so touchingly as almost to bring tears to the eyes. All these structures tell their story. The colonnades, the walls, the windows, the very tiles, are eloquent on some Christian theme. The bells are known to the people by name. Inscribed as they are to countless saints, they speak from their great black throats with astonishing effect. The cold symbols within are taken for reality, and are worshipped. Here is a Christ or a Virgin in a conspicuous place: thousands daily pause and kneel, muttering a prayer at its foot. Gold and silver and precious stones are lavished upon these Jesuses and Virgins. The more massive and costly an image is, the greater its potency. But, on the whole, meaning is not as yet utterly lost in mere form. There is great truth as yet here, despite all the sham and show. Were this not so, we should not have these magnificent structures, those charming madonnas, those lovely cherubs, little in dogmatic orthodoxy, but great in true religion. The artist of this period is no snivelling pedant; the architect's mind is not clouded with the gloomy nonsense of scholasticism. These two, artist and architect, are truly religious in this great sea of unreligion, of orthodoxy, of imposture. And yet the Church must have had some religion, or it would never have appreciated these glorious works of art.

The ancient Church, thus briefly characterized, divided, to be sure, but after all originally and at basis one mere form, passes down through the ages to our own times, without change of government or form or name to speak of, existing under the same constitution which it adopted before the Middle Ages. Meanwhile, during the idleness, and blind, fancied

security of the priesthood, the people have been learning carnal knowledge. Now and then there has been a revolt. Knowledge fermented in men's minds, and caused them to act as if actually possessed of devils. Revolutions occur. Images are broken, costly vestures burned, and painted glass shattered. Elegant organs, "kists of whistles made for the devil," are split into kindlings. And yet after a time the old Church is seen to be sailing on in full glory, but by her side is the ever-present schoolhouse, poor, homely, almost ridiculous at first, but soon to be grand with that grandeur which only truth can give. The conclusion of all this is unmistakable. Men of the present find themselves far in advance of the Church and the priesthood. When mention is made of either, it is noticed that a significant smile is raised. People awake to find that they have no faith in the Church to which they are united. They admit they subscribe to a lie. Let us look into the modern church. As before, the priest shall be considered first.

A striking change that, from the ancient priest to the modern priest; and it is not that the clergy themselves are so different from their predecessors, but that the common people have grown wonderfully in knowledge. In the old days the priest alone was educated, if the theological knowledge he possessed can be called education; now the clergy as a body are no better educated than other professional men. In other words, our idea of education has changed. Except among few besides the clergy themselves, theology and metaphysics are not considered knowledge. All practical men, without exception, have for such learning only that feeling of contempt which it richly deserves. In the old days all the knowledge there was

consisted of theology and metaphysics, and none but the clergy had that; at present these branches form but an insignificant part of knowledge, and, as formerly, the clergy alone possess it.

The clergy are no longer infallible, but must render an account to men as well as to God. Consequently the great cause of their superiority has disappeared. The priesthood holds no such position to-day as it did a few years, not to say generations, ago. The preacher is no longer the spiritual ruler, or even guide; and temporal power he would not think of claiming. The old idea, as has been said, was that the priest was the divinely inspired ruler and guide of man, and that man should follow him and submit to his direction, just as the sheep follow their shepherd. A curious transformation has crept in, — a change really comical: the sheep assume the leadership, and go scrambling and tearing whithersoever they will; while the shepherd, poor bell-wether, follows along in their scattering tracks as best he can! The change is fairly ludicrous.

At present the modern system, in the Protestant Church at least, does not conform to that of the ancient Church, nor yet to the more primitive and simple idea of Christ. The primitive idea was that a really godly man, divinely inspired, and bearing God's own message, should go about and teach people to be pure and godly above all. It was not his duty to compromise with the devil, or to consult with his hearers as to how or what he should teach; for his method and doctrine he had from God. His living was the voluntary offerings of his hearers, and luxury and worldly goods were not sought. But soon tithes crept in, and were demanded as by right; for was not the laborer worthy of his hire? Later the vow of

poverty meant the certainty of untold riches. At present both characteristics of the early priest have disappeared, — except, as before suggested, in the Roman Church, which will be considered later, the remarks in this connection being directed solely to the Protestant wing of the great Catholic Church.

At present, then, the people have full sway. The Church, considered as a body of subscribers to Christian creeds, has taken its destiny into its own hands; it is they who decide what shall be preached and who shall preach it. They hold out promise of large salaries and social inducements to a popular preacher. They invite a man to preach in their church, and if he suits their taste, is “broad” or “narrow,” orthodox or heterodox, according to their particular line of thought, they give him a “call,” and make him an offer. Once installed in a church, he must use the greatest caution in his sermons, lest he offend. His theology must suit his people; above all, he must please the women. If only a parson shall find favor with the women, his success is assured. The men care little about him anyway so their wives are pleased; and he handles his moral scourge shrewdly, so as not to touch some personal sores too harshly.

Heaven, hell, the world, the flesh, and the devil must be mentioned only with infinite caution to suit his people. He must, in short, to a great extent, however learned, wise, and popular he may be, maintain the position of an echo to the ideas of his congregation. Some few great preachers seem to be exceptions to this rule, and to retain positions with unlimited freedom of comment; but when this occurs, the real reason of their tolerance as pastors too often lies in a lamentable pride of having the best or the most popular or the greatest orator, — motives even worse than

the other. One or two real exceptions there may be out in the country; scarcely one in the city. This is not dogmatism, nor am I a radical. I do not say this is not right; but it is not Christ, or Christian either. We shall deal with morality later.

The prevalent method of selecting pastors and the manner of treating them, on the whole, set a premium on mere outward show. Graces of oratory, winning manners, and agreeable personality are chiefly sought. The women are the ones to please, not the men. It is the women who go to church; when men go, they go with the women. The clergy, as a body, it must be confessed, are not intellectually a superior body of men. This is a serious charge to make, but I think it can be proved beyond a doubt. Hundreds of warm friends of the Church will, with some regret, tacitly admit its truth. So true is it, in fact, that the large number of utterly incompetent, inferior, and even stupid men — men who ought to be at work on the farm, where they would do some good — that is counted in the lengthy roll of the clergy has hurt the real cause of Christ more than infidelity itself. Infidelity has, indeed, done as much for the great cause perhaps as the Church, despite the great advantage the latter has enjoyed in organization.

The Church is responsible for the incompetency and unfitness of its servants. Pecuniary inducements without limit are offered at wholesale to all young men who will study for the ministry. Different societies, having established various colleges, offer education therein free of cost to all who signify their intention of studying for the ministry of their particular sect. In this and in other ways the student's complete living is given him without exertion on his part, and without other condition than that already

mentioned. This is nothing more nor less than a deliberate premium set upon inferiority. As a result this inferiority has become a matter of public comment. All are familiar with the old rhyme which makes the fool of the family study for the ministry. Even the newspapers sneer at the clergy. One of our popular periodicals recently summed up the whole feeling in this sentence: "It always seems to create more or less surprise when a man who has actually demonstrated his ability to do anything else, determines to study for the ministry."

"Wherever you see a cassock and gown,  
A hundred to one but it covers a clown,"

was written years ago. In a book formerly belonging to Theodore Parker, I find this side note written with reference to the inferiority of the clergy: "The only calling almost in which a man can rise without merit." This is an epitome of the whole subject.

It is no wonder that the clergy numbers such incompetents as are to be found on every hand within its ranks. In my own personal experience I have known men who knew they were incompetent for the position, to shift along through a theological course simply because they did not know what else to do, and this offered the most temporarily for the least exertion. The ministry is simply crowded with just such men. It is the greatest reproach that can be brought against the profession. Young men of ability and pluck scorn such aid. The very fact that it is offered turns them away from the ministry. Men of ability and courage disdain to be paupers.

The mediocrity of the clergy appears in the sermons delivered. It appears in the limited attendance at the churches, and in the inattention so clearly perceptible

of those who do manage to sit through the tedious sermons. Churches are obliged to originate special attractions in order to fill their seats. Wherever you find a crowded church it is quite generally owing to these special features, often maintained at great cost. People sit through the sermons because they must, if they will enjoy the entertainment. The sermon is the grain of salt generally incident to pleasure.

I wish it were possible to get a composite sermon, just as the photographers take composite pictures. It would be an interesting paper, I am sure. A trite, meaningless text, drawn from the only source permissible; introduction explaining the allusion and a portrayal of the sensations the writer must have experienced; repetition of the text; the instruction intended considered in three lights from as many standpoints; examples from the stock characters, — David the singer, Jonah the only true sign, the devil the root of all evil; final application to the effect that life is worthless without Christianity, and the world a moral Sahara without a belief in the divinity of Christ, the future a hell unless we speedily clutch doctrinal salvation. The people pass out talking about the singing, the next ball, the last party, or fashions. This may not be fair, but it is true. I wish I could add in an appendix a sermon I heard not long ago at Trinity Church, Boston, and the small talk I overheard after the services.

The custom of choosing texts is peculiar. Sometimes the text is so far-fetched that the preacher seems to have set himself a puzzle or task; namely, that of twisting a modern moral application out of an almost meaningless sentence written hundreds of years ago. There is a tempting suggestion always present that the minister, if he be really an able man,



is laughing in his sleeve as he preaches, thinking of the open-mouthed credulity of his audience at his curiously woven argument and far-fetched allusions and analogies. Think of the tracts church societies are forever publishing and sending out broadcast. Their very titles are in many instances grotesque and ridiculous, and their contents lamentably absurd. It is amusing to pry into Sunday-school libraries, and astonishingly enlightening. What heaps of nonsense, senseless trash, are put into the hands of children by pious but stupid parents and societies! No wonder children of pious families as a rule hate Sundays.

It is a curious study to observe what people will endure in this world of ours. What a patient, long-suffering species of animal we are! How strangely we follow a leader to the most whimsical extremes! Some fashionable lady appears in public with a nasty pup; instantly hundreds of ladies purchase these dirty little whelps, and race fluttering through the streets, leading these pitiable objects of their deepest affection. It is fashionable or respectable to go to church; and so we dress ourselves in all our finery, and submit to the operation once a week. We step from the pulpit to the auditorium.

How many people among all the thousands of church-members and church-goers seek in very truth a holy place, where they may lay aside the world and its cares and gain a sacred moment of earnest communion with God? The question is too sad to insist upon. We are unwilling to admit our pitiable meanness and lamentable hypocrisy even to ourselves. We boast of the societies to which we belong, and in a measure take our social standing accordingly. Think of it. Christ said we ought to worship in secret, and we take our social position from the church we attend!

We deck ourselves out in stiffly starched petticoats and nicely creased trowsers, and march slowly down to church just a little late. We nod and smirk at one another over the singing. We hastily mumble over the service or the responses, and are glad when they are done. We kneel and pray, gazing all over the church, or peeping through our fingers at our neighbors; rising, we whine and drawl out a woful hymn. The choir again amuse us with an anthem, and then the organ plays while collection is taken, — a ceremony which gives us a chance to change our cramped position, and yawn, make comments, and display our piety by substantial offerings. Then the minister rises and begins his sermon, and for a moment pretty good attention is given, — a few strangers only exchanging remarks about the parson and his appearance and manners. Pretty soon we are all bored, and begin to wish he would stop. Now and then, it is true, something comes out that pleases us, and gains our approval, or raises a smile. And so with much looking about and yawning and general impatience, we manage to worry through the sermon. How things brighten up when the parson closes the book just before the conclusion! It is a relief to rise and whine through another hymn; and with light hearts we receive the benediction, and trip gayly out and home like school-children. It is a noticeable thing, this school-boy exhilaration after church; and no wonder we feel glad. Just think, no more sermons for most of us for a week; and in the afternoon we will go down the harbor, or take a drive, or a turn through the park! Well, it is a matter of congratulation.

Out of the whole congregation, how many know anything about the sermon? Sharp, the trader, has been reckoning over his accounts; while Blabson, the

lawyer, has settled the form of his brief; young Dandy has been gazing all the morning at the pretty girls, whose mothers have noted styles and exchanged glances of hatred at that upstart, Mrs. Push. Dives mentally clinks his dollars, while Lazarus has done his best to keep the tempter, *atra cura*, behind him. The boys have dangled their little fat legs till they prickle and tingle, improving now and again the chance to play while the head of the family nods stupidly from weariness, but ever ready to assume exemplary decorum when the momentary awakening occurs, always preceded, fortunately, by the short, warning snort. All these people are not in the least sanctified. They are of earth earthy, and not so bad after all. True, most have repeated again and again, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners;" but they don't mean it, not one of them, unless it be Lazarus with the sores. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

Still, some care is taken to see that the minister keeps in the right path. His theology must be sound. He must walk straight between the lines of his particular creed; if he is caught out of the traces, up go the hands in holy horror. "Heresy!" shriek the worthy deacons,—old dry-as-dust idiots, bald numskulls, dried-up dunces, who know nothing but to gibber and squeak over their theological rot. "Heresy!" softly expostulates the ladies' society: the dear ladies! what a pretty sight it is,—almost as bewitching as if this stir were caused by a mouse! Scarcely a year or a six-month passes without such doctrinal troubles. What a list we have had of them in the last two years! There is little morality in all these theological quibbles. The fact is, morality, generally speaking, takes quite a secondary place in

the Church. It is impossible to find it at all in the creed.

In my early youth the pastor of the church my parents attended — a finely built, nice, popular man — found it necessary to abandon his flock to the cruel world, owing to an unfortunate scandal. The excitement it created, the nervous flutter and delicious consternation among the ladies, is very amusing to me now in later years. I remember the mysterious looks and nods of the women. I shall never forget that loving pastor's farewell Sunday: the blushing roses, the innocent lilies, the bold pinks that decked the altar, — a perfect bank of flowers, — the crowded church and the pompous music, but over and above all the touching sermon, so sweet and tender, so droopingly melancholy, it brought tears to all the ladies' eyes. As then in honest boyhood, it makes me sad to think of all that weeping.

As I write these pages the bitterly hostile factions of another church have just received judgment from the Supreme Court of a great Commonwealth over just such a scandal, and the honest judge felt called upon to use these words to the litigants: "It is almost a reproach on Christianity that brethren should be here contending under such circumstances. It is exceedingly painful to see people who have been formerly associated together in a church, coming here and contending, and passing each other by with averted faces. If they are governed by the spirit of the Master whom they serve, another Sunday will not pass without the wounds on each side being healed, and the differences settled." These kind people did not come together, but there are now two churches where there was one. No, the Church is not moral; and it is honest here, if nowhere else, for

it persists in teaching that a perfectly moral life cannot win salvation.

It is a fortunate thing that architects are not religious men, at least as the word goes. Were our architects imbued with a weak, sickly, milk-and-water religion, we should not have so many noble church edifices. But the way these churches are decorated is fairly ludicrous, and in some cases monstrously hideous. The ornamentation of an eastern pagoda is beautiful in the extreme as compared with the painted windows of some of these city churches. Here is a lamb in earnest conversation with a man; and a more forlorn lamb never was seen. Here is another with a cross at shoulder-arms, marching on with his mouth open, as if in indication that he is speaking. This idea is further carried out by raising one of the forefeet, by way of gesture presumably, or else the painter intended it to support the cross. If we must have these creatures of the stable in our churches, do, in God's name, let the painter go out into the country and see a nice frisky cosset, not a homely animal in the barnyard by any means. Again we find an *Ecce Homo*, the most hideous and senseless painting that ever a foolish and flippant public descended to praise, more hideous than Hogarth's worst, and almost utterly devoid of sense.

The saints are forever walking down interminable paths with slow and doubtful step, as if themselves conscious of the fact that they are not making any progress. In this they are emblematic of the Church. With meaningless, insipid faces they stand, with manuscript rolls under their arms, dressed in long robes and sandals, some with strings of fish, presumably to catch the sporting eye, others with nets and crooks, snakes and chalice, mitre and cross, —

all a curious pantomime procession of harlequins. Ah, my dear brother in vesture, you deplore my taste? Excuse me, have I hit your church?

Another window that I have seen reminded me of a picture I saw at the entrance of a dime museum, of a wonderful ossified man. Still another calls to mind a form of puzzle that used to be quite common in almanacs and on advertising cards. A tree would be drawn full of faces and animals artistically and ingeniously arranged in the branches, and the ground also would reveal, on rigid examination, many more similar designs. This window was drawn on the same principle apparently, and every time I saw it I discovered a new face. Looking over a vast number of churches, I have been able to find in them all but one solitary window that has any meaning or teaches any respectable lesson, and that too in a Unitarian Church, which, properly speaking, is scarcely Christian at all in its tendency. This window is well worthy of description because of its moral, though poorly enough executed. It represents a large and powerful man standing knocking at a ponderous door. In his left hand he holds a lantern brightly shining in the darkness, — Diogenes Hunting for an Honest Man. As I intimated, the painting is not at all superior, — in fact, I never thought Diogenes was such a big, powerful man as he is here represented; but the moral is unsurpassed. I sincerely hope my kind readers will diligently search the Unitarian churches of Boston until they find this truly remarkable window.

With this one exception I have not found a single painted window, representing human or animal forms, worthy of praise in any respect. It is a lamentable fact, and yet I have heard more than one minister

boast of his beautiful painted glass. Meanwhile children pinched with hunger and stupid from exposure were crying for food, — in one instance not a hundred rods from where we stood.

Christ would not have such painted glass and hungry children.

The newspapers recently contained a lengthy description of some bronze doors which Mr. William Waldorf Astor has presented to Trinity Church, New York, in memory of his father. The designs are said to be magnificent, and the expense of putting them in will reach as high as \$200,000, if not \$300,000. Great heavens! consider, \$300,000 spent on the mere outside doors of a church built in honor of him who went bare-foot in Galilee some two thousand years ago! This vast sum expended to stop the paltry entrance-holes in the walls of a big cathedral established to teach the simple morality of him who commanded his disciples to take no money in their purses, no, nor so much as food to eat, and who cheerfully gave all he ever had to lighten the sorrows of the poor, so that the widow's heart sang for joy! But the Church has ever been proud to wear a crown of gold, though the master had but a crown of thorns. The Church, eager to become powerful and sway the world, forgets Christ's humble life and simple teachings. Here is money enough to build and equip ten nice school-houses, where alone thousands of children may go and learn that which will make them true men. What a monument of senseless folly! It makes the heart sick.

These magnificent churches are as dark as the tomb, and not half so cheerful as the quiet grave beneath the shady trees, whose pure fresh flowers gladden with a sweet joy the faithful lonely heart. Why must God's

pure sunlight be rigidly excluded from his house of worship? It is not a simple, heartfelt thankfulness that builds such cold, gloomy structures; it is not a holy service that is maintained within them. There is no heart here. It is all pomp and show and extravagant magnificence impersonating worship. If the opinion of these could have been consulted at the creation, what a dark, gloomy world we should have had! All the birds would have been crows, the flowers gloomy hyacinths, upon whose petals would appear in the handwriting of Nature, as of old, the grievous exclamation "Alas!" We should have the sun and the moon and the stars darkened, and the clouds return after the rain.

If Christ could attend some of these pompous ceremonies, don't you think he would be inclined to act as he is said to have done once in the temple at Jerusalem? Would that we had such a Messiah to-day to tear the mask from modern hypocrisy! What do you think he would say of those who kneel in our gilded, carpeted, darkened, ill-ventilated temples of worship, mumbling a senseless prayer in the face and eyes of hundreds of people, the while gazing all about and apparently making inward comments? What would he now say to that? Whatever he would say he would speak not in hate, but in grief. Of all the cant there is in the world, how little is condemnable without pity!

Last winter as I came out of a fashionable metropolitan church, I saw a little girl crying from the cold. Her hands were blue from exposure, and her face was pale and pinched. Quietly stepping one side, I determined to see what the people would do. Upwards of a hundred passed, not one of whom offered to help this little child, though most of them saw her.



At length a woman came along who took off her wrap and put it on the child, and led her home. As I turned away I thought, — I thought what Christ said about kindness to children; and this woman, it seemed to me, was truly blessed, and appeared lovely in my eyes. This is not Christian, but it is natural; it is Christ. I had a better sermon out of doors than within that morning; and I cannot think the great clergyman who preached would disagree with me.

People are not intrinsically bad; they are only lazy and thoughtless. They buy Virtue at a bargain, and think she ought to be honored by their condescension. It is a convenient way to be charitable, — this attending a fine church, having a nice stuffed pew to sit in, and putting ten cents, or ten dollars, as an offering on a silver or gold plate in the hands of an usher in faultless black, and muttering a *pater noster*, or perhaps a curse, if the sermon be poor or the singing bad. Two or three sermons a week, — that is what the Christian calls being good. Worldly people and worldly things they denounce. The poor may live in rags and squalor, they hold out no hand of help; the sick may cry in their pain, they have no sympathy to offer. They cover their faces, stop their ears, and pass by on the other side. A great and kind man, one of the best that ever lived, was moved actually to say this hard thing of people whom he knew: "They went to church a half dozen times in the week; they subscribed to many public charities. Their tribe was known eighteen hundred years ago, and will flourish as long as men endure. They will still thank heaven that they are not as other folks are, and leave the wounded and miserable to other succor." Some of these people actually found hospitals and other public charities, and withal never do a kind act in their lives. This

is a charity that hurts the recipient; and these nice people solemnly debate whether it does not hurt the pauper as much to accept the public soup as to steal it.

Why, do you know, sometimes when I am in these magnificent places, and see all the sham and show, the paint and feathers, the miserable cant and hypocrisy, I feel afraid, and I almost think there is no truth and purity and sincerity at all in this world. I sigh with relief when I get out and breathe the fresh air. How noble does honest John Bunyan seem! how true and earnest the Wesleys! I have to recall noble, generous men that I have seen, and think of kind women that I know, ready to aid, — simple, kindly hearts and pure, — before I can shake off this chill so much worldliness has cast upon me.

Do not mistake me; I am not cynical or intolerant. If clergymen and their people find these things beautiful, I would not forbid or restrain their enjoyment. I would only lead them to know a higher joy, one that regards not self so much as others. My heart cries out against such things when blameless humanity is suffering all about us, and longing — oh, so earnestly! — for light. The poor toiling masses are striving with all their might and main to rise, and too often our extended aid is but a hindrance. The Christ to whom you pray does not want such things, if I comprehend him at all. I do not say you will die in sorrow and go to hell, if you will not give them up, but I know you will better merit heaven, and be doing a merciful deed by turning them to use in mitigating the suffering near you, and teaching men, especially children, real, helpful, moral, and worldly truth, if you please, not so much to die as to live by, — to live kindly, helpful lives, full of thought and consideration

for others. It is a selfish thing to be thinking always of being ready and worthy to die. Let us learn a higher morality and a nobler generosity. Let us think more of living, and of living for others.

Any one who thinks a moment over these characteristics of the clergy and their people to-day is forced to the conclusion that in general neither the one nor the other is really in earnest in their formal religion. Having attempted to give a general idea of the true condition of both clergy and people, I pass to a few specific examples by way of illustration. The following page or two is devoted to the brief statement of matters that have been seriously debated in gatherings of the clergy of various denominations, and of opinions which several have openly expressed with reference to subjects under consideration. Sometimes the very words are quoted.

Among the questions which occupied the attention of a great Methodist convention recently held was the all-important subject of precedence. It seems that some jealousy exists among the Methodists because the Episcopalians arrogate to themselves a superiority over their brethren. The civil authorities, it is asserted, show preference for the services of Episcopalian clergymen on occasions of public celebration. If the Methodists were less Christian and more Christ-like, they would remember that Christ bade the invited guest to take a seat in the lowest room, rather than quarrel for the more conspicuous places. If they had more of the humble spirit of the master, they would be proud to ride the unpretending animal which Christ rode. Another question considered was the desirability of communicants sitting, instead of kneeling, at the Lord's Supper. Let them move carefully here ; for at the original Supper they neither sat nor kneeled, but probably reclined on

couches. The ever-present discussion of the change of pastorate received the usual attention; while infant baptism was passed over in silence.

The Presbyterians are all wrought up over creed revision. The frank statements of some of their prominent clergymen throw light, as will appear later, upon their lack of faith. "Elect infants" is an absorbing theme. Reprobation, infant damnation, damnation of heathen, classification of Roman Catholics as idolaters, and the declaration that the Pope is anti-Christ, — all have their turn. What with *supralapsarianism*, *infralapsarianism*, and *pre-terition*, they have their hands full.

The Universalists are quarrelling over the word "restore" in their creed. Some say it implies original human perfection, and suggest "save," as a better word altogether. Again, they discuss whether "holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected."

The Episcopalians have the race question to settle. Is the negro a man, and as such fitted to be a communicant? The question seems to be decided in the negative at present. The precedents all incline that way. Sullivan refused to fight them, which ought to be enough for reasonable men. The size of the bishop's sleeves will cause as great a flurry as a scandal. They compromise their creed by allowing their churches a choice of two. The Baptists are crying for more water to cool their heated discussions over free will and foreordination; and the American Board of Congregationalists spent most of its time a year ago trying to decide whether or not the heathen are eternally damned, and whether educated men who deny the proposition are fit to teach them truth and morality.

But it is left to the Presbyterians to reveal the real opinions of the clergy upon creed and Scripture. Speaking for themselves, they really voice the sentiments of the better and more advanced members of the profession generally. They have so far forgotten themselves as to blurt out the truth like angry schoolboys, though some speak from the force of conviction, the result of long and troubled meditation. One of their number stated that he believed not five members of his church had ever read the confession; and as for himself, he frankly admitted that he had not, and declared he would not read it.

Consider the situation a moment. Not one of these good people, minister included, would fail carefully to read and deeply to ponder a deed of real estate located in this miserable world, before he gave it his signature. Yet all carelessly subscribe to, and the minister has for years persistently preached under, a creed which concerns their well-being not for a few years but for eternity, a creed which determines the relation not between mortal men but between immortal souls and God Almighty, and none knew what it contained. Do you think these worthy people care much about the religion they parade? Why, they are actually ignorant of the very faith which they say they have, and one frankly confesses that he is ashamed of his religion. Does it occur to any one that he never had any religion worthy the name,—only a sham God, a hollow idol, a nominal faith? Why should he be ashamed of his religion? No blame can attach itself to the religion. It is but a chattel, so much printed paper. Rather the shame which he owns, multiplied a hundred fold, should be directed toward himself. As long as he tries to shift the burden off on his creed (why, he subscribed to it

voluntarily, he preached it willingly, no one forced him to it), he will never know what faith and religion mean.

Another of the same sect admits that his creed has no life in it, and yet complains because others say so. Solemnly accepting the confession at one moment, he suddenly turns about and deals it an underhanded blow the next. Another prominent divine declared that his creed had made him an infidel during ten of the best years of his life;<sup>1</sup> and some of his hearers laughed so when he said he was not such a fool as he looked, that a protest against such levity was made. This same man declared that the Word of God was, after all, the "compilation of fallible men." A liberal vows he will, as in the past, disbelieve, ignore, and deny the doctrine of reprobation, to which nevertheless he owes allegiance. "Before all Israel and the sun," another points out absurd contradictions. Of course he knew that Israel was not there to hear him, and if it could have been, would have cared no more about what he said than the sun.

These ministers have practised a pious fraud with sanctified ingenuity, which has enabled them for years to cheat their own consciences and deceive their innocent flocks. On the communion-table rests the elegant silver and gold service, the consecrated bread and the ruby wine, and under it slinks a slop-jar, to catch the inconvenient but inevitable leakage and dribblings. They have been accustomed to sign "for substance of doctrine."

What can be said of such a state of affairs? In the words of still another subscriber, "When a church so largely ignores and condemns its own

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ewer.

standards, it is time to scrutinize both the church and the standards." There can be no doubt that this feeling of irresponsibility and practice of duplicity exist in other churches as well. It is almost universal. It has appeared, though in another form, among the Methodists. The political jobbing and wire-pulling that those in a position to know assert exists in this great sect is quite as significant as the most startling revelations of Presbyterian insincerity. The shameless adoption of the most glaring political methods which has just come to light in the selection and confirmation of a newly elected Episcopal bishop in Massachusetts sufficiently reveals the state of affairs in this wealthy denomination. "The government of the Church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention." If all this is true, — and it is the assertion of those who themselves practise or have practised that which they now admit, or at least have until now silently acquiesced in, — the defiance penned hundreds of years ago against the bigoted and lying priesthood of a nation that has all but sunk to the level of barbarism, owing chiefly to ecclesiastical domination and tyranny, may aptly be flung in the face of the Protestant clergy of the present time in this enlightened land: —

" Traitor, wilt thou never cease to slander and to lie?  
 You breakfast before mass; you drink before you pray;  
 There is no honor in your heart, no truth in what you say:  
 You cheat your comrade and your Lord, you flatter to betray;  
 Your hatred I despise, your friendship I defy,  
 False to all mankind, and most to God on high." ,

Hypocrisy is the natural outcome of unfounded belief. When men, ruled by custom and society, profess

what they do not believe, and teach what they detest, they abandon all moral principle. No longer honest with themselves, they do not scruple to be dishonest with others. Here is the secret of so many divine pretenders, tricksters, and deceivers. Religion and morality receive more real injury and discredit from hypocrites than from atheists and profligates. As the two in their purity are justly called the bonds of society, so when poisoned and corrupted by fraud, pretence, and affectation, they are the worst of civil curses, and have enabled men to perpetrate most shameful crimes and exercise most cruel tyranny.

Thus far little or nothing has been said of the Roman wing of the great Catholic Church. It is not necessary to devote much space to Roman Catholicism. The creed which it taught in its schools and literature, and the ceremonies which it practised, and the methods which it employed in gaining proselytes and maintaining its members, are the same to-day as yesterday and a thousand years ago. Its principle is the same now that it was then. In reviewing the ancient Church we practically review the modern Roman Catholic church. Remission of sins is for money now as then, though not so open as in the time of Tetzal. The policy of the church is now, and always has been, to keep its members in ignorance. It does not now, and never did, embrace and retain educated men in any considerable number. The educated American of Roman Catholic parentage attends a Protestant church, or none; at any rate, he cares nothing for the faith of his ancestors. I have conversed with many such, and find this true of all. They have come to understand the policy of the church in keeping the people ignorant, and consequently have outgrown it. Few attend the Protestant church; most attend none. They say



their church is little if any worse than others, and that all established religions are largely superstitions; and in this they are right.

As has been said before, the difference between the two wings consists not so much in the actual religious doctrines taught as in the underlying principle. One desires ignorant Christians; the other desires educated Christians. Neither would have people learn or know anything against their faith. One would have its members know only what pertains to Catholic worship, and that, too, in a blind, dull, childlike way; the other desires its members to know everything except that which denies its faith. One believes in non-sectarian common schools; the other insists upon its doctrines being taught with great care and assiduity, and consequently builds the parochial school. Aside from this difference in the standard of education and its direct results, there is no dissimilarity worthy of consideration between the two. Protestantism placed itself years ago on the side of liberty, while Catholicism took its stand with despotism. And yet with Protestantism freedom has had a hearing, not so much because of its teachings, but, on the contrary, in spite of them; and in one sense little credit is due the system. The boy Freedom has simply outgrown its father, and now has full sway.

When all is said against the Roman church, there remains an unfeigned, involuntary admiration for the remarkable policy it has shown. It cannot be summed up better than in the words of the great English historian: —

“It is impossible to deny that the policy of the Church of Rome is the very masterpiece of human wisdom. In truth, nothing but such a polity could, against such assaults, have

borne up such doctrines. The experience of twelve hundred eventful years, the ingenuity and patient care of forty generations of statesmen, have improved that polity to such perfection that among the contrivances which have been devised for deceiving and oppressing mankind, it occupies the highest place. The stronger our conviction that reason and Scripture were decidedly on the side of Protestantism, the greater is the reluctant admiration with which we regard that system of tactics against which reason and Scripture were employed in vain."

The same writer says the Roman church "was great and respected before Saxon had set foot on Briton, before the Frank had crossed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca; and she may still exist in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's." There will always be a great number of ignorant people in this world, and these will for generations be Roman Catholics.

Returning to the Church in general, there is abundant reason for its present status. The peculiar veneration for old ceremonies, forms, and traditions is perfectly natural. Antiquity always calls out more or less reverence. The Church, however, is particularly likely to excite such feelings from its remarkable history. For fifteen hundred years the mighty Catholic Church was believed by all to be directly under the authority and guidance of God, who miraculously interfered to control its destiny, and to render its infallibility unquestionable. The Reformation exploded in a measure this theory, though it was quite general centuries later, indeed even till the present

century. While the Reformation exposed the fallacy of this theory, and protested against its continued adoption, it left a confused feeling that theological doctrines were different from other doctrines. There was apparent hesitation even among the leaders in this great step, and it naturally increased among their followers. This feeling of uncertainty with regard to Scriptural and ecclesiastical infallibility, combined with the influence of public policy, satisfactorily explains the present position of the Christian Church. We have a peculiar awe in contemplation of things that seem beyond our comprehension. When we ourselves grow to understand them, and to appreciate the fact that we alone do understand, while the masses are almost hopelessly buried in ignorance, public policy steps in and suggests that for the ignorant falsehood may be as good as truth, or even better than truth temporarily. Hundreds of the clergy frankly admit this to be their belief, while few indeed have not heard many outside the clergy make the assertion. When the lion associates with the fox, he is ashamed only of the fox, not of his tricks. Names carry so much more to our minds than acts.

There is one other sweeping accusation to be made against the Church, — an accusation, however, of a different character in some respects from others. The Church, as a body corporate, generally secures exemption from taxation. It refuses to give Cæsar his due, though the master, whom it pretends to serve, gracefully paid tribute. It may well be urged, by way of excuse, that the public voluntarily exempts church property from taxation. And yet this excuse is not altogether satisfactory. This privilege given the Church is not as voluntary as it seems; and, indeed, the public are beginning openly to express their dis-

satisfaction with such an extravagant liberality. In at least one State in the Union this exemption from taxation is extended only to aid new and weak societies in gaining a start, and accordingly it is expressly provided that church property above five thousand dollars in value shall be taxed; and in all the States, and in other countries, only that property which is used for church purposes is exempted.

Little could be said against the Church in this respect, were it not for the deliberate dishonesty constantly and systematically practised by societies to avoid taxation. They no sooner have the privilege than they begin to abuse it, and that most shamefully, as an illustration or two will plainly show. It has been said that in one State church property above the value of five thousand dollars is subject to taxation. What is the result? Simply this: that not a church corporation in the whole extent of that enormous and wealthy State admits that it holds property above this limit. In other words, the wealthy churches of that State, without exception, deliberately, wilfully, and systematically practise open falsehood. Few institutions are better able to pay taxes than church societies, and none are so unwilling, and go to greater lengths to avoid taxation. In the very heart of Puritanical New England, a church society has for years openly held property not in use for church purposes exempt from taxation, and that, too, when the newspapers of the Commonwealth have repeatedly exposed and denounced the fraud so disgracefully persisted in. Why, that church, it is said, actually constituted its Sunday-school as a body corporate to hold and use occasionally the property in question, so that it might have some excuse to offer, thus making children an innocent party to its pious fraud.

The exemption so readily claimed and abused by the Church works a palpable injustice. It throws a burden of taxation upon the public, part of whom, from conscientious motives, protest against paying taxes for such purposes, and all of whom have the constitutional assurance that they shall never be taxed to maintain religious worship. If the Church were honest, or even possessed of fair morality, this alone would be enough to cause it to renounce all its extraordinary privilege of exemption. The truth is, the Church is greedy and avaricious in the extreme. She never admits she has her due. Pretending to work ever for her pretended master, she spits as of old in his face. Possessed of untold wealth, the amount of which she scrupulously and laboriously keeps profoundly secret, she persists that she is poor, and lies and cheats, oftentimes foisting her sanctified fraud upon the innocent, to conceal her vast possessions. In general, she is most proud of that for which she should feel the most shame. She is proud of her traditions and the antiquity of her beliefs, proud of her orthodoxy and tyranny, proud of her power, proud of her impotent childish faith, proud of her obstinacy in adhering to old customs and ceremonies confessedly grown useless, proud of her contempt for heresy and her love for bigotry, proud of the eternal vigilance with which she has warded off all attempts at improvement and liberality.

It appears, then, that there is much that is exceedingly discreditable in the Church. We find this religion and Church of respectability open to severe criticism. We discover that mere words and ceremonies, rather than ideas, attract attention. Too many, slaves to form, think themselves religious when they are only bigoted and superstitious. Religion

does not consist in "bowing to the veiled stone." To go much to church, to repeat prayers, to wear short hair, to fast at Lent, and to give alms is neither charity nor purity of heart. We find a class of people who think themselves so holy as to be incapable of doing anything to displease God, and who boast that they have not sinned for years. We find people parading sanctity who are without virtue, honor, and shame. Religion, we learn, has no place in the heart, home, or conversation of hundreds who call themselves pious and who preach piety. It is sad to think of how many Christians it is true that their religion is "to make a noise therewith."

The religion of the modern Church seems almost to inculcate hate rather than love, and fraud rather than honesty. The Church in a way does a vast amount of charity. Millions are yearly contributed to home and foreign missions, and yet there is little love in it all. How many church-members do good personally where they can do good to the very best advantage; namely, in their own street or neighborhood or city? People wish to obtain the credit of virtue, but not to earn it. They take tickets in a moral lottery. They join the church more desirous of seeming virtuous than being good. They wish to be rid of conscience, and so they shift it off into the church. Indulgences are sold in the Protestant, as well as in the Catholic church; indeed the custom is more prevalent, if anything, in the Protestant church. Decent formalism must live even at the expense of earnest helpfulness. Church-membership means simply paying pew-rent.

But with all its faults, is there not something creditable in this stupendous church system? Have we not made progress as the centuries have flown? It is true, indeed, that reforms creep slowest into the

Church. Superstition dies hard. The fact itself shows how little people care for doctrinal religion, after all. While science and the arts make vast strides year by year, religion is almost stationary. People have no time in this world's activity to think of creed and doctrine. Only a small number of men spend even a small part of one day in seven to think of such things. In our world activity we must rest on the seventh day; we cannot worry and fret about dogma and theology. As a matter of fact, we do not. And yet the Church has made much progress during the last century or two. Even the adoption of new and improved methods of building has its effect upon religion. Churches are built in new styles, more convenient and cheerful, and their creeds bend slowly to conform to the new pattern. In this way, indirectly, the Church has slowly but surely tagged on after material progress. It always keeps about so far behind the times. If it lags a little in the early part of a century, it takes a leap forward in the later years. The whole body seems now on the point of a sudden unfolding.

Unitarianism is the leader of church progress at present. To it in a great measure is due the increasing liberal spirit of the day; and yet perhaps in the statement occasion is confounded with cause. The real cause lies rather in the material and intellectual progress of the world. But let Unitarianism have its due. It alone has honestly and boldly thrown down the gauntlet. It absolutely and utterly abandons Christianity in its essence, and seeks Christ rather. Its idea is a life like that of Christ, rather than a Christian life. The latter comes from the old orthodox, infallible Bible; the former, from that grand old world history, the Bible. The teaching of this sect is

chiefly moral. One of its ministers comes to mind, — a simple, high-souled man, the burden of whose sermons is noble, true living. Without what are commonly called the graces of oratory, but plain and simple and homely in speech and manner, not eager to create a sensation, scorning show and studied effect, calcium lights and rhetorical mannerisms, Sunday after Sunday in his plain, simple way he draws out the sweetest and purest things in life. I shall never forget the thrill of pleasure I experienced one morning in his church. It was by chance communion Sunday. After the sermon he quietly reminded the congregation that it was communion Sunday, and added the hope that all members of his own society and of “all societies in this city and elsewhere, yes, and members of none, are cordially invited.” There is in this sect a great possibility. It is a suggestion of a magnificent future, a symptom of a religious revolution, not to be accomplished in a day or a generation or a century, but sure to come with more widely extended education. The hope of the world rests on education. A schoolhouse is a temple indeed. This little sect in mind is a germ soon to attain a mighty growth, a leaven to leaven the loaf.

I cannot refrain from offering in this connection words recently spoken by the Unitarian clergyman, above referred to: —

“As Unitarians, what assurances we have that we are on the right religious track! All the real thinking of the time in all the other churches is right along our line. But I want the liberal religious life of the future to be built on lines of freedom, and not to be taken, as it were, ‘on the sly.’ The men in all the other churches who are preaching the same things for which we have been contending so long, are doing so with the startling effect of inconsistency. The trouble is



that a great deal of this broad Christianity of Christ is being taught in churches which profess to stand for something else. . . . The kingdom of God is not coming by organization nor big conferences. What we need to-day is to take a stronger hold on simple religion. In our reaction against the false pieties of other churches, we must not grow weak in our own piety."

Religion is a superstition just as long as ministers of the Gospel exercise peculiar and arbitrary power by virtue of their profession alone. We shall have religious emancipation just as soon as people realize that the minister is no longer priest and prophet, in whom resides especial intelligence, but is worthy of respect and love only as he is a true man, working, not for a peculiar system of theology, but for whatever adds to real, sound, practical virtue, and enables people to stand before their friends and the world honest, earnest, noble men. This is what Christ stands for, and I think it is what every great reformer has taught each in his own field. A man is worth just what those things are worth about which he busies himself.

The liberal spirit all down the line is seeking a moral life. Orthodox faith and doctrinal theology are becoming of less and less importance to educated minds. Imposition and ignorance will not last forever. When the service of God becomes a senseless mummery, a mere thing of words and ceremonies, — in short, as a great writer has said, when the Church from being the world's guide has come to be the world's scandal, fearless men will rise, confident in truth and justice, and denounce it and all its minions as a sham and an imposition. This has been done once, and will be done again. The most hopeful sign of the present is that many from the Church itself

stand, in words at least, in open opposition to ecclesiastical thralldom and doctrine. The physician, experimenting on his own person with his remedies, finds that they are useless, or even absurd and harmful, and frankly says so. Progressive men will thank him even for this, though he continue to dose his patients with the old pills, for they realize that it is but another short step to complete emancipation.

We are in a transition period at present. During such times there is always more or less disingenuousness. Hypocrisy flourishes. Everything has an unnatural ring, and seems unreal. People waver and hesitate to take a bold stand on disputed points, and are unwilling to commit themselves until there is more certainty in the final issue. But the potent fact remains, that this generation finds all the progressive sects — that is, the general Church — inclining more and more to liberality in teaching and belief. The Church does not require that its proselytes possess profound knowledge of theology or metaphysics, or even have a passing knowledge of its individual creeds. The creeds are mere forms, and are so regarded by their subscribers. It asks rather that men shall be honest and sincere, that they shall be true to the light which they have, and fearless and untiring in worldly good. It recognizes that conscience is no privilege of the great, or of those in vestments; that kindness and generosity have little to do with theology. Now duty becomes a study and a practice, and no longer a mere name. Finally, this generation in a great measure appreciates the fact that there is no such absolute revealed connection between any one priesthood, or system of faith, and true religion, the true God, as to cut off all or any of the other forms. People recognize that priesthods and churches are

their own creation and their servants. They know that church government, forms of worship, and ecclesiastical ceremonies are not matters of religious faith, but that they are matters of public policy, varying, just as political government varies, to suit public emergency, or as rules of etiquette conform to the taste and requirements of society. Such rules and forms are framed, not from tradition, but from general expediency.

The priesthood are permitted in a measure, it is true, to settle these forms as they please, but really they possess only a semblance of power. For a time they may take the reins into their own hands; but it is only because the people care little about their doings anyway, not even enough to inquire what they are, so long as they occasion no sweeping change and establish no radical regulations. When such a measure is adopted, or when by gradual increments considerable power is gained, and odious regulation attempted, then the people simply refuse to be influenced, church receipts fall off, and membership wanes; and finally the clergy get together and adopt new rules and regulations, creeds and doctrines, more in harmony with the existing opinion of the laity. The past year or two actually reveals the practical working of this principle.

For five hundred years more or less the Church has not dared to assert temporal authority. It always has had, however, and under its present constitution it always will have, a desire for such power so long as it is earnest and honest. But withal displaying considerable intolerance and narrowness, it has been, on the whole, a beneficial institution of the highest order, and may now be rendered such, — softening the manners, refining the habits, and comforting the sorrows

of humanity. He who does not have a kind thought and a cheering word for it is an ingrate, for it has in part enabled him to be what he is. If it display incapacity to adapt itself to the progress of civilization, it will simply be swept away, like the similar institutions of the past, and be numbered among the relics of religious faith. But if such a change ever be consummated, — and judging from the history of the past, there is no reason to expect anything else, — the essence of true religion and the elements of noble manhood will still survive, of which the highest manifestation is love for others.

## V.

## DOGMA.

“But still my human hands are weak  
 To hold your iron creeds ;  
 Against the words ye bid me speak  
 My heart within me pleads.

“I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground  
 Ye tread with boldness shod ;  
 I dare not fix with mete and bound  
 The love and power of God.”

EVERY person knows, or thinks he knows, more about certain things than any other person. People of similar views on particular subjects get together and form sects or parties, and give out their theories as indisputable axioms. I suppose this will be so as long as the human race exists. The only change to be expected is with reference to the subjects concerning which people form decided opinions. Thus, in the political sphere, slavery was once the all-absorbing subject of dispute, but now it has yielded to other questions, which in turn will give place to still others.

Of all the subjects concerning which civilized people have held divided opinions of varying character, none will compare with that of the Christian religion. For their belief Christians have sacrificed everything, — their peace and prosperity, their homes, their wives, and their children. The course of Christian progress,

marked it is true with countless monuments of lasting benefit to the human race, and adorned with priceless treasures of education and culture, is yet stained to crimson with the blood of innumerable sacrifices, some of which form the most awful tales human history relates. Nothing can be worse than religious tyranny. Tyranny, however, is never possible but in the ignorance of subjects. It attacks the vital part of the masses; it exercises its awful sway, owing to the weaknesses of the multitudes. In religion it is not satisfied with this world, but boldly strides into the next; it chains the body on earth, and delivers the soul bound in eternity.

It is very common to find people that are well educated and practical in the general affairs and concerns of life who yet reveal a shallowness of mind and exhibit a pettiness of sentiment, lack of moderation, and love of bigotry in religious matters that is fairly astonishing, and that reflects little credit upon the faith which they profess. They manifest the strangest, most unreasonable zeal over the one thing of all upon which they have expended the least thought, and for which they really care little or nothing. Born and bred to certain theological views, they cannot conceive of others; and the heat of unreasoning discussion calls out excessive zeal. Dean Swift's comical analyzation of zeal is suggestive. He says it proceeded from a notion to a word, and then in a hot summer ripened into a tangible substance.

"It is the infamous strength, perversity, and stubbornness of the devil," says the Church, when men reject her absurdities. The creed and confession of bigotry is simply this: "I am right, and you are wrong. I will force you to be right. When you are strong, you ought to tolerate me, because I am right, and it

is your duty to listen to truth ; but when I am strong, I shall persecute you, because you are wrong, and it is my duty to correct error." Says George III. : "The times certainly require the concurrence of all who wish to prevent anarchy. I have no wish but the prosperity of my own dominions ; therefore I must look upon all who do not heartily assist me as bad men as well as bad subjects." He wished nothing but good ; therefore all who disregarded his wishes were traitors, and deserved to be hanged. Passion and conceit make up for defects in logic. Remembering that the Church has been the prize of religious quarrels, it is easy to find reason for especial zeal and intolerance among the clergy.

The Christian Church has never enjoyed a greater latitude of faith and practice than at its very beginning ; and this is not saying much. Sects that scarcely manage to exist at all and maintain their own against powerful opposition have enough to occupy their attention without internal contention, to say the least. And yet it is surprising how quickly dissension sprang up among the early Christians, even before the organization could fairly be called a church. Christ himself always evaded the attempts of the Jewish and Pagan priesthood to narrow him down to a creed, or any concise statement of his belief ; and as the Scriptures stand to-day, there is scarcely a word which is attributed to Christ that can be called narrow and dogmatic. On the contrary, when we think but a moment, many instances of unexpected liberality of sentiment and teaching come to mind, — as, for instance, his definition of "neighbor" and his ready pen-picture of God dividing the children of men to the right and the left hand according to their good deeds, and assigning to each due reward or deserved

punishment. And in every instance where dogmatic construction of his words has entered in, it will be found on examination that that particular expression or idea is but accessory and incidental, and by no means the central and essential thought.

The doctrines of heaven and hell, which Christian theology has elaborately drawn out, are woven from the merest hints and suggestions of Christ. The horrors of hell are rather Christian than Christ's. It would be difficult to ascribe to him such sentiments; and from words which are authoritatively given as his own the Christian idea of heaven seems to have been very distasteful to him, and he is called upon again and again to deny the statements and rebuke the discussions of his followers, who pictured to their minds a real physical heavenly kingdom, with streets of gold; and cities of unheard-of magnificence, and thrones of surpassing splendor. Christ was continually rebuking his followers and people in general for their persistent regard of the letter at the expense of the spirit. The Church from its very foundation to this moment has always and continually erred right at this point, often with a blind stubbornness seemingly born of the devil himself.

It did not take long for dogma to creep into Christian belief and practice. We find in the holy book itself Paul withstanding Peter to the face on account of his doctrine. We detect frequent mention of heated and bitter discussion among the early disciples in the very presence and hearing of Christ. There is nothing unnatural in this. We have but to go back, each in his own district, to the last political campaign to understand in a measure the early Christian disputes; or, better yet, to recall the scenes in the American Board, or the Andover heresy. The Christians cou-



sidered every one a heretic and a heathen who did not accept their faith, and their priests encouraged the practice. The priests were soon ready to condemn any layman of poor estate who pretended to have any original ideas on religious questions. Such assumption on the part of the uninitiated and unconsecrated is always very offensive to the ecclesiastical order, and is promptly resented. The usurpation of Christ's teaching by dogmatic Christianity was speedy. In place of simple, quiet, home worship came the church, with its candles and ceremonies; in place of secret prayer, public supplication; in place of freedom of belief, enforced Christianity; instead of honest and heartfelt moral fervor, fixed ceremonies and responses: the heart is supplanted by church discipline.

The primitive Christians soon acquired a perfect abhorrence of anything Pagan. Pagan spectacles and festivals they were forbidden to attend or witness. The marriage of their Pagan friends they might not solemnize; for even marriage itself was a curse, a necessary evil, tolerated at all only because it seemed necessary. From their death-sacrifices and burial rites they scrupulously absented themselves. The rigorous discipline of the church extended to the minutest details, — to the care of the beard, the gait, the ornaments of dress, and manner of speech. The conduct of marriage and the sexual relation was severely scrutinized and vigilantly guarded. The rules and regulations adopted with regard to the latter seem incredible, if considered a moment seriously. In short, before a century had passed after the death of Christ, we find existing among his successors almost as much bigotry and intolerance as the Church has ever shown, even in the height of its power.

A century later the election of successors to the

apostles was attended with all the disgraceful scenes, selfish and petty passions, treachery and dissimulation, deeply hidden conspiracy and open corruption, and but too often with the public violence, which characterized the general political changes of the times. The Church in the East had already become an ecclesiastical prize, and the spoils were doled out in a manner that would raise the blush on the cheek of a modern political manager. The holy presbyter seeking preferment would promise to share the treasures of the Church with his accomplices and constituents. There were plenty of Judases who were enabled to live in luxury and idleness by a frequent application to the bag, and to gain advancement and honor by a sanctified betrayal of the Church.

The early Church did not gain such power in the West as quickly as in the East. Rome was a missionary field, the last of the early Church. But soon it became the great centre of the system. Indeed, on the accession of Diocletian, in 284, Christianity had become well established, and many churches were constantly maintained, and creditable houses of worship erected. But Christian progress in the West received a severe blow during the reign of Diocletian. Then it was that the catacombs became the home of the faithful during this last and severe persecution. Meanwhile in the East the Church was daily gaining strength and rapidly growing powerful, gathering corruption, dissension, and crime with increasing power. Before the end of the third century the Christian priestcraft had become literally a curse, so that on the accession of Constantine, the quasi-Christian, semi-converted by the sign of the cross in the heavens, it became necessary to issue edicts forbidding the rich from taking orders; for ecclesiastics were

exempted from public and private service and office, and personal taxes and contributions. Other edicts were also issued forbidding bishops to admit new ecclesiastics before vacancies should arise from the death of incumbents. The Church had an endless procession of priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolytes, exorcists, readers, singers, and doorkeepers, and the tawdry pomp of religious worship assumed the proportions of a wealthy organization.

After Constantine granted to his subjects the unrestricted privilege of bequeathing their possessions to the Church, ecclesiastical revenues became princely. Constantine set the example by his own liberality. Hundreds, after dissolute lives, left all their fortune to the Church in hope of divine favor. The Church early guarded against the people. All its doings were mysterious and profoundly secret. Scandals were checked early, corruption concealed, and crime quickly covered over. The bishops enjoyed the privilege of trial only by their peers in all civil as well as criminal cases, and even in capital accusation. Civil causes brought by or against the ecclesiastical order in general were never heard by any secular tribunal. The disgrace of public trial was kindly withheld. The Pagan privilege of the sanctuary was revived among the Christians; and so the lives and possessions of desirable proselytes might easily be protected by the influence of the bishop. The bishop was the censor of morals and faith. The Church bound and loosed on earth with supreme authority. After sufficient admonition, the bishops gave up the stubborn to the abhorrence of earth and heaven, barred from the name of Christian, the privilege of worship, and the hope of heaven. The faithful are exhorted to shun the society of sinners, to deny them food, to withhold

the common courtesies and kindnesses of society, and even to refuse decent rites of burial. When we remember that this was before the fifth century, all cause of wonder at the power exercised by the Roman church in the tenth and fifteenth centuries vanishes.

The power of the Christian Church was long concentrated in the East. After the conversion of Constantine, a conversion political rather than religious, the Christians had full sway. A very brief account of the prosperity of the cause may well be given. Allusion has been made to the general condition of the Church during the rule of Constantine. The famous Milan Decree, in 313, had made Christianity the state religion of the great Roman Empire, whose seat was now moved to Constantinople. In 325 we have the great Nicean Council, which denounced Arianism and adopted what is to this day known as the Nicean Creed.

Fifty years later witnessed a strange event. Barbarian Goths, dwelling on the banks of the Danube, who had repeatedly made war against the Empire, now humbly begged permission to settle in Thrace and become suppliant Roman subjects. This boon was granted on a peculiar condition; namely, that all accept Christianity and be baptized in the faith, giving their children as hostages. This unique event is a curious but fruitful commentary on the potency of Christian authority at the time. Soon we find the Vandals posing as Christians in Africa. Then came the conquest of Africa by Justinian, in the early part of the sixth century. Again we have a good commentary on Christian power. Who is it that advocates the contest, and spurs on the hesitating emperor? A Christian bishop, who says: "It is the will of heaven that you abandon not your holy enterprises for the

deliverance of the African church. The God of battles shall march before your standards, and scatter your enemies who are the enemies of his Son." For the African church was Arian in creed, and Arianism was declared heresy by the Nicean Council.

Italy was next reconquered, having been overrun by the Goths. Reverses followed in quick succession, until finally we find the Persians glorying in triumph over the Christian Empire under Heraclius, early in the seventh century. Then the Saracens appear on the scene, and, after a series of triumphs continuing for several centuries, we find Christianity in the East changed from a shining light to a dying ember.

But in the mean time among the barbarians of the West, the Teutonic races, soul of modern civilization, the light of the Christian religion was enkindled. These rough, hearty people embraced the faith with no half-hearted ardor. Neither they nor their descendants thus far have ever been content with half-way courses. Even in the fifth century Christian bishops found the powerful Clovis a whole-souled convert, after their god gave him victory over his enemies. These people were converted by tribes. When they were losing in battle and had called upon their own gods in vain, at the advice of some Christian priest they called upon the Christian god for aid, promising him allegiance if he gave them victory. At Rome the Christians, who as early as the fifth century had power to cause the suspension of the gladiatorial games, were busily engaged in extending their faith and perfecting their system. It was during these centuries before the Middle Ages that the Roman church laid the foundations of that remarkable system of church polity which has in modern times excited the unfeigned admiration of the civilized world.

But it is the practical side of dogmatism which is intended to be emphasized here particularly. What has religious dogma actually done as practised by Christians of all ages? This is the question with which I shall concern myself chiefly at present. If there is any especial devil in this world, it is religious dogma. Like evil spirits in general, it almost always allies itself with ignorance. Learned dunces form one of its chosen fields. Knowledge often consists in the adoption of new prejudices in place of old ones. Wherever and whenever dogmatism flourishes, sour, long-drawn faces, and severe, are to be found. It is accompanied with fiendish cruelties. Hard, uncompromising characters abound, steeped in a cruel, morose selfishness. Another phase which it commonly assumes manifests itself in the drawling, whining voice, which, carried to its legitimate extreme, results in the chatter and gibber of fools and the yells of madmen. We find Christians fasting from food and drink, the while greedy for bribes and bloodshed. We find Christians cursing innocent amusements, who rejoice and give thanks for massacres. We find Christians burning witches and hanging heretics, who wink at crime and immorality. We find them teaching of the love and kindness of God, in terms, withal, of most violent hatred and revolting cruelty. We find Christians preaching against the outward show, whose inner man is a dwarfed and deformed monster; against hypocrisy, against untruthfulness, folly, and crime, whose lives are a sham and a delusion and a lie. Religion may be a beautiful star of light and guidance, or again it may be a star like that in the Revelation, which fell from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, upon the fountains and rivers, and changed them into wormwood.

During the first four centuries, according to our present reckoning, we find few outrages and massacres perpetrated by the Christians. They themselves rather were the parties to suffer. They were then the weaker party. And it cannot be disputed that they were at different times shamefully persecuted; but it must be admitted that this treatment they often brought upon themselves. Persecution and violence were often reluctantly practised by the Pagans against them. A government whose authority is denied and whose representatives are cursed and ignored, is obliged to resort to violent means in asserting its power and maintaining its dominion over such refractory classes, be they right or wrong in theory. Kings and governors cannot tolerate what will not tolerate them. Many anarchists and nihilists to-day are thoroughly honest in their belief and practice, and other generations may come to consider their ideas right; but still we think they are wrong, at least in method, and so the power of government is exerted against them, and their liberty is restrained when they resort to violent demonstrations, and their lives taken when they defy all law and order, and attempt openly to overthrow existing government. It would not be a difficult thing to find very many educated people who openly advocate the total extermination of anarchists and nihilists, whether they practise violence or simply teach their peculiar doctrines, by any and every effectual means. This is but the same feeling which prompted the early persecutions.

If we cannot find during the early centuries the numerous atrocities of subsequent generations, at least it is not because the spirit is wanting; and we shall not have to wander far from the Scripture itself — infallible, holy revelation — to find the temper

of Christianity. The writings in the New Testament have been proved, beyond question, to cover a period, roughly speaking, of from three to ten centuries. It is now clear that much that was supposed to have been written during the first century really belongs to much later periods. A few quotations will serve to reveal the spirit of the holy fathers during these years. Early in the new dispensation we have the war-cry sounded. It is well that the herald go before, though strange that good people have so completely failed to hear his proclamation. Like the stupid lamb in the fable, they cannot tell the wolf from the master.

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I come not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.”

The bigot overstepped himself this time ; he need surely not have included the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the category, for they could well answer for themselves. These words are put into the mouth of Christ ; but it is needless to suggest that in all probability they are not his at all. Christ may well have taught that right is above family considerations ; but few people will believe that he considered it any part of his mission to foster human hatred and dissension. These early teachers, like their modern brethren, used to preach many things that Christ never dreamed of, and they had the same felicitous way of putting their doctrines into the mouth of Christ that their successors have had down to the present day. Doubtless, they thought people would deem their coin of more value if they could in



some way stamp the image of Christ upon it; and, like their successors, they judged rightly. What would people care for the thunders of the American Board, — they do not any longer, — did it not conspicuously display the seals, wafers, and stamp of God's authority and jurisdiction? Until within a few years the Church had convinced the common people that its doctrines were the infallible word of God, and they gave implicit credence though the teachings were worthy of the devil; and it must be admitted that a good deal of this spirit exists to-day.

“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

This is a glorious Christian refrain, — a true, holy, and sanctified *Laus Domini*. It occurs again and again, like certain Episcopal responses, and in a manner similar to the interjections of the Greek chorus in high tragedy. Now the curtain rises upon a wedding feast, and we see among the motley throng of guests a man which hath not on a wedding garment. Scarcely has the eye rested upon him, and the mind shrewdly conjectured that the impudent villain is to play a prominent part, when in swaggers the king, with the typical stage strut, and demands, as we knew he would, how the poor rascal dare appear in every-day clothes. And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, “Bind him hand and foot and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.” “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” sings the chorus: “for many are called, but few are chosen.”

Again, the scene opens upon the Rialto, as it were, — for Christ always took his stories from the events nearest at hand, — and we see the wise householder, money-lender, with sharp eyes, driving his last bargains before setting out upon his vacation trip. He doles out money to his hangers-on in safe and judicious proportions, and, waving his hand, seizes his staff and is off. When he comes back at the end of the season, he speedily looks to his loans. The usurers bring their principal and interest, and count it off into his hands. But among them sneaks in a miser, — a miserable, disreputable old Jew, bare-footed and bareheaded, old and not venerable, mean of appearance and character, holding in his dirty hand a single talent, the same he had received. The banker reproves his meanness, and points a moral. “Yes, that’s so,” chimes in the chorus. “Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The common method of preaching, with some of the ideas of Christ as groundwork, is well illustrated in the following: —

“And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he did not follow us, and we forbade him, because he would not follow us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in my name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm

dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for you to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Quite clearly the writer intended this for a sermon on the respect and support due to himself and his calling. He naturally waxes warm when he thinks of offences committed against his order, maybe against himself, and scratches out a pretty plain warning. One is reminded of a custom among some of the clergy nowadays, who always announce a collection with the contemptible words, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." It has always been customary among the Christians to follow fulsome praise of the goodness and mercy of their Lord with vivid descriptions of his wrath. There is no better proof of the proposition that men created gods, rather than gods men, than the fact that gods are always magnified human beings. The Christian god acts just like a human father. He persuades, coaxes, and wheedles his children; and then, when they are obstinate, gets angry, grows red in the face, talks loud, stamps his foot, and shows the stick.

Another quotation plainly discloses itself to be a garbled and distorted discourse, founded upon the Sermon on the Mount, and the story of the rich youth, which, on the other hand, on their face bear the stamp of authenticity:—

"Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed

are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven, for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers of the false prophets."

Here is a perfect example of the dogmatism of the early saints. They included some simple words or ideas of Christ in their sermons, first adapting them to suit their own narrow views, and then held the whole discourse out to the public as that of Christ. Everybody knows that to-day the commentator in general is looked upon with a kind of pitying contempt. How much more contempt ought the ancient commentator to bear! And this particular one was a narrow, dogmatic churl. Christ, according to the authority of another story, said it was hard for a rich man to merit the kingdom of heaven, — not that none did, or that any did not; and this bigot cries universal vengeance upon them all, and even upon those who are so fortunate as to enjoy sufficient food, and those who are cheerful and happy. This is Christianity of all times, except, perhaps, that of this generation. Riches, comforts, and pleasures are sin. This is an excellent example of Christian dogma; but we find many other instances just as sweeping, and expressed in more striking language: —

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

"And to you who are in trouble, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty

angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power."

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

"He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he has not believed on the only begotten Son of God."

"And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people."

"If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Tidings of joy, indeed! No wonder it raised the exclamation to the lips of one whose whole soul revolted at the idea of such cruel, godless, hellish malice and hate. But the greatest good news, the best tidings of joy, is to be found in Revelation, — God's promise to the faithful revealed to his sainted vessel. There will be some joyful spectacles for the delectation of saints: —

"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain."

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire."

"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."

"But the fearful and unbelieving, the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all

liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

To cap the climax, the sainted writer, prophetic priest, has given us a little kindly warning:—

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Fitting end to the concluding book of the new dispensation! Glorious and sufficient commentary on the bigoted, dogmatic, and fanatical side of Christianity!

The story for several centuries later is broken and in a great degree unintelligible. All that can safely be said is that the system was slowly but surely gaining strength, rarely losing ground once gone over. This must have been an active period for the new faith, otherwise it is impossible to account for the unprecedented authority, temporal as well as spiritual, of which we find the Church possessed in the Middle Ages. The seed was being sown in that part of Europe which is now France, Germany, and Austria, which was later to spring up and yield a rich harvest. Even to England and Ireland did the zealous Christians penetrate, and they were well received and repaid for their labor.

These Teutonic barbarians possessed a good deal of common-sense, too, for we learn that the Council of Whitby, which was called to settle a dispute over the time for holding a mere ceremony, was opened with the sagacious explanation of its purpose, that as they

all expected the same kingdom of heaven, they ought not to differ in the celebration of the divine mysteries. And in deciding the quarrel, according to the Venerable Bede, the crafty king showed as much sense of a kind as he did in stating the desirability of a settlement. When it was suggested by the Roman party that Saint Peter had the keys to heaven, he quickly reached his conclusion: "He being the doorkeeper, I will in all things obey his decrees, lest when I come to the gates of the kingdom of heaven there be none to open them." Not always was so much discretion shown by the barbarians. Little real reason or judgment controlled these conversions. They merely substituted one superstition for another; for, even if true, Christianity was still a superstition to their untutored minds, which embraced the Christian god only because he seemed to give them victory which their own denied, or because he seemed to grant a protection which their own withheld.

These simple, ignorant worshippers furnished excellent material for the more crafty and subtle Roman priests to work upon in succeeding centuries. It is true, indeed, that the Church made herself a child to prattle with her children, the simple Teutons, and to lisp the pretty legend in their willing ears. Says Guizot: "To dazzle the senses of the barbarians and work upon their imagination, she increased wonderfully the number, pomp, and variety of her religious ceremonies. She converted them by grand spectacles."

Before we pass to the events of the Middle Ages, it may be well to consider a moment one other establishment of early Christianity, — an institution which has been a curse in many ways to civilization, but which, like all other evils, has been a source of many

great benefits. I refer to the institution of Monasticism. The natural and immediate result of one of the most important teachings of Christianity, it spread like wildfire wherever practised. At all times, from the third century down through the Middle Ages, we find a horde of Christian paupers dragging at the skirts of civilization and clogging the onward march of human progress. The practice was known long before Christianity, but was never before so widespread. The number of hermits in a great portion of Egypt equalled the population of the cities, according to the eminent historian, Lecky. The fanatic is the natural companion of the bigot. Intolerance, bigotry, and fanaticism are all stem of the same root.

These poor, miserable hermits abandoned their families and friends, believing that by such unworthy self-denial and cruelty, and by continual self-torture and torment, they might win heaven. They dwelt in tombs or in wells, in swamps and caves, lying upon thorny underbrush or on solid rock in abandoned quarries, unwashed, ill-clad, without decent food or suitable drink, hating themselves and the world, and heartily scorned in turn by all reasonable men. Thousands of these worthless paupers swarmed in the East, a curse to themselves and to others. Even the monks gathered together in the monasteries did vastly more harm by their doctrine of passive obedience than would suffice to counterbalance the benefits which they conferred as teachers and copyists. Practically speaking, the whole system, aside from the incidental aid and relief it afforded to travellers and to the sick who chanced to fall across its path, was a complete and ignominious failure, and ultimately a curse to civilization. With this, we hasten to the events of the Middle Ages.



First, then, we find the Crusades. Beginning with the end of the eleventh century, a series of expeditions was undertaken by Christian kings at the instigation of the clergy, which lasted nearly two centuries, — a most bitter and sanguinary conquest, long and continuously maintained. The object of these formidable military expeditions was the rescue of sacred Palestine from Mohammedan profanation. These stupendous undertakings open up a period of religious fanaticism, a period of superstitious religious zeal, lasting for centuries, and running down in direct and uninterrupted sequence to the beginning of the present century.

The very first expedition was the result of the crafty and treacherous plans of unscrupulous bishops, who cared infinitely more for their own glory than for that of their god. Upon deliberation it was decided to concentrate all the Christian influence upon the fiery, warm-hearted, flaxen-haired Franks, because it was shrewdly conjectured that they would quickest catch the flame. Great preparations were made. Councils were called, and the question was well aired. Finally, a fiery, courageous monk lighted the torch and roused thousands of hearers by his fierce invective, his piteous groans and sobs, his piercing shrieks and doleful howls, to the highest pitch of excitement, so that they returned sob for sob, shriek for shriek, and declared themselves ready to go anywhere or do anything, if it were only pointed out. And the occasion did not want for one to make the most of it. The Pope himself was there to seize the opportunity. He declared that the Christian Church had placed its hope in their courage, that God would give them victory and reward them with manifold returns. When the frenzy of the throng was all but uncontrollable, concluding, he said : —

“ If you must have blood, bathe your hands in the blood of infidels. I speak to you with harshness, because my ministry obliges me to do so; soldiers of hell, become soldiers of the living God! When Jesus Christ summons you to his defence, let no base affection detain you in your homes. See nothing but the shame and evils of the Christians, listen to nothing but the groans of Jerusalem, and remember well what the Lord has said to you : ‘ He that loves his father and his mother more than me is not worthy of me : whoever will abandon his house, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children, or his inheritance, for the sake of my name, shall be recompensed a hundred-fold, and possess life eternal.’ ”

The cursed expedition started, with signs from heaven and prodigies. The graves gave up their dead, and saints and martyrs long buried appeared once more on earth.

A great pyramid of bones told the fate of one division; and Peter the Hermit, either the prime instigator or the innocent tool of unscrupulous men, turns up cursing as brigands and cutthroats the very band he had worked so hard to collect. The other division was victorious, capturing Jerusalem itself and putting to death in cold blood, in slaughter lasting seven days, thousands upon thousands of human beings. We again find Peter the Hermit, this time praising God for victory!

But it is not to the purpose to follow these events in detail. The later Crusades were like the first. History relates many sad tales, but none sadder and withal more instructive than the lamentable story of the Crusades. Affecting indeed is the piteous appeal for justice of the poor men, whose only fault was their credulity, who had given their all for their god, and now sought his aid and mercy; lamentable their awakening to the deception and the uselessness of

prayer. A thousand times more affecting is the fate of that great band of little children, weary and foot-sore from an endless journey that had been promised but for a day. The Children's Crusade is the saddest event in human history.

Never before had the world been so drenched in blood, never were such cruelties of more than barbaric ferocity committed, never were life and property so uncertain and of such little value. The untutored people of western Europe were simply crazed by the priesthood, and fairly lost all judgment and reason in the single thought of redeeming the honor and glory of their god. Ignorant minds, worked upon by crafty and designing men, soon became mere tools. The religious excitement of the rough, hardy men of these ages was so great as to induce a constant state of ferment. The very atmosphere seemed tainted and heavy, and to carry infection and contagion. Europe was visited with a general epidemic, a species of human *rabies*. By day men stood in the fields almost in stupor, buried in religious emotion, unmindful of work or pleasure, and dull with sense of guilt; they crept off alone to ponder over the words of their priests; by night they lay awake thinking of their sin. Such intense feeling must have an outlet, or it will develop into general madness. I seriously question whether the Crusades themselves were not the direct result of literal, temporary insanity and madness on the part of thousands of the participants. People were so worked up that they must act or rave. Fortunate was it that such an opening was found to relieve the mental pressure; and this fearful state was brought about by the untiring zeal of a few ignorant, uncompromising, dogmatic priests, who were as utterly incapable of controlling the frenzy and guiding

the expedition in which it culminated, as they were irresponsible and reckless in their methods of creating such excitement, and unscrupulous and treacherous in their desertion from the cause once fairly undertaken.

Another result of dogmatism, indirect, if not direct, was the utterly worthless and contemptible discussions and learning of the schoolmen. The statement at first sight may seem far-fetched; but had the schoolmen not been bound up in their dogmatic ideas of God, and thoroughly persuaded of the certainty and reality of their peculiar fundamental doctrines, they could never have drifted off into such a senseless tangle of absurdities. Had they not simply accepted the theological views of the Church, they would never have attempted to investigate the side subtleties of metaphysical reasoning on them. Had they questioned the very existence of angels, they would never have asked how many could sit on the head of a pin, if, indeed, they had lived long enough fairly to put the question. If they had sought to prove that the bread and wine of service were the real flesh and blood of Christ, they would never have discussed the nature and necessity of the change. But they were too bigoted to doubt the reality of the things which they discussed, and so intolerant were they that it would have gone hard with any that had dared to suggest a doubt to them. As hinted above, they themselves even might not have lived long enough to put the question.

Taking another step, we come to the persecution of the Albigenses. The Crusades looked after infidel and heathen, now it is the heretics' turn to suffer. Innocent III. receives a command from his god to eradicate heresy; the command, it is supposed, being accompanied with a definition of the word "heresy."

This definition includes the poor Albigenses, and so they have to suffer. An innocent, peaceful, and industrious people are literally swept out of existence, and a quiet, fruitful land devastated. Said a noble officer, in reply to a question as to how heretics were to be distinguished from the faithful: "Kill them all; the Lord will know his own." And all were killed.

Heresy must be kept down: this is the command; and a novel device was hit upon to accomplish the desired result, — the Inquisition, an invention which it must be admitted well served its purpose for several centuries. Queen Isabella did her duty as best she could, and hers is the reward. "In the love of Christ and his Maid Mother, I have caused great misery. I have depopulated towns and districts, provinces and kingdoms." And who will say this is not the command of Christianity? If any reproach is to be laid at the door of dogma, it can only be a reproach for having done its duty, and having done it well. Its victims are simply innumerable; its horrors can only be imagined, if, indeed, the imagination of this century can picture such cruelties. One who has not actually seen the instruments of torture in daily use at this time cannot even imagine the awful persecution. Words scarcely have any meaning when applied to this scourge. The rack, the thumbscrew, stocks, caschilaws, lang irons, the boot, pinniwinkles, iron gauntlets, and the Skevington's daughter are all terms that suggest little if any meaning to the modern mind; and still these fearful practices were all in the name of Christianity, and were actually going on little more than three centuries ago. This was for the sake of Christ, who besought men to be like little children, and whose only dogma was love.

The Jesuits, perhaps, developed the Inquisition to the highest pitch of refinement and efficacy. Reference has been made to them in the opening chapter, and further remarks are not necessary here. This is a Christian institution which has cast a reproach upon mankind. When men of to-day wish to denounce an intolerant and bigoted person, when they seek to apply an epithet that will sting and cut, and to cast a reproach that will rankle, they call him a Jesuit.

St. Bartholomew's Day marks another stage in dogmatism. An unprincipled and dissolute courtesan was without doubt the prime instigator of this horrible deed, and yet she merely played into the hands of the Church; and the deed was hailed with delight by the Church at Rome, at that time undoubtedly the prevailing expression of Christianity. It is one of those peculiar facts frequent in history, that the Protestants of England and elsewhere stood horrified at this massacre, and denounced it in unsparing terms as soon as they realized its enormity, even declaring that it was the most horrible crime that had been perpetrated since the crucifixion of Christ. Yet a little while, and we find these same Protestants just as intolerant, just as bigoted, just as cruel. It makes a wonderful difference in these questions whose ox is gored.

Protestantism was at this time but in its infancy. The Protestants in Scotland, only a little later, practised just as cruel tortures as the Catholics ever did. In Scotland they burned witches and heretics, put them to the rack and tortured them to death; yes, that disgrace of Christian witch-burning attaches itself even to this land of liberty. The Church teaches love and justice, we say. It is true; but it also teaches crime and cruelty. It sets an example of love; but its example of hate is a hundredfold more striking.

It teaches humility; is it humble? It teaches love; is it charitable? On the contrary, it is but too often proud of its past, Roman and Protestant alike, proud of its bigotry, proud of its persecution. Neither sect seeks to atone for its errors; each seeks rather to conceal them, and at times openly parades its intolerance. The crimes perpetrated by the Scotch kirk fully equal in atrocity, if not in number, those perpetrated in any quarter by the Roman church. The intolerance and pride and bigotry of the one sect is fully as great as that of the other. We may well read some of the sentiments of these Scotch bigots. I take them at random as they fall to my hands.

“Suspect that which pleaseth the senses. . . . He that is full and hath enough to make him fuller, will easily deny God and be exalted against him; his table shall be a snare to his body and a snare to his soul. . . . If God loved riches well, do you think he would give them so liberally and heap them upon some base covetous wretch. . . . The world is a dangerous thing and a great evil, and the comforts of it a hell. . . . Have you not been glad when the Lord’s day was over, or, at least, when the preaching was done, that ye might get your liberty? Has it not been a burden to you to sit so long in the church? Well, this is a great sin. . . . Men are naturally more brutish than beasts themselves. . . . There is nothing in the world so monstrous, so deformed, as man. . . . Infants in their mother’s belly have in themselves sufficient guilt to deserve to be ript up. . . . The lilies and roses . . . no doubt had more sweetness of beauty and smell before the sin of men made them vanity sick. . . . The heavens that are supposed to be incorruptible, yet they wax old as doth a garment. . . . Christ did never laugh on earth that we read of, but he wept. . . . Every act of breathing is sin and hell. . . . There are two thousand of you here to-day; but I am sure fourscore of you will not be saved. . . . Oh, the screeches and yells there will be in hell. . . . See the poor wretches lying in bundles, boiling eternally in that stream of brimstone.”

So much for dogmatism in the past. The examples given form as small a portion of the whole as a drop of water is of the ocean. Religious intolerance is more harmful than other, because its victories, almost innumerable, surpass those of any other persecution. And yet, great as is the known number of crimes and outrages, the unknown must be far greater. No one knows and no one ever will know the secret crimes of religious persecution. We hear of public massacres and open tortures; but we learn little of that great band who suffered in secret. Still less do we know of those who from fear and threat of like fate have concealed their inner lives,—have assumed a faith, but lived a lie. The practice of hypocrisy is the greatest evil result of intolerance. Under the ban of bigotry whole nations mask their faces and live in deceit. Hypocrisy and fraud become necessary, if peace and profit are sought; and religious insincerity is universal.

We come now down to our own century and our own times. Massacres and tortures are not to be found. The intolerant spirit is now confined to creeds and attitudes. During the first half of this century Calvinism was preached throughout the length of the United States and in the mother country. There are four principal doctrines in Calvinism: good works amount to nothing; faith is everything and to be valued according to its strength; reason has no place in religious affairs; God from the first foreordained certain persons to salvation and predestined certain others to damnation, and this determination cannot be affected by the conduct of the individual.

The horrors preached from the pulpit equalled any that ever obtained a hearing in Scotland. The music



sung was in many instances mournful in the extreme. Audiences were so worked upon by the clergy that many were overcome and fell to the ground groaning and raving. Such meetings were called spiritual, and a minister's power and virtue were measured by this kind of resultant spirituality. Scenes of this description are not unheard of now. Places may still be found where occasionally such frenzy is created to this very day. The music employed in these services went far to arouse the feelings manifested. Music has always played an important part in religious ceremonies of all ages. Revivalists well understand its power, and make judicious selections. The success obtained by the revivalist Moody, a few years ago, was due quite as much to the songs of Sankey as to the harangues of the leader, who reaped most of the applause. One of the most popular songs, and one that most elderly persons will recall, was this, sung to an appropriately doleful tune:—

“Parents and children there shall part,  
 Parents and children there shall part,  
 Parents and children there shall part, —  
 Shall part to meet to more.

Oh, there 'll be mourning, mourning, mourning,  
 Oh, there 'll be mourning at the judgment-seat of Christ!”

There is not room in a short chapter like this to insert many creeds, and perhaps it would only be tiresome reading if there were room. One illustration is sufficient: <sup>1</sup> —

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the Presbyterian creed now in use.

“These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

“Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

“The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

It was a great surprise to me to find what I did in carefully reading over some of the doctrinal creeds now in use. The truth is, in worship or subscription we hastily glance over these creeds, each his own, without thinking of their meaning. The same thing is true, though to a less extent, in the popular reading of newspapers. Hundreds of people read a morning paper regularly, and yet are utterly unable without painful reflection to mention a single thing they read. Unless actual experiments are tried, one cannot realize how little words really mean after all. A perfect sample of modern creeds may be given, than which a better could scarcely be found, though some contain sentiments more hateful:—

“I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate ; Was crucified, dead, and buried ; He descended into hell, the third day he rose from the dead ; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty ; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

“ I believe in the Holy Ghost ; The Holy Catholic Church ; The Communion of Saints ; The Forgiveness of sins ; The Resurrection of the Body ; And the Life everlasting. Amen.”

Such senseless gibberish as this is hurriedly, yet soberly, mumbled over every Sunday by the richest Protestant sect in Christendom. It is senseless for two reasons, — literally, because unintelligible ; practically, because scarcely one of those who regularly repeat it really knows or cares what he is saying, and no one believes it. It is simply a meaningless form, gone through because aristocratic and fashionable. These may seem harsh words to some ; but few on sober reflection will deny their truth. These people kneel and pray in open church and in full view, ostentatiously conspicuous. If there is a veritable *dies irae*, a day of reckoning such as you pretend to believe in, and if the standard of judgment and chances of acquittal at that awful tribunal are such as you preach, God help you ! — that is all I say. I am not angry with you, — no, I have not the heart to be angry ; I only pity you.

The unseemly quarrels in the American Board are well known, as well as the stormy scenes over Presbyterian revision. The Covell case is a fair sample of modern dogma. The treatment which this deserving young man received at the hands of a great and wealthy Christian organization is a disgrace to our century. The fact that permission is denied an honest, open-minded, and educated man to preach to heathen under any creed because he cannot think

them damned in their primitive state, is a lamentable revelation of the dogmatism of our times. Another instance may be mentioned where a noted Episcopal rector of evolutional tendencies was compelled to choose between an ecclesiastical trial and obedience to the command of the bishop of his diocese to stop preaching evolution. Five members of the Presbyterian faith were suspended recently in one diocese for heresy; and the MacQueary trial in the Episcopal Church is familiar to all. Thus Christ's seamless coat is rent in pieces, and the sects fight over the spoils. This recalls another case, in which we have the example of a noted English priest being denied recognition by his brother sectarians in at least two New England States; and the strangest incident about this little affair was the humble petition of the rejected priest for permission to preach in a Unitarian church whose doors were thrown open to him. If this had been intended as a bit of sarcasm, it would have been masterly; but it seems to have been in simple honesty, which makes the act all the more extraordinary. Here is the spectacle of a man ostensibly sent by God to preach his word, pausing on the threshold of a great opportunity, voluntarily offered, to ask an earthly bishop if he may enter and preach, as if there were pollution in a Unitarian church, or as if the light of truth could shine only from an Episcopal pulpit!

Pastors of different denominations rarely exchange pulpits, though the practice is common among those of the same creed. A union service was held recently in a great Episcopal church in New York, and it was soon afterwards reported that the clergyman who permitted the representatives of other sects to use his pulpit was to be disciplined. There is an old saying

that the Christian churches are rival camps, in which salvation is offered to the initiated, and damnation to all the rest. The saying is not altogether inapplicable to the church of to-day. The different sects display a rivalry at times very much like enmity. If each does not preach damnation to all the rest, still hateful insinuation is very common; and it may be a question whether concealed hatred is not full worse than open defiance. In New York recently the well-known pastors of two great Protestant churches publicly agreed to exchange pulpits, amidst the vociferous applause of a large audience. The exchange was brought about by a statement of one of the preachers, in the course of his address, to the effect that while in Scotland he had frequently made such exchanges, in this country he had never done so.

A new United States war-vessel was not long ago christened in the usual and traditional way. At the launching the granddaughter of the Secretary of the Navy broke a bottle of wine over the vessel's bow, with the words: "I baptize thee Maine." Considerable comment was occasioned by the use of the word "baptize" in such a connection. Letters of protest were sent to the papers, adverse remarks were common, and that ominous word "blasphemy" was heard. One writer, less silly somewhat than others, said that if another word had been used, the young lady would have avoided an expression which she "certainly did not mean as blasphemous, but which is doubtless open to grave objections." The incident is simple in itself; but such little things indicate that bigotry and superstition are not utterly extinct. Again, who but a bigot would think of an elaborate and complete purification — ceremonial, traditional, pompous — of a great church edifice, rendered necessary be-

cause a suicide had been committed within its holy precincts?

An influential religious newspaper publishes the statements of a divine regarding future probation. He says he thinks the Scriptures give no foundation for such a theory; Saint Peter does not lay a basis for the theory; the hypothesis, to his mind, is extra-Scriptural, but not anti-Scriptural; he sees plausible arguments for the theory, but also many against it. The world ought to have this late-learned dunce's opinion as to whether angels have stomachs, or whether the Virgin Mary remained a virgin after conception.

Reference has already been made to a litigation between the factions of churches, and a quotation given from the decision of the court in one case. But the factions of that church did not go to the extremes actually reached in a later case. A society became divided, and one clique withdrew and erected a new edifice. It seems that one of the members of the new society, who still clung in her heart to the old church, died, and on her deathbed desired her burial rites to be celebrated in the old church. When the funeral *cortége* arrived at the church, the officiating clergyman was denied admission, and the services were actually held in the open air, in a heavy, driving snow-storm.

There is but one other instance that I will mention in this connection, and in a sense I am sorry to insert it; but I am seeking the truth, and this is why I add a disgraceful scene that none can more sincerely regret.

“FLEMINGSBURG, KY., Jan. 9. The Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches of this place decided to observe the week of prayer in a series of union meetings. The third meeting of the series was held at the Methodist Church Tues-

day night. A very large congregation was present, and after short addresses by the pastors a prayer-meeting was held. During the progress of this service Rev. Mr. Hughes, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, was called on to pray. In the course of his invocation he introduced the articles of the faith of his church. He was interrupted by the Baptist minister, and, on their knees, the two preachers fought over the doctrines of their respective churches, while the congregation, in confusion, rose to its feet and crowded about the two disputants, who bombarded each other with Bible quotations, denominational arguments, and sharp retort. The audience was becoming noisy; there were indications of more serious trouble, which might have ended in blows, if nothing worse, when the Methodist pastor took the pulpit, denounced the proceedings as a disgrace to the place, the occasion, and the religion all present professed, and ordering the congregation out, declared he would not permit such shameful scenes in his church. No service was held last night in any of the churches. The congregations of the two disputing preachers stand by their respective pastors, while those on the outside are wondering if the church-members of Flemingsburg don't need to be converted."

I do not care to comment on this scene; it speaks for itself.

The Christian Church, all over the land, is forever on the lookout lest the museums and art collections in some way open their doors, though a few such have boldly done so. The running of horse-cars and Sunday trains is strongly objected to, and even the delivery of mails in some places. As if this were not enough, an attempt is made to control the very elements themselves; for a movement was not long ago instituted to prevent the arrival of transatlantic steamships Sundays.

There is one other great example of modern intolerance that deserves mention, and that is the obloquy that is cast upon the liberal-minded. Free-thinkers

are the modern heretics. Generally speaking, no epithet can be too opprobrious or vile as applied to them, and any and every opportunity to abuse and calumniate such men is eagerly seized. It has come to light that when Charles Bradlaugh, a member of Parliament and famous for his philanthropy, was on his deathbed, his house was literally flooded with tracts from sects of all kinds, in which he was assured that he could escape eternal damnation only by the acceptance of Christianity of the various creeds. Again, when a statue of Lessing was recently unveiled in Berlin, the clergy refused to take part in the ceremonies or to appear at all, because they disapproved of his teachings and his life. This is a kind of bigotry that is utterly contemptible, and yet one which is as common as day. Hume and Paine, Voltaire and Renan, Stuart Mill and Huxley, Emerson and Ingersoll, have all had their turn at this disgraceful Christian abuse. All these men, with the partial exception of Emerson, have been deemed the very incarnation of the devil on earth, and are quite too commonly so rated at present. Not even the bones of those that are dead have been respected; and their graves are pointed at with derision, scorn, and contempt. Similar vituperation is daily heard and read by the two still living, and thousands would receive with pious joy tidings of misfortune or calamity happening to either.

The burden of orthodox Christianity is simply this: Life without a belief in some established orthodox form of Christianity is death. One of the greatest preachers of this country and of the world, so considered, commonly and publicly insists that a life without Christianity is a life of misery. To be without the hopes and blessings of Christianity is to be wretched, — this is the burden of his religious teach-



ing. I never heard him preach without stating this theory in one way or another, though I do not attend his church or hear him very often. If the word "Christianity" as used means the Episcopal interpretation of it, I am sure the statement is absurdly incorrect; for such a statement could not be made with certainty by any man, since it would involve universal experience, which can hardly be credited to the divine in question. Moreover examples to the contrary are notoriously frequent, if we may trust our observation, than which we have no other guide to detect misery or its opposite. I fear that there are few of us who do not say foolish things at times, and one who has a great purpose at heart becomes to an extent an enthusiast. To his mind many things become magnified, and exaggeration naturally follows. This little incident is mentioned, not to display a fault in a great character, but to illustrate a form of dogmatism.

Such has been the prevailing tone of Christianity. Who can distinguish between the voice of the holy prophet of God himself, or the exultation of the apostolical father, and the word picture of the great American theologian?

"If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. And he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night who worship the beast or his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

"How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, so many fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many

magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers, blushing in red-hot flames with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets, trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers more agile than ever in the flames; so many charioteers all aglow in flaming chariots; so many athletes practising, not in the gymnasia, but in hell-fire."

"How awful are those words, Isa. lxiii. 3, which are the words of the great God: 'I will tread them in mine anger, and stamp them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.' It is perhaps impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, viz., contempt, and hatred, and fierceness of indignation. If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favor, that instead of that he will only tread you under foot: and though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you but under his feet, to be trodden down as mire in the streets."

Who would imagine that these writings are fifteen centuries apart? Who would think that the American Board, in consigning heathen irrevocably and eternally to the bottomless pit of hell, live two thousand years after Tertullian or Saint John? A man who, living in the present age, enjoying the enlightenment and blessings of these times, will yet solemnly consign his fellow-men to an eternal hell of lasting torment, simply because they have never heard the word of God, or because they do not

believe certain things related in the Bible, even granting that they be true, may write nice sermons and such like, but, God help him, at bottom he is a poor wretch. I think we shall find something that Christ said applicable to just such men and such measures :

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.”

What shall we say of all this crime and cruelty perpetrated in the name of him who taught only love and peace? If we look into Christianity from this standpoint of narrowness and intolerance only, we can see no hope. It would seem as if only tragedy and crime could satisfy the heavy-clouded mind of man. Sacrifice and blood alone seem to attract the sombre-minded worshipper. Even in joyful moments the pleasure appears awfully grim and bloody. The idea of salvation through the blood of another is a dark and painful reflection. Men seem forever selfish; they look to their own miserable salvation. “Shall I be damned?” and “Shall I be saved?” would seem very monotonous and ungenerous questions to be always and forever reiterating. But one conclusion can follow on this line of investigation. If this were the only side of Christian faith, the result would be easy to conjecture. The sole answer to the questions is plain: “You will not be saved; you will be .

damned." It may not be in the literal and Christian sense ; but still life will be lost, its thousand enjoyments untasted, its manifold duties slighted, its innumerable opportunities neglected, its happiness wilfully perverted, its value self-depreciated, its blessings self-denied.

But there is great hope from the past. The ages have progressed slowly but surely. The cloud, dark it is true, yet has a silver lining. We are rapidly gaining a proper attitude on questions of this nature. Religion has not enjoyed the advantages of that reasonable investigation and calm consideration which have been applied to the other affairs of life. If the sciences had been regulated for twenty centuries by an ecumenical synod of ecclesiastics, and if every individual investigator had been compelled to conduct his observations under rule established by their authority, science would reveal to-day just about the progress that religion discloses. Attempt was made to regulate science in just this way, and, indeed, it was practically successful for several centuries ; but finally men said, " You must not, you shall not, you cannot, clog our material progress in this way ; " and so they have been permitted to go on with little effective interruption, though protest upon protest has been made at every single step of scientific progress.

In truth, we are in a much better condition as regards dogmatic religion than we seem. True, the dogmatism in our creeds is astonishing ; granted, the intolerance in the sermons we hear is excessive ; admitted, the clergy and a few deacons are quite apt to get a little excited over disputed points of dogmatic theology ; still, the great fact must be confessed that the people, and hundreds of the best informed and most progressive of the clergy, care absolutely noth-

ing about the old, narrow doctrines and isms, and the only way they yield to them at all is as mere forms. This is not the best state that we could be in, but it is an advance, and a sure indication of further progress.

It is too much to expect that we shall have no more religious dogmatism in the future. As long as men are men they will hold decided opinions in religious as well as in other matters. It is perhaps well that this is so; certainly, I would be the last to advocate unanimity of opinion and action in any field. But men are not likely for some few years to burn and persecute others for mere theological doctrine. The years have taught great wisdom in their exposure of human ignorance. Men are not likely to assert that all truth on any point is fully known and understood. It will be admitted that perhaps there are a few things concerning which we have yet to learn, possibly some that we may never learn.

In the future, then, we may expect a somewhat different line of action. Attempt will not often be made to dragoon people into heaven, and there will be still less quarrelling over the manifold roads to hell. Abandoning the project of establishing an eternal kingdom of God by force, greater efforts will be made to develop characters of uprightness and lives of virtue here on earth. This is the great work of the future, until another Æneas shall leave the sack of Troy for a new home and country, or another Mayflower leave a land of persecution for a land of freedom, though a desert. Progress will be accomplished, as in the past, by the diffusion of knowledge. The school is the power of to-day.

“Lust and avarice and anger creep  
In the black jungles of man’s ignorance.”

With the progress of civilization, the diffusion of knowledge, and its attendant broadening of intellect, it will be better understood that various conditions of life cause various religious opinions; that a given creed may be good for one people while at the same time decidedly bad for another. Finally, people will be less ready to interfere with the convictions of others, and more willing to examine their own lives, purify their own hearts, control their own passions, and conquer this evil spirit of intolerance which underlies all such controversy. Understanding that often the most vigorous and persistent courses of action are the result of causes not comprehended, and generally little studied and questioned, the utter uselessness and impotence of attempts to resist the onward flow of civilization will be much clearer to future generations.

History shows that Christianity has suffered much more as a moral faith by alliance with power than by its opposition; and it may be said that it stands in greater danger of losing its prestige and its influence in the future on account of increasing wealth and power than of meeting its fate because of the desertion of the multitudes and the cessation of its enormous revenues. There is a fruitful similarity between those who hope and strive for the unlimited sway of Christianity and those who in derision thrust upon Christ the mock title and honor of king. The kiss of Judas is not the only betrayal ever practised.

Our appreciation of these things modifies our opinion of the past, and teaches a superior method of judgment. In summing up the character and influence of these uncompromising men, the question which reveals the key to the whole situation is, not where or what they were, but whither were they

going. Were their eyes steadily fixed to the front? Were their exertions calculated to hasten or to hinder the march of progress? In seeking this information, and in reaching favorable conclusions, we do no kindness to the past, offer no gallantry, pay no homage. This is the order of Nature herself. First the plant, then the withering flower, and then the fruit. To complain of the first century because it is not the fifteenth, or of the fifteenth because it is not the nineteenth, is the height of absurdity, and reveals a shallow mind. The average man of the present probably knows more really serviceable knowledge than the wisest of the ancients. He can read and write; but in all probability David could do neither, nor Homer. He understands practically the law of gravitation, while Moses and the prophets never dreamed of it. He knows a thousand useful appliances and ingenious contrivances which were wholly unknown to the most gifted of the ancients. But this is not the proper way to estimate men and times. Fulton was among the first to make use of steam as a propelling power; and we admire his genius for the useful invention, though we do not care to persist in using his boat. We are to judge the past, not by what it lacked, but by what it had.

That those intolerant men had faults, it is useless to deny; but none can gainsay their virtues. Take the Puritans, — nobler men are not to be found. The increased knowledge that enables us to detect their errors may well reveal their virtues. They had the manliness to stand up for their convictions, and live up to their beliefs, so far as it is given to man; and for this we offer them unfeigned respect. That they were radicals is undoubtedly true; but even this has its good results. Their times demanded strictness.

The laxity of their predecessors and of many of their contemporaries was the direct cause of their falling into the opposite extreme. Radicals are unpleasant people to deal with; but they have their place, and do their work in the world. Almost, if not quite, every great emancipation from moral, intellectual, civil, and physical thralldom that has ever been accomplished has been achieved in a great measure by the fearless and persistent efforts of a band of radicals. Every truth over which men become thoroughly earnest is likely to be asserted as if no other truth existed. In a general way we are none of us wholly right, none of us wholly wrong. All of us are at once right and wrong. Let us all, then, love and cherish the right, and deal kindly with the wrong. What might not Christianity accomplish if only it relied on charity and not on dogma?

There is something very sad in contemplating the errors of Christianity. It seems too bad that so much of good should be alloyed with so much bad. Those hard, uncompromising men, and by no means tender and pliant women, who created and practised and promulgated those old dogmas and bitter creeds, — what purpose have they served? The evils which they sought so earnestly to correct, and in rectifying which they deliberately and wilfully stifled many virtuous and praiseworthy affections and impulses, often appear utterly insignificant to us. The reforms which they advocated, and in executing which they abandoned reason and common-sense alike, defied disgrace and dishonor, and invited hostility, but too often appear childish to us. But it must be borne in mind that their life was not our life, nor their ways our ways. We admire much that they despised; we teach much that they condemned. The early sisters



in their love for ornaments and decorations do not seem very guilty to us. The men who sought to enjoy the comforts of the world and to increase them seem guilty of no great crime. The perfection and virtue which they sought seem too often but heartlessness and selfishness. What is the purpose, then, of all this self-denial and sorrow? What service did those uncompromising heroes render? If we hold to a narrow conception of human life, we can never appreciate the painful toiling of men. The greatest endeavors, the highest hopes, the noblest self-sacrifice, and most heroic toil are quite generally fruitless in their direct result. But when we appreciate the meaning of duty and conscience, all these efforts appear simply sublime. In the moral sphere effort is everything; result, little or nothing. Thus, and thus alone, can we understand the willing sorrow of saints and the self-imposed hardships of martyrs. Now the apostle seems grand, and his face seems really to shine with the light of heaven, as he stands and cries: "Oh, grave, where is thy victory? Oh, death, where is thy sting?"

To the wisest men human life and death are very broad subjects. Nature is of infinite complexity and infinite depth and expansion, altogether too broad for present human rules and measures. To use the idea of John Wesley, a string of opinions, though thirty-nine in number, is no more true religion than a string of beads is Christian holiness. Religion is not merely assent to any given opinion, or any number of opinions. Wise and good men have engrafted upon Christianity, itself starting with the wisdom and goodness of one very great man, the healthful morality for which we give it credit. We have made Christianity, and Christianity has made us. The evil which it con-

tains is ours as well ; so let us not deal too harshly with our own work, though it would be great progress if we only could condemn the bad, realizing that it is really ours.

Is it looking too far ahead to expect right living in place of orthodoxy, character in place of faith, good actions in place of ceremonial worship? I think not. I believe that many have actually reached that state, and that more are going to embrace this religion of works. To make all men think and act alike is nonsense, and it would be a misfortune if it were possible; to act and think aright, each according to his own light, is human perfection. I think that of Charles V. one of the sagest remarks of all that have come down to us. It is said that he tried in vain to make a couple of clocks at Yuste run together, and gave up the attempt with the reflection: "How foolish I have been to think I could make all men believe alike about religion, when I cannot here make even two clocks keep the same time!"

While we respect the past for boldly living up to the light which it had, may we not so lose ourselves in admiration of its manly principles as to forget to live up to the light which is given us? Every creed is a stumbling-block in the way of progress. All that old persecution and superstition and self-inflicted penance is gone now, — gone as if it never were. No one believes that we should live as they did. We are wiser, perhaps, or more humane; maybe we are only different. Anyway we are in some way separated from that old-world Christianity by a chasm that cannot be spanned. Let us only realize this fully, and act accordingly. Then we shall find, if we have not already learned it, that those old creeds are no longer of service, and that the old customs are in-

appropriate. It is no longer necessary or fashionable to place a flaming golden Bible in the street window. The little pocket prayer-book supplants the larger and more clumsy volume, and when we come from church we can just slip it under the table. Piety always is modest.

There is little of reproach for the past. But I am not so sure of the present. We have duties in proportion to our opportunities. The past is not the measure of the present. Its benefits we may reap and treasure up; its errors we ought to brush aside, not contemptuously, but respectfully, remembering that they are largely the result of environment. When religious faith consists of iron-bound creeds, when it includes woful threats to those who fail to embrace it, subscription is prudently delayed. Like that old Frisian king who, having one foot in the baptismal font, drew it back when told that he would not meet his noble ancestors in heaven, let us have the courage to reject such proffered salvation as long as our brother-men suffer in torment. The sorrows of wrongdoers will not be a source of pleasure to souls elect; the kingdom of heaven will not be a choral society eternally chanting fulsome praises; the heavenly angels will not care for streets of gold and silver and precious stones, nor will they live a life of idleness; the kingdom of God is somewhat wider and nobler than this, or I will stand outside of it.

As for those of this generation who insist upon their petty creeds, withal forever fighting as to what they shall be; as for those who are weary of this earth, considering it but a snare and a temptation, and a trial for a glorious, triumphant hereafter, — the quicker they are relieved and summoned on high to

heavenly seats and thrones the better, leaving those to enjoy the world who are sufficiently well pleased with it, and do not care enough about heaven to fight for distinction and preferment there. For such there is a very suggestive old story handed down from ancient records. There was once a good king who possessed much money and many servants, over which he maintained watchful and thrifty vigilance, so that his money increased, and his servants multiplied. Now, it happened that one of the servants became indebted to his master in a sum which the prudent king had little hope of collecting; and so he ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his belongings, thinking to realize more in this than in any other way. But the poor wretch begged piteously for mercy, praying an extension of time and offering a renewal of his notes. His tears moved his kind-hearted master, who was truly grieved to bring sorrow upon a willing debtor and an innocent family; and so he not only recalled the order, but forgave the debt. The servant had scarcely left the presence of his master, when he happened upon one of his fellow-servants who owed him a paltry reckoning. Instant payment with usury was demanded; and when the poor fellow said he could not pay, for he had no money, he was taken before the judge, and pitilessly cast into prison. And the ill news soon reached the kind-hearted king, and his simple heart surged with grief and anger, and he caused the guilty servant to be called before him, and, when the attendants were gone, said: "Oh, thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt for which thou wast beholden to me, and yet thou wert not generous enough to forgive thy brother-servant a paltry farthing." And the guilty servant was led away to the king's executioners, and suffered a horrible death.

There are still a few lessons for bigots to learn, even from him whose life and identity they pretend fully to comprehend, and who, when requested to define what he meant by neighbor, selected as an example a heathen, a gentile, and a heretic.

## VI.

## IMMORTALITY.

“Immortality will come to such as are fit for it ; and he who would be a great soul in future must be a great soul now.”

**M**AN without hope is the saddest spectacle possible to humanity ; for on hope is based the principle of his existence, or rather life, — for a man may exist and not live. The only inheritance Nature leaves him is this same life-estate, hope.

Hence it is that every not merely temporary and ephemeral religion the world has seen, teaches, as one of its fundamental doctrines, the immortality of the soul. Reason, it is said, does not exclude the idea ; Nature yields to the possibility ; and experience, with a cloud of witnesses, confirms its reality. Thoughts of immortality bring out the noblest part of us, — love for those we have lost. The vast amount of consideration paid to it, from Homer and the earliest Hebrew or Eastern writers down to modern times, is a sufficient commentary on the place it holds in the human mind. The literature with immortality for its subject is alone enough to give life, measured only by the duration of the human species, to any subject.

There is something in Nature beyond the apparent ; there is a life in death. Gross forms it may take, or again forms of ravishing beauty and fascination, or yet again phantom shapes touchingly sad and sweet, lingering in the memory, like the dreams of childhood,

when mother's eyes had not yet ceased nightly to look down from heaven. The very hills, the sea, and the skies do not so much raise questions and doubts as suggest the reality of an eternal world and a life-activity everlasting.

What a wonderful thing is death! Is it terrible, so awful as it often seems? Are the legends that we all have heard really true? Every ancient churchyard, every old village has its ghost. In the night, before the expiring fires, men speak in undertones of the haunted houses where gibbering, laughing, mocking spirits of the murdered walk. Men always have spoken and always will speak ominously and sadly of the sleep that knows no waking. To die and go we know not where, to decay in the grave and be food for worms, to bathe in fire or to shrink and shiver in the cold, to gibber and clatter in darkness,—ugh! well may one glance over his shoulder nervously, and feel a chill creeping over the body. We have heard that life is a lamentable state of passion and madness and sorrow, like a sick man's dream; that Nature carries us down a fatal stream, urging and hurrying us on, only to shatter us in the end: we fall long distances to ruin. And then, the "silent grave,"—no sound is heard; no light, cheerful step of friends; no gentle, kindly voice that once we knew: all is darkness and silence and cold.

"To die, to sleep; to sleep, perchance to dream."

Is all this true? Is Time a destroyer, and does it eat its children? Or is death but a sleep, that steals away the senses gently and slowly, as day fades into night? We shall, then, wake again to light and life and joy.

Who can tell? And what would one give, if only

one might know, — know with certainty, feel sure as one does of present living? It is well for us all that a sweet hope lies gently reposing over the heart. Still, it does seem hard to men to see friends depart as upon a boundless sea, to say farewell, to receive the last words in grief, in tears to lay away the dead, and then to turn away on this shore, when so willing to depart, with no expectation of seeing them more, unless as spirits or sickly phantoms. What wonder that a land of mystery springs up in the afflicted mind? No wonder men have a land of shades, where walk the shapes of friends long dead, — a land still of doubt, and varying with each passing emotion, at times appearing as a vision, and again but as a passing fancy. Many such eternal climes and boundless shores the life of man has seen, — many that are now no more; many immortal gods have lived to comfort, to aid, to curse, — immortal gods that now are dead.

Humanity ever runs up against the same mysteries, whatever direction be taken, — just as I have seen a tortoise confined in a tank attempting at all points to climb over the edge, only to fall back again and begin anew. The past and the future alike are hidden from human eyes. Even the scope of the imagination is limited to forms and directions already comprehended by the intellect.

It is sad to confess that Christian immortality, notwithstanding the advantages of previous centuries of human experience, does not begin to compare favorably, in purity and beauty of sentiment and in nobility of purpose, with that of other ages commonly considered less refined, less noble, and less moral; and this is despite the fact that the Christian religion as a whole is far superior to any other. After all, Christianity at its best really does in a measure approach



the noble and lofty ideas of Christ. The founders of Christianity knew no compromise; circumstances could not explain away error. First, all are damned; second, unless you walk just exactly within the prescribed lines, you cannot win salvation, — never, never.

Christian immortality is twofold. All souls are immortal, — some happily so, others so rather unfortunately. For a very few we have heaven; for the masses, hell.

“ And hell was built on spite, and heaven on pride.”

Happily a divine revelation opens to all the vision of the blissful shores of paradise, though few may enter, — perhaps, after all, few would care to enter. Revelation comes at the end of the Bible, and consequently is rarely reached by the believer. On account of its peculiar nature it is rarely mentioned, to say nothing of being preached, in the pulpit. The second advent of Christ, according to prophecy, was to bring the world to an end. As the creation had occupied the space of six days, so the world would exist for six thousand years; and as the labor of the creation was succeeded by a day of rest, so the long trial of humanity would be followed by a thousand years of repose. This was the common expectation, though the analogy would seem as far fetched as the familiar interpretation of the sign of the prophet Jonah.

The New Jerusalem, the land of promise, — we must remember that Christianity is a continuation of Judaism, — was represented in different ways. Some, presumably the hungry and thirsty and unfortunate in this world's goods, thought it was another Canaan overflowing with milk and honey, and oil and wine; and to such the hope and expectation of plenty in the future was delightfully inviting.

To others, more fortunate in satisfying their bodily wants, the vision of a new and magnificent city, resplendent with gold and silver and precious stones, unfolded itself to compensate for the loss of sacred Jerusalem. To the minds of all Christ's idea of pure and spiritual pleasure was too refined and profound. They were still of earth, and their ways were the ways and desires of man, unable even in deification to lay aside their human form and nature. A divine revelation, it has been said, discloses to us this promised land. Open the page; there, under that light of heaven, there, weary and heart-sick, before you lies the happy land, Beulah's shore, — there, oh, there! Thither let us fly!

We are disappointed; there stands a great golden throne, upon which, arched over with a rainbow of emerald, Almighty God is seated, to look upon like a big jasper and sardine stone. About the throne are four and twenty seats, occupied by a like number of elders, clothed in white raiment and crowned with crowns of gold. This is very like Jerusalem of old, — the bishop and the elders. God surely first occupied a seat in the Sanhedrim. Lightning and thunder prevail; and all seems to come from under the throne, just as the electricity flashes in sheets under a derailed electric car. The Thomson-Houston Company might get up quite a spectacle in heaven; perhaps they will. There are seven lamps, the seven spirits of God, — a little mystical, to be sure; but a traveller cannot be expected to understand all he sees in a strange land. A sea of glass stretches out before the throne; and four winged beasts, more than Argus-eyed, watch over it, — a lion, a calf, a satyr, and an eagle. And these strange beasts eternally sing: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is

to come ;” while the elders bow themselves and worship the Almighty, casting their crowns at his feet.

This is something like an ancient mythical court, but altogether too insipid to attract many doughty knights or sage counsellors. As if to carry out the idea further, a herald proclaims a challenge to heaven and earth and the region under the earth, whatever it may be, not to fight for some fair lady’s token, but to open a great book sealed with seven great seals. A horned lamb — this is the Christ — frisks up, and, wonder of wonders ! takes the book and opens it, while the elders with golden harps discourse sweet music, and a fragrance from golden vials pervades the air, — the prayers of saints. A new song is sung, notwithstanding the fact that the old song still was chanted forever and ever. All things are possible in heaven.

Christ now proceeds to open the seven seals, with astonishing effect. The opening of each seal brings upon humanity some woful calamity ; this is a feature worth noticing. The sorrows of men shall be the delights of angels. America’s greatest theological light dwells on this point. Angels will not “be sorry for the damned ; it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them ; but on the contrary, when they see this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises ; . . . it will occasion rejoicing in them, as they will have the greater sense of their own happiness by seeing the contrary misery. . . . When they shall see how miserable others of their fellow-creatures are who were naturally in the same circumstances with themselves ; when they shall see the smoke of their torment, and the raging of the flames of their burning, and hear their dolorous shrieks and cries, and consider that they are in the mean time in the

most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity, how they will rejoice! . . . Natural affection is no virtue in the saints in glory; their virtue will exercise itself in a higher manner.”

It is needless to follow the opening of the seven seals; they are much alike, and are attended with similar woes, causing like joy in heaven. The silence preceding the breaking of the last seal is ominous. It is easy to conjecture something fairly surprising, even in heaven, here. Seven angels appear, and each sounds a reveille on his trumpet, and at each trump more woes follow. Again there is suspense at the seventh trump. A mighty angel with raiment of cloud, with a rainbow about his head, whose face shines as the sun, and whose feet glisten like fire, bestrides the earth and sea like a Colossus. Great secrets he will unfold. We pause while the prophet eats a little book, for he must needs take refreshment to continue.

We are treated in pantomime with wondrous sights now. A woman big with child appears, clad with the sun, the moon under her feet, and crowned with twelve stars, like one of Prang's prize designs. The next slide discloses a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, ready to eat the child about to be born. A war in heaven follows, and Michael and his legions do wonders of valor. Doubtless the Irish inherited their courage and pugnacity from this doughty champion of heaven, who whips the devil himself in fair fight. The next picture is that of a composite beast, — leopard, bear, and lion, — making war with saints; him follows another beast even more wonderful.

An intermission now ensues. A mighty noise is heard in heaven, like thunder, — bass accompaniment.

to the song of harpers. After the orchestra has finished its programme, the celestial pantomime is resumed. Seven angels with seven plagues appear in turn. A fall of Babylon, more spectacular than Barnum's of a year ago, is vouchsafed the holy prophet; and yet the dancing could not be better. The first resurrection and the general judgment follow, and a new heaven and a new earth appear, Jerusalem attending like a blushing bride. And all tears shall be wiped away, and there shall be no death, no sorrow, no pain, no night, but all shall be light and joyous and blithesome as a dream of sleeping infancy. Here shall the nations of the earth that are saved walk amid eternal delights, lighted without sun or moon or stars (I fear they will miss these twinkling beauties sadly), marked with the stamp of God on their brow. Meanwhile the prophet cheers us with the promise of a speedy realization of this bliss, if we shun the beast and add or detract not from his sacred book.

This is the most that Christianity can offer to the faithful. It is pitiable indeed! It may be we shall become accustomed to these talking beasts, this eternal singing of praises, this sea of glass, this eternity of cruel spectacles; but there is little inducement in it all to an active, hearty man here on earth. If our virtue is to consign us to this limbo, heaven save us from virtue! To such of the elect as believe in evolution, — if, indeed, this is not heresy, — there may still be some hope. In the course of ages their nature may become modified, so that such an existence with such environment shall be truly the height of bliss. The same comfort may be extended to the damned; they, too, may become so changed as to love what once was torment. On the whole, this concrete, objective life hereafter is a pretty shallow dream. The meanest

savage has quite as pleasant and cheerful a paradise as the civilized Christian. I have never yet heard of a future life, not purely abstract, so beautiful and attractive as that of the American Indian, nor one looked forward to so courageously, or prepared for so simply and touchingly. The "Great Spirit" and the "happy hunting-grounds" of the Indian are, to my mind, the most beautiful and the truest conceptions of God and immortality concrete that ever gained credence in an established religion.

And hell was built on spite, — quite a natural conclusion this, and perhaps very true besides. It takes but a sentence to describe hell. It is something in a sense more indefinite than heaven; and yet with all its delightful uncertainty the place somehow seems well defined.

A great pit, — big enough to hold, though quite uncomfortably, almost all the people the world has ever sustained; this pit contains a lake or sea of raging flame, or burning pitch; a struggling, shrieking, cursing mass of people, comprising, as above indicated, almost all created human beings, are immersed in this burning lake, — this is the Christian hell!

There can be no doubt about the reality of hell, despite some little uncertainty as to its character. However much Christians differ about heaven and the manner in which souls shall find bliss and occupation, there is an awful unanimity of opinion about hell. Here the sects are all agreed, or practically so; for even those that are unwilling to consign the ignorant irrevocably to Sheol confess that they are unable to see how they can escape it. Of course this doctrine is not preached much from the pulpit to-day, — that is, from the aristocratic, fashionable pulpit. It is put in this way quite generally: "Dear brethren, come to

Jesus! Oh, accept the bounteous gift so freely offered, so freely given, and escape the fate of the lost!" They leave it right there, — the "lost." There is something very suggestive about this little word. A chapter or two might be written about it. The general reader will remember a little picture in "my uncle Toby's" history delightfully suggestive. "My young master in London is dead," said Obadiah. This gave the Corporal an opportunity, and he improved it. "Are we not here now," said he, striking his cane perpendicularly upon the floor, "and are we not," dropping his hat upon the ground eloquently, "gone in a moment?" There is nothing in the fact that he dropped the hat; but the way he did it spoke volumes.

We have to go back a few years to find what this word "lost" means, or else out into the country to revival meetings. It is more convenient to choose the former course.

"The wrath of God burns against them. Their damnation does not slumber, the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow; the glittering sword is whet and held over them, and the pit hath opened her mouth under them."

"The devil stands ready to fall upon them, and seize them as his own at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods (Luke xi. 21). The devils watch them; they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them like greedy lions that see their prey and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost."

The popular opinion of heaven and hell is probably gained more from Milton and Dante than from any other source. The pulpit reproduces these ideas, if any at all. Again, religious art has been a great factor in setting forth such ideas. The devil may not be as black as he is painted, nor have so many shapes. I am inclined to think he is a good deal more winning and lovable than people seem to imagine.

It would seem as if Christianity might have deduced from Paganism a more inviting heaven; its hell is sufficient for all reasonable purposes. Yet it is plain that sensual pleasure was not generally the object of Christian desire. In this world it was frowned upon in every variety; consequently consistency compelled its exclusion in a measure from heaven. The family relation being but a curse here, we have no such thing there; natural affection here being evil, its existence there is denied; only luxury could not quite be debarred. Man shall have in heaven that which most he needed on earth. All the good which was wanting here is lavishly bestowed on the faithful in heaven. The weary shall find rest, the afflicted shall rejoice, the halt and the maimed shall leap for joy, hunger and thirst shall not enter in, sickness and want shall disappear, and all tears shall be wiped away. The new earth must be different from this old worn-out vale of misery; and yet, there being no other terms, it is described by those in use here.

Paganism did exactly the same thing. It promised men in the future life all the good that was denied here; only, the Pagan idea of good differed from the Christian idea. To the Pagan this world was, in places at least, a beautiful habitation, and so heaven is composed of the meadows and groves of earth.



Youth and beauty and strength were all objects of righteous desire, and so we find all quite generally in the future world of Paganism. Generally the Pagan retained his identity, it being pleasing, just as the Christian loses his because it is hateful, or he tries to think so. Indeed the Pagan seems almost at times to mourn his departed mortality. The airy phantoms of Virgil and Homer flit to and fro in a dim hazy atmosphere, quite silent and gloomy, like the birds of the deep forest, pining for loss of life's activity. And yet far away in the distance lie the fair Elysian Fields, where Rhadamanthus, with hair of gold, reigns over a land sweet with the fragrance of earth; where sorrow is not, nor winter, nor rain, nor snow, and the never-dying zephyrs breathe soft and cool from off the ocean. Such delights the Pagan loved, and such we find in his future home.

“Ye that have bravery, away with effeminate grief, and fly beyond the Tuscan shore. The ocean encircling the land awaits us. Let us seek the happy plains and the happy islands, where the untilled land yearly produces fruit and the vine flourishes uncared for; where the branch of the never-failing olive-blossoms and the purple fig adorns its native tree; honey distils from the hollow oaks; the light water bounds down from the lofty mountains with a gentle murmuring. There the she-goats come to the pail of their own accord, and the friendly flock return with udders distended; nor does the bear at evening growl about the sheepfold, nor the ground swarm with snakes. Many more things shall we in happiness view with admiration: how neither the rainy east wind lays waste the cornfields, nor is the fertile seed scorched, the king of the gods moderating both. The Argonauts' ship never sailed hither, nor did lascivious Medea ever tread this soil; hither the Sidonian mariners never trimmed their yards, nor the toiling crew of Ulysses. No contagious distempers hurt the flocks, nor do the fiery constellations scorch the herd.

Jupiter set apart those shores for a pious people, when he corrupted the golden age with brass, — with brass, then with iron he hardened the ages, from which there shall be a happy escape for the good.”<sup>1</sup>

The pride at the basis of Christian immortality is clearly apparent. The beasts of the earth are below man, and can have no share in his new home. Fame is for humanity alone. The world was created for man, and the sun and moon and stars to give him light and warmth, and to beautify his temporary home. The centre of the universe is man. How, then, shall his life be limited to this earth? Shall his happiness be controlled by that which was created for his use, and his alone? Philosophy and metaphysics are invented. Matter and mind are different. So, then, the body is but a prison for the soul. Oh happy day that shall set me free!

Still, man is vain even of his body, prison though it be. Even his god is framed in his image. Christian art of all ages magnifies this, and endows it with grace and beauty. The virgins of Raphael and the angels of Michael Angelo are not lacking in bodily grace; on the contrary, this is all they possess. Their faces reveal no strength of character, and are quite generally insipid and meaningless. These angels are all beautiful curves and lines of beauty; and modern Christians, dilating upon these ravishing beauties, hoping such grace for themselves perhaps, do not think of the vigils and toils and fastings of saints. Nothing is further from their minds.

What an unworthy hope for the future this is, and what a proud, conceited idiot man is to expect and desire such a life! As if the great Controller of

<sup>1</sup> Horace.

Nature should select from all his infinite universe puny, insignificant man alone, him to honor and to cherish! Every people has declared God to rule all men, and that men are his especial care. For their good or ill fortune, as one looks at it, every god has had his devil; for their special use each has created the world; for their particular enjoyment the heavens, the ever-shining stars, and all beauties in earth and sky; upon them particularly has each enjoined obedience and submission; for their use each has miraculously supplied a law; for them has he wrought miracles and wonders; them has he specially loved, them specially hated; them has he promised a paradise of eternal joy and contentment, brilliant with jewels and silver and gold; them has he threatened with a hell, horrible with infinite torments, bitter as gall with vile reproaches. Perhaps the animals have the same egotistical faith, egotistical even in its punishments. Is not man in the universe more like a tick in a sheep, — instead of its crowning triumph its insignificant parasite?

Curiously enough, with all this conceit there is a ludicrous modesty or deference in humanity; for immortality seems quite as much an object of dread as of hope. Men in misfortune, still, however, strong and healthy, may sing the delights of the hereafter, and pray soon to be delivered from this world of care; but when the dark messenger beckons, they disavow with surprising *naïveté* all idea of haste, and are quite willing to remain awhile longer.

Long before the witty Englishman, an acre in Middlesex was valued much more highly than a principality in Utopia. Even Achilles says: —

“Talk not of ruling in this dolorous gloom,  
Nor think vain words, he cries, can ease my doom.

Rather I'd choose laboriously to bear  
A weight of woes, and breathe the vital air,  
A slave to some poor hind that toils for bread,  
Than reign the sceptred monarch of the dead."

Homer certainly was not nodding when he wrote the original of these lines. It is all very pretty for poets to picture death, chaplet-bound, playing upon a dulcimer, and singing to the sweet accompaniment such a song of consolation that humanity cannot choose but follow, — this is all very well, but generally the representation is that of a horrible skeleton with a scythe, riding a pale horse, or, more commonly still, a skull and crossbones. Death in itself is not often beautiful to contemplate; but the cause can render it glorious.

Immortality is no idle thing. It is no reward for virtue, imaginary or real, and consists not of a table eternally set with all the delicacies the appetite of man can desire. The rude savage expects his dog, his bottle, and his wife. A man half civilized should rise above this. How strange are the inconsistencies of life! Who would not consider the happy hunting-grounds of the Indian preferable to the stupid, meaningless, mystical heaven of Christianity? On the other hand, beasts, now denied existence at all hereafter, were once considered the very gods themselves. What silly foolishness! We dress up paradise like kings' palaces and gardens, so that only kings shall be worthy to dwell there. No dogs nor cattle may trespass on the nicely trimmed lawns, or trample the flowers. Just so little boys pray for tin horns, and for countless pockets to their clothes for lollipops and toys.

Immortal life on such grounds is exceedingly doubtful, — a very pretty legend for children, but by no

means a likely story for reasonable men. All theories of the hereafter are practically on the same level. The wisest philosopher can tell us no more than the vilest heathen. Four thousand years of philosophy and metaphysics have thrown absolutely no light on the state of the human soul hereafter. Without the aid of revelation, which in itself is a concession of the whole question, all investigation and all theories of the soul have been miserable and complete failures. We are not one single step farther advanced than was Job, of Old Testament fame. For Christians all truth is in the Bible. For a thousand years or more it has been the same old book. It has been open to all the ages, and all have read it more or less carefully and critically. Not a word, not a verse can be added to it. Science nor art can change it. Not a discovery of new arts, not an invention of new appliances, can affect in the slightest degree the future life there asserted and defined, or the means of attaining it.

The resurrection of Christ has been in this book from the first, and in the same way. Men have believed in its actual reality. I suppose men do so believe it now, or think they believe it, though I cannot fully understand why. And the same is true of the doctrine of the transubstantiation. For my part, I can imagine nothing to overthrow the overwhelming force of the reasoning against them both. If men really do believe either of these doctrines now, there would seem to be no reason why they should not find believers as long as the race exists, or at least some doctrines of a similar nature, for Christianity is quite as likely to pass away as Paganism ever was. Faith which will accept such statements and theories as facts positively and literally true, will stand any test that can possibly be conceived of.

But there is one feature, thus far prominent in all the religious faiths that have ever been known, which has in every instance been the cause of their decline and ultimate rejection, and which will yet prove the destruction of Christianity, if indeed it has not already thus become so weakened as to render the statement non-prophetic. All religions combine with assertions strictly theological and metaphysical other statements purely logical and physical. Science, in the course of time overthrowing these purely logical and physical teachings, quite naturally casts doubt upon all the other teachings. This is the only way science can aid religion. The Christian, finding the whole world limited in the Old Testament to a very small part of what he now knows the world to be, soon learns to doubt the Creation and the Fall.

This, however, cannot affect in any way a belief in the immortality of the soul, not confined to sect or religion. The only change that can be expected is a change of character, which in time may lift the soul out of the realms of vulgar superstition. About immortality itself in some form there can be little question. To the evolutionist it is axiomatic; and it is not strange that humanity, weary of the endless disputes of philosophers, tortured by uncertainty, led on by love, longing in its objections even for something to believe and to hold fast to, accepts unqualifiedly and unreservedly the teachings of one and another sect, whose disciples with firm, unswerving faith and loyalty assert and maintain a supernatural commission.

At times everything is rejected, and people seem to accept the idea of annihilation. To the weary and faint-hearted death seems not so cheerless. It rather brings an end to misfortune and care and doubt. It cannot be an evil, reason says, to leave all disap-

pointment and sorrow, all falsehood and treachery and unkindness, shame, and despair, and be at rest forever. The poet sings: "Be of good cheer, O heart; for when thy beating shall cease, it shall bring an end to thy suffering as well."

"Rest! Rest! Oh, give me rest and peace!  
The thought of life that ne'er shall cease  
Has something in it like despair,  
A weight I am too weak to bear!  
Sweeter to this afflicted breast  
The thought of never-ending rest;  
Sweeter the undisturbed and deep  
Tranquillity of endless sleep."

Such feeling is by no means common, however, for hope is above despair. The more cheerful and inviting idea will prevail, —

" . . . Life is ever lord of Death,  
And Love can never lose its own."

There may be woes beyond, to be sure; but the mother whose child lies faint on her breast with but a spark of life, fain to think, if it die first, her heart will break, — almost to hope her heart would break, — finds comfort even in the end. Though she would gladly have given her life that it might live, yet from the cold, silent form, beautiful in death, rises a hope that summons a smile through the tears, — a hope of again clasping to her bosom in joy the little child, sweet with the radiance of heaven. How touchingly sweet it is that women, that mothers, are richer in faith than men! God has surely made them better and nobler; and who knows but this crowning love, this passing self-sacrifice of women, is the earthly manifestation of the spirit that rules the universe?

Whether there be a physical heaven of joy and

bliss, an eternal city resplendent with jewels, capital of a land rich in fruits and flowers, awaiting the faithful in Christianity; whether there be a hell, a burning lake of sulphur, into which shall be plunged irrevocably all the masses who have not sought the heaven of Christianity, or who have been so unfortunate as never to have heard of it, — may well be questions of dispute. Be it so or not, there is an immortal life, in very truth, and one which can readily be understood. The dead do live again, and a life that cannot be misapprehended. There is a life beyond the grave, and it is simply this: Every deed is an eternal mother.

The gods do not conceal the future from men; there is no concealment at all. Everything is as plain and simple as day, and open to all; only man cannot understand it. The fact that man has not torn away the veil from the future, or raised the skirt of Isis, does not by any means indicate that the gods have anything to conceal from man. It is a reflection upon man alone, who, with his usual conceit, throws off the blame on the gods. Men will never reach heaven by piling Ossa on Pelion.

The most trivial action begets an infinity of successors, and these in turn yield a harvest an hundred-fold more fruitful, reaching off into infinity. There is no shore to break the ripple which this pebble makes. An earnest word or two may build a nation, just as a little insect, or an idle wave, may carry the pollen on a flower petal which in a few ages will expand to a mighty forest. Men should not so much prepare for eternity as engraft eternity upon and within themselves.

Our friends and acquaintances do not die, — no, not one of them. All live on forever and ever, whether



we are conscious of it or not, whether we believe it or not. Their appearance only dies, and its image fades out of the memory. Thus everything that ever was, is, and shall eternally be. When did Christ die ?

“ Things seem to die, but die not. The spring showers  
Die on the bosom of the motherly earth,  
But rise again in fruits and leaves and flowers ;  
And every death is nothing but a birth.”

When William of Orange died, as we call it, it is said that the children cried in the streets. His immortal soul entered into the life of his people, and it dwells there to this day, and shall abide. When the sad news of our own Lincoln's cruel death was learned, strong men wept like children ; and Washington's calm, patient spirit is a very talisman or touchstone to the whole American people. Are these men dead, think you ? Have they passed away yet, though centuries or but years have flown ? No praise in life was ever so great as such praise in death. To live, to die, like these, is immortality. Henry Esmond, well known to most people, says of his wife, whose grave is ever green, like the grave of many a spring, “ To think of her is to praise God.”

Think of John Brown, traitor, murderer, — whom they hanged by the neck until he was dead ! After he had hung there awhile, they felt his pulse, and then said he was dead, and took him down and buried him : it broke his neck, for all I know. Now turn over a page or two : mighty armies, with the wings of death, go flying, scurrying by. But listen well ; hear that deep humming, that steady undertone swelling now and again in the breeze, rising at times above the storm and crash of battle and thunder and roar of can-

non, — listen well ; in perfect rhythm with the heavy tramp, tramp, tramp, it rises : —

“ John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,  
But his soul is marching on.”

The history of a great and bloody war, lasting for four long years, and bringing untold sorrow to millions of hearts, lies in those simple words.

Oh no, there shall be no giving in marriage in heaven. Good great men shall dwell as it were the angels of God. That is what Christ said. They shall speak to the living, ay, shout and sing to them in thunder tones and in chorus, and again they shall whisper soft and gentle words, as the spirit spoke to Socrates. Sometimes they shall not speak at all, nor whisper, but only look, — look perchance, and smile, alas, it may be with sadness; and as the face shall turn away, averting, it may leave a broken heart.

What think you of this life ? Is it mean, is it narrow, is it unworthy ? So are you that say it, and it would be a blessing if only you might leave it. Your future, — what of it ? Can you hope to smile there over beyond, when you never learned here ? Will children bless you there, when you never gave any here so much as a drop of cold water ? I fear you will raise but a frown, an immortal frown forever and ever, for such was your mortal smile. And if you think to sing, assuredly you will make woful harmony. It requires a good deal of careful, patient vocal training here on earth to render music, — melody that shall rebuild Thebes and convert a nation.

“ Where shall we bury our shame ?  
Where, in what desolate place,  
Hide the last wreck of a name  
Broken and stained by disgrace ?

Death may dissever the chain,  
Oppression will cease when we 're gone ;  
But the dishonor, the stain,  
Die as we may, will live on."

Is life noble, is it true and helpful? So are you. And it will never be less so. Fret not yourselves: appearances are but shadows. Is not the body only appearance? It does not speak unless with the mind. Life may be perfect, and yet have little or no visual appearance. There have been many such, hundreds of them; but worry not. I have strolled in the woods in the springtime, and inhaled delightful and sweet perfume that came whence I know not: I could not find the flower on stem or tree, nor could I hear the hum of bee; for aught I know it was the spirit of just men, — sometimes I know it was the spirit, recalled and detained by memory, of her whose loving care was the protection of my youth, the creator in me of all the good I ever knew.

Our wives have a pretty custom of saving fallen rose petals, and putting them away safely in a little jar. These little jars rest on the mantel for years as sweet as the rose itself, —

"You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,  
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Say, learned dunces, when did those roses die? Sir Philosopher Ignoramus, did you analyze those violets, did you kill the life in those pale blossoms? You may indeed ruthlessly have torn them in pieces, and extracted the paltry secret you call truth and life; but your little girl, little Annie, who gathered them and loved them and inhaled their fragrance, inces-

santly petting them and praising their sweetness, she has their real life, and she is infinitely better and greater than you. But even you, too, may become as great, if only you will be like her, — not proud and vain and boastful, but modest and simple and true. Like a flower, then, only a thousand times sweeter, fuller of meaning, and more potent and helpful, is she who left you in youth or in the prime of life, dear friend, who has fallen asleep and rests now in that quiet place, so familiar, where it is so sweet to retire sunny afternoons in spring and autumn.

Are Haydn and Mendelssohn dead? When did the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind pass away? Beyond a doubt I have heard songs that have no words, and yet that are eloquent and full of meaning. I am sure I have loved and wept with Shakspeare, and but yesterday my friend and I listened to Thackeray. I have seen machinists and others who could tell me of Fulton and Arkwright, and with my own eyes I have beheld Thomas Edison and Graham Bell.

In a great and prosperous woman's college in the East,<sup>1</sup> Christian immortality is made of primal importance. The weak, sickly Christian sentimentality which exists among the students and teachers is disgusting to many young women of healthy, well-regulated minds, who have to submit to it or suffer worse torture. The attempt is made to couple every trivial incident of the day with some Bible verse. The object of every effort is to glorify the kingdom of heaven. The rule of life seems to be made literally: Seek first the kingdom of heaven and all things shall be added. Compared with heaven, this earth is of no consequence at all. What a training this is for a young, pure-minded, but active girl! No wonder so many young-

<sup>1</sup> Wellesley College.

woman graduates are so silly and worthless. To women as well as men this earth is of primary importance. Too much attention cannot be given to earthly things; too little cannot be given to heaven. Young women, care for this life, cherish it: it is rich in blessings to you, if you use it wisely; and blessings innumerable you may confer. No one can exert a better and more noble influence upon mankind than a pure-minded, earnest woman. Wisely improve the opportunities of this world, and all things shall be added.

“ They may rail at this life, — from the hour I began it,  
 I found it a life full of kindness and bliss;  
 And until they can show me some happier planet,  
 More social and bright, I’ll content me with this.  
 As long as the world has such lips and such eyes  
 As before me this moment enraptured I see,  
 They may say what they will of the orbs in the skies,  
 But this earth is the planet for you, love, and me.

“ As for those chilly orbs on the verge of creation,  
 Where sunshine and smiles must be equally rare,  
 Did they want a supply of cold hearts for that station,  
 Heaven knows we have plenty on earth we could spare.  
 Oh! think what a world we should have of it here,  
 If the haters of peace, of affection, and glee  
 Were to fly up to Saturn’s comfortless sphere,  
 And leave earth to such spirits as you, love, and me!”

There may be people that will sing round a great white throne in praise and flattery of a real and visible king of glory, — indeed there are many who have done this, and who still do so now, — but there are better lives, more pure, more humble, more helpful. They that so dance and sing now will keep up their dizzy whirling step without change or rest forever.

Herodias has never ceased to dance before the king.

I suspect that if heaven really be that curious land so often mentioned in sacred literature, the elect will, for a time at least, sadly miss the beautiful skies and fruitful meadows of old earth. Simple country souls will long to hear a cock crow in the morning, or the doves softly cooing as they used to under the eaves of the old barn. If, after all, faith awaits only a magnified earth in heaven, disappointed, it will find that revelation has omitted many, many things exceedingly comfortable and cheerful that we have here. Unless, according to the evolution heresy, Nature adapt herself to environment, the saints in glory will wish for old earth again, and a human companion, if it were indeed only to say, "How our shadows lengthen as the sun goes down!" or, "How fresh is the face of Nature, how sweet the flowers of the field, how delicious are these fruits!"

Whatever the hereafter may bring, be sure it will bring only what each and every one deserves. Immortality of no kind is to be won like a prize in a lottery; so that when all is said, the future life is controlled by this life, and consequently the absurdity of taking thought for a physical heaven is plain. The present only humanity can control, and the present is for eternity.

"The Present, the Present, is all thou hast  
For thy sure possessing;  
Like the patriarch's angel, hold it fast  
Till it gives its blessing.

"Peopling the shadows, we turn from Him  
And from one another;  
All is spectral and vague and dim,  
Save God and our brother.

- “Like warp and woof all destinies  
Are woven fast,  
Linked in sympathy like the keys  
Of an organ vast.
- “Pluck one thread, and the web ye mar ;  
Break but one  
Of a thousand keys, and the paining jar  
Through all will run.
- “Oh, restless spirit ! wherefore strive  
Beyond thy sphere ?  
Heaven and hell, with their joy and pain,  
Are now and here.
- “Back to thyself is measured well  
All thou hast given ;  
Thy neighbor’s wrong is thy present hell ;  
His bliss, thy heaven.
- “Then of what is to be, and of what is done,  
Why quierest thou ?  
The past and the time to be are one,  
And both are Now.”

Wisely to improve the present, to find in it pleasure as well as labor, to acquire the ability of deriving benefit from the things freely given and lying all about, rather than to fret and worry in the trying pursuit of the things at a distance, is all very good and reasonable advice in a general way ; but to give up all thought and desire for the future because only this life is certain, and because it is short, is not the highest and truest view of earthly existence. For while it is true that one’s own individual life is short, the life of man is not so ephemeral. Not an individual but influences in some degree the whole future of the human race. Every act has an endless effect ; every

deed is an eternal mother. Here is a truly noble field for the play of the imagination, and for the highest satisfaction of the intellect. If this seem but a silly and fanciful idea at present, the future will elevate humanity to its level. It is a glorious and infinite truth which future ages will honor and extend.

As men grow in wisdom, and learn to improve their condition by a fuller understanding of the forces about them, greater and higher pleasures will be revealed, which will render the old ideas of the future less and less alluring. It is they that secure little from this life who hope to find compensation in the next. Having suffered here, they hope for pleasure in the hereafter. When men shall learn really to live on earth the fullest and richest life humanity is capable of in each successive age, less thought will be directed to the hereafter. After all, there is a too unworthy selfishness in Christian immortality; and at this point the system most signally fails of the lofty ideal of Christ.

It may be that many will wish that something more were offered to take the place of the Christian faith in the immortality of the soul. Some may have expected a substitute. For such there is none in kind. He who wishes other hope for the future than the one thus briefly outlined, is not yet ready to receive this seed, of which the harvest is an absolute certainty. He who cannot comprehend the relation of cause and effect, and with satisfaction, will never attain to our idea of immortality, though innumerable examples day by day bear witness to its absolute reality. He who cannot in his mind summon the loved and lost to life again, and understand with gratitude that such life is none the less real because physically invisible, will never attain to the lofty ideal set by the master him-



self. For that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of spirit, is spirit. Like the wind which blows where it lists, the sound of which we hear indeed, but cannot tell whence it comes nor whither it goes, is the spirit.

Perchance as our eyes now see in the movement of the very winds order and regularity, we may even find a cheerful and beneficent future for the soul that has blessed the earth. With how much greater emphasis, then, is the sublime teaching thus renewed; and how touchingly sweet and comforting is that old, old story thus understood! We cannot get back to Christ; we must go forward to him. Thus approached, the very presence of the master himself seems to renew the life and meaning of those beautiful words: "Mary, thy brother shall rise again, and not as thou hast thought, in the resurrection of the body at the last day; the present, the past, and the future live only in spirit: for I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The soul, the spirit lives on, though the body lie mouldering in the grave.

This is the most beautiful and sublime inspiration the world has ever known. The mind is above the body. Christ, and the apostles too, mistaken though they were, have found victory in death, and live now, and truly shall live forever. Thou art indeed right, great teacher and thinker. Though heaven and earth pass, and all written word and thought pass with them, yet shall not thy word pass away: for thy word is truth; and truth has been, is, and shall be, though never so much as uttered or even thought.

## VII.

## PHILOSOPHY AND GOD.

“Egad, I think the interpreter is the harder to be understood of the two!”

CONSIDERING human life as a continuous existence personified to a single individual, this one person, viewed from a scientific standpoint, appears to be travelling on an endless road that stretches back through various windings until it is lost in darkness, and runs forward as the person is travelling until again it is lost in a flood of dazzling light. As he travels, there is continuous change as the point of view alters. The alluring, tantalizing lake, fringed with refreshing verdure, strangely sinks into the desert. Mountain ranges melt into cloud and dissolve in vapor. The long shadows shorten, shift their places, and finally disappear. This road might be considered as color, beginning with a jet black and shading off to the imperceptible color of light.

This single individual, viewed again from a metaphysical standpoint, appears to be permanently fixed on a pivot, which permits him to face all directions in succession, but never to progress in any. This pivotal man seems to be dimly outlined in a thick, uncertain mist of grayish hue, perfectly even in color. Keeping this latter idea in mind, it may be well to look through the eyes of our imaginary individual as he is turned around. We shall find that the view

extends in all directions to exactly the same distance, and is lost always in exactly the same uncertain haze. The same question is continually raised, and the same answer always returns.

What am I, and what is this world about me? Who made me, and to what end? Is my life limited to this world? From the earliest times recognized by man these questions have been framed; and in general, the metaphysical answers have been identical, though the form has been different. No answer has yet been given that is in any sense satisfactory. The Sphinx has never revealed her secret. The knot has never been untied, though it has been cut again and again.

For convenience, the history of philosophy has been separated into two main divisions, ancient and modern. Each comprises several so-called schools. These may best be considered in chronological order.

## I. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY.

1. THE IONIC SCHOOL. A material element or principle is claimed to explain the universe. Everything has a common foundation; and this is matter, of one form or another. The fundamental elements are the familiar earth, air, fire, and water of the old school books. Thales, of Miletus, B. C. 636, figures prominently in this school. A power behind Nature is recognized. Water is first claimed as the primal creative element. But Anaximander, B. C. 610, perceives that water is destructive as well as productive, and claims that the qualities are inconsistent; for the creative principle cannot both build up and destroy. Consequently he sets up a double element, ἀρχή, — that is, *beginning*. This element is finite and infinite at once, and gives

off heat and cold, corresponding to life and death. Anaximenes, B. C. 529, declares that air is the primal element. Air produces the other elements by concussion. Thus the clouds coming together cause lightning. Under his teaching air was personified as a god.

2. THE PYTHAGOREAN SCHOOL. This school was established by Pythagoras, of Samos, B. C. 600, who claimed that research had been conducted hitherto in the wrong direction. The fundamental element is not qualitative, but is based rather on quantity. To explain his meaning, he reasoned thus: water is not the element, but rather how much water, or the quantity of water; and thus he reached number as the creative principle. All relations are numerical. Furthermore, numbers are symbolical. The idea was consistently maintained, reaching throughout the physical and the metaphysical world alike. Harmony is universal. It applies alike to music and morals, mind and matter. The soul is recognized as a higher region or degree of harmony.

3. THE ELEATIC SCHOOL. This school is a culmination of philosophical endeavor. The steps of progress are clear. A power behind Nature and controlling it is recognized at first, upon which ancient mythology is based by simple personification. Then follows a material element, perceptible at first, and then imperceptible, to be succeeded in turn by the numerical idea, which may have been non-material. The Eleatic school comes out boldly and clearly, basing its doctrine upon an element imperceptible and non-material, — namely, *pure being*. Xenophanes, B. C. 620, is the leader. The universe is claimed to be spherical, perfect, and eternal. He opposes mythology and anthropomorphism. He is the first pantheist, and is above

all a sceptic. Parmenides, B. C. 536, famous for having lived a perfect life, teaches that pure thought and pure being are one. The mutable is only apparent; the real is unchangeable. Zeno, B. C. 500, is prominent in this school. From the inconsistency of the many he finds the reality of the one. Multiplicity and movement are both impossible. His paradox on motion is famous, and the position is maintained to this day by no less a light than Spencer.

4. INDEPENDENT PHILOSOPHERS. Heraclitus, B. C. 503, leads the independents, and is considered one of the most profound of all the ancients. His work on philosophy is supposed to be the oldest prose treatise on the subject. Early philosophy was written in poetry. Socrates even commends Heraclitus. Mutation is the central thought in his system; there is no such thing as permanence. Life is a stream ever ebbing and flowing. Strife is the father of all things. Fire seems to be his primal element; and on this account, by many he is classed among the Ionic philosophers. Empedocles, B. C. 450, followed in his footsteps, denying origination and destruction. Hate creates union; love causes separation. But Anaxagoras, friend of Pericles, B. C. 500, is the most famous independent. He denies the reality of the Athenian gods, and has to leave Athens for it; but leaving, he utters those immortal words: "It is not I that have lost the Athenians, but the Athenians that have lost me." He distinguishes between force and matter. Intelligence is his ruling principle, and an intelligence embracing design. His intelligence is separated into constituents like our molecules; and he asserts that these molecules, as it were, pervade all things.

5. THE ATOMISTS. Leusippus founds the school; but Democritus, B. C. 460, is its distinguished light.

Atoms are the primal elements. Quality is defined as but variation of quantity. The atom is an independent entity. The soul is an aggregate of atoms, and its perception is occasioned by effluxes of atoms given out by various objects. Vision and hearing are explained similarly. Thus a tree by throwing its peculiar atoms as it were into the eye causes the image in the mind. Anger is centred in the heart, desire in the liver. He introduces the element of chance into philosophy, though it was not altogether unknown. Like atoms have a mutual attraction. Chance is not personified.

6. THE SOPHISTS. All these materialistic theories proved failures. The Sophists fall back on the individual. Each individual has the ultimate authority in and of himself. We have much to thank the Sophists for. In this school was democracy born. All lovers of free institutions will ever be grateful to these, though their very name became a byword and a reproach, and is so even to this day. The rule of reason and of mind distinguished this school. The Sophist is pre-eminently a teacher, and for a time at least a popular teacher. However weak and erratic their views, they encouraged thought and study, and each was free to his own opinions.

Protagoras, B. C. 480, was prominent among this class. He maintained that truth was to each individual just exactly what he saw and felt for himself. Rare sense this; and it seems that Christ himself later taught the same doctrine, — he becomes an honorary member of the society. But Protagoras went too far. He declared that there was no general truth; and for this dangerous teaching his books were burned and he himself banished. Prodicus became the most highly respected of the school. But the doctrine could

not be retained long; it was too far in advance of the times. It was practically non-philosophical agnosticism.

7. THE SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY. Socrates, B. C. 469, is of course the founder. He is in a way the forerunner of Christ, an hundredfold more truly and profoundly so than John the Baptist, for he is the intellectual forerunner. He claimed that a spirit dissuaded him at times, much as Christ did later. He mocked the prevailing idiosyncrasies of philosophy, just as Christ later derided the hypocritical absurdities of Judaism. For this he suffered death as a blasphemer and a corrupter of youth, just as Christ was crucified as a heretic.

Nature had proved inexhaustible to philosophy, and Socrates abandons it practically; he seeks the good. The highest good is man's duty; but to attain this man must know what is good, and so he comes to investigate the human mind. He agrees with the Sophists, finding that mind rules; but he distinguishes between reason and caprice. It is claimed that at this point he breaks with the Sophists. Really he is only the better partisan; he is only more profound. He supplants ethics by morality. He is the shrewdest of the ancients. He retains the questioning on his side by frankly admitting that he does not know, and asking for information. His mother was a midwife; he, too, is another, helping the mind of others to bear its children, thought.

In morals, to his mind, evil is only ignorance. Virtue is knowledge. He finds no religion or philosophy; but schools were established after him, just as Christianity followed Christ. Important among these was Cynicism (Diogenes, B. C. 412), teaching that the end of life is freedom from desire. This school taught

that men should despise pleasure and luxury. It sneered at prevailing customs and manners, and even at the prevailing dress of the Athenians. It denied both art and science, denouncing one as a lie and a sham, and the other as an unworthy fancy. Cynicism followed Socrates just as Christianity followed Christ. Is it not strange to find at this time a perfect prototype of Christianity ?

Hedonism is another school founded on the Socratic philosophy, teaching that happiness is the end of man ; not sensual license, but refined mental and moral pleasure. Megarianism (Euclid, B. C. 450) is another school, developing the logical side of the philosophy.

But Plato, B. C. 429, is supposed to be the best imitator of Socrates, though it is to be feared that his philosophy may resemble in a way Mr. Pope's Homer. His theory of the idea is pronounced. Thought is a permanent subjective reality. He denied the idea of the Sophists that knowledge is but opinion. Ideas subjective regulate knowledge ; ideas objective are the essential principles of existence. Things, then, participate in ideas, and become real only through the idea. Ideas unite, rising higher and higher, until we reach the one ultimate idea. Justice and Beauty and Truth are involved in this ultimate. Deity is not quite personal, though creative.

Aristotle, B. C. 384, follows Plato, differing only in that he claims that ideas have no objective existence. He recognizes the unity of essence in the world. Matter apart from form has no existence. Form involves thought, matter, and purpose. Something exists, and this is eternal. Recognizing the *cosmos* as real, a chain of cause and effect must follow. This leads to a first cause which is originating and divine. He does not claim that worship is due this divine being.



8. THE SCEPTICS. Pyrrho, B. C. 325, was the founder of this philosophy. Little or nothing is known of his teaching. The philosophy is based on the principle that there is no standard of judgment of truth. Things simply appear to us in one light or another. The philosophy is negative. Epicureanism (Epicurus, B. C. 342) is really but a form of Scepticism. It resembles Hedonism, and its search was directed to happiness in its best sense. Scepticism, abandoning the endless and fruitless disputes of the other schools, sought refuge in morals. Indeed, Socrates himself first made philosophy moral.

The Stoics (Zeno, third century B. C.) followed in a great measure the principles laid down by Aristotle.

9. NEOPLATONISM. Greece no longer remained the home of philosophy. Egypt and Rome became the new centres. It is even claimed that philosophy at this time became absolutely lost; and it unquestionably does yield its independence, becoming henceforth for centuries but the dotting parasite of the Christian religion. Neoplatonism flourished at Alexandria, being established there by Philo a few years before the advent of Christ. We find this school bitterly contending against Christianity. They were Jews; and the Jews who really knew the most about Christ have always denied his divinity and the faith built upon his life and teaching. Faith is the essence of the philosophy. Science is from God, and its name is faith. God is incomprehensible, but still can be understood somewhat by the Word. The Word is God's thought. The writer of the book of St. John in the New Testament was a Neoplatonist. This Alexandrian school framed the famous theory of the Trinity. Faith was placed far above reason. With Proclus, 412, this school expired, and ancient philo-

sophy comes to an end. Religion takes its place. The enthusiast, dispensing with the ordinary modes of investigation, finds his solution of the universe in revelation. Reason surrenders to faith.

SCHOLASTICISM. This is the name given to the transition period of philosophy, comprising in all about a thousand years, or the years from 600 to 1600. The absolute intellectual barrenness of these centuries has been noticed before in other chapters of this work.

## II. MODERN PHILOSOPHY.

1. GIORDANO BRUNO, 1548, an Italian thinker, heads the list of modern philosophers, and is a worshipper of Nature. He is famous rather as a pioneer than because of his teaching. The real fame of re-establishing philosophy independent and unrestricted belongs to Francis Bacon, 1561. This great thinker has been classed rather as a scientist than as a philosopher by many, and with reason. Despite this so-called emancipation of philosophy, the great fact remains that to this day philosophy has maintained the position, generally speaking, of handmaid to religion. Philosophers have been very slow and unwilling to publish views contrary to religious doctrines. Most have prosecuted their investigations with eyes constantly fixed on religious truth. We may give Bacon place here, however, and treat him as is customary. Bacon imitates Aristotle. His introduction of the inductive method into science has rendered his name immortal. Science is not mean and unworthy, is the lesson he taught; and that which is most useful is most valuable. He did not trouble himself much about gods.

2. THE CARTESIAN SCHOOL. Descartes, 1596, is the

founder, and is noted also as a great mathematician. *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am, or exist) is his famous fundamental proposition. Analysis is his principle of reasoning. He begins with the infinite, and descends to the finite. He does not designate this infinite, (*substantia*) as God, nor does he personify the principle. He is a heretic, of course. Malebranche, 1632, is a follower of Descartes, and presents the same theories.

Spinoza, 1632, is the only other famous thinker of this school. For his teachings he was excommunicated, and barely lived, but still a life of freedom, by grinding and polishing lenses. "Spit on that grave; there lies Spinoza," is the comment I find on him. Substance is the perfect one; all else is imperfect. Substance is independent, interminable, and it existed before thought. It is not merely thought; it is, and as such cannot be described by that which is finite. Hence it cannot be called good, for it is goodness itself, and as such is God. God has not free will; for if this be so, something may be done that has not been accomplished. There is nothing God has not done. God is not personal and is not local. God does not make use of design, because this would require means and time, both of which are by necessity finite. Individuals are non-essential. Man's thought is as the wave of the sea, or as a bubble on the wave. So far as we reach consciousness we reach God.

3. EMPIRICISM (Locke 1632) teaches that all knowledge comes from experience. Innate ideas are claimed. No principle is of universal application. Mind is at first an unwritten tablet. Religious truth is admitted. David Hume, 1776, is the most famous member of this school. He denies the reality of substance, which Locke admitted. He also denies causation. It is

only succession which we see, and we assert the relation. There is no universality and no necessity. Immortality and the miraculous he denied; indeed the latter received its death-blow at his hands.

Sensationism is empiricism in France. The French practise; the English only preach. Condillac, 1715, declares that all knowledge comes through sensation. He recognizes God as existent. Helvetius, 1715, asserts that the moral and ethical is only the customary. Self-interest is the principle of existence; for if this is not true, theory works one way and practice the other. His theory was suppressed.

4. MATERIALISM. Voltaire, 1696, is the leader. His theory is simply that of sensationism recognizing a cause; and this cause is matter. He recognizes a God, though unmercifully criticising Christianity. All Nature proclaims a God. Vice is weakness; religious zeal, fanaticism. Free will is denied. His famous saying has proved quite true: "I have accomplished more in my day than either Luther or Calvin." Diderot, 1750, finds the atom fundamental. God is an aggregate of atoms. Law and free will are only fancy. "Immortality is a desire to live in the minds of posterity." Holbach, 1770, represents the extreme view. There is no God and no soul. Immortality is the remembrance of posterity. Force and matter alone are real.

5. IDEALISM. Empiricism declares that the intellect (*ego*) is simply passive; Idealism says it is active. Leibnitz, 1646, called the modern Aristotle, founded the Royal Academy. The Cartesian substance was infinite; here it becomes unity, the *monad*. The universe is an aggregate of monads. The monad is indivisible, and therefore non-material. It is a transcendental atom. The atom is the unit of matter;

the monad is the unit of force. This monad is organic, and consequently is a vital force. God is the predominant monad, having reflecting and creating capacity. The ideal in deity becomes real. We have, on the one hand, a universe of force, of monads; on the other, a universe of matter, of atoms. Souls reflect the divine rather than matter. Good is inconceivable without evil. Perfect intelligence alone is perfect good. Creations must be less than the creator. The moral world is like art. The shadow is the most important factor in art; the discord, in music; so evil is the important factor in virtue. Without choice there is no virtue. Berkeley, 1750, is another exponent of this philosophy. Wolff, 1679, revises and amplifies the work of Leibnitz. The individual is exalted by this philosophy quite as much as it is considered secondary by the Cartesian School. Wolff is prominent chiefly because he introduced philosophy into Germany.

6. CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY. This school takes ground between Idealism and Materialism, finding both extreme, though containing much truth. Kant, 1724, asks the question fairly, Are there *a priori* elements in the mind? He then asserts that this question must be answered affirmatively, offering time and space as examples. They are not perceived as results. One is an internal presumption; the other, an external presumption. The intellect is spontaneous, active, and non-receptive. The soul is independent and immortal. The understanding, he declares, cannot substantiate this idea while still it does exist, involving the *a priori*. Of God likewise we have an idea. Cosmologically, phenomena cannot give the universal necessity. At most they can give but a cause for themselves. Our world-phenomena, not

being universal, cannot give the ultimate, uncreated totality. Teleologically, again, he runs up against the same barrier. We can only prove a designer equal to the design in question. Having only part of the universe, we cannot construct in the mind the creator of the whole universe.

The will is automatic, because a moral law or principle controls us unconditionally. Motive is admitted as having connection with the will. The moral law is universal. In the world of sense, virtue and happiness conflict; in the supersensual, they unite. This is the supreme good. We can only approximate this in our present state. Its attainment involves progression unlimited. Here is the postulate, immortality. To reach this supreme good, Nature, external and internal, must be overcome. Here is the postulate of assistance, God. The understanding can master neither postulate. Morality leads to religion, because the highest good demands a God, — another postulate. Religion absorbing morality renders all duties divine commands. The kingdom of God follows; and its objective, visible existence here is the Church. Reason interprets Nature by categories partaking of transcendent ideas. Transcendent judgment aids the reason. Nature is a series of organisms involving a cause. We cannot understand Nature undesigned; nor can we substantiate the designer, though possessing the transcendental idea.

Jacobi, 1743, follows Kant, and states his theistic idea concisely. A God demonstrated would be finite. A God cannot come through science. Fichte, 1762, Hebart, 1776, Schelling, 1775, are lesser philosophers in the same general theory; Hegel, 1770, completes the school.

The successors of Hegel established a kind of school

by themselves. The question of main interest was, Is Christianity rational? Kant clearly proved that science cannot reach a God, but bridged the chasm by a postulate God who reveals his will. This brings in the element of tradition; for revelation is but single, and is valid only to the one who has the experience. Three views were expressed.

Erdmann, 1805, and Dorner, 1809, admit miracles and revelation as proved.

Michelet, 1801, and Rosenkranz, 1805, assert that miracles may be proved; whether any one has been proved is an open question with them.

Strauss, 1808, and Baur, 1792, maintain that miracles are irrational, and are to be rejected as facts because of the lack of evidence.

7. EXISTING SCHOOLS. (1) The Scottish school practically falls back on Kant's theory. In "common-sense" certain innate principles of knowledge exist. Reid, Stewart, Brown, and Hamilton, 1710-1788, are the principal exponents; and they came generally to Kant's conclusion that a God cannot be known. God is created out of the mind. God is innate, and must be accepted without understanding. Rational criticism is not proper or admissible in this field.

(2) Eclecticism, located in France, is a reaction from Materialism, and is based on Kant and the Scotch position. Cousin, 1792, founds the order. It is a transcendent philosophy, not conditional.

(3) Positivism is another tendency located in France, which is practically a rejection of religious and philosophical ideas as progressive stages of thought. Philosophy is a co-ordination of all science that will give positive truth, which is knowledge. Humanity is its highest object of worship. Comte, 1795 or 1797, is the chief supporter of the theory. He

sets aside both philosophy and religion, finding no clew to the origin or destiny of the universe. Even causation is denied. Mathematics is valid and fundamental truth absolute.

(4) Pessimism finds the world as bad as may be. Schopenhauer, 1770, is a leader ; it may be added that he failed as an instructor, which may account for his ideas. Life, he asserts, is unsatisfied desire. Hartman, 1840, asserts that the universe is developed under an unconscious providence, not personal nor divine. Life is rendered tolerable only by sleep and illusion. He is a shrewd thinker, and consistent. His answer to the critics consists of a collection of their criticisms, which are so contradictory that they destroy themselves.

(5) Agnosticism is rather a tendency than a school. All knowledge is relative, and is confined to world-phenomena. God is unknowable. Spencer, 1820, is the leader, and he recognizes an infinite source of power, call it what you will. Fiske is a less famous member of the school. Religious truth is admitted as valid in a general way. Stuart Mill, 1806, is ranked as high as Spencer himself. He denies that there is a God to be worshipped. He also denies causation. Some one has classed George Eliot, 1819, as one of the school, with the spiteful remark that her philosophy is as indefinite as her name.

(6) Transcendentalism is the only school the United States has fostered; and that is saying very little. It is really a protest against Materialism. Emerson, 1803, is the seer ; Margaret Fuller, the critic ; Theodore Parker, the preacher ; George Ripley, the editor ; and Amos Bronson Alcott, d. 1888, the undertaker.

(7) Evolutionism is the last school to be considered,



and it promises to be the most fruitful of all. The theory is simple. All things are evolved from a single source, or homogeneous germ. The main difficulty that troubles the critics consists in bridging over the gap between the animate and the inanimate. Darwin, 1809, is, of course, the founder. He left the system very incomplete. He left, however, a suggestion that may revolutionize the world of thought. The theory is rather scientific than theistic. All the later schools run rather to science. Admitting the theory, it is but a method; and so we are thrown back as ever to the question, Whose method? This question the school, if a school can be said to exist, has not attempted as yet to answer.

If the patience is sufficient to endure the exhaustive examination of all the theories these philosophers have constructed to explain the universe and its relation to a god, the judgment will invariably conclude that the interpreter is harder to be understood than the god. To any but the student all these theories appear in general hopelessly contradictory; and so they are as to the essence and character of a god. But progress is clearly apparent. While the modern schools are no nearer a comprehension of a god, real and substantial, than the very oldest, still many principles of correct thinking have been developed and applied. This is the only practical progress philosophy reveals during the whole four thousand years of its existence; indeed, it may well be asserted that even this fruit itself is scientific rather than philosophical.

Philosophy proper, involving, as it always does, the metaphysical extensively, is of scarcely any practical value and utility, saving perhaps the gratification it yields to its devotees. Philosophy proper may be

said to seek to render humanity godlike; science seeks to furnish humanity with everything and anything that can be of use. Philosophy fails, as Kant has clearly demonstrated it must, simply because, being the research of finite man, it cannot comprehend the infinite or universal, which requires infinite or universal experience. It is as if one should attempt to reckon the number of trees in the whole world from the number ascertained in a certain wood, beyond whose narrow and petty confines he could not look or traverse. Why, science assures us that Sirius is fifty billion miles out into space, and that probably thousands of stars exist that are unknown to us, because our sight, aided by the best devices human ingenuity can invent, is unable to reach their distance. The earth is but a paltry eight thousand miles in diameter. Man, confined to this tiny, infinitesimal particle of matter, boldly asserts a complete theory of the whole universe. Not unreasonable is the query of Teufelsdröckh: "Which of your philosophical systems is other than a dream theorem, a net quotient, confidently given out, where divisor and dividend are both unknown?" God must laugh outright, could such a being exist with such capabilities, to behold the ludicrous actions and antics of his chosen, created in his image.

Philosophy seeks what her greatest lights have admitted she cannot understand. In the terms of an eloquent critic, she draws a good bow, but, like the hero Acastes, the arrow is aimed at the stars, and though there is no lack of strength or want of skill, the effort is simply thrown away. Acastes' arrow left a train of dazzling radiance, indeed, but it pierced no target. An endless tangle of long, mysterious words is about all thousands of years of philosophical study

have given us, — words which in themselves require volumes of definition and commentary to explain, and which are as devoid of common utility and intelligibility as the most meaningless of barbarian hieroglyphics. Retrogression, instead of progression, marks the long history of this evanescent bauble; and the reason for this is clear. In the beginning the research was physical, though poetic in form. The best of the ancients were physical investigators; but their instructions were followed by metaphysical theories. The ancients were children lisping a new and untried and marvellous language, descriptive of world-phenomena; their successors were toothless old men, mumbling over a dried-up gibberish of supernatural and metaphysical isms. That which is beautiful in the winning mythology of ancient Greece becomes hateful in the senseless, long-drawn arguments of scholasticism.

As has been suggested before, modern philosophy is rather nominal than real. It is philosophy separated from metaphysics largely. All the prominent investigators of this century are really scientists; and the aim of the whole research has generally been to separate the metaphysical from the supernatural. Men of high intellectual powers, if in youth seized with the inclination, soon tire of employment resembling the labors “of the damned in the Grecian Tartarus, to spin forever on the same wheel round the same pivot, to gape forever after the same deluding clusters, to pour water forever into the same bottomless buckets, to pace forever to and fro on the same wearisome path after the same recoiling stone.”

So many times have the pitiful arguments of natural theology been refuted, that repetition seems almost unnecessary. It is enough to say with regard to the

ontological evidence, that it is *a priori*, and that its very first statement involves its conclusion. It simply takes the whole question *pro confesso*. Admitting the hypotheses, the conclusions are inevitable. Giving the utmost weight to the cosmological evidence, including the argument from design, it would prove only a force or designer sufficient to make the world, or that limited part of the universe which is known to us. The argument apart from design, relying upon a first cause, is absurd. In fact, "first cause" was made a hobby of by the schoolmen, and it is worthy of them. Every effect is cause to some other effect. A first cause or a last effect would be simply an assumption. Every individual mind would find the end in a different place. Mathematically we reach only infinity at either end; that is, there is a series of causes reaching back beyond the reflection of the human mind, and a series of effects running forward without limit.

The arguments which are used to clothe this natural god with the attributes of personality, holiness, spirituality, and the other qualities, will answer just as well to add the attributes of badness, infinite size, and beauty. There is no limit to the number of absurd qualities it may be made to possess with just as much reason. The position taken now by the best natural theologians — indeed it is Hobson's choice with them, for they are forced to it — is that all these arguments lead only to the presumption that there is such a god. Of course, they make the presumption very strong. Yet the evidence and argument which they use to make this god, from beginning to end, are of a nature which is not permitted to be used to control human affairs in the courts of justice in any civilized country. Such evidence would not be

admitted at all in our courts, and if it were, on the strength of it no jury would find even a verdict of petty larceny against an accused person. Despite this fact, the pitiful god of natural theology is asserted with all the emphasis of absolute certainty, so that until recently to deny its validity was to seal one's own fate, and even now in some communities social ostracism awaits him who dares to follow the dictates of reason.

Mau's idea of a god is just in proportion to his capacity; it is a measure of his culture and education. To the first inhabitants of the world, there seemed to exist utter lack of regularity and order. Heat and cold seemed merely to happen, and the light of day itself appeared capricious, and the very ground unstable. Gradually some kind of order was recognized, and simple laws and principles understood. As more was observed these principles became more extensive. As the result of education they are even more broadly conceived now than ever, and are constantly receiving wider application. Men are now learning that the difference between themselves and other animals and things is only a difference of degree and capacity. When man knows what is really good for him, he will choose it; when he cannot perceive this, some chance or principle will guide him, perhaps aright, perhaps not. If he makes mistakes, he will profit by experience. It is only from ignorance that men seriously discuss the possibility of membership in ten universities. As knowledge is gained, it is perfectly plain that one may hold honors from a hundred universities and colleges, if sufficiently popular, fortunate, and learned. "A university is a body; and while a body may have many members, a member cannot have several bodies. This is monstrous. The

member would be the body, and the bodies or universities the member, and altogether it would be a scandal to learned scholasticism." The holy Saint Thomas might have stood aghast at the idea of making himself a member of ten universities, — his ignorance only is to be pitied. A modern professor or politician finds it easy to acquire unlimited membership of such kind; and the modern youth easily secures membership in one, if a good stroke oar or end rush.

But we are finally forced to the conclusion that human thought is not limited to this life. The manifestations of higher power lie about on all sides; and in all ages and in all nations humanity has believed in the existence of some ruling intelligence, generally personified. But the unanimity ceases at this point. Polytheism and monotheism alike have their believers, and the qualities and attributes and relations of these gods vary almost as the individual varies. Revelation is asserted and likewise disputed; moral government finds its believers and its rejecters; and personality itself is quite as much in question. Concerning all these theories the vast majority of men have always been in error.

The Christian god is a pitiable idol. There is no crime in the decalogue of which it is not guilty. There is no crime attributable to humanity so outrageous as many that it is said to have perpetrated. It is strange that a civilized and intelligent man can worship such an uncivilized and monstrous idol. It does not appreciate honesty and integrity in the least. Faith and cruelty are the only virtues it knows. Even our human criminal law always recognizes intent as the essence of crime; divine law does away entirely with intent. Innocence and ignorance

are no excuse. Unbelief, though of that which was not understood, is the warrant of eternal punishment, the certain token of heinous crime. What an unworthy idol proves this god! Why, even a dog can distinguish between being stumbled over and being kicked! But the Christian god has not the fine sensibilities even of a miserable cur. It is better, as Bacon says, to have no opinion of God than one which is unworthy of him.

It may be noticed right here that it was this same Bacon who, with his application of the inductive method of reasoning, inflicted the first crushing blow on theology. He demonstrated the fallacy of beginning with principles which are to be assumed as truths, though incomprehensible. The very source of theological power lay in this method of argument. From the time of Bacon on, the theologians have been driven from one position after another, until their retreat has assumed the character of an ignominious flight. Indeed, theologians have for some time ceased to rely upon reasonable argument. None will attempt a discussion, unless the whole conclusion is admitted from the outset. It is not denied that induction fails absolutely to validate the conclusions of natural theology. The *a priori* presumption is the only resource of the system. Granting the validity of this argument is simply giving up the whole case. All that is required is to deduce logical inferences from that which is first assumed, as, for instance, supernatural communication and revelation. Even the theologians themselves, in assuming this *a priori* ground, admit that it is unintelligible and beyond comprehension. But credulity is converted into an honor, and faith is divine. Deduction tends to multiply assumed laws and original principles; induction tends to diminish

them. Great commendation is due Bacon for his bold stand, praise in proportion to the contumely and insult that have been heaped upon him. And it is not the least hopeful sign of modern times that he is receiving this recognition of his services so long overdue.

A simple statement of the conclusions of the two methods will illustrate sufficiently the systems. Conscience has ever been a ground of serious discussion. How is right distinguished from wrong? The inductive school says, By association through the relation of social causes. Conscience, says Spencer, is the result of accumulated experiences of utility gradually organized and inherited. The deductive school assert that this distinction of right and wrong is inherent, beyond analyzation; in short, it is an *a priori* presumption. The former system permits development; the latter really denies it. The one admits the understanding, and is consistent with reason; the other excludes all reasoning, and denies the validity of intellectual judgment.

Those who have held to the *a priori* view have never been content to discuss simply and reasonably the proposition of the other school, but have always resorted to scurrility and abuse, ever attacking the motives and avoiding the reasoning, gaining more applause by such personal abuse than they could have gained by fair argument. The reason why they could thus impose upon the world is simply because in the almost universal ignorance their position was accepted without question, and when any one became so rash as to gainsay its validity, their power enabled them to suppress his exposures, and even to take his life. The reason is that ignorance was in the ascendancy. Knowledge was almost hopelessly lost in the mist of all but universal superstition. And this cloud of



superstition and ignorance is but just beginning to lift even now. Prejudice to this day is stronger than reason in almost any disputed field, whether of science, art, literature, or theology. But falsity will out, only give it time. The ordinary, the uniform, the regular, is science; the abnormal and the supernatural is superstition.

The time will yet come when the distinction between the animate and the inanimate shall be proved a fallacy. Evolution has no gulf to bridge over. The chasm does not exist at all. Philosophers cross the bridge before they come to it. No one of them can point out the dividing line between life and death, the organic and the inorganic. Organic and inorganic are but nominal, and in no true sense real. Everything is life in this whole universe. There is absolutely no death and no dead matter. The very stones under our feet live and breathe, and love and hate, weep and rejoice; and even they shall in time rise and mutiny, in very truth, at the fallacy of a dead world. Wonderful indeed would it be, if we, who cannot now comprehend the constant life-activity of what is actually about us, should reach a perfect understanding of the great and infinite universe, of which vastly the greater part is absolutely unknown to us. Yet we have the spectacle in every age of a body of men "divinely taught," alleging that they are "divinely called," who positively assert that they comprehend all, and apparently believe their assertions. The divine "calling" of most of them urges them to warn, and generally to curse, those who cannot or will not accept their views. Ignorance and self-assertion are ever allied. This class of men has lost a vast amount of ground, and irrevocably, during the present century. The intellect first threw off its allegiance; the

affections and prejudices followed rather slowly; and without these, fashion and policy have but a slender footing.

All these various philosophies have been accepted and rejected by succeeding ages. Others will undoubtedly rise to supplant those now in vogue, only to be followed by still another set. At one time they seem infinite wisdom itself; at another, infinite foolishness. Yet at all times there is a great undercurrent of truth which ever holds its steady course, irresistible, never-ceasing, though at times it sinks deeper below the surface and seems lost. The new philosophies will have the pleasure, as their predecessors have had, of demonstrating the ignorance of the past. There is something grand and beautiful in these partial and faulty victories of truth over error. Perhaps in the exhilaration which these partial victories induce, lie the real source and promise of new acquisitions of the precious metal of truth. Knowledge and education — that is, the means of gaining knowledge — are the grandest of world-phenomena. What a delightful revelation awaits the thoughtful infant of to-day, if he live to the age of fourscore and ten!

There may still be that in the world, not to say in the universe, which will ever elude the mental grasp of humanity, just as in the dim twilight of Tartarus the fond Grecian mother, whose sacred form is wasted to a fleeting shadow by grief for the loved and lost, yielding to no disease but the absence of her cherished son, eludes the physical grasp of the ardent Ulysses. But whether this be so or not, one thing is sure: some uniform succession of law or principle regulates the universe. If the life it bears, itself in all its forms participating in this infinite power, fall

within the line of its proper exercise, it is fulfilling its destiny or purpose in the highest degree; if it fall without, its manifestation is quickly changed, though the life is not lost and cannot be annihilated. Not all the prayer and sacrifice of saints, or insult and cursing of demons, can change in the least degree this ultimate and infinite power, call it what you will. Nature is in every particular infinite art, unknown, it may well be, to man. Chance is but direction uncomprehended; and discord but harmony too sweet and perfect for human ear to catch.

The infinite ruler of the universe has loftier themes and higher aims to take his attention than mere human affairs. Human life, right enough in its place, is only an infinitesimal part of universal life, and can claim but a corresponding part of infinite direction. They are but sham gods that sit on thrones in human shapes, profoundly engaged in the busy idleness of controlling mankind. God does not command humanity in any such way. He does not threaten and rage and storm at human obstinacy. He is not jealous of men. He does not make creeds or commandments. His voice is not limited to the winds and the thunder. He speaks in no uncertain way in every bird and beast and living thing. His eloquence is fully as great in those things men call dead. He is the God of the living, not the God of the dead. He is Life.

The Christian god who cannot or will not distinguish between the just and the unjust, nor punish insult to his holy name, will concern himself little about the prayers and sacrifices of those who claim to be his elect, but to whom he gives no sign. For the enlightenment of such there is a pretty fable, old as time itself, for all one can tell, of a poor man who prayed day and night without ceasing for wealth.

His god was a miserable wooden idol, set up in a prominent place in his house. With all his prayers he became constantly poorer and poorer, until one day, in a rage, he seized it by the legs and dashed it to pieces on the floor, when hundreds of shining gold pieces rolled out in all directions, raising to his lips the exclamation: "What a fool I have been to worship a miserable god who yields to force what he would not grant to prayer!"

Thousands of men have treated the modern idol in the same way, and thus have revealed to their longing eyes priceless treasure, far more valuable than gold and silver and precious stones, fully realizing the eternal promise of him who set the example at the very beginning of the modern era, and who suffered a cruel death for his bold independence. Intellectual freedom is beyond price. God is spirit; and they that worship aright, worship in spirit and truth. The infinite spirit-power of the universe is no man of giant stature, clad in shining robes, with flowing whiskers and noble mien, wielding a golden sceptre, at the inclination of which thousands of saints in white prostrate themselves and sing eternal praises. Such gods are idols, the creations of superstition. The injunction to refrain from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge is sufficient ground to seal the condemnation of any god. Humanity has but to seize its petty, contemptible god by the legs and dash its head against a stone, which stone may be called education, and from its dead body will roll an intellectual independence that shall enrich the world.

## VIII.

## AGNOSTICISM.

“There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”

A LONGING for truth is a longing for righteousness, for truth and righteousness are one. It was nothing more nor less than an encouragement of scepticism which Christ intended when he said, “Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Christ was the greatest agnostic, infidel, or unbeliever the world has ever seen; and, curiously enough, the greatest mistake his successors in infidelity and heresy have made is in ignoring their very leader. Christ was no impostor: he was an infidel, an unbeliever in Judaism; brother of Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll, only greater than any. He was more honored, too, than any, for they crucified him. He suffered death as a blasphemer; impiety was the crime he committed. He proclaimed freedom of worship; his religion had no creed, was no orthodoxy, required no priest. It was not the religion of the Jew; it was the religion of humanity.

On the other hand, the Jews who condemned Christ to death were not bad men, not at all, at heart. They were honest, and lived up to the light which they had. They were the men of honor of their times, noted for their learning and respected for their morality and piety. That high-priest who

rent his garments at hearing the blasphemous words, was assuredly as much shocked and horrified as the high-priests of to-day are at the impious words of modern infidels. Suppose the American Board, for instance, had lived some eighteen or nineteen centuries ago, born and bred to the Jewish faith, would it have shown the moderation of Roman Pilate? Would it not rather out-Herod Herod himself? It is no trifling matter to expose the shams of society; still more dangerous is it to denounce its honest convictions and deride its established customs and manners.

In the world of mechanical invention it is quite generally the rule that the original projector, though failing to develop his idea perfectly, secures his full measure of praise. His successors, though applying the newly discovered principle with wonderful success to the incalculable benefit of mankind, acquire but a secondary fame. But in the sphere of intellectual discovery the rule seems to be reversed. Application of theories seems to win greater applause — or abuse, which is the same in its early stages — than origination. It is unfortunate that this is so. The real guide to the right rarely receives popular recognition as such; some follower, who takes the direction already indicated, stumbles across the prize and wins all the honor. It is a more difficult thing to project and build a road than to walk in one already laid out. After the fort is carried, there are many brave enough to plant the standard of victory on the highest turret; but it is a very different matter to find men willing to rush into the breach before the surrender.

The application of a new idea certainly does often require rare courage and boldness. When the two qualities are combined in one, we have a real god. It demanded a good deal more intellect than most people

appreciate to seize upon the absurdity of the old Jewish ceremonial religion; the courage required to expose all its cant and hypocrisy and imposture, closely interwoven as it was in the implicit faith of many generations of a people strong in prejudice, is readily apprehended. To tear aside the sheltering veil from a religious faith that has become firmly established in the hearts of mankind; to denounce a faith universally accepted, and possessed of immense power and incalculable riches; to say to it, "You are a delusion, you are a lie," and to say it openly, is, in truth, a rather bold undertaking. To go over the evidence of a great and prevailing faith carefully and in detail, to conclude inwardly that it is deceptive and wholly undeserving of credence, and then silently to abjure the faith, requires a good deal of intellectual ability and originality. No wonder the world stood aghast at the marvellous audacity of him who dared to write on the wall before the eyes of all men: "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin."

It is by no means strange that the masses of people, blinded by prejudice and bound by custom, fail to understand such an exposure, even though it is complete and beyond dispute. Of what effect are the numerous exposures of spiritualism upon its faithful followers? Few will care to notice such exposures at all for years. Those that do take notice and understand rest easy in the thought that the new idea may be all right, but the old faith is good enough for them. Those who are satisfied with darkness will care little for light. Indeed, a superstition which has become a part of human nature by early training and later education does not lose its power even when detected. A superstition, moreover, which thinks itself easy to be borne, whose "yoke is easy" and whose "burden is light,"

is the hardest of all to overcome. A nation of slaves will always boast of the clemency of its masters. The judgment will for years mock such servitude before the will asserts its freedom. The experience of all ages has proved the impotence of gods ; the weakness and folly, not to say degradation, of a worship of idols the light of reason has exposed almost from the first ; and yet, despite these repeated exposures of the unreality of the one and the depravity of the other, neither can even now be said to be without influence.

Religious systems have generally undertaken too much, and their failure to maintain part of their assertions opens up a fatal crack into which the wedge of criticism slips, which finally, driven home, splits the whole system asunder. Applying the idea to Christianity, once it was asserted that the sun moves round the earth, and a denial of the theory was declared to be a denial of the Bible and Christianity ; but soon it was proved that the theory was false, and then Christianity had to shift around to other ground, with not a little loss of prestige. The wedge had entered, to say the least. The rejection of the Ptolemaic theory was the prelude to a denial of transubstantiation and the resurrection.

Detection in a single lie naturally prejudices the whole testimony of a witness. The experience of the simple missionary among the Fiji Islanders will illustrate the practical effect of detected error. The zealous preacher had just narrated the story of the creation of Eve, and as proof of the story added that ever since woman has had one more rib than man. The good soul had heard his old nurse declare that the statement was true. But the cannibal, whose knowledge of human anatomy was eminently practical, had some doubts on that point, and brought a man and a woman



before the missionary, and requested him to count their ribs. Careful and repeated trials revealed the same number, and, with considerable confusion and much stammering, the holy man began by saying that though he had made a mistake as to the number of ribs, still the first woman was undoubtedly made from a rib of the first man. "But," said the savage, "you come to me with a story which you say was revealed by God to you, and I have already proved that half of it is a lie. How, then, can you expect that I will believe the other half?" At these words the poor man was seized, and soon the savages were greedily picking his bones. A greater illustration of the practical working of this principle in Christianity may well be given. For centuries the Christian religion was openly and boldly staked on the working of miracles. "If ye will not believe me, believe the works which I do," was the open challenge. The power of working miracles was universally ascribed to saints and prophets, from the beginning clear down through the Middle Ages. Miracles were of daily occurrence. The literature of the Middle Ages, and even that of the seventeenth century, is full of instances of this supernatural power. James I., of England, was a firm believer in the divine right of kings. "As it is atheism and blasphemy to dispute what God can do, so it is high contempt in a subject to dispute what a king can do, or to say that the king cannot do this or that!" James's brother Charles, already mentioned, is said to have healed, by simply touching them, upwards of one hundred thousand persons. Not only Charles believed he could heal a distemper by simply touching the person afflicted, but the people believed it. Thus for hundreds of years Christianity with its open challenge met with no effective exposure. This was left

for the eighteenth century. Soon after this time the whole claim was denied, and proved unfounded in fact. The result is simply our present religious condition. We found the system false in one part, and we deny the rest. We deny the infallibility of Scripture and Church, divine revelation, the divinity of Christ, and the resurrection of the body.

I am not altogether sure that the idea involved in this principle was not expressed away back thousands of years ago, in the Old Testament. It will be remembered that the Israelites, in their famous battle with the Philistines, brought the ark of their god down into the camp, with the hope and expectation of its bringing them victory in the doubtful engagement which was about to ensue. The holy prophet narrates the issue with startling keenness. When the battle was lost, owing to the profanation, behold, the ark of God itself was taken! One cannot help feeling that there is a moral here.

After a few repetitions of this process of enlightenment, during which Christianity was driven from one position to another, it finally assumed the never-failing argument of pointing to its past, and boasting of what it had accomplished. And this is its great present defence. It assumes a tragic attitude, and begs for mercy. "Have respect for my venerable age," it says, "which has been filled up with an uninterrupted succession of pious deeds. Although I am antiquated, do not attempt to draw off my votaries; although I am an impostor, remember that I am a pious fraud, and protect my dotage out of regard for my glorious past." Even as a pauper its treacherous traits remain. It points with pride to its virtues, but never admits an error. The bag it carries in front is packed full and running over, while the bag at its back hangs

limp and empty. But it is best to refuse its appeal firmly, though without malice. Humanity can well afford to assert its freedom without a display of spite, for after all the servitude was self-imposed.

Scepticism, in its best sense, and democracy are the characteristic features of this century. Few people appreciate the great debt we owe to this spirit of scepticism; for democracy is, after all, but one of its expressions. It has entered into all forms of knowledge; it has led scientific research; it has actually revolutionized every field of scientific investigation; it has not only denied the ancient theories, but has proved them false beyond the shadow of a doubt. Ancient truths are shown to be fallacies in all spheres of investigation. Christianity itself it has changed to a mere form. The Bible is no longer believed, even by the faithful, with the active and sympathetic faith of the past. Not long ago President Eliot of Harvard University made an extended tour of the West. Soon after his return, the following significant notice appeared in the papers, which speaks volumes in its three lines: —

“At the college conference meeting next week, instead of the lecture on the Bible, an address will be given by President Eliot on ‘Harvard and the West.’”

But a century or two ago the Bible was the standard of reference on all questions of every-day life, religious, political, and social. Indeed, it is the regret of the clergy of this age that it has passed out of daily life, and is thought of only on Sunday. The ardent dogmatist, aghast at the dissoluteness of the age, thought he found in the ways of the Israelites a divine precedent for exterminating the evil that was rife, and a precedent which it was his duty to follow.

Royalty found in its pages that resistance to the king's wishes was not only unwise, but absolutely sinful. Mothers named their children from it, in the hope that the patron saint would leave some impress on their minds. Its simplicity and clearness were such that all might read, and every one was sure he understood it. A Biblical lecture to be set aside for "Harvard and the West"! Alas, we have fallen from the clear-sighted wisdom of those days.

The modern church, in all its protestant forms, is itself but a heresy and a schism. This is a truism which still is little realized, being quietly concealed. Unitarianism, indeed, is at times referred to as a modern heresy; and yet the cause of true religion can never repay the debt it owes to the courageous stand of this sect. The leaders in religious thought are called heretics and atheists, and every other imaginable abusive epithet is applied to them, not because they deny the existence of a god, but because they deny the reality of the present god. I doubt if an atheist, so called, can be named who denies absolutely all theism. On the contrary, atheists have usually held peculiarly strong theistic views, denying the prevailing gods from very righteousness itself. We call a person an atheist who does not accept our god, or acquiesce in our particular idea of the infinite controlling power in the universe. Every age, almost every generation, has its own peculiar and characteristic conception of this force in Nature. Every age cannot be right in its theory; and no especial reason can be urged why our own should, among the countless number, alone have solved the mystery. The analogy — strong theological argument, by the way — is to the contrary. Sceptics or agnostics of all times have denied the reality of a personal god. The

atheistic mind finds God an abstract, a force; not a concrete, a form. God is rather infinite Love, or infinite Goodness, than an omnipotent, omniscient man.

That agnosticism which has been classed with the philosophies differs somewhat from the agnosticism here under consideration. The tendency of the philosophical idea is to pronounce the creative principle of the universe beyond comprehension. It is unknowable philosophically. Here the idea is that it is unknown practically. This is a distinction not without a difference. To the enlightened believer in evolution — and the modern agnostic, at all events, certainly is such — nothing is impossible. Evolution does not know the word “impossible.” With God and evolution all things are possible.

There is nothing new in the idea of agnosticism. On the contrary, it is as old as time itself. It is clearly traceable as far back as the earliest known literature. The greatest author of the Old Testament, whoever he may have been, gives perfect expression to the view. Mr. Huxley himself has not better stated it. There is indeed a limit where the “proud waves” are stayed. We have not yet entered into the springs of the sea, nor walked in the search of the depth; the gates of death have not been opened, and the doors of the shadow of death are still fast; the treasures of the snow with its beautiful crystals are unknown; the parting of light scattering the east-wind, and the ways of the lightning are unrevealed. Who is father to the rain, or who has begotten the drops of dew? In whose womb were the ice of winter and the hoary frosts conceived? We have not bound the sweet influence of Pleiades, nor loosed the bands of Orion; Mazzaroth unbidden by man announces him-

self in his season, and Arcturus and his sons roam unguided by man through the firmament. The goodly plumes of the peacock are no gift of our understanding; the strength and glory of the horse is a mystery unrevealed to man; human wisdom will scarcely bid the hawk to fly and stretch her wings to the south, or the eagle to soar northward and build his nest among the clouds.

From the time of the ancient Scriptural writer, this idea has been expressed by the wisest men of all ages. Greek and Roman alike have clearly admitted their ignorance of the secret of the world. Wise men of all times frankly admit that they do not understand the mysterious life about them, just as the ignorant of all times boastfully declare that they know it all. There is nothing so positive in this world as ignorance, and its very certainty prevents it from becoming wiser. The fool has indeed said in his heart, "There is no God;" and again, taking the opposite extreme, he has boldly asserted that there is a God, and has minutely described his actions and even painted his features.

Agnosticism is rather a negative tendency than a positive belief. It is no theory of philosophy; it is philosophy itself, love of wisdom. The acquisition of knowledge is its faith; its works are applications of knowledge for the highest good and enlightenment of humanity. Without creed and without dogma, bound only to the loving service of man, its doctrine is as broad as the world. Its hope is unlimited in time and space, boundless as the universe, immeasurable as infinity itself. Evolution is infinite.

Unitarianism is its modern or Christian expression. Abandoning the senseless theories of Christianity, it aspires to know and seeks to imitate Christ. This

sect has exerted a wonderfully broadening influence upon the other sects, which still cling to the dogmatic doctrines of scholastic Christianity, and in time it will pervade all the denominations. True religion is not confined to orthodoxy. Men have the best right to live in accordance with the dictates of their individual reason. Conscience is limited to no sect, but is as varied as the individual. The only creed permissible to the agnostic is truth; and truth has not yet become an absolute certainty fully and irrevocably defined in any field. This creed depends upon science, which is in a state of constant progression. The truth of yesterday becomes false to-day. It is best not to be too sure of ourselves or our knowledge. To be willing to learn is the *sine qua non*<sup>1</sup> of wisdom.

It is by no means strange that such a belief is unpopular among those who set up their opinions as absolute truth, and who claim to possess absolute and certain knowledge. To such people, enthusiastic as they are in their faith and sure that it will abide, the doubter and investigator appears wilfully and maliciously obstinate. They have themselves long since abandoned doubt. With them even hesitation is sin. How can such a person ever entertain the idea that he himself is the perverse and obstinate one? It is simply impossible! Infallibility beginning to doubt is absurd!

But the idea runs even farther than this. Hesitation among the faithful is sin; but actual doubt is heinous. Consequently, freethinkers are bidden to conceal their views and play the hypocrite. They are attacked, and then the adversary with his bundle of texts bids them hold their peace and bear all

<sup>1</sup> "Essential;" literally, "without which not."

opposition in silence. "If your judgment really does tell you that our faith is false, oh, for the love of mercy, do not breathe it to one of these simple souls in the faith! Because, if you should by any chance convince one, what a terrible condemnation awaits him that shall 'teach men so'!" This is a delightfully impersonal way of putting it. Christians never judge their fellow-men. "Judge not that ye be not judged," they serve to the letter; but the whole spirit of the command is lost. The result is simple and natural; the Church becomes militant. The honor of God is in its keeping. Shall it fail of its trust? The old cry of heresy and atheism is heard, and the religious press becomes hysterical over the blasphemous teachings of infidels. The same old stories are shrieked out in the same old language, but scarcely with the same old effect. The popular attitude has become passive. More or less curiosity is at times exhibited, it is true; but the enthusiasm is left to a comparatively few individuals, most of whom are clergymen.

To give any literary work, almost, a touch of scepticism is to insure its success, regardless of its intrinsic worth. This success may be but ephemeral, but surely it cannot be altogether ignored. Within a few years a striking example of this fact occurred, when a novel, written by an absolutely unknown author, created a perfect *furor* among the intelligent people of the two greatest nations of the world. This little incident is not without significance. It means simply this: the great mass of educated people of this generation is inclined to scepticism and to a rejection of revealed Christianity. There is a popular recognition of the fact that Christianity has served its purpose in its present form, and that the Church in blindly ad-



hering to the traditional belief is out of harmony with the times. If anything beyond the statement of the fact were needed before, the wholesale creed revision that is at present under advisement, to say nothing of the trials for heresy, would convince the most stupid.

Dr. Lyman Abbott in a recent lecture used the following words, which need no comment, coming as they do from a strictly orthodox clergyman:—

“In the past this Bible has been regarded as without error. Every sentence, and every word in every sentence, and every syllable in every word were regarded as the product of inspiration. We have thought it an authority on theology, and on almost every subject of human knowledge, so that there was no error or mistake in it. But there are very few who hold this opinion now. They think they do; but if they will consider a little where this opinion will lead them, they will quickly see that they do not.

“In the first chapter of Genesis we find that the world was made in six days. All geology is mistaken. The day is limited by the rising and the setting of the sun; and we shall have a theological opinion of the creation for Sunday and a geological opinion for week days. We go against the Biblical institutions of slavery and bigamy and circumcision. We have abolished slavery and bigamy, and we say that baptism has taken the place of circumcision by a divine decree. The whole system of sacrifices we have abandoned. The man who thinks he believes in the infallibility of the Bible turns to moral law. He takes the Ten Commandments; they stand as moral standards. He knows they are not. He knows a man may keep every one of the Ten Commandments and yet be not admitted to decent society in New York; and the civilized standards of the nineteenth century in New York are not too high for Christian living. He opens the Bible at a Psalm which asks God not to forgive, and then to the Sermon on the Mount, which prays God to forgive all sinners, and he cannot reconcile them. Let us be true to ourselves in this matter. Such things as these confront us, if we think.

“A minister ought to be sincere. I do not believe the Bible is infallible. I do not think it can be an infallible book. I do not believe anybody believes it to be an infallible book. For a book to be infallible, means that the author should be infallible, his means of knowledge infallible, and what he writes infallible; the person who copies it infallible, and that copy infallible; the translator infallible, and the translation infallible, and we who read it infallible. Now, we do not believe these things. We may believe Moses was infallible, but we do not believe his copyist and translators were infallible and ourselves infallible.”

But it will be said that this is not scepticism or agnosticism: so strange is the power of a name! Agnosticism is, in current opinion, synonymous with atheism; and atheism — holy horror itself — cannot find words strong enough to express its meaning! All the bitterness and hatred and intolerance of who knows how many years is concentrated in that one word. To the mind of one born and bred in the Christian faith, an atheist is the incarnation of all that is horrible and despicable in life. I doubt if human language has adequate terms to express in limited space the thought which this word sets in motion in the mind of orthodoxy. Certain it is, orthodoxy can never find words abusive and vile enough to apply to those who incline to the idea. And yet this body of men, very small one or two centuries ago, and hardly worth considering in antiquity, has ever borne all the contumely and disgrace heaped upon it with a sublime patience and humility easily surpassing the heroism of the early Christians, and actually rivalling the example of their leader, Christ himself.

To suffer death is not the worst calamity in this world, and even the torture of the rack fails to reach the most exquisite pain. Thousands yearly seek

death, one by one, glad to throw down the burden of life, too weary longer to continue the toil. The early Christians rushed to certain death in crowds at times, and actually smiled and laughed and sang in torture. Mere bodily sensations yield under great pressure to the control of the mind, so that under certain conditions the most torturing pain becomes imperceptible. But the mind has no such refuge; its pain cannot be soothed. Such has been the untold mortal agony of many great and gifted men, the lights of the world. Where will you find a nobler example of self-restraint and moderation constantly and persistently maintained, though at times so sorely tried as to waste away the very body, than that which unbelievers in prevailing religious faiths have shown in their clear, single-minded exposures of religion, error, and crime, fighting single-handed, without sword or weapon of any kind, content if permitted to speak, satisfied if given a hearing?

In no other field is such an example of disinterested love for mankind possible; for he who undertakes such a task begins a work which can never bring him a reward from his fellow-men, but, on the contrary, is absolutely certain to call down upon him disgrace and obloquy. The inward approval of the conscience is the only comfort he can have. If one is inclined to look lightly upon this, and consider it rather fancy than fact, let him but read the pages of history which trace the growth of human civilization, and pause over the innumerable obstacles that have vainly been thrown in the way of education, and ponder a moment over the dogged obstinacy of minds that would not be convinced, the persistent blindness of eyes that would not see, and the unnatural dulness of ears that would not hear. Such a retrospect, indeed, will take one

back to Galilee itself, even to the "Man of Sorrows." The agony of the cross is eclipsed by the many lonely vigils by the lake-side, and the frequent wandering among the hills about Jerusalem.

The accusations made against the liberal-minded are just as true and just as false as was the charge of blasphemy against Christ. If atheism and infidelity mean a rejection of ideas worn out and past service, then the accusation is true; but if it mean a denial of the infinite one, and utter negation of all moral principle, the charge is brought against the wrong persons. There can be no doubt that Christ was guilty of blasphemy according to the Jewish interpretation of the word. He said he was the son of God, and this was blasphemy in itself; but it is not atheism nor infidelity, and the Jews were shrewd enough to see it and govern themselves accordingly. The charge of infidelity is no more applicable to one who differs from the opinions of the majority of his contemporaries in their belief in Christianity, than it is to the accusers themselves because they reject the opinions of their ancestors or of the heathen. Macaulay wittily observes that a man ought no more to be called an apostate because of free-thinking, than he ought to be called an Oriental traveller because he is always going round from west to east with the globe and everything that is upon it. But such terms are applied without much reason; they are born of prejudice, and kept alive by a combination of prejudice and custom. The only unfortunate feature about these words is the fact that their meaning is never settled, but changes with the ages. The apostate and infidel of a few centuries ago would quite generally be a very narrow-minded modern Christian. The charge of apostasy is even now at times brought against Uni-

tarians, but the time is surely coming when the sect shall receive peculiar honor. It is well to give full measure of praise, though tardy, to the wise men of the past who dared attack the very stronghold of prejudice and ignorance.

The dishonor which these men bear is but for a time. Even now indications are not wanting of a better appreciation. It must, however, be remembered that prejudice is nowhere stronger and more unreasonable than in religion, — than in the Christian religion. Even in purely scientific fields it is by no means wanting. It is said that when Dr. Boylston in 1721 performed the first experiment in inoculation for small-pox in Boston, a mob of enraged citizens paraded the streets for days with halters, prepared to hang him wherever he might be found. All the learned doctors opposed the practice, and the clergymen saw fit to denounce it as the work of the devil himself. Old Dr. Mather was about the only defender of the discovery, and an attempt was made to destroy his house. A shell was thrown in, with a paper attached which bore this little compliment: —

“Cotton Mather, I was of your meeting, but the cursed Lye you told of — you know who, made me leave you, you Dog; and, Damn you, I Enoculate you with this, with a pox to you.”

The press ridiculed the whole idea, and the clergy found abundant condemnation of it in the Bible. A few of the reasons urged against it may well be given: —

“It is unlawful to make oneself sick when well, or to take distemper to oneself. We ought to wait God’s time for it. Can we not trust God? It is going from God to man. It is taking God’s work out of his own hand. It [small-pox] is a judgment of God, sent to punish and humble us for our sins,

and we should not evade it. The fears of the disease are of spiritual advantage. It [the remedy] has brought about many sinful contentions. God has fixed and determined the time of man's life, and if his time be come, inoculation will not save. If one should die from inoculation, he sins, because he has brought it upon himself. It was originally from the devil, who first inoculated Job. To stop small-pox is to stop the fiat of the Almighty."

All new discoveries interfere with accepted notions of things, and have to overcome an incalculable weight of prejudice. Not a single instance can be found of welcome or early commendation by Christianity of any new discovery, either in the intellectual world or in the physical world; or if by any possibility an instance can be found, — and I should like to hear of one, — it will be during the last twenty-five years. It is strange that so few people appreciate the changes which these late years have brought. Who are they that admire these old radicals of the past? We, whom they would consider heretics and infidels and sinners.

For even the witch-burning fanatic we have some praise. Men will always love to see a courage that will stand any test, an honesty of conviction that will never shirk any responsibility, and a devotion to duty that nothing can shake. The admirable qualities of the Puritan are identical with those of the infidel. The difference is only one of direction. The sturdy integrity and fidelity to conscience that led men to express their honest convictions, though it brought disgrace and obloquy, is identical with that which led others to burn and torture and persecute for love of God. With a little more light the latter would have perceived a higher duty, and served it just as heartily and conscientiously. A little more ignorance would

have led the former to just as bitter intolerance and just as contemptible bigotry. The sacrifice and self-denial and penance of past ages seem pitiable to us now; the cruelty and intolerance appear terribly hateful; but nevertheless the principle behind the humility and bigotry alike was a noble principle, the actual presence of which is too little felt at present. Others who have held vastly different views have been actuated by the same manly resolution that inspired the saints of the past. Be true to yourself and you cannot be false to any man. Live up to your convictions, whatever betide. Not disgrace, nor torture, nor death, no, nor hell itself, shall shake the fixed determination of the honest man to be true to his own convictions. Better, a hundred times, eternal damnation itself, with a pure conscience and a stout heart, than eternal bliss won at the price of insincerity and cowardice.

The fact that the most eminent men of the past have doubted the views of Christianity leads many to waver just a little in their opinions and convictions. Great men exert an influence over their contemporaries, even though it be an unconscious influence. The result is clearly apparent at present. We are in a transition period so far as religion is concerned. There is far greater unanimity than is apparent. Able and practical men do not care to say what they think. We have to-day little of the religious sentiment of Christianity, and in subscribing to its doctrines we simply subscribe to a form. Our churches are Christian only in form. We judge a formal man to be religious and Christian, when the very formalism which we see takes him out of either category. It is enough if one only wear a faultless black coat and a stiff, uncomfortable white collar, and carry a Bible

or prayer-book in his hand. Our piety is largely decency; our religion, propriety.

Let us see what it really is to believe that old Bible, with its appalling threats and awful torments. Let us see how people who do actually believe it act and think. In this way, perhaps, we may best appreciate the almost universal unbelief of the present.

There was John Bunyan: most good Christian people have read that great allegory, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, — not half so much an allegory to its author as we are inclined to think. Let us see how this man thought and acted. We have his own words to tell us, and shall not need to go far outside of them. In boyhood Bunyan had such an appreciation of his utter sinfulness, in common with humanity, that he continually dreamed frightful dreams. As he says, the Lord "did terrify me with dreadful visions." The only right men had, in his judgment, was the right to be eternally damned. He was convinced that he himself was a miserable wretch, so worthless at best as to deserve eternal damnation. At times, like Paul, he thought he saw Christ himself looking down at him out of the sky. He gave up dancing; he abandoned music, though it cost him much, because he thought God did not like it. He loved to ring the bells in Elstow Church, but he felt obliged to give them up. Even then he could not keep away, and so he would go to the tower and look and listen. But finally his conscience troubled him so that he dared not go and look on, lest the very tower itself fall and kill him.

All his fears took bodily form to his frenzied mind. His friends appeared to him sitting on a mountain-side in the cheerful sunlight, while he stood actually shivering in the cold and snow. He wanted to go to



his friends, and finally found one very small passage through the separating wall. It taught him that none might really live but the downright earnest, and they must leave "the wicked world behind them." For here, as at the hole at the mountain wall, "was only room for body and soul, but not for body, soul, and sin." He wished to be good and be saved; but no, for "it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." He was so afraid of sinning that he dared not pick up a pin or a stick, though but as big as a straw, and he scarcely dared to speak words aloud for fear he "should misplace them." He seemed to stand on a quagmire that shook if he stirred, left by God and Christ and the Spirit. His original inborn sin was like a sore. More loathsome he was to himself "than was a toad;" and he thought he was so in the sight of God as well. His only equal, to his mind, was the devil. He blessed the condition of the "birds, beasts, and fishes, for they had not a sinful nature: they were not to go to hell-fire after death."

The devil beset him with cruel doubts; but Paul set him right, and gave him hope for his soul. But oh, to be a dog or a horse; for they "had no soul to perish under the everlasting weight of hell for sin, as mine was like to do." The Bible gave him no help; for in it he read his own condemnation, as any one must, who reads at all. But the greatest temptation of all was to sell his Lord. "Sell him I will not," he repeated again and again, "not for thousands of worlds." He fought bitterly against it, and fell back in exhaustion; and the involuntary thought passed through his brain, "Let him go if he will."

This all but killed him. He wandered in the fields for hours, "as a man bereft of life and now past

recovering, bound over to eternal punishment." He crawled under the hedges to hide his head. He seemed to himself to be worse than Judas. He thought how loathsome he "should be to all the saints at the Day of Judgment." There was no hope for him, God was tired of him, he thought. He sought comfort, but found none. The very "stones in the street and the tiles on the houses" were against him. Finally, heavenly voices sang to him, — sang sweet songs of encouragement; and he saw Christ at the right hand of God watching him in all his acts, and the vision seemed to guide him aright. He was freed from bondage; he found rest and peace. Then came happiness and victory, and soon he burst forth in praise of God.

Christ, whom he had sold, now became his ally. His wife was dreadfully suffering once in confinement; he prayed, and instantly her pains ceased and she fell asleep. Then he tells us that men do not pray aright, nor teach prayer as they ought. "They should teach their children betimes what cursed creatures they are, how they are under the wrath of God by reason of actual sin; also to tell them the nature of God's wrath and the duration of misery." In preaching he did not care for praise. Once when he was complimented on a fine sermon, he replied: "You need not remind me of that; the devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit." Such a belief as Bunyan had admits of no trifling. Mere graces of oratory, pretty sentimental sermonizing, and brilliant, popular lecturing have no place in earnest, unadulterated Christianity. True faith in the Bible will make a man forget the world, hate joy and comfort, and think of his soul and its fate.

Just imagine the situation a moment: suppose

your pet preacher now — nice, sleek, highly polished gentleman that he is — really thought he was a poor miserable devil from original sin; that he could not do right, but must always be evil, and an eyesore to God in it; and that an awful hell, eternal with torments, awaited him unless he laid firm hold on faith, and even then that the chances were against him, — suppose he really believed this, and it is God's own word, do you think he would stand so calmly, so gracefully, by that beautiful pulpit overflowing with rare and costly flowers, speaking so elegantly and properly? Great heavens, how he would jump and yell and sweat, if he did have faith! And his congregation, too, they would drop their smelling-bottles and fans as if they were red-hot coals from hell itself, and groan and mutter and lie weltering on the floor, as I have seen the faithful in very truth do. Such a belief will cure men of affectation and trifling, if it does not make them insane. No, your beloved pastor does not believe the Bible any more than — than *you* do, for instance. Men are no longer self-conscious when in downright earnest. I once saw a minister so wrought up in his preaching that he forgot all about where he was, and unconsciously stepped right off the platform. Picking himself up without a moment's hesitation, he resumed his place and subject with only the remark, "I'd rather fall there than into hell;" and he meant it.

The religion of modern times has come to be a thing of words, and of words that too often suggest no ideas. We have a few phrases learned by rote which we mutter over in unison, a few maxims with which we begin essays and sermons. Religious doctrines are familiar to us from childhood, and came to us like the clothes on our backs, and we did not think or care to question. Not one church-member in a hundred

deliberates upon his own individual belief and conduct. They admit the blessing of the poor in spirit, and those whom men revile. They know it is easier for camels to pass through needles' eyes than for rich men to enter into the kingdom of heaven. They do not judge lest they be judged, nor do they swear at all. To love one's neighbor as one's self, and to send the coat on after the cloak, and to turn the cheek to smiter are all good maxims; to think not of the morrow, and to give to the poor, and to look for reward in heaven are all good morals. Church-members believe this firmly, — so firmly that they neither care nor think anything about it. They not only believe these things, but they live up to them as they do to other rules of good breeding. They are not to put themselves out to do good or to be virtuous; this is not good breeding. Reasonable, respectable, proper efforts are to be made to aid the poor. Good taste does not permit earnestness. If opportunity for good arise, they must look around and observe how others of the church of respectability act under similar circumstances. Why, in the old days the Romans used to wonder at how Christians loved one another! There is little danger of anybody's wondering nowadays at the love Christians display one for another. Virtuous maxims are an old, old story, and like antiquated jokes only make us yawn. There is indeed a "slumber" of certainty.

I do not think I have exaggerated the characterization at all. The candid reader will readily admit that the average church member, or attendant at least, does not worry himself very much over the frightful punishments so often brought to his notice, and so often in his mouth. We become accustomed to these words, and know that they don't mean anything, and, except

in rare instances and at certain limited periods, never did mean anything. It is no exaggeration to say that few people have any lasting dread of future punishment after death, or indeed any great longing for heavenly bliss. Heaven and hell are little more than forms, and words to swear by. A day of earth is reckoned as of infinitely more value than a thousand years of either, and rightly. This has always been so, and I think always will be. This namby-pambyism, this living of lies and teaching of falsehoods, is sickening. Let us honor and respect those worthy preachers who have dared to speak out for once boldly and honestly their candid opinions about their creeds and the Bible. The only lamentable fact is, they keep right on preaching the same old Bible, in the same old way, under the same old creed. They put it that they are willing to sacrifice their own opinions for the good of their churches, and the benefit of the community at large. They serve men. Serve men by living and preaching what they know and confess is a lie? Christian policy — Christian politics! — to preach what you do not believe? The good old Anglo-Saxon word for it is "lie." It is not Christian charity and kindly regard for others; it is moral cowardice. Whoever preaches a theology or a morality he does not believe, and under a creed which he knows is false, is not serving the best interest of mankind; he is doing about as much injury as he can do, and is a hypocrite and a moral coward as well.

To leave the ecclesiastical order, do we hear much from the lawyers, doctors, and professional men generally about Christian theories? Is there one among them all who has read the creeds, or even that of his own church? Even the clergy admit they do not read them. Doctrinal Christianity already is but a

name. Thousands who are liberals at heart are simply waiting until the popular movement shall be absolutely unmistakable before declaring themselves. And this time is not far distant. When all the ability is on one side, and all the ignorance and prejudice on the other, it is more than possible that the ability may be right and the ignorance wrong. If there is anything that indicates with certainty the agnosticism of the age, the feeling of doubt about truths formerly considered infallible and divinely revealed, it is the fact of the contemporaneous and comparatively peaceful existence of so many sects of Christianity, holding views all the way from Scriptural and Church infallibility and the absolute divinity of Christ, veritable Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary by immaculate conception, to utter rejection of all of these teachings. Consider the significance of Unitarianism: a denial of Scriptural infallibility, a denial of the infallibility of the Church, a denial of the divinity of Christ, a denial of miracles and of divine interference, a denial of the Trinity, a denial of the atonement, a denial of the resurrection of the body. What is there left of Christianity? Absolutely nothing as a doctrinal theory of religion. The sect has absolutely no creed. What agnostic goes farther than this?

We have a sect admitted among the Christian brotherhood which holds as essential truth absolutely nothing beyond morality. Men can be good without any theories of theology whatever. Is not this infidelity? Says one of their well-known exponents: "Unitarianism is a protest against the materialism that makes a man non-moral, and the theology that makes him immoral. . . . We believe in the moral accountability of man. We believe in independence and in freedom of thought." Is not this a sign of the second coming

of Christ himself? Catholicism and Unitarianism are the only consistent modern sects. Catholicism is consistent because it preaches logically a poor creed; Unitarianism is consistent because it persists logically in none. Great credit is due both for daring to be honest.

What is the commercial side of the question? A few years ago when a young man seeking employment presented his credentials, conspicuous among them was the statement that the applicant was a Christian and a member of the Church. Its absence called out an inquiry as to the fact. The applicant's success depended upon his being orthodox. At present all this is lacking. Honesty and industry are the qualities mentioned in the credentials, and they secure the position, and, later, advancement. How completely has orthodoxy vanished from our every-day life! Here is another indication of the times. These characteristics are simply negative characteristics. The question "Are you a Christian?" is simply omitted. People say nothing about it, except on Sunday, and then the talk is confined almost solely to the clergy. On the other hand, people do not require as yet open, positive scepticism. Still, there is a positive tendency even here, and quite perceptible. It is the liberal-minded clergyman that wins the applause, never the old out-and-out orthodox divine. And this is true even in orthodox sects, those whose creeds are the very narrowest and the most intolerant. The greatest preacher in this country to-day is popular, not because of his orthodoxy, but because of his lack of it, — a lack which all but cost him a bishopric. People even wonder how his church can retain him, and humorously insinuate that it has to put up with it as best it can.

Scepticism or agnosticism, then, has been rather passive than active, though there is a wonderful activity that is not apparent. It is a hidden force, working below the surface. This is the history of all reforms. They are brought about after years of quiet and hidden progress. Sudden, destructive revolution is by no means the real reform; it is but the incident to reform, oftentimes actually hindering and delaying the real progressive movement incalculably. This is the regular process of Nature. The infant is quietly and continuously, but secretly, nourished for many months, until finally one day there is an hour of intense anguish, and the child is born. The birth is but an incident to its life, — at times an incident which brings disaster, absolute destruction in a moment of the quiet and unseen growth of months. Again, human civilization has been likened to an iceberg drifting slowly southward to the open sea. At first but little of the great mountain of ice is visible above water, and the whole mass is as steady as the land itself. But down below the surface, hundreds of fathoms down, warmer currents wash the base of the berg. Silently and stealthily the gravity of the whole mass is changed, and the early stability seems mysteriously gone; until finally, without a moment's notice to the casual observer, the great berg heaves over and disappears with a mighty plunge.

A similar fate surely awaits this stupendous and magnificent religious system; only the final violence of revolution will be wanting. "Gently and without grief the old shall glide into the new. The eternal flow of things, like a bright river of the fields of heaven, shall journey onward in perpetual peace." Such was the downfall of Paganism; and it is surely but a question of time when Christianity likewise



shall cease to be accepted as a religious system. It will simply die out. Just as the moral teachings of Paganism remained, so will the enhanced morality of Christianity abide. The truth in all systems alone survives.

But what of Agnosticism in the future? Shall it, too, yield to something else? As a philosophical system, it certainly will disappear. It was a fool who, bitten by many fleas, put out the light, saying, "You no longer see me." As a practical tendency it will remain and flourish, with temporary set-backs, it is true, until the nature of mankind, becoming absolutely perfect through evolution, shall really understand the universe in all its infinite totality. To assert that this time will ever be realized would require the very perfection indicated. Certain it is that the character of human existence would have to undergo considerable modification to attain this height of wisdom. Infinite hope, however, is extended to humanity in evolution. Its attainment without modification would be simply the precursor of absolute ruin. Man as such, without any truth to strive for, is a low brute, and must ever be such while controlled by present prevailing laws. The words of Lessing well express the idea: "If God should extend to me in his right hand absolute truth, and in his left hand the eternal striving for truth, coupled with the certainty to me of never-failing error, and should say, 'Choose!' I would take in all humility the left, saying, 'Father, give! absolute truth is for thee alone.'"

The wise of hundreds of generations to come will be agnostics or doubters; the ignorant will always understand all things. Theories of religion and theology have always existed, and will continue to exist for centuries, not to say forever. But all these theo-

ries from their very nature must be incomplete. The great work of humanity is to conquer untruth and superstition.

These two yield only to education, and education always involves doubt. Without doubt all knowledge were impossible. Every man before he enters the temple of learning must make free confession of his own ignorance. A thinking man is the greatest enemy of superstition; and a man never begins to think without first saying, "I don't know."

The whole secret of human progress lies in one word, "education." The only honorable occupation for humanity is teaching. The teacher is great because he humbles himself. He that would become truly great must serve men. *Ich dien*<sup>1</sup> is the noblest motto ever written; and it is that of Christ himself.

The common school is the highest achievement of modern civilization. No other work will compare with it. It is noble because it is the reflection of God's own infinite light. And there is no higher and more worthy class of men in the whole world to-day than schoolmasters. They are the divine men, called to the highest labor conceivable. If there is any person that appears holy to my eyes, it is the school-teacher with his well-worn books under his arm. Blessed are the teachers, for they are the children of God!

If our age is the highest stage yet reached in civilization, our acquisition of knowledge has made it so. Consider the responsibility that rests upon us, if in very truth we are at the front. The responsibility of every step almost induces a shudder or a feeling of faintness. If our position is the highest, so our duties are the most severe. The prophet is of the

<sup>1</sup> "I serve."

past. Let us continue to work with all his zeal and spirit, only on a different road. Martin Luther himself was the champion of individual independence. His whole fight was for freedom of interpretation of the Scriptures. We have but to extend his idea. Thanks to the divine energy and patience of man himself, theological propositions are not now the standards by which goodness and wisdom are judged. Life may be noble and helpful outside the pale of theological isms and beyond the control of ecclesiastical bigotry.

“ Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to heaven : the fated sky  
Gives us free scope, only doth backward pull  
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.”

Many pretty little gems of faith will rise, and trusting, credulous, dependent souls will cling to guiding hands stretched down from heaven, unseen by the more self-reliant because not sought.

“ This pretty bird. Oh, how she flies and sings ;  
But could she do so, if she had not wings ?  
Her wings bespeak my faith, her songs my peace ;  
When I believe and sing, my doubtings cease.”

“ Like a blind spinner in the sun,  
I tread my days.  
I know that all the threads will run  
Appointed ways ;  
I know each day will bring its task,  
And, being blind, no more I ask.”

This will do very well for sentimental ladies to linger over in the dreamy, sunny days of early spring, when the whole being is languid, and the

system needs strengthening and invigorating; but noble-hearted, brave mothers, with large families of boys and girls to bring up, have no time for petty sentiment. There is plenty of hearty, honest sentiment which is only too little read. It is folly for those who are not blind to shut their eyes; and indeed the blind who are energetic will be eager to learn, and by no means willing to sit idly by, waiting for what may come. Think what the very blind have done! Those who crave for a taste of the invigorating apples of knowledge find little nourishment in the insipid, melting fruit of faith that rots on the ground.

If Amphion had waited for the gods to furnish music, the walls of Thebes had never been built. Humanity must sing as it works, or rather it must heartily get to work, and then the burden of song will rise with characteristic cadence unbidden. Let the gods attend to their own affairs. Not by long prayer, not by much sacrifice and praise, will any one of them be induced to move mountains. Put faith in human heads and hands, and mountains shall vanish into the sea, or where you will, as indeed they have already. I would rather have to work for me one active, robust man, willing to learn and eager to work, than all the gods that have existed in the mind of man from the beginning of time; and when I have something to do which requires a good deal of care, I leave it to neither god nor man, but do it myself.

It is not a characteristic of true greatness to assert that human happiness is and must always remain imperfect; that society is inherently defective, and man by nature abortive and deformed. To those who entertain such views of human existence there is but one refuge: they must from sheer necessity cling to

supernatural doctrines. Prayer and fasting, sacrifices, catechisms, and holy water are the inevitable attendants of such beliefs. Thank God, there is a higher faith than this, — a faith which hungers and thirsts after truth, fain to believe that it is attainable, if only rightly and intelligently sought. No trick of words, no cabalistic sentence or mysterious utterance will open the door to Aladdin's cave. "Open sesame" is a fable, a story for children, withal capable of a higher interpretation. Knock and it shall be opened; if not willingly, yet by persistent and well-directed blows you shall batter the very gate from its hinges. Seek and you shall find.

If we must have a magical word, — and it does seem necessary, — let us at least have one which has some practical efficacy. "Education" may be suggested as a good one. Only try to understand and be willing to learn, and something is sure to be gained. We can conceive for others blessings which we may not enjoy. We can summon hopes for the future which the present may not entertain. As mankind climbs higher the hill of learning, the horizon is extended. The capabilities of expansion are infinite. Hitherto in forming our judgments the oracles have been sought and depended on, and we have given implicit credence to our imagination. Superstition has held imperious sway. We have bound ourselves to the superficiality of religious divination. But science has been struggling for freedom all these long ages. First the mind asserted its independence; then the hands burst their bonds and undid, with no little toil and bruising, the fetters of the feet. This age has removed the gag; and the tongue, the little member, greatest next to the mind, has begun to roll about with curiously beautiful effect.

The mind in science frees itself and leads the heart in reason, or if straying now and again is quickly brought back by a noble, controlling impulse which yet it taught. It makes use in its persuasions of appliances whose exactness and accuracy have been tested, and are always susceptible of proof. Thus measured, what we took to be deformity proves to be regular conformation; shapelessness reveals forms of perfect symmetry; what seemed capricious and aimless discloses a prevailing principle, and the old multiplicity and discord end in harmony and unity. Out of all this a new idea of learning arises, amenable to science, and as such capable of expansion; recognizing the right and duty of independent judgment, and consequently leaving religion free to humanity. Who is not ennobled by learning that principle produces form, that matter is thought, that all Nature is harmonious unity? Holding to this broad conception of things, art is ever growing, morality springs up anew, and religion is born again.

## IX.

## MORALITY.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”

IN these simple, loving words, and others like them, how great and sublime does the master seem, and how pitiably small and contemptible in comparison appears the disorderly crowd of questioners, commentators, and expounders, bitterly struggling from the first to gain proselytes for this or that sect of Christianity! “By *this* shall all men know that you are my disciples, *if you have love one to another.*” Civilization has not yet caught the meaning of Christ’s words, though he was crucified two thousand years ago.

I think it was Jean Paul Richter who said that men have gods because adoration is a good deal easier than obedience. Here is a whole book in a single sentence. It is infinitely easier to be devout than it is to be good. Pious enthusiasm passes in religious circles for good deeds. Ecclesiastical indolence, the shrewd invention of sanctified ingenuity, makes an eminently respectable display of pious rapture, and thereby gains exemption from the toil of doing good. It is not good form, on the contrary it is decidedly out of taste, earnestly and persistently to exert oneself for the good of the vulgar common people. There

is, however, an enormous amount of maudlin sympathy and piously stupid supplication wasted over these same vulgar people.

For some years now the heated discussions of inharmonious and conflicting sects have ended considerably short of war and bloodshed. People have ceased to take up arms at the cry of heresy. Most of the sects even have advanced so far as to detect some slight difference between Calvin and Christ. But many common people, venturing even farther out, have boldly asked the question, Whether is better, to be orthodox or to be good? The theological spirit belongs to an earlier century. The great army of theologians has been forced to retreat, and but the stragglers remain. Propositions which half a century ago would have convulsed society, now with difficulty gain a hearing. The fiery philippics of ecclesiastics have been brushed away with other rubbish, to be burned as chaff. The times have no need of such matter. Even the evangelical clergymen show indications of superseding theology by morality. There has been quite enough discussion about infallibility, divinity, repentance, and death. Let us abandon this for something better and more useful. An honest, conscientious man should think of all things least of death; and wisdom is meditation on life. Let the dead bury their dead, and come you with me and take thought on this life.

There is no denying the fact that we do have to live in this world; the question for earnest men is how best to live here. While we remain on earth, shall we add something ennobling to the world, or shall we suck something out of it? Whether Protestant or Catholic, Christian or heathen, let us make the world the better for our living in it. These are the questions and ideas for us. It matters little how



great and profound speculation man entertains of God, except that it is an indication of his progress, following rather than leading, so long as he is slave to his lusts and passions; it is of no consequence how little speculation he entertains of God, so he live aright. His creed cannot be wrong whose life is in the right. "Do right and fear no one; you may be sure that with all your consideration for the world, you will never satisfy the world."

This little earth is to us a real, earnest place, — no idle jest, but rather a serious fact. Now, what shall we do with it? We cannot shift it off on God or the devil either; we must perforce handle it ourselves. Prayer, as the word goes, will help us little. When we pray, in the old, common, slovenly way, "Now I lay me down to sleep," or, "Our Father who art in heaven," we utter too often either a meaningless form, or else we seek to shift our burdens off on somebody else. How rare is a genuine heart-felt prayer! My friend, have you offered a single one during the past month, or even the past year? Have you prayed at all during the year?

There is a familiar song, sung in every Protestant church in the world to-day, which always seems to me utterly contemptible and low, and totally unworthy of an honest man. The first two lines ought to bring a blush to the face of every self-reliant, upright man.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear."

I have no words to express my utter contempt for such debasing sentiments. To me it is sacrilege, and worse than blasphemy can be, to couple any such sentiments as this with the glorious, high-minded independence of Christ. I can only deplore the judgment

of those who find Christ an impostor; for that pious sanctity which either treacherously or ignorantly — for such ignorance is no excuse in the light of these times — makes him the cesspool of the social Christian sewer, I have nothing but a mingled feeling of bitterness and hatred and loathing. I dislike to seem dogmatic; anger I think unworthy; but there is a point where patience ceases to be a virtue. Christ himself once drove, with a whip of cords, the hucksters from the temple.

If you have done a wrong and guilty deed, be a man and right it. Go to the person you have injured and tell him the whole truth about it, and then do your very best to make amends. Do not fall on your knees, and pray to your god to pardon you. You have injured the unfortunate object of your evil deed a hundred times more than you have any god. You have injured your own miserable self more than you can injure any god. And in such prayer you can only increase the guilt and injury to yourself. When you fall on your knees in this way, what are you doing? Are you half honest about it? The truth is, you dread to confess your error, you lack the courage of honesty; you are a pious coward, and seek to shirk the responsibility. Oh, you poor, miserable wretch! Christ is no refuge for despicable, slinking cowards; he will bear no man's sin or grief, and you simply reveal your own meanness of heart to expect it. Christ will not lower himself to your level. Not even if your god himself wished to do so, could he take the responsibility for your crime and error.

Kindness is better than penance; mercy is better than sacrifice; reparation is better than prayer. How can a man kneel beside his wife and pray honestly to his god for forgiveness of sins, while she whom he

has cruelly wronged, she who still loves on and is obedient, true to the vow which she took years ago when the future looked so bright and promising, is asking, with heart well-nigh broken, "Why does n't he love me and ask my forgiveness?" There is something unspeakably sad in that little domestic picture which Thackeray draws of the home of a drunken, dissolute man. "Where's his wife, thought I? Where's poor, good, kind little Laura? At this very moment — it's about the nursery bedtime, and while yonder Good-for-nothing is swilling his wine — the little ones are at Laura's knees lisping their prayer; and she is teaching them to say, 'Pray God bless Papa!'" Children need a mother's love more than established orthodoxy. There is plenty of faith in human love. Says a Spanish proverb: "An ounce of mother is better than a pound of clergy." I say there is no honesty in such a religion as this, and I say it in grief. Its whole tendency is to hypocrisy.

This practice of prayer which prevails in all our churches is little if anything more than a meaningless form or a pompous show. Why, these prayers are printed in the newspapers! Think of it, a prayer published in the "Globe"! This is enterprise indeed. Does the Christian god take the "Globe" or the "Tribune"? It would be a revelation to him if he could read them; they might do him some good. Our newspapers are by no means altogether faultless; but there is much in them for the orthodox god to learn, both of wisdom and of morals.

How many people pray daily or at night by the bedside, as in childhood at mothers' knees? It is a beautiful thing, — this sweet, innocent prayer of childhood. How unworthy does the prayer of manhood seem beside it, — to sit in the church with bowed

head wishing the parson would stop; or to kneel before thousands, muttering, "God have mercy on us miserable sinners," to repeat it again and again, and then to get up and sigh. On the Christian's own theory of God and his attributes, prayer is useless. But it is asserted that God loves to be praised, — a pitiable excuse indeed. To take a familiar example, every Sunday prayers are offered for some sick person, some loved child or brother or sister, that lies at the point of death: "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done." If God is the all-wise being he is represented to be, if he is all-powerful and all-knowing, and does everything for the best, prayer cannot influence him one way or the other. It must be annoying, not to say impertinent.

We are told that he loves praise, and if so he is quite human. But our praise is very specious. It is as plain as a simple geometrical proposition, Q. E. D. "O Lord, thou art good and wise and merciful, and we praise thee daily. We have indeed remembered our Creator from the days of our youth, singing daily his praises, offering every night our prayers; . . . be mindful of us, and send us all that is good and pure and true in life. Incline us to the right. We know we are poor miserable creatures; but thy grace can save, ay, hath saved, and thy mercy always hearkens. Grant our petitions, if it be thy will, and thine shall be the praise forevermore, Amen." Here is the average prayer in substance, though short in form; and what a mockery, if God really be what we are taught! After it is finished we sigh and forget all about it, and in a half-hour cannot for the life of us tell what we have prayed for. True, the mother bending over her feverish child does pray in earnest for the quivering spark of life that still lingers

hovering on its parched lips, and that prayer is touchingly sad; but such a prayer is by no means the rule. We become very devout in danger and trials.

There is a common story told of two Irishmen crossing over East River. It was when Brooklyn Bridge was in process of construction, and the two hardy Hibernians had crawled out on one of the cables, one just behind the other. Pausing a moment to rest, they found themselves midway out, high up over the dark, treacherous water, that seemed to gleam maliciously at them, quivering with fear on the trembling cable. "Ach, Pat, God is a good man," was the solemn comment of the leader, to whom was returned in the same subdued tones: "Arra, Mike, and the divil is not so bad as he's panted." As they crept painfully on, every few feet the leader would groan, "God is a very good man," and Pat would always offer the touching response, "And the divil is not so bad as he's panted." And so with much earnest muttering and honest prayer they crawled slowly on. Finally Mike laid firm hold of the farther fastening and jumped bravely to *terra firma*, interrupting his honest companion's last "Divil is not as bad as he's panted" with the still more common and general, "To hell with thim both." Oh, we are wonderfully pious in trouble, provided we have not had enough of it to drive all such pious belief and hope out of us! Even in our prosperity we are much more ready to thank God than to help our less fortunate or successful fellow-men.

In our pride and our avarice and our self-interest we are forever petitioning heaven for its smile of favor. We argue with God with logic from his own sacred word. A thousand texts we throw in his patient face. We appeal, we shriek, we rage, as

humility or justice or hate moves us. We are always so sure that our own vision is perfect. Out of it all we do emerge finally, forgetful, appeased, even cheerful. "Alas, patient and long-suffering God, thou needst be more surelier God to endure us than to have made us." In general, we care little about our prayer or religion. We do not half expect the one to be answered or the other to be rewarded; and so rarely if ever does apparent answer or reward come, that we regard both as respectable forms to be kept up as a matter of public policy.

During a severe drought in the country which proved very disastrous to crops, the good old parson called his people together at the little white church to pray for rain. As the people gathered, a little girl who had brought an umbrella excited a good deal of comment and ridicule. "Why," said the old beldames, "what did you bring your umbrella for?" The little girl's ready and honest answer was: "I thought you were going to pray for rain." Here is the whole situation in a nutshell. No one expected his prayer or that of all the people together to be answered. On the contrary, all were surprised at the child's ingenuousness, and had but a sneer for her innocence. The little girl was the only honest one in the lot, save the grim crazy old farmer who muttered as he stood on the porch, "What poor old fools, to pray for rain with the wind dead in the northwest!" If honest John Bunyan prayed for rain, he took mighty good care to have his top-boots, slouch hat, and waterproof greatcoat, surer of nothing than the speedy realization of such a hurricane and deluge as would all but lay waste and drown the world again.

Christ taught a vastly different lesson. Reconcilia-

tion should precede sacrifice. Never mind the gifts to God; leave them on the altar, and go and make peace with the brother you have wronged. Having made peace with your fellow-men, there will be time and to spare to make peace with your god. There is falsity in any religion which pretends or intimates that any being — god, man, or devil — can take away the consequences of good or evil. A faith which holds out pardon absolute without possessing any right of pardon, is a sham and a lie. Even the law of man is above such reproach. What right have I, a stranger, to pay another's debt? What liability can I incur for a stranger? Absolutely none, and the law declares it with justice. How can one pardon a private injury committed unknown to him by others? With innocence atonement is impossible. No god can have the right or the ability to pardon sins between man and man. Humanity will have made great progress when it shall realize the fallacy of any such principle of living as that which underlies the whole theory of the Christian religion, for the atonement is the essence of the faith. Christ said he had not seen such faith in all Israel, as that of the publican who offered restitution fourfold to any he had wronged. When man shall have acquired the honesty and the courage fairly and openly to meet the consequences of his own folly and crime, and justly to make amends for injuries done to others, hypocrisy will cease to exist. The Christian religion proper is a breeder of hypocrisy. Hypocrites flock by the thousands to the churches; they subscribe by thousands to the creeds; they contribute by thousands to the charities, hoping thereby to seem better than they are, and to get great gain where they give little value.

Something has been said in another chapter of the immense speculation practised in Christianity. This is no mere fancy. There is scarcely a church-member but knows in his heart that he buys his religion as a bargain. Few people enter the church to add something to it and to noble, upright living. Most enter because it is proper and fashionable to be a regular attendant, and not a few because they hope to get something out of it. These speculators invest a dollar to draw out ten; their pew-rent comes back in trade, or they think it will; their tender mercies and charities bless him that gives vastly out of proportion to him that takes; they cast their bread upon the waters, that it may return to them after many days. The deacons of the holy church, like the Roman augurs, cannot help winking at one another at times, while the office of Sunday-school superintendent has become a standing joke.

All the essential lessons which Christ taught are absolutely devoid of dogmatic theology and bigoted sectarianism. The essence of each and every one of the characteristic stories, all of which are so familiar to us from the Scripture, is simple and unalloyed morality. There are no thirty-nine articles to a moral life. Morality is above such petty rules. I can well imagine the perplexity of the learned inquisitor who asked the master for his definition of the word "neighbor," as he listened to the story of the good Samaritan.

Christianity proper is not moral according to the advanced idea of the times. That it was once the expression of the highest morality known to mankind cannot be doubted. But while men have advanced, Christianity has remained stationary, or at most has swung on a pivot, being securely anchored to an in-



fallible revelation. The hypocrisy which is its inevitable offspring has already been noticed sufficiently. It pervades the entire system from beginning to end, as a modern theory of religion. Badman frankly discloses the reason: people love their vice, but do not care to bear its name.

Christianity is absolutely lacking in essential virtue. Holding out its highest rewards to all who have faith in its teachings, it signally fails as a moral system. It fails to account for thousands of people who will never know of its saintly lessons. Twist and distort the texts as you will, salvation by faith alone is the highest offer this great religion extends to humanity.

Virtue is no living force here; it is but a dead theory. It is negative rather than positive. Under the system it is essential only to avoid error and crime as defined by the law. Judaism would be a more applicable term for the faith than Christianity. The term in use is a libel on Christ, who taught an active, persistent virtue as the essence of goodness. Christianity, on the contrary, teaches men to shun and hate the world, — a command which many of its followers in the past have literally and faithfully obeyed. And yet this very command itself is immoral. This world, whether it be good or bad, has innumerable duties for man, the avoidance of which is positive error. Failure to do good, as well as the actual commission of crime, is a departure from virtue. Mere observance of the decalogue will not win salvation. Little credit does he deserve who, in one way or another, manages to pick his way through life without ever having violated the commandments. This is exactly the boast which the rich young nobleman made to Christ. The servant who carefully hid

away his single talent, it will be remembered, was cast into outer darkness. To pray, "Lead us not into temptation," is not enough; it is our duty to see that we do not throw ourselves in the way of temptation. To be good, man must do good.

This great religion asks men to be Christian rather than to be virtuous. It reasons in this way: Because you are a criminal is no reason why you should be an infidel; come, the blessed Lord holds out his hands to thee. As if, indeed, God were a Christian! Man is outcast unless he is such. The faith seeks to thrust upon mankind, not the virtues of Christ, but his mere name. Hence it is that the Church is always speaking of goodness, but rarely has a word of praise for good men, much less of censure for bad men. Of course, her position is rather delicate. She fears offence. Why, a dead man's pageant and eulogy shall be, not as his virtues were, but as the gold he has left behind. Recall the eulogies of the pulpit. *Hic jacet* is the meanest vanity of all, rendered possible by a system that teaches the possibility of religion without morality, and of piety without virtue. "He died a Christian," — what a farce!

The dishonesty and fraud of trade, ruining hundreds of innocent victims, meets with no reproach from the pulpit. The poor Irishwoman, with seven fatherless children, who keeps a little dirty saloon in a back alley does indeed call forth a perfect torrent of abuse, and the clergy at times wax frantic over her crime; but not a word, not a syllable, is breathed against the bloated brewer, who swaggers even into the very church itself, highly respected and honored. Oh, for shame! Of these the poor widow is a martyr; the rich, flabby brewer is respectable; but the Church is altogether contemptible. Nothing so low-

ers Christianity in the minds of honest people, as the existence of such unworthy practices in the Church which bears its name, especially when it is discovered that the existence of such things is due to the immorality of the system. There is always the assurance of the possibility of buying off its god by prayer or fasting or sacrifice. It has its price within the reach of all. God is very merciful; his price is low, so no one need ever conclude that he is really beyond salvation.

Selfishness is another inherent fault of the Christian system. It teaches men to consider their own personal salvation of the very highest importance. Have I sinned? have I hurt myself with God? — these are the questions that it bids men ask themselves; not, Have I hurt my fellow-men? The self-denial of personal gratification is a credit that all of us are apt to enter in our accounts. How different is the self-forgetfulness which Christ taught: “He that serves is greatest among you.”

The practical results of this failing are as numerous as the sands of the shore. To how many people is the Christian Sabbath made hateful by this very selfishness of others. Play is frowned upon, and pleasure-trips are forbidden. A grave decorum is exacted, and stiff and faultless black dress is required. No singing but of hymns is permitted, and no reading but of sermons and Biblical commentaries. The clergy attempt to prohibit the sale of the Sunday papers; the distribution of mail even is forbidden, and the running of Sunday trains and of horse-cars. The museums and the libraries must be closed. The truth is, there is danger lest the vulgar common people will learn too much. Mr. Moody thinks we should not dance Sunday or any other day. The bird's song

is a sin, and the gayly blossoming flowers are sadly wicked; while the busy bee is a spiteful little monster of impiety. But the sons of man are lords even of the Sabbath, and, thanks to their awakening judgment, they are beginning to realize their right. It is all very well to teach a day of rest as a matter of economy, or even of religion, in one way; but to teach it as a religious dogma is absurd, and people are beginning to admit it openly, for none have ever pretended to believe it implicitly, or to live up to any such belief. Furthermore, men are claiming the right to rest in whatever way they please, as well as whenever seems best to them.

As a final result, people begin to think that the theologians have laid down doctrines about things concerning which they know no more than others whose pretensions are a good deal less sounding, and to conclude — and with a good deal of wisdom, too — that, after all, the essence of religion lies in correct living, and that a moral life is the highest end of man.

Considerable space has been taken up so far in stating what morality is not. We may well abandon the faults of Christianity, yes, and the whole system of faith, to the mumbling, chanting priest, and hasten to define in some slight measure what is comprehended in this general term, morality. An accurate definition of the term is perhaps impossible. No formula can be laid down which can be guaranteed to apply with success every time. Tom Jones said that no amount of rules could make a man as good as his father, good old Squire Alworthy; and although his spiritual instructor saw fit to box his ears for it, most people will believe that Tom was right. The ordinarily accepted rules are as inadequate to measure a moral life as a foot-rule is to measure

the sun. There is virtue outside of moral tenets,—most of it lies outside. Beyond confessions of faith there is moral truth; and there lives abundant piety that worships no Christian deity, just as there is justice outside the courts, and crime not confined within prison walls. A sounding name is not goodness; one may be moral and a benefactor who at birth and death has passed unnoticed. Morality is simply the permanence of an approving conscience.

Virtue is greatest in love for man, which, indeed, is of itself love of God; for we touch God when we lay our hands on a human body. To teach the fruitlessness of moral action is to dissuade men from the habits of rectitude. People will not try to be noble if nobility is represented to them as impossible and of no value. The past is not a desert, and our deeds are not unworthy in the light of heaven, if we become better and nobler. Good actions never fail to elevate, not only the one who performs them, but all men. No one can tell where an action, good or bad, ends; no one can say that it ever does end. Even he who gives the occasion for good, or the motive, is sharer of the fruit. I know of no worship like brotherly love.

Remember of whom it was said: "Much shall be forgiven her, for she hath loved much."

It is a good deal better to do a kind deed once in a while than to be a regular attendant at church. All the patient listening to tiresome sermons, all the contribution to Pundita Ramabai, all the play-work devoted to senseless nothings for church fairs, all the missionary discussions of the ladies' circles, is outweighed a hundred times daily by the kind helpfulness of the servants below stairs. There is quite generally more downright morality and helpfulness

in the kitchen of ninety-nine out of a hundred great houses than there is in all the rest of the mansion. There is something humiliating in awakening to the fact that one's own under-servants, perhaps the very scrub-women, are really one's betters.

How many rich ladies would give up their ride in the park of a pleasant day to do an act of common decency for their servants? How many men would give up a single afternoon at the club to help a friend in need? The most selfish men I have ever known were churchmen, were honest Christians. God be praised, all such are not so. I think of noble Christian women; they outnumber the men. I know of a fine Christian gentleman, more than a millionaire, who deducted a couple of days' wages from the pay of his farm-hands who had spent the time dragging a pond for the bodies of two children, of one of their fellows, who had drowned there. We — that is, most of us — love our friends; we will do anything for them, anything in the world, in a pinch, but we cannot quite give up a minute of our pleasure for them, — oh, anything else! Here is a poor, ignorant paddy, with a dirty mop-rag of a dress, who washes down the steps; and yet she has more faith and charity, with all her popery, than a whole Episcopal synod.

Action rather than belief is the test of virtue. The essence of faith is work. A lazy man is never moral. Idleness begets corruption. Like stagnant water, the system becomes foul from sheer inactivity. All Nature purifies itself in action. Death is only apparent suspension of activity. Decay is continuation of activity and life.

It is a pity that no religion can get itself established whose fundamental doctrine is work. This is the very element which all religious faiths promise to

eliminate in the future. Depend upon it, man will find no heaven without work; with work he will wish for none, for he has already found one, and has no time to think of or care for any other. Work brings happiness and love and purity. Idleness brings misery and lust and depravity. There is no class of men more pure and manly and happy than workingmen, in whatever field of labor you please. It is the rich and well-to-do who need to learn to work, and to work unselfishly. Profit and loss prevails altogether too much in this little world of ours. Even the children at school are taught it, and trade jackknives as sharply as their fathers trade stocks. Is it not philanthropic gambling to grind a thousand men down to the last penny, and then to give old clothes to the beggar at the door? It is even cheating in the game. This is not for all time, or else virtue is a delusion and religion a dream. The consciousness of good beyond price, or fame, or hope of reward, is the noble part in life. It is no use to worship without toil. Impossibility is simply the greatest possibility in the whole world.

There is hunger and cold and crime in the world: who caused this? The nobility, the aristocracy, come in for their full share of the blame. Dives is the greatest cause of Lazarus. Who is it that pays for the splendor of kings and the magnificence of courts,—who, but the poor? The ragged clothe the royal.

If there must be sacrifice, let it be sacrifice to the people. What a glorious incense that would be! If only our fasting meant the feeding of the hungry, it would be a blessing indeed. Would that Lent were something more than a fashion! Oh, noble sacrifice, that which serves the unfortunate, disinherited, de-

spairing masses! Give the poor common people of your abundance, you who have so much for frivolity. Give them money, or, better still, give them thought; give them love, and, best of all, give them your own attention and service. Listen to their complaints, listen to their confessions; listen, and help their strivings. They do try very hard to do right; you shall learn it of a truth, if you will but try. Alas, alas! the poor and downtrodden suffer so much, and know so little.

The masses will help themselves, if opportunity is given. If it is not given, the time will come when they will help themselves in another way, and you too. But only reach out a hand to the mass, and it will grasp it with ready and intelligent good-will. Teach it letters, and it will smile. Be kind, and it will be thankful; be generous, and it will not abuse your offers; be faithful, and it will be as true as steel; be moderately attentive, and you will never find a more willing pupil. With all your inattention and selfishness, it has learned a wisdom not to be despised. Think where it would be to-day, if as much time and attention had been directed to its education as has been spent in its oppression. Wisdom teaching ignorance is the noblest ideal of mankind.

“Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod,”<sup>1</sup> says the German; and a nobler saying was never penned. Be of some use, be of some service, to mankind. People must think of something, — think of making the world better. There is no caste in doing good. He that serves gives his attention alike gratefully to the weak and the strong, the poor and the ignorant. It is enough that these exist at all. There is a whole world of work before humanity. Whoso will take

<sup>1</sup> “A useless life is an early death.”



hold in earnest, will in that moment set a hundred other hands busily at work. It would be grand, and it is by no means impossible, if idleness should become a dishonor. Human history would be overturned in a twinkling, if in some way the question, Who is this worker? could be changed to the reproach, Who is this idler? What a beehive this world would become! And there is music, too, in such activity. How delightful is the hum of the bees!

The duties of these times are complex, without doubt. Only, one thing ought to be settled by this time, and that is that mere thought and love are not enough. These must be followed by action. Here is a duty; take your position right there before it, and doggedly fight it out. Never admit defeat. Any man who will stubbornly persist in struggling can tire out any condition imaginable here on earth. Death itself will never dare attack an aggressive man. When it meets such a one, it steps one side, until finally, old age bringing weakness and decay, it again approaches and boasts of a victory which it never won.

The dignity of mankind is a great lesson to be learned. That conceit which teaches that man is God's chosen creation, made in his image, object of his especial care, for whose delectation all the stars and the heavens were made, is wholly separate from this human dignity referred to. Let man realize that he is a part of the infinite, even though a small part, and as such has a certain proportionate responsibility, which is and must be the inevitable attendant of his existence. This responsibility is his, and his alone. No one can take it from him; no one can lessen its burden. Each and every man must answer for his proper share of work. If he improves his opportuni-

ties the very best he knows how, all humanity is the better for that life. If, on the other hand, he shirks his duties, human progress and well-being is in that exact proportion injured.

Consider the awful grandeur of life viewed in this light. In sorrow, I fear, most of us will have to admit that our influence for good has not been what it ought to have been, and might have been, with a little more effort and a little more conscientiousness. Think of it: you and I might have made all future men somewhat better than they will be, but for our laziness, our carelessness, our downright selfishness and crime. If we had only done all that we were capable of doing in the years already gone by, humanity would have been a notch farther ahead than it is, even though a small one.

Suppose we take another view. Suppose not only that we have not lived up to the measure of our capacity for good, but have even voluntarily or perhaps wilfully perverted that capacity. The enormity of that crime seems terrible. We have actually and wilfully hindered human progress. Humanity would have been farther on in its journey, if we had never lived. Of how many shall this be said? How many on reading these words hear the verdict of conscience, "Guilty"? It makes one fairly shudder to think of the number, and of the enormity of the crime. It seems to me that this judgment of conscience is worse than a thousand years of hell. It causes a sinking feeling and a faintness. Mankind would have been better if I had never been born, or if I had died in my infancy. I think such an idea might drive one to suicide.

Quick, let us make up for the past! There may yet be time for us to fill our measure just a little

more than half full. And it will be no small comfort, if it be found to exceed the half limit by a single tiny grain; but oh, the grief, if it be found lacking by an atom! Alas, a long life, and humanity the worse for it! God forbid, gentle reader, that this be your fate or mine!

Oh, let us hasten! Let us forget our weariness and our care, and think only of making up for the past, so as to do our duty in some small measure to our fellow-men. There is too much grief in this world for you and me to live idle or thoughtless, — too much hunger, too much cold, too many haunts of vice, too many lives of shame, too much ignorance and superstition. A home slowly becomes cheerless and silent; or if there is any sound, it is that of sobbing. The quick, strong, manly footstep has become unsteady and shambling. The old, noble, loving glance is now brutal and sensual. Is there anything here that resembles a home you know, my brother? Is it possible that you have caused such sorrow and shame? Ah, you who triumphantly shake your head and rejoice in your virtue, have you ever tried to lift up hearts so down-cast? Quick, before it is too late! There are ten such houses where you might do good, and you have never once tried.

The cheerless chamber of the poor but beautiful girl suddenly becomes a pretty bower; laces gracefully fold about the window, little ornaments lend a charm to the once bare shelves, and elegant dress adorns the form that but yesterday could scarcely hide its shame. Knock at your heart; is there anything there that resembles this? Did you ever cause this? Society is full of error which earnest hearts and willing hands can lessen in love, but only in love.

Education is the greatest need. Light the torch;

you cannot see in such darkness without a bright light. Instruct the young and the ignorant. Above all, labor for the young. They it is who shall make the future. It is well enough in a way to lighten the burdens of the aged; but to see that the young get their burdens swung properly on to their shoulders is a hundred times more important. I would give more for "Life's" Fresh Air Fund than for all the labors of the American Board of Foreign Missions for a generation, and I do not say that missions are worthless. Pundita Ramabai, the Japanese missions, and Borriboola-Gha are all outweighed by a single bright, clean-washed boy face and clean-clothed boy form, breathing for a brief two weeks God's pure country air in the care of pure-minded, noble women and generous men. Do, in the name of conscience, give these boys and girls a cup of cold water. Send them to school to bright, clean, pure-speaking, and pure-acting women.

And you that have the teaching of these children, be mindful of your responsibilities. You may make a noble life, which in turn may make a thousand, or you may turn to evil one that will lead a thousand astray. Yours is about the highest position in this world; and yet so few of you know it, and so few of those who give you places, and haggle with you over a paltry dollar of remuneration, have any appreciation of your virtues. You that teach little children the alphabet and the first reading lessons, you that vigilantly guide and watch the development of reason, — you, noble men and women, are the world-makers more than all others.

Many shall hate you and look down upon you, — many that owe to you alone all that they have in the world. So hated others before them the great master,

who, like you, patiently drudged and groaned over dull minds and unwilling hearts, glad, even like you, to win a single smile or catch the gleam of a single eye beaming with awakening intelligence. Do not weary of your task. Yours is a rich reward. The future shall connect your name with all that shall be known of goodness and greatness. You are the steady workers in the grandest field of labor the world has seen. Depend upon it the harvest shall be great in proportion.

Sometimes everything seems discouraging. There is so much to be done, and so few who seem to be ready to work in earnest. We pause and sigh and linger a little before we begin. Who has not in this way lost many precious moments, hours, days? Perhaps discouragement comes after a period of earnest work. On looking about, the field seems without limit. Our efforts are scarcely appreciable. In surprise we exclaim: "What! so much evil yet, so much ignorance?" And then, just at the critical moment, some one adds the straw that ends our usefulness. Some one always preaches from the old texts, "It is no use; the world is bad, and cannot be made good. If you will be pure and win salvation, leave it to its miserable fate; hate it and place your faith in heaven; pray to be delivered from its shame and sin; save your own soul regardless of the world."

Such is the temptation which besets every earnest worker for humanity. And it is the temptation of Christianity. This great faith is the ruin of many noble efforts. It seals the fate of many promising beginnings. All of us, as we journey along through this life, find many obstacles in every stage. By far the greater part of these annoyances are stumbling-blocks that other people who have passed before have

put in the way, or at least have suffered to remain there. Thieves infest other roads than merely that which leads down to Jericho; and the unfortunate and the unwary ever fall in their way, to the horror and disgust of priest and Levite. Good Samaritans, too, thanks to the ceaseless upward journeying of humanity, are always to be found on all roads; and owing to the brave efforts of untiring bands of good and true men and women in all ages, their number is ever increasing. Disregard the insidious suggestions of Christianity; keep steadily and faithfully at work. Scorn to leave a good work, one which meets with the approval of conscience, at the nod of any priest or the command of any god. It is no God that commands the abandonment of mankind; be sure it is the devil masquerading in some god's clothing. Pledge yourselves, as the heathen do, never to accept personal private salvation so long as a single one of your brother-men is denied the bliss. Pledge yourselves to remain at his side, striving with might and main to lead him in that better way; and remember that the pledge is of little consequence without the act.

Let us all, great and small, rich and poor, in all our work, — the laborer at his bench, the lawyer at the bar, the minister in the pulpit, — confront dishonesty and imposture, denounce hypocrisy, and aid virtue. And let us begin with ourselves. Let us preach a good deal less, and practise more. Let us reckon that day lost during which we have done no good deed. Let us change our ideas about death.

Our ideals form the goal towards which we should strive, not the ideals of the past. The world has changed wonderfully during the last three centuries. The evils of the past are not the evils of the present. There is even more to be done now than there was then.

No wonder the timid are appalled, and fear to attack the evil they find. Not less is required of us, but more, just in proportion as our opportunities exceed those of long ago. It is just as much man's duty to see that his duties increase daily, as it is to fulfil them day by day. Teaching by example is the best method of instruction.

Humanity no longer enslaved, but free, is the great hope of the future. It is a strange thing to alter the past; but it is done, and of itself almost. Christianity as an infallible religious system has been dying since the Middle Ages. Then was the first victory of reason and morality over Christian theology. The old ideas of life and duty are thrust aside, and new and better ones proclaimed. The old religion is little short of a dead thing. It is not moral enough for the times. It has been patched and mended time and again, until it is all shreds and patches. It is fit now only to frighten idiots. The scarecrow excites only derision from the wise, who indeed are likely to lose all respect for its past service, seeing its imbecile attempts to thrust itself upon unwilling but patient humanity. The angels of light are in full pursuit of the legions of darkness and ignorance.

The great fact which shines out bright and clear in the face and eyes of mankind is this: the whole universe is an infinite chorus wherein man has a part to sustain. We must sing with full rich voice the praise of the Infinite all the days of our life, in cheerfulness and in labor and in love. When the affections glow with kindly feeling for others, and fairly render helpfulness imperative, joy is but another name for heaven. When one thinks of the Greeks, one realizes that hope moves faster than fate. We do believe in progress, though; and it is inevitable, whether we

believe in it or not. I put my shoulder to the wheel, determined in intention to aid progress. It may be true that the ark of God is in better hands than ours, and that it will always have better protection than we can give; but no one whose opinion is worth anything now thinks that God will strike him dead for an honest, earnest attempt to steady the car, or to aid its progress.



## X.

## RELIGION.

“Est Deus in nobis.” (Yes, God *is* in us.)

**H**UMANITY for six thousand years has been a pupil in Nature's school, and not altogether a brilliant one. Many individuals have always outranked the rather slow-moving masses. As six thousand years ago, humanity is still a great child unwillingly moping off to school, preferring a hundred times to loiter and play, though in ignorance, than to study and toil to enlightenment. Nevertheless the species has always felt in some degree, rather indefinite at times, the same hunger and thirst which has incited its more brilliant members to their noblest efforts. This hunger is common to all; all have much the same means of satisfying it; but some know better than others how to apply the resources at hand, some have greater capacity for hard work, some have a fuller appreciation of results than others.

This great hunger is ignorance. The means of satisfying it is education. The final result is knowledge. There is an infinite rotation of these three on successively higher planes. Knowledge, as soon as it is acquired, becomes ignorance again on a higher plane, only to emerge as higher knowledge. This progressive rotation is religion. Blessed hunger and thirst after righteousness!

The greatest revelation that ever comes to a man is the realization that he is what he is because of the patient, laborious toil of his ancestors, combined with his own comparatively insignificant personal efforts. A hearty appreciation of the labor of the past is a complete rejuvenation, or a new birth. Through a great sea of blood and tears mankind has slowly waded and toiled on and on toward the promised land. The wilderness has been long and trying. On the steep winding path many stragglers, weary and footsore, have fallen never to rise again. The great mass has struggled onward and upward with infinite persistence, with hands torn and bleeding, but with a courage undaunted by fear, unshaken by failure, sublime in its steady, unfaltering faith in something better and higher and nobler beyond. Surely God is in us. Our faith is God: our love, our hope, our courage is God.

But the end is not yet. We are still only in the early stages of the infinite journey; but the same sweet old courage and patience will live within us through all the way. Climbing to perfection is slow and laborious work. See it in our speech. Thousands of agonizing years, sweet ages of sorrow and labor, have passed since whining, grunting, stuttering man tried, oh, so hard! to tell his thoughts and feelings. And now, with all our books and with all our speech, the tears will rise and the sob will break in our vain attempts to describe feelings which we suffer to impart, and to express thought too delicate and profound for human speech. We stamp, we gesture and gesticulate, we make faces and utter cries to aid speech in indicating thought and feeling. No single mind can measure or comprehend all the labor and grief — yes, and joy too — that changed the early

beginnings of men that ran with the beasts in herds in the forest, scratching, fighting, snarling, snapping over the miserable ground-nuts and acorns, free gift of Nature, to the present educated man, seated at his elegant table in peace and plenty, happy with chosen companions of like tastes and feelings, or discussing calmly and dispassionately the interests of his fellow-men, or again studiously sitting buried in thought over the treasures of the great minds of the past in the cheerful, inviting library.

Consider the growth of art. How great is the span between the early cave-dwellers who chipped out the pictured rocks on Lake Superior, and the mediæval masters who decorated the great cathedrals of Europe! Who would dream that the savage who scrawled his god on the smooth sand of the shore, would learn to paint the Sistine Madonna? Or who could imagine that the hand which scratched in effigy the monstrous shapes of old Egypt and the Nile, would ever acquire the delicate touch possessed by a Landseer or a Douglas? In that remote past, which seems so dead and unreal to us, was downright truth sought with the hardest labor and the highest patience. Choose whatever field you will, it reveals the same patient, persistent toil. One age takes up the labor of its predecessor and bears it on to the next. This is the great torch-race of the nations; only each century, each generation, fans the torch to a brighter glow, passing it on to the next increased in brilliancy. Well for us if we are as earnest for truth and right in our times, with our greatly increased opportunities!

We are altogether too apt to speak with disrespect of the past, — at least those of us who are educated and critical. We are inclined to find its faults overmastering. We speak rather of the ignorance and

superstition than of the honest endeavor. The great labor and heroic sacrifice escape our attention. We look to find great results where we should be grateful to find earnest efforts. The past represents the labor; the present the finished work. We, too, in our turn are toiling nobly over a work which the future will enjoy. If we wish credit for our efforts then, let us now gratefully remember the past.

That dim, unknown past was not all error. There is a great element of truth in it, quite comparable, too, with the truth of the present. We who may enjoy the fruit of those times shall yet never taste them, until we have learned rightly to appreciate the self-sacrifice and devotion of those who have gone before. We shall never rise to the opportunities given us, until we understand the relation which exists between our times and the Middle Ages. We shall never adequately meet our duties and obligations, until we learn to value the gifts showered upon us in the untiring efforts of our ancestors. While we reject the results of the past, let us thoroughly understand and appreciate the efforts of the past. It is our duty to reject the results which are largely erratic, though it is sad to confess that many of us are still unable or unwilling to do this.

Some one has said that the most creditable part of the past is that which has been forgotten, and the most uncreditable part is that the world has forgotten it. Let us honor the heroic men who made the present for us. The quantity of work that has been forgotten in this world is saddening to think of. We do, to be sure, honor in a very ignorant, unenlightened way many of the gods of the past. The noise of our rejoicing over these really lost worthies is strangely like braying. We speak of the laws and the miracles

of Moses, and attempt to bind them to the present; we forget their relation to their own age, which is indeed glorious. We praise Christ as Lord and God, thinking our whole duty lies in his worship; we forget that he said, "I am a servant among you." We boast of the orthodoxy of Luther and Calvin; we forget the freedom and independence which was the very fountain of their efforts. A time comes, however, though in revolution itself, when these great lights and their real work are understood. If this time did not come to pass, what would become of us?

Religion does not consist of theologies or theogonies. Creeds and sects, commandments and sacraments, are by no means essentials. They are but the husks, and too often contain worms which have eaten out all the heart and kernel. They are like language which may be intelligible to those born and bred to the tongue, but which is utterly worthless to a stranger. The religious sentiment is susceptible of a countless variety of forms and expressions. These forms vary in value as the times vary. But it is not in these different forms, whether of a generation or a century, sure to change, that we are to search for religion exclusively. All contain religion in some degree, it is true; but none is its complete expression. They are but the incidents of religion. Sects are the incidents of Christianity. Now, just as Roman Catholicism, Methodism, Congregationalism, Universalism, and all the other schools are recognized as the incidents of Christianity, not any one individually and exclusively its essential; so Christianity, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and all the other faiths are the incidents, not any one the sole essence, of true religion.

The very name "religion" itself is apt to mislead. When the word is used it calls to mind, not necessarily that great universal sentiment which is as old as the world, if not the universe itself, but rather some form of worship or sectarianism. This is wholly apart from the idea at present intended. The religious sentiment — call it piety, or goodness, or what you will — is now under consideration. Outside of philosophy and theology, pure and simple by itself, is religion. We may experiment with logic and reason until doomsday, indeed beyond the judgment itself we may indulge the fancy and imagination; but above it all will rise the sublime and significant fact of a living man, a living world, a living universe. In contemplation of universal life, the petty differences and contentions of mankind dwindle into absolute nothingness. The great religious hymn of the universe rises everywhere, from everything, and forever and ever.

But what form does this religious sentiment take among men, viewed at its highest and best? Simply this, — a perpetual reaching out for the ideal. True religion is to live fully up to the light which is given, and to strive and hope for more.

This is the great moving sentiment at the basis of every creed and sect, though at times it is all but lost in the tangled web woven of contention and intolerance. The hour now is when true believers worship in spirit and in truth. This is the only true religion that ever existed. Such a faith was long before Christ; such a faith has been ever since, — never general or universal, always rare in its higher types, outside of Christianity as well as in it, indeed rather than in it. Webster defines religion as the recognition of God as an object of worship, love, and obedience. This is all

very well for ordinary use, to buy and sell by, but altogether insufficient to rise by. To become great and good requires a higher and broader definition than this. There is no particular hill where God is worshipped, nor does true religion require a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

“God attributes to place  
No sanctity, if none be thither brought  
By men who there frequent.”

The capability of infinite variation in religion is at once apparent, viewed in this light. Religion differs in every individual according to the light which he has. The Eastern peoples, more than all others, seem to grasp this idea intelligently. The beautiful story of the three rings, which Lessing in his masterpiece has immortalized, well illustrates the thought. Each of the sons has the real ring bequeathed by the father to the best beloved, so long as each in love honestly believes his own to be the right one, and strives to prove the virtues of his priceless possession by deeds of kindness and charity; for the father loved all with equal love.

Equally expressive are the other well-known legends. Buddha is detained on the shore of an impassable river, when several good souls build each a bridge for him to pass over. He separates himself into as many forms as there are bridges, and thus each spirit believes Buddha to have used his own. And again, when another divinity dances with a shepherdess, each of the others present believes he danced with her. True religion is spirit and truth. Wherever man earnestly and honestly strives for the highest ideal appreciable by him or possible to him, there is religious worship absolute, though his very labor

itself be error. Be true to yourself. There cannot be a righteous judgment of actions and aspirations considered apart from, and unrelated to, the mental state of the individual. What is righteous and religious in one may well be criminal and impious in another. Moreover action and belief are no correct indication of the moral *status* of the individual, unless the result of his own reflection and judgment.

Our very errors are significant indications of our real faith. Without this continual striving for the ideal, suffering and toil were without merit in us, and the error were criminal indeed. Thus considered, the failings of the past no longer seem mean and censurable. The Bible becomes a beautiful and instructive history of the unceasing endeavor of humanity. Virtue being sought for its own sake, without expectation of reward or favor or riches or power, this is the ideal upward struggle of mankind, — this is religion to-day, and the underlying principle will not change. Where selfishness, which seeks a reward, where treachery, where indifference prevail, there is unreligion, impiety, atheism. Purity of heart and honesty of purpose in human effort is the only true religion. Christ defined it in one word, — Spirit.

Religion henceforth is never a known concrete quantity. It can never be reduced to an arithmetical number or integer. It is a constant progression; its ideal or goal is perfection. Its realized forms never reach truth absolute. Its expression is the asymptote of truth, always approaching truth but never reaching it, except in infinity or perfection, which is the same thing in morals.

Its progress is traceable in the modification of the forms of its expression. Progress in morals and in religion alike is accomplished in two ways. First and



foremost, there is moral and religious sentiment, the result of experience and reflection. A healthy sentiment must underlie healthy action. This sentiment soon results in action, and quickly forms rules of conduct, which is the second means of causing progress. Under certain conditions, rules and formulæ appear of themselves to cause progress. Closer inspection, however, will always reveal the sentiment beneath, which is the real source of life.

Man comes to know that certain things are wrong, and he has learned that in honesty he must abandon ways and courses which he recognizes as immoral. The very knowledge of wrong teaches avoidance of wrong. Here is a sentiment which has begun to work. He soon reduces to tangible form the things which he is to shun. He makes commandments, for the most part prohibitive. He dwells on the rewards of right living; he emphasizes the punishments of error. He exaggerates both, indulging his imagination as he thinks to their enhancement. But it proves at times unpleasant to thwart desire and habit. It attracts attention, and he prefers to keep in the old, popular, established ways. So a compromise is struck with conscience. Curious ways are discovered of avoiding the real issue. Substitutes are provided. Sacrifice is established by which the old courses may be persisted in. A tax is paid for privilege. A penalty is incurred for the gratification of desire. The letter of the law is regarded rather than the spirit.

Thus sentiment becomes a mere form. Instead of a religion we have a superstition. The superstition is popular because it permits error and indulges vice, by introducing the idea of atonement or pacification. By penance or prayer or sacrifice, God can be bought off. Soon this practice becomes so universal, and

immorality becomes so common and flagrant, that conscience will not be easy, and finally rebels and reasserts its superiority. Again we return to religious sentiment, which is strengthened, and acquires a higher meaning.

A familiar form of religion may be considered by way of illustration. Prayer and sacrifice have always existed in some form in every religion. At first sacrifice of human life in urgent need is practised. The Hebrew Jephthah sacrifices his daughter; Greek Agamemnon sacrifices Iphigenia; barbarians cast their infants into the flaming arms of idols, or drown them in the bosom of the river god. Among the Hebrews there came a day when Abraham led Isaac up into a mountain to offer him as a sacrifice to his god, believing it to be his sacred duty; but as he looked at the slender form of his dear boy bending under the burden of sticks which, all unknown to him in his innocence, were to complete in anguish the cruel expiation, the poor father out of his love for his boy begins to question within himself. What was the deed which he was doing? Was it necessary? Why should the lad suffer? He was innocent. He is my own dear boy, and I love him; and my heart bleeds to bring this pain upon him. Natural affection cries out against such cruel sacrifice. It seems rather sacrilege. Ah! there it is, there is God; and God tells him the sacrifice is not required: and he clasps his son to his distracted breast with sobs of mingled grief and joy, and offers up a kid instead. This is a step higher.

Many years later Christ appears, and teaches the folly of sacrifice in any form. He stands before the altars at Jerusalem, and cries: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." He even attacks prayer itself as

practised among his people. Never did hypocrisy receive a more crushing blow than at the hands of this great reformer. He tells men to go off alone and pray in secret, and to commune with God and self in retirement. Here is another step.

We have not as yet reached this high example set by the master. Brute sacrifice is gone indeed; but the old hypocrite's prayer remains, shouted out to God in open church, on bended knees, in the presence of thousands. Long ago some rebelled, and said they would not kneel to pray, but would pray standing or sitting. This is a short step. Another step is taken inwardly and secretly. Most people now stand or sit with considerable patience, but only pretend to pray. With bowed heads and closed eyes they reckon their gains, or dream of worldly pleasures. Few listen at all to the parson's prayer; most neither pray nor listen, unless out of curiosity, or because of the fame of the preacher. I have known good people to sit with bowed heads and count, so as to make the time pass more quickly.

Prayer in the old form is fast disappearing everywhere, even in the church itself; already it is almost gone from daily life. Bribes of blood no longer suffice, nor the enticements of fruit and cakes and wine. The cajolery and flattery of prayer are equally impotent, and humanity is beginning to see it. In the church short prayer is looked upon with increasing favor; a few years ago a solid half-hour was taken up by the prayer at mid-service. Few of us pray at all at home, and almost none pray regularly. At church we only respectably bow the head, and leave the praying to the preacher. The time will come when we shall see the folly of such prayer altogether, and have the courage and honesty to say so. The

prayer of a good deed or a good thought, and the prayer of inner communion in retirement, — the soul-struggle of right and wrong, — will never be lost, thank God, till man, having become perfect, shall have no occasion to struggle with wrong.

This modification of sacrifice and prayer affords a perfect illustration of religious progress. The old altars are discarded and despised; the old ceremonies seem like idolatry. Religion springs up with new energy, and combats with fierce determination what it now considers to be sin, and cleaves with dogged persistence to what now appears to be true and right. This continual reaching out for better ideals is permanent, and at basis remains ever the same. Religion is a single principle, but its forms are multiple. The principle exists, even though the keenest intellects cannot detect it; it appears alike in idolatry and materialism; it is found alike in Christianity and in atheism. Paganism, scholasticism, and superstition reveal its presence. Wherever man has a hope or an ideal, he will strive to attain it: this is religion.

The heart always retains its single character; and what we of to-day at the best admire in antiquity is the honesty of purpose clearly perceptible in the great mass of ignorance, of error, and of cruelty. Recall the greatest of the Old Testament characters. Consider the qualities which are ascribed to Moses. He is a prophet, a priest, a warrior, a lawgiver, and a lover of freedom. Of all these characters bound up in that one man, what remains and truly lives? The prophet raises a smile; the priest excites a sneer; the warrior calls out feelings of horror and repulsion; the lawgiver is buried under the rubbish of antiquity; but the lover of freedom lives, and shall live forever. When we think of Moses, what character does he as-

sume? He frees the children of Israel from bondage, and leads them up out of the land of Egypt.

The past is past. It has done its work, and has done it well. It takes years to advance a single step in civilization. Compared with the infinite, centuries are but infinitesimal periods of time. Considering individual lives separately, one by one, progress seems almost hopeless. Why, mankind has not yet, no, not in these eighteen centuries, attained to the ideal of morality which Christ set up as a standard. Humanity to-day cannot be compared in morality, or in religion either, with the best of the Pagans. What shall we say, then, of the future? Is humanity well on towards the goal, or is it but just started in the race? Is it still in the cradle, or is one feeble foot already in the grave? Is the battle for truth and right, which from the first man has been fighting, a fixed law or principle of his existence? These questions cannot be answered intelligently. No one knows the ultimate destiny of man, or of this world which he inhabits. Somehow it seems true that the fate of man and the fate of this world are linked together. Science tells us that the world is fast wearing out, and that it cannot last much longer. But Science may change its mind. It has changed a good deal in the past, and probably it will change much more in the future. Sectarianism tells us that the world will end; but it is altogether uncertain when and how, despite the prediction of the Yale professor.

Are science and sectarianism always to be at swords'-points? Knowledge hitherto has been constantly thwarted by established religion. Perhaps the greatest progress we can expect in the near future is a cessation of this hostility. Established religion,

let us hope, will soon rejoice in the progress of knowledge. Sectarianism, welcoming investigation, would be a glorious step in advance. The old jealousy lost, with how much greater speed would man advance, and how much smoother would the way become! It is not too much to expect the speedy realization of this long-cherished hope of independent minds. I love to linger over the peculiar significance of Unitarianism. This little Christian sect — indeed, the only sect that is Christian in the true sense — seems to me in a way to possess the key to the whole situation. Here is an established Christian sect actually welcoming investigation, ready and eager to accept new truth and to test new discoveries. Bound to no set rules, owning no creed, it alone of all the sects is in a position to advance with civilization and science. Embracing among its universally educated and intelligent followers some of the most advanced and ablest thinkers, who moreover have the splendid courage to follow and teach the conclusions of their reason, it alone seems able to aid scientific progress. The other sects can but follow, all somewhat of a hindrance to Science, some dragging like a leaden weight at her skirts.

In the light of these things it cannot be claimed that we are not advancing. But there are, and always have been, two classes of men, not separated indeed by any sharply drawn line or distinctive mark, but still in general clearly to be distinguished. There are the highly educated thinkers and philosophers. They distrust the masses of men. They have no convictions. They are wholly passive and without impulse. It is axiomatic with them that the masses receive their light solely from the aristocracy, and that reform is brought about by the profoundly educated. They fear to trust power to the common

people; they hardly venture to grant them education. They think that a lie is better than the truth under some circumstances.

The other class consists of those who have unbounded faith, in general, in the ultimate triumph of truth and right in all conditions of life. Not possessed of so much learning as the first class, they have more wisdom and practical judgment. With these the whole question seems to be merely to point out the truth and let it stand for itself. They would place any amount of confidence in the common people. They would give them the benefit of the highest ideas which they possess. Universal education, they think, is the highest possible blessing to humanity in general. They believe that men will on the whole cleave to the right, if only they can understand what is right, and that error and crime are almost invariably the result of ignorance rather than wilful and premeditated. The practice of concealment or falsehood they judge the most dangerous policy possible in dealing with human affairs, fearing sooner or later inevitable ruin. With them the conviction that a given idea or condition is right absolutely precludes the possibility of its concealment. It must be made known because it is right.

Each of these classes is undoubtedly possessed of religion; but the religion of the one is beyond all comparison with that of the other. Each class has religion because each is honest. Religion is impossible without honesty. The beneficial effect of the latter class, that which believes in universal education, surpasses that of the other class beyond comparison. If we have advanced at all during the last four thousand years, it is through the diminution of the ignorance of the masses. We are better than the

ancients because we know more than they did; and our knowledge enables us to increase our adherence to right. They lived up to their convictions of right and duty quite as faithfully, in their way, as we now live up to our similar convictions. They had just as much relative honesty as we now possess. The advancement consists rather in this, that their idea of honesty is not ours. Owing to the persistent upward toiling of man, the horizon has broadened.

This broadening has of itself introduced another factor into the net result. The ratio of the good and the bad is changed for the better. Here again we have improved on antiquity. If this be not true, religion is a delusion and a lie, and morality is only a show of goodness. Increase of knowledge is not enough. Enhanced material prosperity will not suffice. The soul must be improved correspondingly. It is not enough for man to labor and study, unless there is something elevating in it all. The sorrow-laden heart must be relieved. Evil must be diminished, or humanity is but an idle nothing, a mere bauble in the universe; and such a conclusion would render the universe itself a stupendous lie.

There has been altogether too much pessimism in this little world of ours. The spirit of the old cynic of the Ecclesiastes still lives and thrives beyond measure. Too many people have cried: "All is vanity, *vanitas vanitatum.*" There are actually people in this world who are grieved because they can find nothing to excite grief. This morose cynicism prevails in quarters least suspected. Our established religion is full of it. Its god is jealous; its priests are jealous; its proselytes are jealous: all are forever crying, "Vanity."

But pessimism and superstition have seen their



best days. True religion at present is prevailingly optimistic. It finds the world and its labors and enjoyments righteous and worthy. If only the whole Church would swing in line, if it had the faith of a grain of mustard seed, the present period of wavering uncertainty and pessimistic scepticism would quickly pass. But we may wait patiently. It is the people that establish reforms ; and though they move slowly, they certainly do advance. Let them once appreciate a truth, and it is sure to prevail with them. The masses are honest, and education will not hurt them. Already the time is past when teachings can be laid down as infallible because they have been considered so, and have come down to us through the Scriptures. Already the verdict is pronounced that infallibility is no longer believable. It is generally admitted that, after all, we must fall back on reason, than which we have no other guide. It is too late now to say men must yield up their reason, though it be to the god of never so powerful a religion. Man and God are one ; man is God. The schools have done their work too well for this. There is more religion in the school to-day than there is in the Christian Church ; God be praised for so much !

Man is beginning to appreciate this, — that he is responsible for his acts, and that no one can relieve him of this responsibility. Here is the foundation of a faith of surpassing grandeur. Many forms it will doubtless assume. Its expressions will be quite as varied as that of the religion of the past. Like those of the past, it will have the common element of sincerity, but sincerity on a higher plane. We are on the point of undergoing a complete intellectual revolution. The tides below have been surging and melting, and the centre of gravity of human intelligence

has been slowly changed. The instability of the times is as clear as day. There is an equilibrium, but the tendency is to swing over the centre and past recovery.

Education has made this state possible, but its duties are by no means fulfilled. It has but begun the good work. Greater responsibility than ever now rests upon it. Increased freedom must be attended with increased power of self-command. The divine order of teachers must prepare the intellect for independence, or the result will be disastrous. Established religions are past influence when people begin to smile and shrug their shoulders over the sacred doctrines and the divine inspirations. When a system of religion is played on the stage as a diversion and a delight, its usefulness is past as a moral guide. Woe to humanity if none is forthcoming to take its place!

But it is only the narrow-minded, the foolish, and the ignorant who deplore the secularization of the times.<sup>1</sup> The pessimistic denounce education. It is unreligion that decries the extension of literary delights. It is impiety that grieves over the multiplication of libraries and their increasing size. It is atheism that groans over the growth of secular schools and colleges. It is not the loving minister, but the bigoted priest, that is sorry to know when he rises in the pulpit of a Sunday that his hearers have their minds saturated with the news of the day. There is abundant reason to thank God that people go to church Sunday as they might go on Wednesday or Thursday. This is just the spirit that is most needed at present. If only people would go to worship Sunday with exactly the same practical earnestness that they carry

<sup>1</sup> Reference is made in this and the following pages to the address by Dr. Storrs before the American Board, March 19, 1891.

to business Monday, the prevailing mummery and nonsense, not to say hypocrisy itself, would disappear like the mist before the morning sun.

There is reason to be thankful that preaching begins to be educational and entertaining. The iron-bound shoes of an earlier day are best laid aside, with the other rubbish of the same antiquity. It is well to class the Garden of Eden with the other fables of the past. But it is saddening to learn that men who exert great influence in the Church grieve over the fact that money which might go to spread the gospel among the heathen of foreign lands is spent upon free libraries, Christian associations, and for secular educational and charitable purposes in general. A single pure-minded teacher of human knowledge will weigh more in the scales of God than a thousand missionaries of the divine gospel. Of the telegraph, the railroad, and the secular school, any one alone has done more service to God, during its existence, than the whole Christian Church put together for the last three hundred years. That is not a despicable idea that the gospel, viewed in its old orthodox light, is being left — not to Providence, that was a mistake — to the devil: that is not despicable, I say; it is divine, it is a glorious triumph of pure religion. Then it is true, is it, that secular influence is pervading, dominating, and managing the Church? I begin to see more of God in the Church now.<sup>1</sup>

Let us not pray so much as we have in the past, and not at all in the old way. Let us not wait for the spirit to come upon us. The spirit never comes to those who wait in idleness. Let us rather take right

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Storrs announced what the author had not dared assert, from his lack of knowledge of church management. Dr. Storrs will be sufficient authority for the most exacting.

hold in earnest, as if we meant what we say ; let us be early at work and late to rest. Above all, let us be honest and sincere. And yet hypocrisy is not the worst possible evil, for it immediately precedes a step in progress. The very existence of hypocrisy itself reveals the fact that he who descends to practise it is aware of the truth. This is an advance from superstition and ignorance. Another step, and he will confess the truth.

Let us not abandon the Church. It still, if rightly directed, may confer benefits incalculably greater even than it ever has in the past. It is not necessary to subscribe to its creeds to secure enrolment. Often the most influential workers are not strictly members. Let us become earnest workers in the Church ; such will inevitably drive out the hypocrites, and encourage the righteous to renewed efforts. A little of God's pure light of this nineteenth century will dispel the gloom of superstition that still lingers in the dark, ill-ventilated temples of worship. Pure religion, pure air, and fresh sunshine will drive out cant and mummery from the darkest corners and the narrowest aisles. Independence of thought and freedom of speech will confound the bigotry of the most obstinate of priests. Only let the people show that they are in earnest, and there is no reason to fear that the clergy will persist in their dogmatic doctrines and ceremonies. The clergy, generally speaking, always will tag along a little behind civilization. It is only in ages of popular ignorance that they lead, and those times are now some distance in the rear.

Humanity is dependent upon no capricious god defined by creed and sect. As a constituent part of the infinite universe, man is not wandering aimlessly in unlimited space. The universe is not subject to whims

and vagaries. Man, as subordinate to the infinite, will worship and serve what he believes the infinite to be. He will be obedient to infinite truth as he understands it. He will never grow weary of pushing the stone up the hillside, though he knows it will surely elude his efforts and roll heavily down again. He will make mistakes, but he will also correct them; he will commit absolute crime, but he will repent; his efforts will result in failure, but still his aim will ever be high. He will always strive to pierce the unknown, though his language may change, together with the whole outward character of his labor. Man will always be religious, his intentions and his strivings will always be holy in the aggregate, no matter how impious they may seem during certain limited periods. When he falls, he will struggle to regain his feet. Education will never supplant religion, for the simple reason that its very essence is religion.

Alas for those who assert that religion is passing away! Never was the world more religious than it is at present, never was religion purer and more unselfish. Alas for those who seek to restore the authority of a dead dogmatism and an antiquated orthodoxy! Woe unto you, hypocrites, who for policy's sake seek to impose upon others beliefs which you no longer share!

There is no longer a religion, say you? The still, small voice of God is hushed? Ten thousand thousand schoolhouses rise on every hill to proclaim the glory and sing the praise of God. A countless army of teachers, rich in the blessings of heaven, clad in the mail of truth, bearing the book instead of the sword, in purity and in love sing of the wisdom of God. Millions of children and youth, God's own little children, trudge nobly off to school every morn-

ing just as God's sun is well above the horizon, to recite the lessons of his world-book of truth. Do you say there is no religion in education? Listen and believe. Why ask for Truth, when she stands there before your very face and eyes, if you will but look?

Or think of the charities of the present, — the great secular charities, denounced by the pulpit, blessed of God. Think of the kindness of the world that has time to love and cherish, not only humanity, but all living things. Think of the societies for the prevention of cruelty. His prayer is good who has love for all living things; his prayer is best who loves them best, even as they are all loved of God. Think of the administration of justice. Compare modern justice with the best jurisprudence of antiquity, and in that comparison you will find God. Consider the generosity of to-day, that gives its hard-earned millions to the causes of education and charity, that creates fresh-air funds, that sends unsparing relief to the suffering and unfortunate by disaster, without solicitation, ungrudgingly, out of a pure and godlike heart. Do you find no religion in all this? Is God wanting, and has he lost his power. Think of it, a single book is made to feed thousands of the hungry and thirsty. Still no God? O you infidel! O you atheist! God has indeed left you, and your miserable soul is sombre and dull with darkness. Saddest of all, you yourself have banished God; you have hidden the light which he gave you. Where will you gain that by which to light it again? Alas! I know not.

As in Christ's time, again we are told by the clergy that God exists only in their pitiful doctrinal disputes. His home is declared to be the synagogue. His worship is reduced again to a form and a dogma; piety has become a ceremony and a show; religion is again

reduced to a wax taper and a bishop's cap. Prayer is degraded to a senseless mummery or an impertinent bawling on the street corners and in public places, to be seen of men; and the clergy are crying that there is no God in the world, and no religion at all. What, none? No God in the printing-press, no God in the telegraph, no religion in the railway and steamship lines, no piety in the libraries and museums, no worship in the public parks and gardens? None? Eyes have you, but they see not; and ears, but they are dull.

I tell you there is a God and a religion, grander and nobler than any dreamed of in antiquity. We have a master. If he is worldly and selfish, so are we; if he is noble and pure, his purity and nobility live in our minds, his features are even stamped on our faces. Look back into the past: there is the god of the barbarian; and there is the semblance of the savage face, — rude, heavy, coarse, and sensual. Now look here: this is the God of civilization; and here is the type of the civilized face, — features distinct and animated, full of intellectual expression, refined and moral. Yes, there is a religion to-day, and it is grand and noble. It manifests itself in love of man, which of itself is love of God. Public generosity is God working in the world among the souls of men. We said material and intellectual progress was not enough, unless man is made better by it. Man is made better. We are richer than we were in worldly goods; and so, too, we are richer in that other treasure which neither moth nor rust corrupts.

Religion abounds in the common heart, and sings as never before from the common soul, and never before in such harmony and unison. Amidst the chang-

ing religious systems of man and the transformations of human language, amidst the varying forms of government and the alteration of social customs, religion pure and simple, sweet truth of God, has remained steadfast and resolute, firm in its faith in righteousness, constant in its noble strife for good, better, and best. Everything has passed away but this one steadfast principle. This wondrous sacred song, sung to the admiration of more than two hundred generations, not only retains all its ancient charm and sweetness, but has acquired in the fleeting ages increased richness and enhanced grandeur. This strange old poem still commands the admiration and veneration of minds purified and enriched by the ceaseless labor of many nations and many centuries. Having survived innumerable transformations, it still remains to us, a glorious heritage, and will endure forever with the everlasting vigor and immortality of truth; and like truth, it shall expand. Religion is still with us; God is still in us. Never before, since that early day when the morning stars first began to sing together, has there risen from this world, itself a tiny twinkling star in the infinite chorus, such a full, rich melody, such a noble, ringing anthem, to swell the praise of the Infinite God.

THE END.





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