THE

GIFTS OF CIVILISATION

AND OTHER

SERMONS AND LECTURES

Delivered at Oxford and at St. Paul's

BY THE LATE

R. W. CHURCH, M.A., D.C.L.

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S, HONORARY FELLOW OF ORIEL

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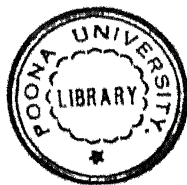
THE GIFTS OF CIVILISATION



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TO

HENRY PARRY LIDDON

IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY BENEFITS

AND NUMBERLESS KINDNESSES

THIS VOLUME

IS WITHOUT HIS SANCTION

INSCRIBED

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SERMONS AND LECTURES

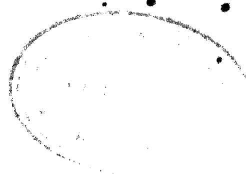
SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

O Sapientia, quae ex ore Altissimi prodiisti, attingens a fine usque ad finem, fortiter suaviterque disponens omnia: veni ad docendum nos viam prudentiae.

Vasudeva J Kirtikar



SERMON I

THE GIFTS OF CIVILISATION

Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.—1 Cor. xii. 31.

By these "best gifts" St. Paul meant the miraculous endowments which attended that outpouring of the Spirit in which Christianity as a distinct religion began. Nothing can be more astonishing, yet nothing more natural, than his picture of the feelings and behaviour of those who found themselves in possession of these spiritual powers. The gifts were novelties. The subject which received them and had to use them, and was influenced by the consciousness of their presence and the sight of their effects, was that human nature which had long formed its habits of dealing with whatever enlarged its capacities and its sphere of action, and whose deportment under this sudden change of condition might be predicted from an old and sure experience. What came to pass at Corinth, strange as it seems at first sight, was in reality no more than there was reason to expect. Speaking of

what he saw on a large scale, the Apostle describes men thrown off their balance and carried away by feeling their natural faculties transformed and exalted under that Divine influence which was pervading the Christian Church. The purpose was lost sight of in their keen appreciation of the instrument, and in the personal satisfaction of possessing and using it; and St. Paul's words disclose a state of feeling more absorbed by the interest of a new and strange endowment than impressed by the awfulness of its immediate source and the responsibilities of having been called to hold it. Side by side with gifts from heaven and "powers of the world to come," were the levity and frivolity of man, surprised and dazzled, measuring them by his own scale, pressing them into the service of his vanity;—childish delight in a new acquisition, childish insensibility, childish excitement, childish display, childish rivalries, mistaking the place and worth of the gifts themselves, altering their intended proportions, inverting their end and intention. This was the disorder which the Apostle had to redress. In these chapters he bids the Corinthian Christians remember the source and the reason of this distribution of varied gifts. He recalls them from their wild extravagance and selfish thoughtlessness, to soberness and manliness, and a recollection of the truth "Brethren, be not children in understanding: be babes in wickedness, but in sense grown men." Claiming a use for every gift in its own place, he bids

them set on each its right comparative value. He corrects their estimate, and urges them to measure, not by personal considerations, but by larger and nobler ones of the general benefit. "Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound to the edifying of the Church." Their eagerness was roused at the sight of the new powers which the kingdom of God had brought with it into the world; and St. Paul does not discourage their eagerness. Only, he warns them to direct their zeal wisely, and to be eager about the greatest and best: "Covet earnestly the best gifts," those which may serve most widely the good of the whole body, those which influence most fruitfully the ends for which it exists.

Yet as he interrupts himself to add—there is even a higher point of view than this. It is good to "covet earnestly the best gifts." It is good to wish to be entrusted with those high gifts which are the fruits of the Lord's ascension and reign. It is good to be intent on their exercise, intent on the great purpose for which they were bestowed, anxious to push them to their full effect. Yet the subject has to be lifted to a higher level still. There is something greater than the greatest of gifts—than wisdom in the choice of them, zeal in their exercise, usefulness in their results. When we are speaking of how Christians ought to feel and act, it is a maimed view which leaves out that which is the characteristic spring of Christian action, the principle which covers

all cases, the "new commandment" which is to be henceforward the quickening spirit of all morality. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." And then he goes on to give that description of charity—charity in contrast with the greatest powers and most heroic acts,—charity, as the root of all the strength and all the charm of goodness,—charity, as the one essential and ever-growing attribute of the soul amid the provisional and transitory arrangements of this present state—which has made the thirteenth chapter of this Epistle one of the landmarks of man's progress in the knowledge of truth and right.

I hope it is not disrespectful handling of the words of our great teacher to pass from the occasion which so deeply stirred his thoughts to the actual conditions and necessities amid which our own life is placed, and to see in what he wrote about spiritual gifts now passed away a meaning in relation to very different circumstances, which were beyond his range of view, and which he could not anticipate. We have long been accustomed to accept, in theory at least, the principle laid down by another apostle: "Every good gift and every perfect gift," writes St. James, "is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." It is not, then, I trust, forcing the language of St. Paul or desecrating it, to apply his words to what he was not directly thinking of; to apply them

in the most extended sense to all the powers with which men have been endowed; to make the words of apostolic truth and soberness stretch beyond the temporary interest of the religious question with which he dealt, to the universal interests of human society, which is not indeed coextensive with the Church, but which the Church was founded to embrace and restore, and St. Paul preached his gospel to fill with light and hope. Those awful gifts, which were at once the privilege and the snare of the Christians whom St. Paul had immediately to teach, have passed away; they were of their age; they did their work; they left their results behind. But God's wonderful gifts to man are not gone. They are as real, as manifest, as operative, as ever. In what surrounds us in that condition of society in which we are actually passing our life, we see a world fuller of gifts—in one very real sense spiritual gifts of God—than was the Church of Corinth. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," the "greater" ones, the higher; "and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." In these words St. Paul seems at once to put his sanction on all the great results of human civilisation, and at the same time to open a wider view beyond it, and to claim for man a higher end and a higher law of life than even it can give.

I use the word "civilisation," for want of a better, to express all that trains and furnishes man for that civil state which is his proper condition here: all skill, and endeavour, and achievement, all exercise

and development of thought, restricted to the sphere of present things; the high and improving organisation of society, primarily for the purposes of the present life. The contrast has often struck observers, and has been drawn out by some of the deepest as well as of the most superficial, between civilisation and the religion of the New Testament; and it often makes itself felt secretly and importunately, even where the feeling is not avowed or suffered to come to light. It is true that civilisation and religion have worked together, have acted on one another and produced joint results; but in their aims and in their nature they are distinct, and may be, as they have been before now, in a right cause or a wrong, arrayed in opposition to one another. And it cannot be denied that minds strongly under the influence of the one, and keenly appreciating its vast relations, are apt to fear or shrink from the other. From the religious point of view, and where religious impressions are clear and paramount, it seems often strange—I do not say always as a matter of conscious reflection, but of unexplained distaste and wonder—to see men giving their lives to business, or science, or political life, the pursuits which civilisation cherishes and which advance it. We are all of us perforce embarked in it; we all use and enjoy it and profit by it; and yet uneasy misgivings about it come upon us from time to time; we are suspicious about its tendencies and jealous of its claims; and the things

we do every day, and feel satisfied that they are right for us to do, we sometimes find it hard to reconcile with the deeper and more uncompromising of the religious views of life. And as civilisation grows more powerful and self-sustained, more comprehensive in its aims, more sure of its methods and perfect in its work, we must not be surprised if there grows with it, among those in whom its influence is supreme, distrust and impatience of religion. There have always been religious despisers of civilisation, and they have sometimes been its revilers. And there have been, and always will be, those who would raise it to an exclusive supremacy, the substitute for religion, and destined to clear away that which it replaces. But this supposed antagonism is but one of the many reminders to us of our own weakness and narrowness. Civilisation and religion have each their own order, and move in their own path. Perhaps the more clearly we keep in view their distinctness the better. They *are* distinct. But no religious man, at least, can feel difficulty in believing that, distinct as they may be, and in the hands of men sometimes opposed, they have essentially one origin, and come both of them from Him who has made man for this world, as well as intended him for another.

We hear civilisation both admired and disparaged by those who do not duly think whence it comes. That great spectacle amid which we live, daily before our eyes, and with so much that we could not do

without,—so familiar, yet so amazing when we think of the steps and long strange processes by which it has grown, and the vast results beyond all human anticipation which it has come to; that fruitful elaboration of the best arrangements for the secular wellbeing of man, not material only, not intellectual only, productive not merely of comfort and light, but goodness, that complex and delicate social machinery, the growth of centuries, and *our* inheritance and possession—let us make all abatements for its defects and inconsistencies, all reserves for its blemishes and drawbacks—yet deserves more respect than it has always received from religious people, as the great work of God's providence and order. The world easily suggests very awful views of its own condition, which we may call overcharged or morbid, but which it is not so easy to answer and get rid of. But the world would indeed be far more dreadful, if we must not see in its civilisation the leading and guiding hand of God, the real gifts of the Author and Giver of all good things. He who gave us the gospel of immortality, He who gave us His Son, gave us also civilisation and its gifts. His gifts are not necessarily dependent one on another, however much they may be allied. It is not necessary to trace all our civilisation up to Christianity; no one can doubt how largely the temporal has been indebted to the spiritual; but it is true that our civilisation has other sources, wide and ancient ones, besides. Nor do I see why we

be deterred from recognising it as God's work ...sing, because of its sure ill use, by luxury ...le, for impurity and wrong. It is but what ...d with the gifts at Corinth; they were ... and wrongly used. However our civilisation ...and however it is used, it is one of God's ways, ...as the sun and air and rain, of doing good

Surely a Christian need not be afraid to ...all that is excellent in civilisation, as being, ...ever way, from his own Master, whose awful ...d will is reflected in the universe. Surely he ...t be afraid to say that it is not by religion ...at tones of goodness are struck from the ...soul which charm and subdue us, and that ...s yet other ways, secret in working yet ... in effect, of bringing out the graces which make men like Himself. The Apostle's call[1] may quote his familiar words in the less ... but not less forcible Latin version of them ... ...umque vera, quaecumque pudica, quaecumque ...uaecumque sancta, quaecumque amabilia, quae... bonae famae, si qua virtus, si qua laus ...ae, haec cogitate," finds indeed its deepest and ...response in that faith of which he was the ...r; but shall we say that it finds no true re... apart from it and beyond it?

... teaches us about His gifts not only by His ...nt by His providence; and His providence,

[1] Phil. iv. 8.

working in many ages, has unfolded such a lavish munificence of gifts to men as might well deserve the praises even of an apostle. We are unreal, we talk loosely and deceive ourselves, when we ignore the gifts of our civilised order, in all that they have to amaze us, in all that they do to bless us; or, when profiting by all the appliances with which they furnish us, we speak superciliously of their worth. Civilisation has indeed its dark side—a very dark one: there is much that is dreary and forbidding in the history of its growth; and who can look without anxiety at the dangers of its future? But the irreligious and worldly tendencies of civilisation are not to be combated by simply decrying it. What it has of good and true tells of its Author too clearly, and bids us accept its benefits and claim them as coming from God, though they do not come directly through religion. Let us look at the world as we know it, with honest but not ill-natured eyes, calmly and fairly, neither as boasters nor as detractors—as those who were put here to "refuse the evil and choose the good." Let us not be driven off from the truth, because in the growth of human civilisation there is so much which must make a Christian, or any one who believes in God and in goodness, shudder and tremble. Let us look at it with its terrible concomitant of men made worse by what ought to make them better. Yet look at it as it is. Follow the history of a great people, and consider what it brings forth. Observe that one great fact, the

progressive refinement of our human nature, proving unconquerable when once begun, even through ages of corruption and decline, to rise up again after them with undiminished vigour; keeping what it had gained, and never permanently losing; bringing of course new sins, but bringing also new virtues and graces of a yet unwitnessed and unthought-of type. Observe how, as time goes on, men gain in power,—power over themselves; power to bring about, surely and without violence, what they propose; power to have larger aims, to command vaster resources, to embrace without rash presumption a greater field. See how great moral habits strike their roots deep in a society,—habits undeniably admirable and beneficial, yet not necessarily connected with the order of things belonging to religion; the deep, strong, stern sense of justice *as* justice; the power of ruling firmly, equitably, incorruptly; the genius and aptitude for law, as a really governing power in society, which is one of the most marked differences of nations, and which some of the most gifted are without; the spirit of self-devoting enterprise, the indifference to privation and to the pain of effort, the impulses which lead to discovery and peopling the earth with colonies; patriotism and keen public spirit, which some religious theories disparage as heathen, but which no theories will ever keep men from admiring. If nations have what, judging roughly, we call characteristic faults, there grow up in them characteristic virtues; in one the unflinching love of

reality, in another the unflinching passion for intellectual truth, in another purity and tenderness, or largeness of sympathy. This is what we see; this, amid all that is so dark and disappointing, has come of God's nurturing of mankind through the past centuries.

We can but speak generally; and civilisation has many shapes, and means many things. But let us speak fairly, as we know it. Civilisation *to us* means liberty and the power of bearing and using liberty; it means that which ensures to us a peaceful life, a life of our own, fenced in from wrong and with our path and ends left free to us; it means the strength of social countenance given on the whole to those virtues which make life nobler and easier; it means growing honour for manliness, unselfishness, sincerity,—growing value for gentleness, considerateness, and respect for others; it means readiness to bear criticism, to listen to correction, to see and amend our mistakes; it means the willingness, the passion, to ameliorate conditions, to communicate advantages, to raise the weak and low, to open wide gates and paths for them to that discipline of cultivation and improvement which has produced such fruit in others more fortunate than they.

And it has disclosed to us in the course of its development more and more of what is contained in human characters and capacities. We are, in this age, drawing forth with amazement discoveries which seem

to be inexhaustible from the treasure-house of material nature. When we cast our eyes back over history and literature, it seems to me that the variety and the disclosures there are as astonishing. Think of the great forms of history, so diversified, so unlike one to another, so unexpected in their traits; think of all that a great portrait-gallery represents, doubtless in but too rank abundance, of vile and bad, but also of high and venerable, of what the world had never yet known but was never more to forget, of originality, of power, of goodness. The examples of actual history are but part in this great spectacle. Think of what fiction, with all its abuses, has done for us, creating pictures of character, of infinite novelty and interest, in which imagination reflects the real, endless play of life; multiplying and unfolding for the general knowledge types which would otherwise have been lost where they grew up: think of its world of ideal histories, revealing to man *himself*; showing him with subtle and searching truth things unsuspected or dimly felt, making him understand, better sometimes, as it has been said, than graver teachers, his temptations and self-deceits;—the parables of each generation. Think again what has been bestowed on man in the perfecting of language, its growth and changes, its marvellous acquisition of new powers, in the hands of the great masters who have forged it anew for their thoughts; the double process going on at once of deepening scientific analysis and continual enlargement by actual

use; as in an instrument of music, ever attaining improvement in mechanism, ever, under refined or powerful handling, surprising us with fresh secrets of what it can do. Think of the way in which new faculties, as it were, spring up in us of seeing and feeling, and how soon they are made over to the common stock; how, by art, by poetry, by the commentary of deep and true sympathy and deep and true knowledge, our eyes are more and more opened to discern in new ways the beauty of hill and plain, of sky or sea, the wonders of the physical universe and their meaning. Think of the wealth that any great literature enshrines of true observation and diversified emotion, and of thoughts that live for ever, ever widening and purifying men's minds. Count over all our great possessions. Shall we venture to say that all this does not come from the Source of all beauty and all wisdom and all light —from Him by whom alone the great are great and the good are good? Shall we say that all these things ought not to excite in men passionate admiration and interest—that men ought not to desire and follow them—to wish to advance the progress and to share in the gifts?

What we see, then, is a profusion, overwhelming to contemplate, of what, if we trace them to their source and author, we must call the gifts of God to man for this life; most varied, most manifold, ever increasing, changing their shape, growing one out of another, unfolding and expanding as new ends appear and shape

themselves. It is not wonderful that such a spectacle should win involuntary admiration even from those whose thoughts go most beyond it, and who wish to measure all things here by the measure of Jesus Christ. It is not wonderful, either, that when we come fresh from the New Testament, it should seem too dazzling. But whether or not our thoughts are baffled when we try to embrace God's different ways of working, this we none of us doubt, that all that tends to educate and improve and benefit man comes from the goodness of the Divine Ruler who guides his fortunes. And what He gives, it is for us to accept and improve. It is an easy thing to say, as has before now been said, *Leave it*. A wiser thoughtfulness, a braver and deeper faith, will say *Use it*, only believe that there is something greater beyond. Surely we may hear in the words of the Apostle, not only the warrant, but the call, of his Master, who Himself had not where to lay His head, to take and prize and carry on to its perfection all that His providence has created of so different an order for us, the talent of *our* trial. "Covet earnestly the greater, the better gifts." Measure and compare them wisely. Fearlessly choose them, fearlessly give them full play. This is indeed one side of the matter. But there is another and a higher. Covet earnestly what most raises man's part here; what would be to be most desired and followed, even if his part ended here;—but remember also, that besides all this, there is a yet

more excellent way. Above God's greatest gifts here is that which He is essentially: above them all is charity, for "God is love."

"A more excellent way." It would still, I suppose, be true,—though it would be unaccountable how it should ever have been said,—even if this world were all: it would still be true, that the perfection of character which St. Paul describes under the name of charity is the highest achievement of human nature, and that above knowledge, or power, or great acts, is the unfolding of pure goodness as the universal principle of action. But we believe that this world, with all its wonderful results, is not all. We look forward. And we believe that we have a place in something wider and more lasting. Our ties are not those only of this world, nor the duties we acknowledge, nor the hopes. We believe in the relation of men to God as a Father as well as a Creator, as a Divine Saviour and Guide and Redeemer, as well as the Infinite Cause of all things and the Ruler and Judge of all that is. We believe that we have been told, as far as it concerns us and we could bear it, the truth about ourselves, and the strange aspect of this world and our condition in it. We believe that all we are brethren, sharers together in a great wreck and disaster, sharers too in a great recovery, even now begun. We believe that *He* has been with us, and of us, who made us, and by whom we live. In Him and from Him we learnt the mind of God; from

Him we know God's value for man, and what God thought it not too much to do that man should be restored to that for which God made him. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In making Himself known to us, He has not indeed kept out of sight those awful attributes, in virtue of which we, and everything we know and see, are so fearfully and wonderfully made. But that by which He makes us to understand Him and draw near to Him is His love for us. Henceforth the world knows Him irrevocably, if it knows Him at all, in the Cross of Jesus Christ. The world never can be the same, *after* that, as it was *before* it, as it would be without it. It has brought a new spirit into the world, with a divine prerogative of excellence, to which all other things excellent and admirable must yield the first place. Civilisation runs its great and chequered course, influenced by religion, or independent of it. As great things *have* been done, so still greater may be done, for the wise and just and generous ordering of society, while this life lasts; and what God has given to men to know and to do may be little to what He has yet to give them. Yet after all, henceforth *that* will always be more excellent which comes nearest to the spirit of Jesus Christ. That must always remain for man, *ἡ καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδός*, the way in which our Master walked, the love in which He lived, and by which His religion lives.

"Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." And then, after having shown the more excellent way, reversing the order of the precept, St. Paul proceeds—"Follow after charity; but covet earnestly the spiritual gifts." They were to be prized and coveted by those who were so earnestly taught how far charity was above them. Nor can we prize too much the so different gifts which our own generation sees with wonder increasing upon us. We cannot honour them too sincerely; we cannot set them at too high a rate; we cannot take too much trouble to master all that is true and real in them; we cannot spend ourselves better than in making the world the richer for what God has given us. But when we feel dizzy with the marvellous spectacle around us, carried away with the current of those great changes which with good reason make us hope for so much more for man in his life here, let us remind ourselves that this is not all. There is something else to be thought of besides the objects and pursuits of a successful civilisation. These things are to have their time and service, and then pass away. There are interests beyond them; and each one of us knows *that what he is* reaches beyond them. We are not necessarily growing better men, though we may be doing a great work, when we are living up or dispersing abroad God's manifold gifts of knowledge or ability. And what we are here for is, if anything, to become good; and goodness, since Christ

has come, means essentially that spirit of love which joins man to man and lifts him to God. Whatever happens, whatever may be done in reducing this present state to greater reason and order, in drawing forth its resources, in curing its evils, the Cross of Christ is *there*, standing for ever, the Cross of One who came to seek and to save that which was lost, who was among us as "one that serveth," our pattern, our warning, in the end our last consolation. For consolation we want at last, be our triumphs what they may. There is no need to colour or overstate. Side by side with our brilliant successes and hopes abide the certain and commonplace conditions of our state, inexorable, unalterable—pain, moral evil, death. Serious and thoughtful men, however much they may be the children and the soldiers of an advancing civilisation, must feel, after all, their individuality. As one by one they die, so one by one each must live much of his life. And when a man enters into his closet and is still;—if ever, from the glories and the occupations of a great part in the world's business—(I say not from its temptations and entanglements; they need not be this, they may be his proper engagements)—if ever from these he withdraws up into the mount, and in silence and by himself looks in the face his awful destiny, the awful, endless road which lies before him, the purpose for which he was called into being, the law he was meant to live by; when he feels himself confronted alone

with the object of his worship, out of all reach and passing all knowledge, yet the most familiar and customary of all familiar thoughts,—he can hardly help feeling that the gifts of God for this life *are* for this life; they cannot reach beyond; they cannot touch that which is to be. As St. Paul argues, they are incomplete, and they are transitory: they are, compared with what we are to look for, but the playthings and exercises of children; they share our doom of mortality. There *is* a link which joins this life with the next; there is something which belongs equally to the imperfect and the perfect, and which we carry with us from the one to the other. We know little what will become of our knowledge; we *do* know what will become of our power: one thing only "never faileth." The charity which seeks the good of all to whom it can do good; the charity which detects good wherever it is to be found or to be advanced; the charity which opens and enlarges the human soul to conceive, and long for, and set up for its standard, and contemplate with adoring and awful gladness the perfect goodness of God,—that belongs to the world where we are going, when all is over, and, as Christians believe, comes even now *from* that world. *There* is the direction in which we look to be *perfect*; there aspirations are secure against disappointment, and the object is not inadequate to the affection, nor fails it. In the next world, as in this, it is by love that creatures receive and show forth the likeness of their Maker.

There is, then, one great order of things which pertains to the present scene of man's activity; and there is another, not indifferent indeed to the present, but primarily and above all directed to the future of mankind. In both we have our parts. For the purposes of both God has been lavish in His gifts. We distinguish them, and they are distinguishable in thought and in fact also. But each of us in truth has his part in both; and our life ought to combine them. We ought not to be afraid of God's gifts; we ought not to make as though we saw them not, as we ought not to mistake their place or reverse their order. We are as much bound to be faithful to the full as the stewards of our civilisation, as we are responsible for our knowledge of the light and for our gifts of grace. Here especially, what are we *here* for?—we who are connected with this place, or who have ever tasted of its benefits,—what *are* we, or *were* we here for, but to desire earnestly, and seek with hearty effort and use with fidelity for the service of our brethren, the choice and manifold gifts which a place like this stores up and distributes? "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Surely the gifts which God's providence puts within our reach here are among His higher, His better gifts; surely they are meant to kindle our enthusiasm, to call forth our strong desire, as they awaken the longing of numbers outside of us. When we think of the work and the opportunities of this place—its far-reaching influences, its deep and lasting effects on English

society; how here thought and character and faculty are fashioned in those who are to lead thousands of their brethren and control their fate; with what prodigal abundance the means and helps are supplied us by which men may make things better in society, may make things more sound and wholesome and strong; how time is ensured and leisure fenced off from outward calls; what may be learned; how the door of real and large and grounded knowledge is opened to men; how men may train themselves to think and to judge, to discern the true and to choose the best;—indeed we must have dull minds and poor spirits not to see the great chances given us of work and service, not to be stirred to eager and emulous thoughts about these great gifts. St. Paul is our warrant for being in earnest about them, and our teacher how to use them. "Covet them earnestly." Open your eyes to their greatness and charm; remember their purpose, remember their variety. Follow after them,—only do not be children about them; do not idly extol them and vaunt about them; do not be jealous if you have little; do not be proud if you have much: there *are* differences, and *all* have their use; and "God hath set the members, every one in the body, as it hath pleased Him." Cultivate, as good servants, your great gifts. Be zealous for great causes which carry in them the hopes of generations to come. Appreciate all you may find here, to help you to interpret the works and the thoughts of God, to understand yourselves and the

world in which you are. But there is something more. Surely there are times to most of us when, in the midst of the splendour and the hopes of visible things, it is with us as the Psalmist says: "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" We want a tie and bond deeper than that of society. We want a standard and exemplar above this world. God has placed us to develop our full nature here; but He has placed us here, we believe, still more to become like Himself. So, while learning to understand, to value, to use the last and greatest endowments which the course of things has unfolded in human society, learning to turn them honestly to their best account for the world for which they were given, remember that there is a way for you to walk in which carries you far beyond them, and opens to you even wider prospects, more awful thoughts, a deeper train of ideas and relations and duties which touch us in what is most inward, to the very quick. We are sinners who have been saved by a God who loved us. There is a religion which is our hope beyond this time, and the incommunicable character of it is love. That which its Author thought necessary to be and to do, for a remedy and comfort to man's misery and weakness—unless man's misery and weakness are a delusion—reveals a love which makes us lose ourselves when we think of it. Love

was the perpetual mark of all His life, and of the Act in which His work was finished. His religion came with a new commandment, which was love. That religion has had great fruits, and their conspicuous and distinctive feature is the love which was their motive and support. Its last word about the God whom it worshipped was that "God is love." It is the Gospel of One, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." "Let *this* mind be in you, which was in Him,"—love for those made in the image of God and whom God has so loved—love, self-surrendering, supreme, ever growing at once in light and warmth, of Him who made them. Let us pray that He who has crowned our life here with gifts which baffle our measuring, and which daily go beyond our hopes, but who has "prepared for them that love Him such good things as pass man's understanding," would indeed "pour into our heart such love towards Himself, that we, loving Him above all things, may obtain His promises which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON II

CHRIST'S WORDS AND CHRISTIAN SOCIETY

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. ST. MARK x. 21.

THE lesson for this Sunday[1] set before us the Prophet Balaam, that extraordinary character of the Old Testament in whom the experience of modern times has seen the great typical instance of self-deceiving obedience. But he is the type not only of the character which hides the truth from itself, but of that which sees it in vain. Balaam, admiring but unable to believe, looking at the order and beauty of the sacred camp, and plotting to tempt and corrupt; feeling the full grandeur of the spectacle, but able to keep from his heart, though he could not from his intellect and his lips, the confession that it was Divine,—is the warning we meet with, earlier than we should have expected to find it, against every form of insincere homage to truth and religion.

[1] Second Sunday after Easter

It seems to me that we must always feel some fear of this danger, when, living as most of us do, we turn to our acknowledged standards of life in the New Testament, and meet with such texts as that which I have just read. We live one kind of life, an innocent, it may be, a useful, improving, religious life; but it is not the life we read of in the New Testament; and yet that life is the one which Christians, in some sense or other, accept as their rule. We honour it, extol it, make our boast of it. But a thinking and honest man must sometimes have misgivings, when he asks himself how far his life in what he deliberately sanctions is like that set before us in the New Testament, and how much of the Gospel morality he is able practically to bring into his own. One lesson taught us by the varied experience, inherited by those on whom the ends of the world are come, is a quickened sense of the incredible facility of self-deceit. Is there not reason to be anxious, whether, when we own the New Testament as our rule of life, we are not merely making a compromise,—admiring, and not taking the responsibility of our convictions; contemplating the New Testament with perhaps longing or respectful or wondering awe, but at an infinite distance from it in spirit and temper?

This is a large subject; and though it is much too large to be dealt with now as it should be, I will venture to say a few words about it this afternoon.

What I mean is this. Here is the New Testament,

the confessed source of Christian morality, with its facts and language, about which there is no dispute, and with its spirit and tone equally distinct and marked. And on the other hand, here is the ordinary life of Christian society, with its accepted principles, its familiar habits, its long-sanctioned traditions; the life of Christian society, not particularly in this or that age, but as on the whole it has been from the time when Christianity won its place definitively in the world; with its legitimate occupations, its interests, its objects, its standards of goodness, of greatness. When we put the two side by side, the mind must be dull indeed which is not conscious of a strong sense of difference and contrast. What does this feeling mean, and to what does it point? So obvious a question has been variously answered; but an answer of some sort is wanted by us all.

The life set before us in the words and deeds of the New Testament is, we all confess, the root of all Christian life. Consider steadily what that was. The life which our Lord led He enjoined: His words are nothing more than generalisations of what He did. It was not that His life had in it difficulties, pain, self-denial, and that He taught men to expect them; all lives have that, and all teaching must arm men for it: but the regular, ordinary course of that life was nothing but hardness, abstinence, separation from society or collision with it. Such a life a great reformer indeed always must go through: others have gone through it.

But here, not to speak of the degree of it, it appears as much imposed on the taught as welcomed by the teacher. He was a King, and announced a kingdom and claimed subjects; but it was a kingdom of heaven, not one of earth: and this kingdom and its members, both King and subjects, are represented as in open and deadly enmity with what is called the "present world."[1] They are few compared with the many; the way is narrow that leads to life, and few find it; they are not to marvel if the world hates them; the blessing is with those whom men revile and speak ill of; the woe is for those of whom all men speak well. We read how the lesson was learned, how the disciples understood their teacher. "Be not conformed to this world,"[2] says one; "Whosoever will be the friend of this world," says another, "is the enemy of God;"[3] "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," says another; "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."[4] The claim was for undivided allegiance: "No man can serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon." And what was our Lord's call? What were His leading maxims? He bids His disciples count the cost, as those who embark in great projects full of risk. "*So likewise*, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."[5] He warned the multitudes that followed Him, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother,

[1] Gal. i. 4. [2] Rom. xii. 2. [3] St. James iv. 4.
[4] 1 St. John ii. 15. [5] St. Luke xiv. 33.

and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[1] "One thing thou lackest," is the answer to the young man who had kept the commandments from his youth, and whom Jesus "beholding loved"; "If thou wilt be perfect," "go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." This was no isolated command; it was given in a general form to the whole of the "little flock": "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."[2] And what He said, they did—"they left all and followed Him." With such a call it is not surprising that there were corresponding precepts. "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself;" "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, neither for the body, what ye shall put on. . . . Seek not what ye shall eat nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." Consider what is involved in these words; how they touch the common occupations of mankind in "the nations of the world"; what a sweep they made to those who heard them of the most ordinary motives and business of life. True, what came in His way He took; He

[1] St. Luke xiv. 26. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 33.

blessed the marriage-feast at Cana; He refused no invitation from Pharisee or Publican, from rich or poor; He cared so little for the current austerities of religion, that His enemies could sneer at one whom they called a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a "friend" and "guest" of sinners. But such passages only throw into stronger relief the general character of His words and life. He who had less a place that He could call His own than the birds which have their nests and the foxes that have their holes, had but stern warnings of judgment for the man who built large barns for his increasing harvests, for those who *have* their reward now, for him who has received his good things here. "How hardly shall they that have riches"—or, take it in its softened form—"that trust in riches, enter into the kingdom of God." "I say unto you, Swear not at all." "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; give to him that asketh thee; turn the right cheek to him who has smitten the left; to him that would sue thee at the law for thy coat, give up thy cloke also." He forbids His disciples to seek high places, to claim their own, to assert their rights. He gives them as their portion slander, misunderstanding, persecution. He breaks their ties with the world. He scarcely allows them an interest in it, beyond their work as His delegates. His first followers took Him at His word, and very literally. All His disciples were *called* to follow this, and they *did* follow it. Their first instinct was to have all

things common. The religion taught by St. Paul and St. John is a religion of poverty, with little or no interest in the present life; which submits to violence and ill-usage as a matter of course; which accepts the loosening of family ties; which preaches indulgence without limits, even to seventy times seven, "as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven"; in which devotion to the unseen, a sense of the citizenship in heaven, fills the thoughts and throws into the background—ought I not to say into utter insignificance?—things visible and temporal. It discourages wealth, and says hard things of the love of money; it is shocked at appeals to law, and holds it far "more blessed to give than to receive"; it regards industry as a moral remedy against idleness, and riches only as what may be turned into "the treasure in heaven";[1] it contemplates a state of mind in which war between Christians is inconceivable and impossible; it brands ambition and the "minding of earthly things."[2] I need not say how severely it looked upon mere enjoyment. It was more in earnest against human selfishness than even against what caused human suffering. It seemed to be irreconcilable with litigation and the pursuit of gain, but it did not *seem* to proscribe slavery.

What an astonishing phenomenon would it have appeared to the Christians of the first century, could they have looked forward and seen in vision the Church and Christian society as it was to be, as we

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 19. [2] Phil. iii. 19.

know it, and as it has been for the greater part of its history. I do not speak of scandals, of invasions of worldliness, of confessed corruptions. Those were *then* also, and we know must be always. But the change is not only one of fact, but in the general sense of what is right and lawful, in the general view of the conduct of life. Christian society was *then* almost as separate from the society by which it was surrounded as a ship is from the sea, or a colony in a foreign land from the strangers about it. And now Christianity claims to have possession of society. Not only is the Church no longer opposed, as it then was, to society, but we find a difficulty in drawing the line between them. It seems impossible to conceive three things more opposite at first sight to the Sermon on the Mount than War, Law, and Trade; yet Christian society has long since made up its mind about them, and we all accept them as among the necessities or occupations of human society. Again, Christianity has been not only an eminently social religion, but a liberal religion. It has been so, not merely from slack indifference, but with its eyes open, and with deliberate reason given to itself for what it did. It has made large allowance for the varieties of character. It has naturalised and adopted in the boldest way—(I say this, looking at the general result of what has come to pass, and not forgetting either narrow fears and jealousies, or very terrible abuses and mischiefs)—art, literature, science. It has

claimed to have a charm which could take the sting out of them. We educate by the classics, and are not afraid of Shakespeare. We may say, and say truly, that where there is society, these things must be; but Christian society began in the life of the New Testament, and they are not there. In all directions we see instances of the necessities of things enforcing an enlarged interpretation of its language; and we believe that the common sense and instinct of Christians have on the whole caught its true meaning. If this is a compromise, remember that every portion of the Church, every age, every class in it is implicated. Even monastic religion, though it declined society, implied that there was a legitimate form of it, however hard to find, out of the cloister. Even the sect which denounces war and titles has not shrunk from the inconsistency, at least as great, of being rich. We are all involved. We may draw arbitrary lines for ourselves, and say that all outside them shall be called the world. But these distinctions we do not always recognise ourselves, and no one else does.

It seems to me impossible to exaggerate the apparent contrast between Christian society in its first shape, and that society which has grown out of it; between the Church, as it was at first called forth out of the world, at open war with it, condemning its morality, rejecting its objects, declining its advantages, in utter antipathy to its spirit—and Christian society as we know it, and live in it, and on the whole take it

for granted. The Sermon on the Mount was once taken very literally: it is easy to say, take it literally still, with the Poor Men of Lyons or the Moravians; only then you sacrifice society. So it is easy to say that it is for a few, that its words are counsels of perfection; only then you sacrifice the universal interest of it; you seem to admit two rules, and lower the whole aim of Christian morality. And it is easy to soften it down and say that it merely inculcates justice, humanity, forgiveness, humility, self-command; only then you are in danger of sacrificing its special meaning altogether. It is true that it lays down principles; but this does not account for the instances chosen to exemplify the principle. It is not satisfactory to call such language figurative; for nothing can be less figurative than the commands, "Lay not up treasure on earth," "Take no thought for the morrow," "Sell all thou hast," "Resist not evil." Such words do indeed embody the spirit of Christian morality; only they do more,—they express what, to those who heard them, were the most literal of facts and duties.

Is then the history of Christian society the history of a great evasion? We Christians of this day believe that in its earlier and later forms it is one and the same; that the later has not forfeited the mind and the hopes of the earlier. Unless we are apostates without knowing it and meaning it, we accept the difference as being, in spite of enormous and manifest

faults, the result of natural and intended changes. Are we mistaken? Are we insincere and double-minded, triflers with our belief, for allying Christianity with civilised society, for letting it take its chance, so to speak, with the inevitable course and pursuits of human life? It is the very meaning of an active and advancing state of civilisation that men should be busy with things of this present time: yet between the best side of Christian civilisation and the Sermon on the Mount there seems to be a great interval. Is Christian civilisation a true and fair growth? or is it, as it has been held to be, a deep degeneration, a great conspiracy to be blind? Are we Christians to our own shame as honest men, and to our Master's dishonour—"Christiani ad contumeliam Christi"?[1] Has the Christian Church, in its practical solution of these questions, come near to the likeness of Balaam, who can neither be called a false prophet nor a true? Has Christian society fallen away from what it was meant to be; or may we think that, with all shortcomings and very great ones, it is fulfilling its end, and that its rule, with such astonishingly different applications, is still essentially the same?

The obvious answer is, and we hope the true one, that God has appointed society, and that society means these consequences: that society, as well as religion,

[1] Salvian, *De Gub. Dei.* viii. 2. qu. by Bossuet, Serm. "Sur la haine de la verité."

is God's creation and work. If we have anything to guide us as to God's will in the facts of the world,—if we see His providence in the tendencies and conditions amid which we live, and believe that in them He is our teacher and interpreter, we must believe that social order, with its elementary laws, its necessary incidents and pursuits, is God's will for this present world. He meant us to live in this world. And for this world—unless there is nothing more to be done than to wait for its ending—what we call society, the rule of law, the employments of business, the cultivation of our infinite resources, the embodiment of public force and power, the increase of wealth, the continued improvement of social arrangements—all this is indispensable. There is no standing still in these matters; the only other alternative is drifting back into confusion and violence. If the necessities of our condition, with all the light thrown on them by long experience, are no evidence of God's purposes, we are indeed in darkness; if they are, it is plain that man, both the individual and the race, has a *career* here, that he has been furnished for it, I need not say how amply, and was meant to fulfil it. It is God's plan that in spite of the vanity and shortness of life, which is no Christian discovery (it was a matter for irony or despair long before Christianity), and in spite of that disproportionateness to eternity which the Gospel has disclosed to us, men should yet have to show what they are, and what

is in them to do; should develop and cultivate their wonderful powers; should become something proportionate to their endowments for this life, and push to their full limit the employments which come to their hand. The Church by its practice, its greatest writers by their philosophy and theories, have sanctioned this view of the use and divine appointment of the present life. This natural order of things was once interrupted. It was when Christ came to begin society anew. But as soon as the first great shock was over, which accompanied a Gospel of which the centre was the Cross and Resurrection, it became plain that the mission of the Church was not to remain outside of and apart from society, but to absorb it and act on it in endless ways; that Christianity was calculated and intended for even a wider purpose than had been prominently disclosed at first; that in more refined and extended ways than any one then imagined, it was to make natural human society, obstinate and refractory as it was, own its sway, and yield to an influence, working slowly but working inexhaustibly, over long tracts of time, not for generations but centuries. Then was made clear the full meaning of such sayings as those of the net gathering of every kind, and the great house with many vessels. May it not be said that our Lord has done to human society —even that society which is for this world, and which in so many of its principles and influences is so deeply hostile to His spirit—what He did among men on

earth? He came to widen men's prospects of thought and hope to another world. And yet His great employment here was healing their bodies and comforting their present sufferings; comforting sorrows that must soon be again, healing sicknesses which were to come back worse, restoring to life bodies which were again to die. He is now above, "giving gifts to men"; and now as then the great ends of His religion are the things of God and the soul. But as then He healed men's bodies when He sought their souls, so He has taken possession of that world which is to pass away. He has sanctified, He has in many ways transformed that society which is only for this time and life; and while calling and guiding souls one by one to the Father, He has made His gracious influence felt where it could least be expected. Even war and riches, even the Babel life of our great cities, even the high places of ambition and earthly honour, have been touched by His spirit, have found how to be Christian. Shadows as they are, compared with the ages that are before us, and tainted with evil, we believe that they have felt the hand of the Great Healer, to whom power is given over all flesh; all power in heaven and on earth.[1]

The Tempter offered all the kingdoms of the world to Christ, and He refused them, and chose poverty instead. And yet they have become His, with all the glory of them, with all their incidents. Such has

[1] St. John xvii. 2; St. Matthew xxviii. 18.

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been the course which God's providence has appointed for that company, which looked at first as if it was intended to be but a scanty and isolated band of witnesses, living, like the Rechabites, in the wilderness till their true destiny was unfolded in the world to come,—among men but not of them. It was meant, if we see in history the will and the finger of God, to have *here* a higher flight and a higher action. Through the whole lump of civilised society the leaven was to spread and work. The great overshadowing tree, sheltering such different inhabitants, was to rise out of the mustard seed. Christendom has grown out of the upper room. The Catholic Church was to be the correlative to the unity of all tribes of man. It was to expand and find room for all, as they all were embraced by it, with much margin for their differences, with all their fortunes and their hopes, with all that is essential and necessary in all human communion and society, with all that belongs to man's perfection and gives exercise to his great gifts here, with much, too, that belongs to his imperfection.[1] Was this an

[1] If "the world" with which Christians have to fight meant simply, as it seems sometimes in words taken to mean, "society," this is the same thing as admitting Christianity to be anti social. There is no help for it, and we must say, "Come out of it and be ye separate," as, to a great extent, it had to be said of society in the first days. For society, as we term the world and its conditions, must make much of trade and industry, must have cares for the future, and make a virtue of prudence; must accumulate wealth, must go by law, must take care for liberty, must accept the necessities of war. But Christianity is not anti-social, if on certain occasions it has

accident? Was this a great miscarriage? Have the purposes of God once more, and in His final dispensation, been turned out of their path by the perversity and sin of man? Is all this acceptance of society by the Church, with all that society brings with it—its wars, its profession of arms, its worldly business, its passion for knowledge, its love of what is beautiful and great, its paramount rule of law—and not the mere acceptance only, but the Christian consecration of these things of the world,—is all this not as it should have been? It is manifest that in all this there is much that is unchristian, and that Christians have often tolerated what it was unpardonable to tolerate; but unless the whole Church has absolutely failed in vital principle and in understanding its mission and charge,—unless not only the Divine arrangements of the world in natural society, but the Divine interpositions to restore them have been defeated, and produced, as the poet says, "not works but ruins,"[1]—we must believe that what we have seen worked out with such irresistible tendencies and uniform effects, in the fusing of society with the Church, has been according to the original law and purpose of its existence. That is to say, the Church was not meant to

adopted a strong attitude about the ordinary pursuits and objects of men in civil society; about riches, or about life itself. This is no more than the soldier does, who is not anti-social, though there are times when all he does and thinks of is against the common ways of society.

[1] "Non arti ma ruine."—Dante, *Par.* 8.

be always in its first limitations and conditions. Christian society was meant to take in, as avowedly legitimate, other forms of life than those insisted on and recognised at first. It was *not* always to have all things common. It was *not* always to live by the literal rule, "Take no thought for the morrow." It was *not* always to set the least esteemed to judge, or to turn the other cheek. It was *not* always to decline the sword. It was *not* always to hold itself bound by the command, "Sell all that thou hast." Probably it is not too much to say that Christianity helped largely in that break-up of ancient society out of which modern society has grown. But society, broken up, was reorganised; and as, while time lasts, society must last, the common, inevitable laws of social action resumed their course when society entered on its new path with the Christian spirit working in it, sometimes more, sometimes less; ebbing or advancing, but manifestly, in the long run, influencing, improving, elevating it. Certainly the history of Christendom has fallen far short of the ideal of the New Testament. Yet I do not think we can doubt that true Christian living has had at least as fair chance, in the shape which the Church has taken, as it could have had if the Church had always been like one of those religious bodies which shrink from society. It has had its corruptions: we may be quite sure that it would have had theirs, if it had been like them. In its types of goodness it has had what is

impossible to them—greatness and variety. And its largeness and freedom have not been unfruitful. I am not thinking of exceptional lives of apostolic saintliness, like Bishop Ken's. But in all ages there have been rich men furnished with ability, busy men occupied in the deepest way with the things of this life, to whom Christ's words have been no unmeaning message,—students, lawyers, merchants, consumed with the desire of doing good; soldiers filled with the love of their neighbour; "men," as we call them, "of the world" following all that is pure and just and noble in the fear and love of God; of whom if we cannot say that they are men in earnest to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, it is difficult to know of whom we can say so.

Christianity, then, claims now to make occasions and instruments of serving God out of things which at first were relinquished as inconsistent with His service; and there is no doubt that at first the call to relinquish them was absolute and unqualified. The austere maxims of privation and separation from secular things which we find in the New Testament, have seemed at times to raise an impassable bar between its religion and society. If then, in their original severity, they were not to be universal, why are they there at all? But let us go back and see how it could have been otherwise. Consider who the Good Shepherd was who gave His life for the sheep; who Christ was, and what He came to do. Consider what Christianity was, and that what it had

in view was something which was to be *for ever*. Who that remembers that it was the Eternal Son of God who was here, and remembers what He was here for, can wonder at His putting aside all that we are so busy about as irrelevant and insignificant? Can we conceive Him speaking differently of the things of this life and what they are worth; or can we conceive His putting in a different shape His call to human beings to be like Him and to share His work? Who can be surprised at the way in which the New Testament seems to overlook and despise what is most important in this world, when we consider that its avowed object was to break down the barriers of our present nature, and reveal an immortality before which all that now is, shrinks into a transitory littleness of which nothing known to our experience can give the measure? Who can be surprised at what it seems to sacrifice, who thinks what the change was which it professed to make in what concerns mankind, and all that *that* Sacrifice embraced by which the change was made? Indeed the tone and views of the New Testament about the present life are very stern; but they are in harmony with that awful dispensation of things which is recorded in the Apostles' Creed: it is not too much to say that they are the only ones that could be in harmony with it. Measured against its disclosures and declared purpose, we can hardly conceive the demands of the New Testament other than what they are. Say that it claimed from the individual the

absolute surrender of all interest in the ordinary objects of life: it did so for manifest ends, the highest the human mind can conceive,—only to be obtained at the highest cost, and for which the highest cost was little. But it did no more than society itself, in its degree, is forced to do for its greatest and most critical triumphs. This world was sacrificed—sacrificed for a great object: just as the soldier is called on to sacrifice it; just as great patriots, when they have to suffer in trying to improve human society, have themselves to sacrifice it. These maxims and precepts belong specially to the days when the Lord had just been here, the days of His miraculous interposition, the days when the Church was founded. There never can be such a time again. Those to whom the words were then said were to be the *salt*, the *light*, the *leaven*, in an eminence of meaning to which nothing later can approach. They were to surprise the world with something unheard of, both in claims, and in end, and in power. And it seems to me that we undervalue the greatness of the time, the occasion, the necessities of the thing to be done, when we loosely take these sayings, softening and accommodating them, as meant in the same average sense for all periods, and fail to recognise their special bearing *then*. We are indeed commanded humility, self-denial, forbearance, an unworldly mind; they are always necessary. It is quite true to say that the texts we quote for them embody, as in instances, universal principles of duty in the

most emphatic form, and raised to their highest power and strain; but the texts we quote for them *did* mean something more for those days than they do for ours.

What, then, are they to us? What are we to think of that severe aspect of the New Testament which looks at us out of every page; its detachment from present things, its welcome for privation, its imperious demand for self-denial, its blessing on pain and sacrifice, which went so deep, not only into passionate souls of quick sensibility, like St. Francis of Assisi and the countless votaries of poverty, Catholic and heretic, of the middle ages, but into the large mind of Augustine and into the clear mind of Pascal? In our changed times, what is their place in our thoughts and consciences?

This meets us at the outset, and no change of times can alter it. These sayings come to us in the train of that eternal example of the Cross, of which they are but the faint shadow, and which to us is the key and centre of all religion. All that they say is but little to what is involved in *that*; and that is what is before the eyes of mankind henceforth. Turn their eyes where they will, wherever Christianity comes, it must bring *this* with it—Jesus Christ and Him crucified: and the Cross can mean but one thing. Can we imagine the Cross standing alone? These sayings are not the abstract doctrines of philosophy; they reflect a real life and work the most astonishing ever heard of on earth. While the world lasts and Christ

is believed in, come what changes may over society, what tells us of the Cross must oblige us to remember all that went with it, all that inevitably surrounded it, all that it drew after it. "Jesus Christ," we are told, and it must be so, "is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Further, the stern words which in the midst of a high civilisation remind us of the foundations on which our religion was laid, give us the ultimate measure of all that we are engaged in here. We believe that society is meant by Him who made it to be always improving; and this can only be by ends being followed and powers developed, each in their own sphere with deep and earnest devotion, and for their own sake. The artist's mind must be full of his art, the merchant's of his trade. So only are things to be done, and objects which are great in their place and order, to be attained. But when all this is allowed for, and the largest room is made for all human work and progress, we know the limits of our working here. We know our end; we know the conditions of our power and perfection; in the race, and in the highest specimens of it, the law of humiliating incompleteness is inexorable. Here then comes in the severity of the New Testament; not mocking us, not insulting us, not even merely telling us the plain certain truth about what we are; but while giving us indeed the measure of things here, giving us, too, that which compensates for their failure and completes their imperfection. For

if Christianity is true, and not only there is another world, but we know it, and the way is opened to it by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is plain that nothing can ever reverse or alter the proportion established in the New Testament between what is and what is to be. No progress here can qualify the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," or make unreasonable St. Paul's view of life, "The things that are seen are temporal, the things that are not seen are eternal;" "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." In St. Augustine's words, "Christiani non sumus, nisi propter futurum saeculum." We hope that this world, as *we* know it and have a part in it, is something better, in spite of all its disorders, than the "City of Destruction" of the great Puritan allegory; but after all, we can but be pilgrims and strangers on the road, and something else is our true country. Be this world what it may, the only true view of it is one which makes its greatness subordinate to that greater world in which it is to be swallowed up, and of which the New Testament is the perpetual witness.

Even when least consciously remembered, its maxims are in the background and tacitly influence our judgments, which would be very different if they were not there. But besides, they are the unalterable standard of the Christian spirit. As long as Christianity lasts, the heroic ideal must be the standard of all human life. Christianity can accept no other; whatever it

may tolerate, its standard is irremovable. The *De Imitatione Christi* can be written only in one way. The Christian spirit is a free spirit, and has, we believe, affinities with strangely opposite extremes. It can ally itself with riches as well as with poverty; with the life of the statesman and the soldier as well as of the priest, with the most energetic as well as with the most retired life; with vastness of thought, with richness of imagination, with the whole scale of feeling, as well as with the simplest character and the humblest obedience. It can bear the purple and fine linen, it can bear power; it can bear the strain and absorption of great undertakings. But there is one thing with which it will not combine. Its antagonist is selfishness. Be it where it may, it is the spirit which is ready in one way or another *to give itself* for worthy and noble reasons. As long as the New Testament is believed in, we must believe that the Christian spirit is that which seeks not its own, which is not careful to speak its own words, or find its own pleasure, or do its own ways. It is not merely the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice; it is the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice for the great objects put before it. For the great and rare thing is when purpose and self-denial answer to one another, and one by its greatness justifies the other, and animates it. Doubtless it is hard to have self-denial; but it is harder still to have a great object which shall make self-denial itself fall into a subordinate place, indispensable there, but

not thought much of for its own sake. The heroic mind and the Christian mind are shown not simply in the loss of all things, in giving up this world, in accepting pain and want, but in doing this, if it must be done, for that for which it is worth a man's while to do it; for something of corresponding greatness, though unseen; for truth, for faith, for duty, for the good of others, for a higher life. And this view the words of the New Testament keep continually before us. There is plenty of temptation to give up the heroic standard. It often fails. It is easily counterfeited. Its failure is scandalous. And not only our self-indulgence, but our suspicion and hatred of insincere pretence, our moderation and common sense, bid us content ourselves with something short of it, and take our aim by what we call our nature. But the New Testament will not meet us here. The heroic standard is the only one it will countenance for its own, as proportionate to the greatness of its disclosures. It is a standard which lends itself to very various conditions. It may be owned in society or out of it; in solitude or in the press of affairs; in secret wrestlings or in open conduct; by the poor and ignorant or the great and wise. But everywhere it makes the same call. Everywhere it implies really great thoughts, great hopes, great attempts; great measures of what is worthy of man, and great willingness to pay their price.

The Sermon on the Mount continually reminds us

all that we are disciples of a religion which was indeed founded in a law of liberty, but began also in poverty and the deepest renunciation of self. We need the lesson. We believe, surely not wrongly, that God meant this world to be cultivated and perfected to the utmost point to which man's energy and intelligence can go. We trust that the Christian spirit can live and flourish in society as we know it, different as it is from the first days. But it is clear that, as society goes on accumulating powers and gifts, the one hope of society is in men's modest and unselfish use of them; in simplicity and nobleness of spirit increasing, as things impossible to our fathers become easy and familiar to us; in men caring for better things than money, and ease, and honour; in being able to see the riches of the world increase and not set our hearts upon them; in being able to admire and forgo. And we need such teaching as the Sermon on the Mount to preach to us the unalterable subordination of things present to things to come, to remind us of our object and our standard. This it is to all of us. But it was in its own time more than this. It was the call to the great revival of the world. And is it not true that in proportion as that impulse from time to time reawakens sympathy, the meaning of that call comes home with more vivid light and force? I am sure that there are numbers who follow the work of this life in simplicity of heart and purity of

intention. But there is besides a more dire
conscious service of the kingdom of heaven.
are those whose hearts God has touched, w
that they are not merely men blessed by a
the Gospel has done for them, but that they
special business and duty as servants of that
They feel the necessity of something deeper th
world's blessings, of greater aims than this
business. They feel that there are evils wh
needs something stronger than even civilisati
cure, sufferings which ask for more than an a
self-devotion to comfort, wants which nothing
full compliance with the New Testament standa
meet. The words of the New Testament, which
so austere to us common men, are intelligibl
natural to them. These words are the secret
and sign of Christ to those elect spirits for who
has higher work than the highest works of this

What, after all, are these words but the expr
of the universal law, that for great effects and
works a proportionate self-dedication is necessa
the single eye, the disengaged heart, the direct
pose, the concentrated will, the soul on fire, the
set on the invisible and the future, in love with t
great and pure and high. And we shall only
that the time is over for such a call, if we are sat
with what has been and what is. But it is
peculiarity of the religion of the Bible that, what
may be the aspect of the past and the present, in

of all glories of what we look back to, and all discouragements in what we see now, it ever claims the future for its own. If we have the spirit of our religion, it is on the future that we must throw ourselves in hope and purpose. But if we dare to hope in the future for a greater triumph for Christianity than the world has ever seen (and why should we not if we believe our own creed?), we shall come to see that the language of the New Testament has not yet lost its meaning. For the world is not to be won by anything—by religion, or empire, or thought—except on those conditions with which the kingdom of heaven first came. What conquers must have those who devote themselves to it; who prefer it to all other things; who are proud to suffer for it; who can bear anything so that it goes forward. All is gladly given for the pearl of great price. Life is at once easier in its burdens and cheaper in its value with the great end in view. Such devotion to an object and cause is no unfamiliar sight in the world which we know. We must not think it is confined to Christians. We must not think that Christians only are enamoured with simplicity of life, with absolute renunciation of wealth and honour for the sake of a high purpose; that they only can persevere, unnoticed and unthanked, in hard, weary work. The Great Master, who first made men in earnest about these things, has taught some who seem not to follow Him. But if Christians are to hold their place and do His work, they must

not fall behind. They have an example and ideal of love and sacrifice, to which it is simply unmeaning to make anything of this world a parallel. Their horizon is wider than anything here can be. They have a strength and help which it is overwhelming to think of and believe. And theirs is the inheritance of those words and counsels by which at first the world was overcome. If great things are ever to be done again among us, it must be by men who, not resting satisfied with the wonderful progress of Christian society, yet not denying it, not undervaluing it, much less attempting to thwart it, still feel that there is something far beyond what it has reached to, for our aims and hopes even here. It must be by men who feel that the severe and awful words of the New Testament, from which we sometimes shrink, contain, not in the letter it may be, but in the spirit, not in a mere outward conformity to them, but in a harmony of the will, not as formal rules of life, but as laws of character and choice,—the key to all triumphs that are to be had in the time to come. Those who shall catch their meaning most wisely and most deeply, and who are not afraid of what it involves, will be the masters of the future, will guide the religion of serious men among those who follow us.

May our Lord give us grace to open our eyes to the full greatness of His inestimable benefit, and, each of us according to his own place and order and day, daily to endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life.

SERMON III

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.—1 Cor. xi. 1.

Once in the course of the world's history we believe that there has been seen on earth a perfect life. It was a life not merely to admire, but to follow. It has been ever since, for the period of man's existence of which we know most, and during which the race has made the greatest progress, the acknowledged human standard; the example, unapproachable yet owned to be universally binding, and ever to be attempted, for those who would fulfil the law of their nature.

And we have the spirit and principles of that perfect life made applicable to men in our Lord's numerous words about human character, behaviour, and views of life. We have not only the perfect example; but we have it declared, in words of equal authority, *why* and *how* it is perfect. Lessons, teaching and enforcing, accompany each incident of our Lord's ministry; they are drawn together into a

solemn summary in the Sermon on the Mount. Here we have the highest moral guidance for the world. It is impossible to conceive any life more divine than that thus shown us. All the more amazing is the contrast, when once we master it in our minds, between what is shown us and the form in which it is clothed. That inimitable acting out of perfect goodness speaks in homely and, at first hearing, commonplace words, without any apparent consciousness of its own greatness, as if it belonged to the rudest life of the people, and were something within everybody's reach. It takes no account of what we pride ourselves upon, as the finer parts of our nature, our powers of thought, our imagination, our discrimination of beauty. In illustration and phrase and argument, it uses nothing but what is of a piece with the first necessities of life, with the speech and cares, the associations and employments of the humblest. That appeal of the Supreme Goodness for man's allegiance and love was to what was primary and common and elementary in his nature. It was far too real to be anything else.

For that example and law of life were nothing less than *universal*. They were meant for all men. Yet, when we say *universal*, how are we at once reminded of the vast and infinite differences among those for whom there is this one Pattern. For what profound and broad contrasts divide men from men; what gulfs separate one race from another, earlier from later ages, any one state of thought and social progress from what

went before it and follows it: and, within narrower limits, what endless variety, baffling all imagination to follow, of circumstances and fortune, of capacity and character, of wealth or poverty, of strength or weakness, of inclinations and employments, of a kindly or an unkindly lot. Yet for all, *one* life is the guiding light, and the words which express it speak to all. A life, the highest conceivable, on almost the lowest conceivable stage, and recorded in the simplest form, with indifference to all outward accompaniments attractive whether to the few or to the many, is set before us as the final and unalterable ideal of human nature, amid all its continual and astonishing changes. Differing as widely as men do, Christ calls them all alike to follow Him: unspeakably great as His example is, it is for the many and the average as much as for the few; homely as is its expression, there is no other lesson for the deepest and most refined. The least were called to its high goodness: the greatest had nothing offered them but its brief-spoken plainness.

This combination, in the most practical and thoroughly in earnest of all rules of living, that its pattern is nothing less than the *highest*, and also nothing less than *universal*, is one of the proofs of the divine character of the Gospel. But no doubt questions suggest themselves in connection with it, though the honest and true heart will never find them in its way. For it may be asked, and *is* asked, how such an example can seriously be meant to claim the efforts of

those who make up the great majority, the middle class in the moral scale, ordinary in character, ordinary in their views of life? It is not difficult to understand how it was the rule of saints; but how was it to be that of all the world? How can it fit in with the infinite differences of tastes, and powers, and work? How can it follow the changes of living human society? So again, how is it to be a model at once to the poor and to the rich? How is the life of the Great Sufferer and Sacrifice to be the rule for those, who, though they are serious, religious people, self-disciplined and earnest in doing good, yet live, we cannot deny it, in comfort and enjoy life? How does the morality of the Sermon on the Mount fit in with and apply to the actual and accepted realities of our modern social state? It seems the natural rule for what used to be called by way of distinction the "religious life"; yet is it not also the rule for the soldier, the trader, the philosopher, for the life of men of the world? Is not that example one not merely for clergymen but for laymen?

How is it, equally and really, to be the measure for one and the other?

Christianity makes itself universal by making its moral standard, not verbal rules, but a *character*. It has often been said that Christian morality is a system of principles, not of laws; that its definite rules are most scanty, that its philosophy of life is of the simplest and most inartificial. This is so.

In it a law has been exchanged for a character. It professes to aim at doing without laws, and substituting for them the study of a living Person, and the following of a living Mind. "The law is not for a righteous man." "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." More definitely, more plainly within our comprehension, that character is one who is called in Scripture, in an incommunicable sense, the Image of God. In the face of Jesus Christ the glory and the goodness of God shone with a new light to the consciences and reason of men. All that He did and said, the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, His sentences on men and things and thoughts that came before Him, formed one whole, were the various expressions of one mind and character, which was the reflection of the perfect goodness of the Father. And that character is the Christian law.

And this is what fits the Christian standard to be a universal one. Indeed, it is not easy to see how an example and rule for the world can be, except in the form of a character. For a character, if it is great enough, carries its force far beyond the conditions under which it may have been first disclosed. If shown under one set of circumstances, its lesson can be extended to another, perfectly different: a character is to rules, as the living facts of nature are to the words by which we represent them. It will bear being drawn upon for the application of its

truth to new emergencies; it adapts itself with the freedom and elasticity of life, which is very different from the accommodations of theories, to the changes which meet it. When by thought and sympathy we have entered into it, we feel that there are still depths beyond, that we have not exhausted what it has to suggest or teach. We can follow it on, from the known, to what it would be, in the new and strange. It unfolds itself in fact; and we can conceive its doing so in idea, as things round it alter. It is not tied to the limitations and exigencies of its first development: change them, and its action changes too. We see that Character, in which we know that we behold perfect goodness, and which has in fact drawn up the soul of man to heights unknown before,—we see it, as we see all things here, only *in part*. We see it only in a special dispensation or economy; acting, speaking, judging, choosing, only in reference to one particular set of conditions, according to what the occasion and end called for. It is the supreme and essential goodness; but we see it unfolding itself under the conditions of the supreme humiliation, meeting the demands on it of what the humiliation involved. **Ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτόν.** He "emptied himself" indeed. What was the greatest of the miracles He vouchsafed to us, to that Almighty and Infinite Power which in His proper nature He was? What were the most overwhelming instances of His love and wisdom which we see, compared

with that inexhaustible wellspring of goodness and truth from which they flowed forth? We witnessed that absolute goodness, as He spoke and acted in the state which He had chosen for our redemption and restoration; as was called for and was fit, under the circumstances in which our Maker descended to be one of us. But we know that that perfect goodness does not show itself only under such conditions; it shows itself equally in Christ creating, in Christ reigning, in Christ judging: and when we raise our thoughts to what He is *there*, we know that His goodness must wear an aspect, which, though essentially the same, would look very different to us. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"—the same in glory as in the form of a servant. But there are *other* ways in which His goodness shows itself to those who worship Him on the throne of nature, besides those in which they saw it who beheld Him preparing for the Cross. To us on earth it is revealed in sorrow and sympathy; but we know that it must be exhibited too in the heaven of the divine bliss. The veil has fallen from Him; that temporary partial state of circumstances under which His goodness was shown on earth in that narrow space of time that He was with us, has passed away. And the same goodness moves in different lines, comes with different claims and judgments, now that, no longer despised and rejected, He has taken His own place, and has all things for His own.

Still, under conditions utterly changed, His goodness is that same very goodness which we saw. And so we can derive from that Character lessons for our state, which is so different from His; and for our imperfection make His perfection the law. And not only so, but we can derive lessons from it for conditions of human life very far removed from those conditions under which His goodness was manifested to us here. The interval is indeed great between those conditions and circumstances, and the state of things amid which we believe that He has called us to run our course. We, instead of being the company of poor men, separate from the world, whom He gathered round Him, and of whom He was one, belong to a varied society of the most complicated order. Functions, gifts, vocations, differ endlessly: we include the extremes of outward fortune, of place and office, and personal cultivation. But under all these different conditions, there is, if we know how to find it, the way in which that perfect goodness would teach us how to feel and how to behave. Literal imitation may be impossible, but it is not impossible to catch its spirit and apply its lessons to altered circumstances. It is true, we have only as it were part of the curve actually traced for us; but the fragment is enough to show him who can learn its real law what, in spaces far removed, is the true line and direction of its prolongation. And so the conformity to the character of Jesus Christ extends, not

only to a life like His in its lot and duties, but to one which on earth is called to tasks outwardly as different as can be conceived. In that character, though shown to us in the form of servant, we know that everything is gathered which could make human nature what it ought to be. That perfect goodness was *potentially* all that the sons of men can ever be called to be by the course of that Providence which appoints their lot and the order of their life. His example enfolds them all. It will bear being appealed to for guidance under whatever different circumstances they are called to live: they may learn from it, if we may venture so to speak, how He would have acted in their place, and how He would have His followers to act.

1. Consider, for instance, what was the first and prominent feature of that perfect life as we saw it: it was, I suppose, the combination in it, most intimate and never interrupted, of the work of time and human life with that which is beyond sight and time. It is vain to try to express in words that of which nothing but the Gospels open before us can adequately convey the extent—the impression left on our minds of One who, all the while that He was on earth, was in heart and soul and thought undivided for a moment from heaven. He does what is most human; but He lives absolutely in the Divine. However we see Him—tempted, teaching, healing, comforting hopeless sorrow, sitting at meat at the wedding or the feast,

rebuking the hypocrites, in the wilderness, in the temple, in the passover chamber, on the Cross,—He of whom we are reading is yet all the while that which His own words can alone express, "even the Son of man which is in heaven." The Divine presence, the union with the Father, is about Him always, like the light and air, ambient, invisible, yet incapable, even in thought, of being away. And yet, with this perpetual dwelling and conversing with God, to which it were blasphemy to compare the highest ascents of the saintliest spirit, what we actually see is the rude hard work and the sufferings by which He set up among men the kingdom of God. What the most devout contemplation, detached from all earthly things, could never attain to, was in Him compatible with the details and calls of the busiest ministry: yet labour and care, and the ever-thronging society of men, came not for an instant between Him and the Father; and even we, with our dim perception of that Divine mystery, cannot think of Him without that background of heaven, not seen, but felt in all that He says or does.

Men have compared the active and the contemplative life. And they have compared also the life of practical beneficence with the life of devotion, of religious interest and spiritual discipline. We see great things done without the sense of religion, perhaps with the feeling towards it of distrust and aversion. We see the religious spirit sometimes

unable to cope with the real work of life, failing in fruit and practical direction, failing to command the respect of those who have other ways of ministering to men's wants. But in Him, who is our great Ideal, we have both lives combined. No recluse conveys so absolutely the idea of abstraction from the world as our Lord in the thick of His activity. Than that heavenly-mindedness, it is impossible to conceive anything more pure and undisturbed. Than that life of unwearied service, it is impossible to conceive anything more absolute in self-sacrifice. Our Lord was the great example of man working for his fellows; of a consuming desire to raise and bless mankind. "The zeal of thine house," as He says, in the loftiest sense of the words, "hath devoured Me." But He was also, at the same time and in equal measure, the proof to the end of time, that the highest degree of the divine life is not opposed to, but in natural alliance with, the highest and noblest service of man. The world had seen instances of human goodness cut off, except in the most indirect and precarious way, from that conscious communion with God which is religion. It was incomplete and maimed. Morally, as well as theologically, without faith man cannot, even as man, be perfect. But when He came, who was to show mankind a perfect life, there was the great gap filled up; there was goodness, the goodness of human nature, with the part restored which had been wanting—its

link with the Divine; its consciousness of its relation to the Father, and capacity for communion with Him. In Jesus Christ we see man serving to the utmost his brethren; but we also see man one with the thought and will of God.

Here we see how character in itself, irrespective of circumstance, is adapted to be a guide; here is an example, shown under the most exceptional conditions, yet fit to be universal. Of such a life what truer key than the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"? what more expressive account than the words, "Ye cannot serve two masters; ye cannot serve God and mammon"? But on what outward circumstances does such a life depend? Why is it not equally to be realised in the calling of the ruler, the rich man, the student? How need their outward conditions affect their relationship to God, their sense of it, their grasp by faith of what *He* is and what *they* are, and what He has called them to—the unfolding in their hearts of reverence and devotion and love; their sense of what their work is for, and what makes its value? He whom they worship came in the deepest poverty, separate from the world and its order; and they are at the opposite social extreme, perhaps born to rule, commanding wealth, endowed with great faculties. The mind of man cannot, indeed, help being, as it ought to be, touched with the contrast. But His example is as full of meaning to them as it would

be if they, like Him, had been born in poverty. Why should not that combination of union with God and the utmost activity of all powers of soul and body go before *them*, as their guiding light and encouragement, as well as before the priest or the sister of charity? How is it less adapted to be the animating and governing pattern to those in whose hands are the greatest interests of mankind, and their course and fate for times to come? Was not Jesus Christ, though we saw Him but for a short time in abasement and poverty, in reality the Lord of all things, and the Prince of the kings of the earth?

2. As His life was the pattern for the life of *faith*, so it was the great instance of the life of *truth*. For to all, quite apart from the accidental conditions of their state, it shows what alone is real and great in life. The imitation of Jesus Christ, even in the highest form in which we can conceive it, must always be but by way of proportion. When we are called to be like Him, it is obvious that the impassable distance between *His* ends and works and ours, limits the command. To imitate Christ, being what He was; to imitate Him who joined in Himself what He alone ever joined; to imitate Him whose life and work were absolutely by themselves, both in that part which we can see, and in that larger part, impossible to be known by man, of that mystery which oppressed and baffled the illuminated intellect

of St. Paul,—this, even in idea, eludes the utmost stretch of imagination. We cannot follow His steps, who for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich; who died for us, that we might live. Like Him, in what makes Him the hope of the world, we cannot be: and any attempted outward conformity of circumstances, or lot, or discipline, has in it the danger attending every attempt at what is in the nature of things impossible—the delusion, of which the extreme instance is the state of thought represented in the story of the stigmata of St. Francis.

And yet it is true that in every page of the New Testament we are called to be like Him; to be renewed into His image; to put on Christ. An apostle is not afraid to express this conformity by that very image which we shrink from in the hard literal form of the middle age legend.[1] And how can we be like the Infinite Being who made and saved and shall judge mankind, except so far as in our work and life—whatever it be matters but little—we bear a mind and spirit proportionate, as He did, to our calling and our end? For surely there are ends and purposes in the life of each of us which are literally as real as the ends of His life. One is high and another low; one has much and another little; one is born to govern, to acquire, to call forth new powers in the world of man or nature; another

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 10.

to pass his days unknown, to carry on the detail of necessary labour in his time, to make no mark and leave no memorial. But to every one who believes in God and providence, the work of each is equally real: a call, a commission, a talent, a stewardship from God; and who is too high or too low to say that the inexpressible seriousness and earnestness of the life described in the New Testament is not suited to guide him how to think and feel about his own life?

For what we see in that life is not only a purpose and work passing man's understanding, but that purpose followed and that work done, in a way which man *can* understand. It is a life governed by its end and purpose, in which shows or illusions have no place, founded on unshrinking, unexaggerated truth, facing everything as it is without disguise or mistake; and further, a life in which its purpose is followed with absolute indifference to whatever sacrifice it may cost. The Gospels show us One, with the greatest of works to do, a work so great that it sounds unbecoming to qualify it with our ordinary words for greatness; One, never diverted from His work, never losing its clue, never impatient, never out of heart, who cries not, nor strives, nor makes haste; One, whose eye falls with sure truth and clear decision on everything in the many-coloured scene of life; One, around whom, as He passes through the world, all things that stir man's desire and ambition take their

real shape and relative place and final value; One, to whom nothing of what we call loss or gain is so much as worth taking account of, in competition with that for which He lived. He has put all this into words which mark for ever the change He made in our views of life—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work;" "I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day;" and when all was over, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." Such a life He generalises in such words as, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" in His sayings about the treasure in heaven, the single eye, the pearl of great price, the violent taking the kingdom of heaven by force.

Unless it is all one at last to be a trifler or in earnest, and unless a high standard of life involves no more cost or forgoing of what we like than a low one, that life is the one which all conditions want, and all may use as their guide. For the great vice of human nature is slackness about what is good; not insensibility, not want of admiration, not want of leanings and sympathies, but feebleness and uncertainty of will; *that* in moral character, which would be represented in intellectual work by looseness and laziness, disinclination to close with things, being content with what is superficial and inexact. Every work and calling of life has a high side and a low one. In one extreme difference as in another,

down to the smallest and humblest sphere, the trial of duty and high purpose is equally real, and it is equally costly. Bring the Sermon on the Mount into a life of activity or of riches, that is, of power: is it simply, as it may seem at first, a discord? or may not the two, though so far apart, be made to answer truly to one another, as the differing parts of a harmony? What it does is to impose upon riches, or business, or learning, or art, the severe and high view of life, instead of the low and self-indulgent one. What it does is to hold up, in its inexorable claims, the highest end, and to preach the truth that the greatest liberty is the greatest trust. Far beyond the limitations of outward circumstances it speaks of an inward foundation of character, of simplicity, thoroughness, completeness of the man himself, answering to the facts amid which he lives and their extreme seriousness; which, like the house on the rock, can endure its appointed trials, and can take care of itself wherever it has to serve God, in high place or low. The estimate in it of the value of outward things, its warnings against their temptations—what are they but the counterpart, in infinitely more solemn tones, of the voice of all experience? The Master of truth and reality, who passed by these outward things as valueless to Himself, surely knew what was in man, when He spoke so earnestly of their immense and fatal abuse. The difficulties, so great and so affecting, which they create in the way

of better things, wring from Him, as it were, cries and bursts of pain—"Many are called, but few are chosen;" "Strait is the gate and narrow the way;" "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." They dictate those preferences for the hard lot and the bitter side of life, for mourning, for poverty, for persecution, the blessing on those of whom men speak ill. Can we say that the world did not want those plain truths and those sharp words? But the sacrifices and self-denials of the Sermon on the Mount are not dependent on outward conditions. They simply represent the price which *must* be paid, in some shape or another, for all true and pure living. The alternative of loss, of pain, of being ill thought of, meets from time to time every one, wherever he is placed, who aims at anything above the dead level of custom, much more at such a standard as the Christian. And those higher ends of life may be the object of deep and fervent effort, where the eye of the looker-on rests upon what seems too busy, too exalted, or too humble to be the scene of the greatest of earthly endeavours, the inward discipline of the soul. Surely it may be there, where nothing is the token of its presence; it may be there, with its bitter surrenders of will, its keen self-control, its brave and deliberate welcomings of pain, masked behind the turmoil of public life or the busy silence of study; it may be there, stern and high in its choice, stern in its view of the world, stern in its

judgment of itself, stern in its humility, yet nothing be seen but the performance of the common round of duty, nothing be shown but the playfulness which seems to sport with life.

> Se sub serenis vultibus
> Austera virtus occulit,
> Timens videri, ne suum,
> Dum prodit, amittat decus.[1]

3. The life of *faith* means the life which comes nearest to His in never forgetting the unseen Father in the activities of the present. The life of *truth* and purified will means the life which comes nearest to His in holding fast, amid the infinite and intrusive shadows which crowd the path of life, the severe realities of our appointed lot, the unspeakable realities of our further destiny. But this is not all that that character invites us to copy. There were those who had walked with God before He came, though none ever walked with God as He did. And many had spoken wonderfully the truths concerning our state, and even concerning our hopes; they had sounded great depths in the sea of wisdom; they had drawn the line between what is solid and what is vain in life; they had caught firmly and clearly what was worth living for; they had measured truly the relative value of the flesh and the spirit. But none but He had so combined with the sternest reason the deepest love. This was what made Him new and

[1] Motto to Froude's *Remains*.

without parallel in the world. It was that, in Him, truth, duty, religion, ended in love—love inexhaustible, all-pervading, infinitely varied. With Him, reason did not, as it so often does with the clearest and ablest of the sons of man, stop in itself; it passed over into the sphere of the affections, and kindled into the manifold forms in which the play of the living heart shows itself. Reason with Him—severe, inexorable reason—was translated into the diversified and elastic activity of doing good; compassionating, making allowances, condescending, consoling; healing the sick, casting out devils; forgiving sins and cleansing them; "preaching the gospel to the poor, binding up the broken-hearted, preaching deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty them that are bruised"; calling the weary and heavy-laden to rest—to make proof of His "meekness and lowliness," and take His yoke upon them: laying down His life for the world.

It is this new commandment, new to the world, but as old as the eternal Word who brought it, which turns the Sermon on the Mount from a code of precepts into the expressions and instances of a character. Its words do not stand by themselves; they are not as the definite commandments of a law; they cannot be represented or exhausted by any rules; they have their interpretation and their reason in that divine temper which had come with Jesus Christ to restore the world. The purity, the humility, the yielding and

forgiving mind, the ungrudging and unflagging goodness they speak of, were but some among the infinitely varied ways of acting out the meaning of His last charge—"That ye love one another, as I have loved you;"[1] and of his last prayer—"That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."[2] His life, and the character revealed in it, is the interpreter of what He means by love. A great deal may be said of love without ever really touching what is its vital essence. But here our sympathies are appealed to. We see how Jesus Christ showed what it is to lead a life of love. He showed how it could be carried out to the uttermost in what we call an extreme case of our human condition. But, as it has been said, "glorious in His darknesses,"[3] He showed that mind and spirit which He had brought into the world for mankind at large; for all conditions in which man is placed; which is not tied to the circumstances in which it was first disclosed; which was something too real, too free, too universal to be restricted to any outward state; which was to inspire and govern character in all forms of the social order; fit to be the ruling principle in him who commands the results and powers of the last stage of civilisation, as in him whom nothing raises above barbarism but his Christian love, or in him who parts with society for the present, to

[1] St. John xv. 12. [2] *Ibid.* xvii. 26.
[3] Taylor, *Life of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 59; Heber's ed.

sow seeds from which society shall be the better in the future.

The mutable shapes of society, unfolded by God's providence, fix almost without our will our outward circumstances. But for the soul, wherever it is, Christ our Lord has one unchanging call, "Be perfect;" and He has one unchanging rule for its fulfilment, "Be what I am, feel what I felt, do as I should do." How shall we? How but by looking steadfastly at Him and trying to see and know Him? Yet we have to remember that that Divine Character is what it is, apart from our ways of looking at it; and that our ways of looking at it and understanding it depend on our own characters. We behold Him through the medium of our own minds and hearts. It holds true, in the things of the spirit as in those of the imaginative intellect, that "we receive according to what we give"; the light, the landscape, the features are the same, but the eye, the capacity, the knowledge, the feeling differ. It is but saying that He is shown to us under the conditions of all human things, to say that we do not all see Him in the same way. But, however we may mistake, that Divine manifestation still remains the same, to teach other and wiser men, and ourselves if we become wiser; and however true our view may be, there is still, beyond what we see and grasp, more to be known and loved and copied. We see this in the history of the Church. We talk indeed with admiration of His being the one standard

to the endlessly differing conditions of society, to rich and poor, wise and ignorant, strong and weak, the few and the many; but what is this to the wonder of His having been the constant standard to distant and different ages? In the same Living Person each age has seen its best idea embodied; but its idea was not adequate to the truth — there was something still beyond. An age of intellectual confusion saw in the portraiture of Him in the Gospels the ideal of the great teacher and prophet of human kind, the healer of human error, in whom were brought together and harmonised the fractured and divergent truths scattered throughout all times and among all races. It judged rightly; but that was only part. The monastic spirit saw in it the warrant and suggestion of a life of self-devoted poverty as the condition of perfection: who can doubt that there was much to justify it; who can doubt that the reality was something far wider than the purest type of monastic life? The Reformation saw in Him the great improver, the breaker of the bonds of servitude and custom, the quickener of the dead letter, the stern rebuker of a religion which had forgotten its spirit: and doubtless He was all this, only He was infinitely more. And now in modern times there is the disposition to dwell on Him as the ideal exemplar of perfect manhood, great in truth, great in the power of goodness, great in His justice and His forbearance, great in using and yet being above the world, great in infinite love, the opener of

[illegible handwritten annotation]

men's hearts to one another, the wellspring, never to be dry, of a new humanity. He is all this, and this is infinitely precious. We may "glorify Him for it, and exalt Him as much as we can; but even yet will He far exceed."[1] That one and the same Form has borne the eager scrutiny of each anxious and imperfect age; and each age has recognised with boundless sympathy and devotion what it missed in the world; and has found in Him what is wanted. Each age has caught in those august lineaments what most touched and swayed its heart. And as generations go on and unfold themselves, they still find that Character answering to their best thoughts and hopes; they still find in it what their predecessors had not seen or cared for; they bow down to it as their inimitable pattern, and draw comfort from a model who was plain enough and universal enough to be the Master, as of rich and poor, so of the first century and the last. It has been the root of all that was great and good in our fathers. We look forward with hope to its making our children greater and better still. "Regnum tuum regnum omnium saeculorum; et dominatio tua in omni generatione et generatione."[2]

What is the lesson? Surely this: to remember when we talk of the example of Christ, that the interpretations and readings of it are all short of the thing itself; and that we possess, to see and to learn from, the thing itself. We should be foolish and wrong to

[1] Ecclus. xliii. 30. [2] Ps. cxlv. 13.

think ourselves above learning from all that wise and holy men have seen in it. But the thing itself, the Divine Reality, is apart from, and is ever greater than, what the greatest have thought of it and said of it. *There* it is in itself, in its authentic record, for us to contemplate and search into, and appropriate, and adore. Let us not be satisfied with seeing it through the eyes of others. Mindful how we ought to look at it—remembering what, after all, have not ceased to be the unalterable conditions of knowing truth,—purity, humility, honesty,—let us seek to know him directly more and more, as He is in the New Testament; as those saw him, whose souls took the immediate impression of His presence and His Spirit. So does the Apostle describe the progress of the great transformation, by which men grow to be like their Lord and their God. "But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

SERMON IV

CIVILISATION AND RELIGION

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.—St. Matt. v. 13, 14, 16.

One of the purposes for which our Lord instituted the Christian Church was that it might exercise a distinct moral influence on the society round it. Separate in idea from the world, and at first separate from it in a great measure in fact, it was to be *in* the world, to touch the world, and to make great changes in it; to attract, and win, and renew. It was to be a principle of health and freshness, the antagonist of corruption and decay. And it was to work, not at a distance, but by contact, by subtle and insensible forces, which combined with what they acted on and modified. "The kingdom of heaven was to be like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." In that great

discourse with which the Gospel teaching opens, the first thing is the character of the children of the kingdom, the second their relation to the world around them. After the Beatitudes comes, thus early, long before the disciples were an organised body, or were yet fitted for the greatness of what they were to be, the picture of their office to society, in its two powers of purification and light, and with its attendant responsibility, answering to its greatness. For it was in no partial or temporary sphere that they were to affect mankind. "Ye are the salt of the earth," says their Master. And then, investing them with one of the most transcendent of His own titles, before he had yet claimed it Himself,—"Ye are the light of the world." It is simply a fact of history that Christianity and the Christian Church have exerted on human society a moral influence which justifies the figures by which it was described—an influence more profound, more extensive, more enduring, and more eventful than any that the world has seen.

But there has always been a tendency in society in its higher forms to produce, apparently by its own forces, some degree, at least, of that moral improvement and rise which the religious principle has produced. It is this rise and growth of moral standard and effort, this aim and attempt at higher things in life, and not merely in the instruments and appliances of life, which enters as the essential element into the true notion of civilisation, and alone deserves the name.

Civilisation cannot be said to be the same thing as the influence of Christianity, or to be purely a result derived from it; for these tendencies to moral improvement existed before Christianity, and showed themselves by unequivocal signs, however much they were thwarted, neutralised, or at last destroyed. There are certain great virtues which social life loudly calls for, and tends to foster; which, as thought grows and purposes widen, are felt more clearly to be the true and imperative conditions of all human action. Civilisation, whether or not it presupposes and assists in keeping in view another life, arranges primarily and directly for this one; and these virtues it produces in increasing force and perfection, as its fruit and test. It is no disparagement to that which we believe to be as infinitely greater than civilisation as the future destiny of man is greater than his present state, to acknowledge gladly that these beneficial tendencies were originally implanted in society by the author of society. But the effect has been, that alongside of the influence of Christianity has grown up another influence, not independent of it, yet not identical with it; owing much —it would be bold to limit *how* much—to Christianity, yet having roots of its own; not in its own nature hostile to religion, yet moving on a separate line; sometimes wearing the guise of a rival, sometimes of a suspicious and uncongenial associate, with diverging aims and incommensurate views; but always, even when most friendly, with principles and methods

of its own. It has many names, and perhaps none of them happy ones; but it is that power, distinct from religion, however much it may be affected by it, which shapes our polity, and makes our laws, and rules in our tribunals, and sets the standard in literature, and impregnates our whole social atmosphere. In our days we seem to witness a great triumph of this influence. Many of the characteristic phenomena of our time seem to point to great and salutary results, brought about without calling on the religious principle. Most of us, I suppose, have our reserves about our actual civilisation; most of us, I should think, must have our misgivings and anxieties; but it seems beyond dispute that where we see justice, honesty, humanity, honour, the love of truth, and that moderation in word and act which is so akin to truth—where we see these things aimed at with no unsuccessful efforts, and, in spite of infinite failure and alloy, taking stronger hold on society, we see what we ought to welcome and be thankful for; and it seems also beyond dispute that this kind of improvement goes on, and goes on with vigour, where it is often difficult to trace the influence of religion, and supports itself, as far as can be seen, independently of that influence, and without reference to its claims.

Accordingly, it may be said, and certainly is sometimes thought, that civilisation does all that Christianity claims to do. It is suggested or announced that society has outgrown Christianity; that whatever

benefits it once derived from Christian ideas and motives it needs no longer; that even if it learned its lessons from Christianity, yet now it is able to walk alone, to judge and deal without its teacher; that there is nothing left for the Church to do, as a moral influence on society, but what can be as well or better done by other influences, not holding of religion, or, at any rate, of definite Christianity. The virtues which men want will now grow on their own roots; civilisation is become strong enough to maintain itself, and to provide in the healthiest way for the perfection of human character.

It is a claim, as we know, which excites equally hopes and fears; hopes and fears often, surely, far in excess of their grounds. This claim is sometimes met by the assertion that civilisation, as such, cannot do without Christianity; that owing so much to Christianity, it would ultimately lose, if parted from Christianity, even the virtues of its own proper sphere. It is likely. But forecasts of this sort are hazardous; and I am not so sure of this, as that I should like to venture on it the claim of Christianity to the continued allegiance of the world. Certainly the highest and most varied civilisation that men have ever known has not come into being without Christianity. But what it might do, when once started, is another matter. I think it is possible that very excellent things, planted in the first instance by Christianity, may yet thrive and grow strong, where there is little reference to their historical origin. Still less does it seem wise or

right to rest on extreme and one-sided statements of effects and tendencies, such as it is easy enough to make, either way; denunciations of what we fear, panegyrics of what we value. Alas! we have had too much experience of such expedients, and paid dearly for their hollowness. Let us keep from these rash contrasts, these rash disparagements, which provoke overwhelming rejoinders; rejoinders which derive their power, not from their intrinsic force and reason, but from their rhetorical truth and justice, as answers to exaggeration and over-statement. It is enough to say that there are things of the deepest import to man and society which civilisation does not pretend to give, and which nothing can give but Christianity. Admit that society has learned a great deal; that, apart from the direct impulse of religion, it does a number of things well; that, independently of religion, there are reasons and motives for high morality which are listened to and act powerfully: but when all is admitted, we are a long way from the conclusion that Christianity has nothing more to do, and that its significance and interest are over. Put the improvement of society and its hopeful prospects at the highest. Assume, as it is most reasonable, that it is according to the order of Him who is Lord of the Ages, that truth and humanity and justice should grow and increase, even where His direct influence is unrecognised or unfelt. Yet that is not all that He came to claim of man and society, nor all that man is capable of being made.

The Church is His witness to something more, even when courts and parliaments have learned to deal justly, rulers to govern in equity, men in general to be considerate and sincere, thinkers to value and toil for truth.

It would, indeed, be either very shallow or very faint-hearted—a great mistake, whoever makes it, whether from premature confidence in civilisation, or from short-sighted fears for religion—to think that as civilisation increases in vigour and range, and its inevitable consequences show themselves, it must displace Christianity, and narrow its influence. It is conceivable that the changes which are going on may make the work of the Church more difficult: no doubt all changes have this, that they make some things difficult which were not so before. But things change for the easier as well as for the harder. We all of us have the benefit of the one law of change, as well as have to accept the necessities of the other. It is possible that mere civilisation may more and more do many things which in past times Christianity did; that it may assert its independence; that it may take things out of the hands of religion, which have hitherto been under its government. This may alter the form and direction of the work of religion; but it need not cripple it, as it certainly cannot exhaust its purpose and scope. Before now, civilisation, while raising the most formidable obstacles to Christianity, had already removed others as serious, and in almost equal degree

made its way easier. Why should we not still look upon the civilisation of Christendom, as we are accustomed to look upon the civilisation of Heathenism, which we know to have been as much the minister as the antagonist of the Gospel conquest? Why should we not be thankful that if it raises dangerous pretensions, it has broken up for us all much rugged soil, and tamed many of the old brutalities of man? Why should we be niggardly in confessing what it has done to our hands, in refining, ordering, calming? Ought we not to see in its conquests the opening of a new world to the inexhaustible energies and hopes of faith,—a new world, with its new dangers and troubles, but not without abundance to outweigh and reward them? As civilisation increases, makes things easier, does many things of its own accord that religion used to teach it, so the work of the Church is not superseded by all this: its sphere is widened; its tasks, it may well be, are increased; there is more to do, and perhaps some of the old facilities are removed; but others come in their place. If any of its old work is done to its hand, it is so far put more forward for higher functions; it may have to do different things and in a different way: but certainly its room is not occupied. If ever the Church was the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the leaven of society, there is just as much place for it to be so still. The world still wants it; and it only can supply the want. Civilised society can do many things for itself which it could

not do once; but there is much which it is not in the nature of things that it can do. Civilisation is the wisdom and the wit of this world; and its office is for this world. If it makes the best of this world, in the highest sense of the word, this is the utmost it can do. Beyond the present—and I include in this the futurity, as far as we can conceive it, of our condition here—it does not pretend to go. And when the perfection of our present state is arrived at, even if we could imagine the law of our intellectual and moral and civil perfection carried out far beyond what we have reached to yet, there would still remain something more. "Man," says Hooker, "doth not seem to rest satisfied, either with fruition of that wherewith his life is preserved, or with performance of such actions as advance him most deservedly in estimation; but doth further covet, yea, oftentimes manifestly pursue with great sedulity and earnestness, that which cannot stand him in any stead for vital use; that which exceedeth the reach of sense; yea, somewhat above capacity of reason, somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth; somewhat it seeketh, and what that is directly it knoweth not, yet very intentive desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other known delights and pleasures are laid aside, they give place to the search of this but only suspected desire. If the soul of man did serve only to give him being in this life, then things appertaining unto this life would content him, as we see they do other crea-

tures. . . . But with us it is otherwise. For although the beauties, riches, honours, sciences, virtues, and perfections of all men living, were in the present possession of one; yet somewhat beyond and above all this there would still be sought and earnestly thirsted for."

In speaking of what Christianity has yet to do in civilised society, where high moral ideas have established themselves and bear fruit, I do not now refer to what is of course at the bottom of all that it does—of that assumed foundation of fact and creed (without which Christianity is nothing), by which we believe and declare what God has done for the recovery of man, and which, whether in sight or only in the background, makes all the difference, as to the influence under which we live. I am not speaking of the example held up in making the great venture (for such it must be) that faith makes, as to what has been and what is to be; nor of the effects on men of such awful truths as those of which Christianity is the message, the truths connected with what we are at this season specially thinking of, the only truths that can bring light to pain and sorrow and ill-success, that conquer death, that can take the sting out of the irrevocable record of sin. These, it is plain, are what they are, whatever civilisation may come to. I am on much lower and narrower ground. I am quite aware that even that is too large for me here. We all know how hard it is to draw broad outlines, at once adequate and exact; how, in general statements, qualifications and

exceptions start up at every step, which need to be kept in view and allowed for; and broad outlines are all that are attempted now. Yet I will venture to notice generally one or two points which seem to me to open serious reflections; points in which any of us may see that Christianity is still wanted as the "salt" and "light" of society; points of great importance; points in which I cannot see that civilisation has anything to take the place of what Christianity does, or can pretend to make up for it, if it is away. I shall be only recalling familiar thoughts. But even very familiar thoughts may be worth recalling; and it is part of the business of this place to recall them.

1. We are in danger, even in the highest condition of civilisation, from the narrowing of man's horizon, and we need a protection against it which civilisation cannot give. I call a narrowing of man's horizon whatever tends to put or drop out of sight the supreme value of the spiritual part of man, to cloud the thought of God in relation to it, or to obscure the proportion between what *is* and what we look forward to,—the temporary and provisional character of the utmost we see here. To have fought against and triumphed over this tendency is the great achievement of Christianity. We hardly have the measure to estimate the greatness of it; of having kept alive, through such centuries as society has traversed, the faith, the pure and strong faith, in man's divine relationship: of having been able to withstand the constant enormous pressure of

what was daily seen and felt; not only of the solemn unbroken order of the natural world, but of the clogs and fetters of custom, of the maxims taken for granted in the intercourse of life, of the wearing down, the levelling of high thought and purpose which is always going on in society; of the perpetual recurrence, with the tides and weather, of the same story of promise and disappointment, of far-reaching attempts and poor success; of evil in high places; of the noble mingled with the vile; of good ever tending either to extravagance or decay; of character in men or bodies of men insensibly deteriorating and falling away from its standard; of wisdom hardly won and wasted; of great steps taken and thrown away; of the old faults obstinately repeated in the face of ever-accumulating experience; of the bewildering spectacle of vice beyond hope and without remedy; of the monotonous dead level of the masses of mankind. For a religion to have been proof against all this,—still, through it all, to have preserved itself the same and unworn out, and still to be able to make men hold fast by faith and hope in the invisible, is, among the wonders of human history, one of the greatest and most impressive.

But the pressure is still going on; and to yield to it, and let that faith and hope pass from the common heritage, would be a disaster for which nothing conceivable could make up. There is still the weight of all we see and are accustomed to,

making it unnatural to us to trust our spiritual ideas, calling for a strong effort to resist the spells of imagination, and to grasp as real the convictions of reason about what we can never hope to see or test. There is still the inevitable temptation to make our experience—our one-sided experience, and accidental habits of thought—the measure of what is possible, the measure of the Eternal Laws of the Most High. Against this weight and pressure of the actual, the customary, the natural, civilisation, by itself, is not able to help us. For its main work and claim is to regulate this present scene. This is its confessed province; here is its glory and triumph. I am not forgetting the value of whatever strengthens character and refines thought. I do not forget the enlargement of even religious ideas as knowledge widens. I, for one, hope never to speak but with respect and the deepest thankfulness of that dispensation of order and light—no doubt with much of evil and danger, yet fruitful of blessings and bright with hope—under which God has appointed us at this day to live. But civilisation in its professed aim is content with the present; and they whom it monopolises will be content with it too. In its highest forms, it is of the earth, earthy; mistress and minister of the truths and marvels of this earth, but, like this earth, only to last its time and pass away. And yet, *there is* "the natural," and *there is* "the spiritual"; the First Man and the Second; the

two ideals, man made for this life, and "the Lord from heaven." Against the tendency to look at everything from its own point of view it cannot protect us; and to confine ourselves to its point of view is to lose sight of all that is highest in man's reason, all that is noblest in man's hope. Every occupation, every province of human interest, has its special temptations to narrowness of view and shortness of thought. We are all accustomed to be told this about theology; and who can doubt its truth? But just as true is it that the same vice infests as deeply the generalisations of the philosopher and the judgments of the statesman. There are worthier and wider thoughts of God, the soul, man's calling and purpose, in the Psalms, than often under the highest light of modern culture; *it* could not produce them, and sometimes hardly understands them. To pass to them from many a famous book of modern speculation is like passing into the presence of the mountains and the waters and the midnight stars, from the brilliant conversation of one of our great capitals. There is no narrowing so deadly as the narrowing of man's horizon of spiritual things; no worse evil could befall him in his course here than to lose sight of heaven. And it is not civilisation that can prevent this; it is not civilisation which can compensate for it. No widening of science, no conquest,—I say not, over nature and ignorance, but over wrong and selfishness in society,—no possession of abstract truth, can indem-

nify us for an enfeebled hold on the highest and central truths of humanity. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—the soul which feels itself accountable, that owns sin and aspires after goodness, which can love and worship God and hope for immortality; the soul which can rejoice with trembling in God's grace, and dare to look forward to be like Him. What is it which keeps alive this estimate of man's soul but that unearthly power which first proclaimed it to mankind?

2. Once more: we think much of purity, with all its consequences; that idea and family of thoughts, which is perhaps the most characteristic distinction between the old world of morality and feeling and the new; that idea, which, in its essential nature, apart from political necessities, or ceremonial restrictions, or social expediencies or tastes, we owe absolutely to the religion of the Bible; which had its birth for us in that wonderful mixture of severity with tenderness, of inexorable and exacting holiness with boundless pity for the sinner, tolerance for the weak, and welcome for the penitent, which marked the Son of man; that most mysterious of the virtues, as its opposite is the most mysterious of the sins, which we have not yet found the way to talk much about, without danger to that which we most wish to guard. It is the flower of the Christian graces: witnessed by the care with which it has been fostered from the first; witnessed, alas! in other and sadder ways, in

the mistaken and wild expedients to cherish it, in the monstrous machinery brought into action to make up for the sluggishness or perversions of conscience, in the very magnitude of the scandals and shame inflicted on the Church, when the avowed ideal has cast a deeper shade on the bad and apostate life. The Christian idea of purity has still a hold on our society, imperfectly enough; but who can tell what it contributes to the peace, and grace, and charm, of what is so large a part of our earthly happiness? Can we ask a more anxious question than whether this hold will continue? No one can help seeing, I think, many ugly symptoms; the language of revolt is hardly muttered; the ideas of purity which we have inherited and thought sacred are boldly made the note and reproach of "the Christians." And—vital question as it is, one which, if solved in the wrong way, must, it is evident, in the long run be ruinous to society—yet there is no point of morality on which it is easier to sophisticate and confuse, easier to raise doubts of which it is hard to find the bottom, or to make restraints seem the unwarrantable bonds of convention and caprice. It is eminently one of those things, as to which we feel it to be absolutely the law of our being as long as we obey, but lose the feeling when we do not obey. Civilisation in this matter is by itself but a precarious safeguard for very sacred interests. By itself, it throws itself upon nature, and in some of its leading and most power-

ful representatives; looks back to paganism. It goes along with Christianity as to justice and humanity; but in the interest of individual liberty it parts company here. What trenches on and endangers ideas of purity, it may disapprove, but it declines to condemn or brand. At least, it does not condemn, it does not affect to condemn, in the sense in which religion condemns; in the sense in which, *with* religion, it condemns injustice, cruelty, and falsehood. It is too much to hope that civilisation by itself will adopt and protect these ideas. And the passions which assail them are not among those which wear out with civilisation and tend to extinction; they are constant forces, and as powerful as they are constant. Argument is hardly a match for them. They are only to be matched successfully by a rival idea, a rival fire, the strength of a rival spring of feeling with its attractions and antipathies, a living law and instinct of the soul. Civilisation supplies none such but what it owes to Christianity. Purity is one of those things which Christian ideas and influences produced; it is a thing which they alone can save.

Here seem to be two points in which civilisation by itself cannot guarantee us from great loss; instances in which is manifest the need for a "salt," a "light" of the world, higher than what anything of this world can give. If there are great functions which civilised society takes over from the Church, there are others which none but the Church can dis-

charge; which, without the Church, are lost to mankind. And, at the same time, there is no reason why, if *ever* the Church discharged them, it should not now. Here is our hope and our responsibility. When we talk of the influences of Christianity on society, we use large and vague words, which we are not perhaps always able to explain and develop; but there is one form and element of this influence which is not too subtle and fugitive for us to grasp. The influence of a system is brought to a point in the personal influence of individuals. It is not by any means the whole, or perhaps the greatest part of that influence; but it is the most definite and appreciable part. When men live as they think, and translate ideas into realities, they make an impression corresponding to the greatness of the ideas, and the faithfulness and intensity of their embodiment in life. "*Ye* are the salt of the earth;" "*Ye* are the light of the world;" so it was said at first, so it is now. Truth, incorporate in human character, allying itself with human feeling and human self-devotion, acting in human efforts, is what gains mankind. In the great movements of the past, and in what is around us now, we are often baffled when we attempt to compare and distinguish, amidst the vast play of forces. But when the course of things has been turned, whatever is intricate and confused, we can seldom miss the men who, by what they were, turned it; indeed it is almost appalling to observe how it has often hung on the apparent acci-

dent of a stronger character or a weaker, one equal to the occasion or unequal to it, on some great unfaithfulness which lost the game, or some energetic conviction which won it, whether some vast change should be or not. When everything has been in favour of a cause—reason, truth, human happiness—only dearth of character has ruined it. There are many things which we have not in our hands; what we have is this, whether we will act out our belief. Our heart sometimes fails us when we contemplate the new world of civilisation and discovery. What are we to do against the advancing tide of what seems to us unfriendly thought, so impetuous, yet so steady and so wide? There are reasons for looking forward to the future with solemn awe. No doubt signs are about us which mean something which we dare scarcely breathe. The centre of gravity, so to speak, of religious questions has become altogether shifted and displaced. Anchors are lifting everywhere, and men are committing themselves to what they may meet with on the sea. But awe is neither despair nor fear; and Christians have had bad days before. *Passi graviora.* A faith which has come out alive from the darkness of the tenth century, the immeasurable corruption of the fifteenth, the religious policy of the sixteenth, and the philosophy, commenting on the morals, of the eighteenth, may face without shrinking even the subtler perils of our own. Only let us bear in mind that it is not an abstraction, a system, or an idea,

which has to face them; it is *we who believe*. The influence of the Church on society means, in its ultimate shape, the influence of those who compose it. The Christian Church is to be the salt of the nations, if Christians are true to their belief and equal to their claim; nothing can make it so, nothing can secure that what has been, shall be, if they are not. And so we are brought back to the secret which our Lord's words intimate; the great secret of personal influence; the key of great movements; the soul of all that is deep and powerful, both in what lasts and in what makes change. It is of infinitely less consequence what others are and do against us, and what we do to resist and defeat them, than what we *are* as Christians ourselves. We ask a great thing, when we talk of influencing the world; let us believe that it imposes obligation, and must have its cost. Our Master's sentence, "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world," has been before now the bitterest of sarcasms, the deepest of shames. The wrath and scorn of men have trodden under foot, as He said, the salt that had lost its savour; and when the light became darkness, it has been darkness indeed. May we try so to live, that these words may not ring in our ears and thoughts as a mockery, or, what is worse, a hollow, self-complacent boast. Let us hear in them our Lord's claim on us. How each generation fulfils this call can never be known to itself; it must be left to the judgment of posterity and the account of the

Great Day. But we have in them the announcement that to the personal influence of Christians our Lord commits His cause; in personal influence His Church was founded, and by this it was to stand. May we never forget, amidst the contests and searchings of heart round us, that these words are the measure of what we were meant to be; the standard by which we shall all be tried.

CIVILISATION

BEFORE AND AFTER CHRISTIANITY

TWO LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

AT THE

TUESDAY EVENING SERVICES

January 23rd and 30th, 1872

PREFACE

THE two following Lectures are part of an unfinished series which was begun in St. Paul's on Tuesday evenings, during the winter of 1871-72, and which the preparations in the Cathedral for the Queen's visit to return thanks for the recovery of the Prince of Wales made it necessary to discontinue. The Lectures were an experiment, arising out of the desire of the Chapter to make the Cathedral of service to the large body of intelligent young men who follow their business around it, by treating, in a spirit not unbecoming the place and its purpose, subjects of interest and importance which are often assumed to be out of place in the pulpit. I have reprinted these two Lectures as a remembrance of an occasion of great interest to us at St. Paul's, and as being in some degree connected with the subjects of the preceding sermons.

R. W. C.

LECTURE I

ROMAN CIVILISATION

I PROPOSE to bring before your thoughts, in fulfilment of my part in this series of lectures, the subject of Civilisation—first, as it was, in probably its highest form before Christian times, in the Roman State; and next, as it has been since Christianity has influenced the course of history and the conditions of human life. In doing this, I have to remember several things. I have to remember the vastness of the field before us, the huge mass of materials, the number, difficulty, and importance of the questions which arise out of the subject, or hang on it. I have to remember that civilisation is a thing of more or less, and that general statements about it are ever liable to be misunderstood or excepted to, because the speaker is thinking of one phase or degree of it, and the listener and critic is thinking of another. One may have his thoughts full of its triumphs, and the other of its failures and shameful blots. I have to remember that it is a subject which has tasked the powers and filled

the volumes of learned, able, and copious writers—Montesquieu, Guizot, Buckle, to name only these, who have made it their special theme—and that they have left much unsaid, much unsettled, about it. And I have to remember that I have only two short lectures—circumstances have made this necessary—to say what I can say about it. Perhaps for what I have to say it is enough. But, with such a subject, I should gladly have had more time both for preparation and for discourse.

We who pursue our business in this great city, we who come to hear or to worship in this great cathedral, have continually before our eyes, in some of its most striking and characteristic forms, a very complex but very distinctive fact in the conditions of human existence—the vast complex fact to which we give the name of *civilisation*. It is, we all know, a vague and elastic word, and I am not going to be so venturous as here to analyse it and define even its outlines; but it expresses a substantial idea, it marks a real difference in what men are and can be; and if loose and idle thinkers throw it about as if it was a glittering counter, it is so real, and so important in its meaning, that the most accurate ones cannot dispense with the use of it. The distinction between man in the barbarian state, and man in the state of civil life and civil society, is no imaginary one, though civilised life may be penetrated and disgraced with elements of barbarism, and gleams of civilisation may be discerned

far back in times which are rightly called barbarous. A cloudy sky and a bright sky are different things, though one may be brightening and the other darkening, into its opposite; though there may be uncertainty about their confines; though clouds may be prominent in the clear, and though there be light breaking through the dulness and gloom. Civilisation is a sufficiently definite and a sufficiently interesting thing to speak about, even though we find, as we must if we think at all, how much of the subject eludes our grasp, and how idle it is, on an occasion like the present, to attempt to work upon it, except in the way of rough and imperfect sketching.

I include under the word *Civilisation* all that man does, all that he discovers, all that he becomes, to fit himself most suitably for the life in which he finds himself here. It is obviously possible, for the fact stares us in the face, now as at all times, that this moral being, endowed with conscience and yearning after good, whom *we* believe to be here only in an early and most imperfect stage of his existence, may yet live, and feel, and act, as if all that he was made for was completed here. He may also, with the full assurance of immortality, yet see, in this present state, a scene and stage of real life, in which that life is intended to be developed to the full perfection of which it is capable;—a scene, intended, though temporary only, and only a training place, to call forth his serious and unsparing efforts after improvement;

just as at a school, in playtime as well as in work, we expect as much thought, as much purpose, as much effort, proportionate of course to the time, as we expect in grown-up life. There is, I need not say, a further question—whether this life *can* become all that it is capable of becoming, without reference to something beyond and above it: that, of course, is the question of questions of all ages, and emphatically of our own. But into that I am not now entering. All that I want to insist upon, is that there is such a thing as making this present life as perfect as it can be made for its own sake; improving, inventing, adjusting, correcting, strictly examining into detail, sowing seeds and launching deeply-laid plans of policy, facing the present and realising the future, for the sake of what happens and must happen *in time*, under the known conditions of our experience here. To all such attempts to raise the level of human life, to all such endeavours to expand human capacity and elevate human character, to all that has in view the bettering of our social conditions, in all the manifold forms and diversified relations of the society in which we grow up and live, till our senses come to an end in death; to all that in the sphere, which is bounded to our eyes by the grave, tends to make life more beautiful, more reasonable, more pure, more rich both in achievement and felicity, up to the point when pain, and sorrow, and death claim their dread rights over it, and that even in the presence of pain and

death, imparts to life dignity, self-command, nobleness —to all this I should give the name of civilisation.

I do not, therefore, take civilisation to consist in the mere development, and extension, and perfection, either of the intellectual faculties, or of the arts which minister to the uses and conveniences, or even the embellishment of life. The intellectual faculties, some of them at least, may be strong and keen in what I should still call a low stage of civilisation, as hitherto in India. I cannot call the stage to which man has reached in Egypt, in China, or Japan, a high one, though there he has been singularly ingenious, singularly industrious, and in many ways eminently successful in bringing nature under his control. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy were brilliant centuries; they witnessed a burst of genius in art which was absolutely without its match. It *was* civilisation, I cannot deny it. But I cannot call *that* other than a corrupt and base one, of which the theory was expounded, with infinite ability, by Machiavelli, and the history told by Guicciardini. I do not call it a true civilisation, where men do not attempt to discharge their duties *as men* in society. Not even the presence of Leonardo, Michel Angelo, and Raffaelle can persuade me to rank it high, as a form of civilisation, in which life, amid all its splendours, was so precarious and so misguided, in which all the relations and rights of society were so frightfully confused, and in which the powers of

government were systematically carried on by unlimited perfidy, by the poison bowl and the dagger. I should not consent to call the railway, or the telegraph, or even the newspaper of our own age, a final test of civilisation, till I knew better how the facilities of intercourse were employed,—what was flashed along the wires or written in the columns; nor, again, the wonderful and intricate machinery of our manufactures and trade, till I knew how the wealth produced by it was used. Civilisation, the form, as perfect as man can make it, of his life here, needs these appliances, welcomes them, multiplies them; man needs all the powers that he can get for help, for remedy, for the elevation of his state. But the true subject of civilisation is the *man himself*, and not the circumstances, the instruments, the inventions round him. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." The degree of civilisation in a society, high or low, rising or going back, depends, it seems to me, on the actual facts of civil life, political, social, domestic, not on the machinery of outward things of which men can dispose; on what men try to be one to another; on what they try to make *of themselves*, not of their goods and powers; on the words which they speak, really speak from their hearts, not imitate or feign; on the indications of will and purpose, of habits of life, of self-government or indulgence—in a word, *of character*. The degree of civilisation depends a great

deal more on whether they are manly, honest, just, public-spirited, generous, able to work together in life, than on whether they are rich, or hard-working, or cunning of hand, or subtle of thought, or delicate of taste, or keen searchers into nature and discoverers of its secrets. All these things are sure to belong to civilisation as it advances; and as it advances it needs them, and can turn them to account, more and more. All I say is, that they are not civilisation itself, as I understand it.

Our own civilisation, it is not denied, has been greatly influenced by religion, and by the Christian religion; by the close connection of this present life with a life beyond it, and by what Christianity teaches of our relations to the unseen. But civil life of a high character has undoubtedly existed, at any rate for a time, without such connection. I will venture this evening to put before you the hasty sketch of such a civilisation, and follow it to its fate.

In the ancient world, as we call it, two great forms of civilisation appear, with which we must always have the liveliest sympathy. They have deeply influenced our own: and we must become quite other men from what we are when we forget them. The civilisation of Greece, with Athens for its standard, and in a main degree its source, still lives in our civil and political, as well as in our intellectual life. The great idea of citizenship, with all that flows from it of duty and ennobling service

and cherished ties, found there its clear and complete expression in real fact and spontaneous action, before it was portrayed and analysed by writers of extraordinary force and subtlety, and of matchless eloquence, who are our masters still. But the civilisation of Athens, though not too precocious for its place in the world's history, was too precocious for its own chance of life. On that little stage, and surrounded by the ambitions and fierce energies of a world of conquest,—in its first moment of weakness and mistake, it was oppressed and crushed. It lasted long enough to plant a new conception of human society among men, to disengage and start upon its road a new and inextinguishable power, destined to pursue its way with the most momentous results, through all the times to come. It did not last long enough to work out in any proportionate way a history for itself.

It is to civilisation as exhibited in the Roman State that I invite your attention. There you have the power of growth, of change, and yet of stability and persistent endurance. There you have an ideal of social and civil life, a complex and not always a consistent one, yet in its central elements very strongly defined; keeping its hold on a great people with singular tenacity through the centuries, amid all their varying fortunes; undergoing great transformations in the vicissitudes of good and evil days, yet at the bottom unchanged, and frequently reasserting its un-

impaired vitality at moments when we least expect it. It grew to impress itself on mankind as the power which had a unique right to command their obedience and to order their affairs; it made its possessors, and it made the nations round, feel that Romans were, in a very real sense, the "Lords of the human race." To our eyes, as we look back upon it, it represents, as nothing else does, the civilisation of the *then* world.

Why does it deserve this character? What in it specially has a claim on our interest? The Romans, we know, left their mark on the world; much of what they did is still with us, defying all our centuries of change. We live in the cities which they founded: here, at St. Paul's, one of their great roads runs past our doors. But I do not dwell on Roman civilisation, because they were builders who built as if with the infinite idea of the future before them; because they covered the face of the earth with famous and enduring cities; because their engineers excavated harbours, drained marshes, and brought the waters of the hills along miles of stupendous aqueducts; because they bound together their empire with a network of roads and postal services; because they were the masters of organised and scientific war; because they were great colonial administrators, subduing the earth, to subdue its rudeness, and plant in it the arts of life. Not for all this; but because, in spite of the crimes, which come back to our minds when we name the

Romans, they were yet keenly alive to what men, as men, ought to be,—men, as men, not for what they had, but for what they were—not as rich, or clever, or high in dignity, or even as wielding power, but as citizens of a great commonwealth and city, the Mother and Lady of them all. Not because they possessed in large measure the arts and the expedients by which the social machine is made to move more easily, much less for the pride and sensuality which squandered these arts in ostentation and fabulous luxury; but because, amid all the dark tragedies which fill their history, in spite of the matchless perfidy and the matchless cruelty which contradicted their own ideals, and seem to silence us when we talk of Roman virtue, it is yet true that deep in the minds of the most faithless, the most selfish, the most ruthless, was the knowledge that justice and public spirit were things to which a Roman, by the nobility of his birth, was obliged; because the traditional, accepted popular morality of Rome placed among its first articles, however they were violated in practice, that fortitude, honesty, devotion, energy in service, were essential things in a society of men; because popular opinion, loose as the term may be, had the sentiment of honour, and owned the bond of duty, even to death; because Romans recognised a serious use of life, in *doing*, and doing for the common weal—not merely in learning, or acquiring, or enjoying for themselves alone.

Now, immediately that I have said all this, the picture of Roman history rises up before our thoughts, as it is painted in Gibbon, or Milman, or Merivale. We remember the hard and rapacious times of the Republic, with their resolute and unflinching vindictiveness, their insolent affectations and hypocrisies of moderation and right. We are met by the enormous corruption and monstrous profligacy of the statesmen of the age of transition; and under the Empire we find a system fruitful, normally fruitful, of a succession of beings, the most degraded, the most detestable, the most horrible, of all that ever bore the name of man. Is it worth while to talk in Christian days of a civilisation with such fruits as these?

I venture to submit that it is—that the subject is most interesting and instructive, and that it is our own fault if, in spite of the evil, we are not taught and braced by so much that is strong and so much that is noble. We pass backwards and forwards from admiration to horror and disgust as we read the story in Gibbon, who, in his taste for majesty and pomp, his moral unscrupulousness, and his scepticism, reflected the genius of the Empire of which he recounted the fortunes; but who in his genuine admiration of public spirit and duty, and in his general inclination to be just to all, except only to the Christian name, reflects another and better side of Roman character. For there *was* this better side. Roman civilisation produced not only *great* men, but *good* men of high stamp

and mark; men with great and high views of human life and human responsibility,—with a high standard of what men ought to aim at, with a high belief of what they could do. And it not only produced individuals; it produced a strong and permanent force of sentiment; it produced a character shared very unequally among the people, but powerful enough to determine the course of history, in the way which suited it. I think it may be said with truth that the high ideal of Roman civilisation explains its final and complete collapse. A people with a high standard, acted on by the best, recognised by all, cannot be untrue to the standard with impunity; it not only falls, but falls to a depth proportionate to the height which it once was seeking; it is stricken with the penalty which follows on hollow words and untrue feelings,—on the desertion of light and a high purpose, on the contradiction between law and life. A civilisation like that of China, undisturbed by romantic views of man's nature, and content with a low estimate of his life, may flow on, like one of its great rivers, steady, powerful, useful; unchanged for centuries, and unagitated by that which, more than wars and ambition, is the breaker up of societies,—the power of new ideas, of new hopes and aims. But because Roman civilisation became false to its principles, there was no reversing its doom.

The reason why I put Roman civilisation so high and in so unique a place is, that it grew out of and

cherished, age after age, with singular distinctiveness and tenacity, two great principles. One of these was that the work of the community should be governed by law; the other, that public interest and public claims were paramount to all others.

Where you have in a society a strong and lasting tendency to bring public and private affairs under the control of fixed general rules, to which individual wills are expected and are trained to submit; where these rules are found to be grounded, instinctively perhaps at first, methodically afterwards, on definite principles of right, fitness, and sound reason; where a people's habitual impulse and natural disposition is to believe in laws, and to trust them, and it is accepted as the part of common sense, duty, and honour to obey them,—where these characteristics, of respect for law as an authority, of resort to it as an expedient and remedy, are found to follow the progress of a great national history even from its beginnings, it cannot be denied that there you have an essential feature of high civilisation. They, of whom this may be said, have seen truly, in one most important point, how to order human life. And Law, in that sense in which we know it, and are living under it, in its strength, in its majesty, in its stability, in its practical, businesslike character, may, I suppose, be said to have been born at Rome. And it was born very early; very different, of course, in its rude beginnings, from what it grew to be afterwards, but showing, from the

first, the serious, resolute struggles of the community to escape from the mischiefs of self-will and random living, without understood order and accepted rules. The political conflicts of which Roman history is full, centred, in its best days at least, round laws: they assumed a state of law, they attempted to change it; the result, if result there was, was expressed in a law; violent and extreme measures might be resorted to, and not seldom, in those fierce days, something worse; but it was presupposed by public opinion, whatever violent men might dare, that law was to continue and to be obeyed, till it was changed, and that it would only be changed by lawful authority and by lawful processes. Roman law was no collection of a certain number of vague constitutional articles; it was no cast-iron code of unchanging rules; but it was a real, living, expansive system, developing vigorously as the nation grew, coextensive with the nation's wants in its range and applicability, searching and self-enforcing in its work, a system which the people used and relied upon in their private as much as in their public affairs. And so grew up, slowly and naturally, through many centuries, in the way familiar to us in our law, the imposing and elaborate system of scientific jurisprudence, which the Romans, when they passed away, bequeathed to the coming world; the great collections of Theodosius and Justinian, in which are gathered the experiences of many ages of Roman society, played upon, illuminated,

analysed, arranged, by a succession of judicial intellects of vast power and consummate accomplishment; that as yet unequalled monument of legal learning, comprehensive method, and fruitfulness in practical utility, which, under the name of Civil Law, has been the great example to the world of what law may be, which has governed the jurisprudence of great part of Europe, which has influenced in no slight degree our own jealous and hostile English traditions, and will probably influence them still more. "The education of the world in the principles of a sound jurisprudence," says Dean Merivale, "was the most wonderful work of the Roman conquerors. It was complete; it was universal; and in permanence it has far outlasted, at least in its distinct results, the duration of the Empire itself." A civilisation which, without precedent and unaided, out of its own resources and contact with life, produced such a proof of its idea and estimate of law, must, whatever be its defects, be placed very high.

Again, when, with this strong and clear and permanent sense of law, you also have in a society, among its best men, a strong force of public spirit, and among all a recognition that in this the best reflect the temper and expectations of the whole, its civilisation has reached a high level. It is the civilisation of those who have discerned very distinctly the great object and leading obligation of man's fellowship in a state—of his life as a citizen. And certainly in no

people which the world has ever seen has the sense of public duty been keener and stronger than in Rome, or has lived on with unimpaired vitality through great changes for a longer time. Amid the accumulation of repulsive and dark elements in Roman character, amid the harshness and pride and ferocity, often joined with lower vices, meanness, perfidy, greed, sensuality, there is one which again and again extorts a respect that even courage and high ability cannot—a high, undeniable public spirit. Not always disinterested, any more than in some great men in our own history, but without question, for all that, thoroughly and seriously genuine. It was a tradition of the race. Its early legends dwelt upon the strange and terrible sacrifices which this supreme loyalty to the commonwealth had exacted, and obtained without a murmur, from her sons. They told of a magistrate and a father, the founder of Roman freedom, dooming his two young sons to the axe for having tampered with conspiracy against the State; of great men, resigning high office because they bore a dangerous name, or pulling down their own houses because too great for citizens; of soldiers to whose death fate had bound victory, solemnly devoting themselves to die, or leaping into the gulf which would only close on a living victim; of a great family purchasing peace in civil troubles by leaving the city, and turning their energy into a foreign war, in which they perished; of the captive general who advised

his countrymen to send him back to certain torture and death, rather than grant the terms he was commissioned to propose as the price of his release. Whatever we may think of these stories, they show what was in the mind of those who told and repeated them; and they continued to be the accredited types and models of Roman conduct throughout Roman history. Even in its bad days, even at its close, the temper was there, the sense of public interest, the fire of public duty, the public spirit which accepted without complaint trouble and sacrifice. It produced, at a time when hope seemed gone, a succession of noble and high-souled rulers, whose government gave for a moment the fallacious promise of happiness to the world. It produced a race of now nameless and unremembered men, who, while they probably forgot many other duties, forgot not their duty to the public, of which they were the servants.

"The history of the Cæsars," writes Dean Merivale, "presents to us a constant succession of brave, patient, resolute, and faithful soldiers, men deeply impressed with a sense of duty, superior to vanity, despisers of boasting, content to toil in obscurity, and shed their blood at the frontiers of the Empire, unrepining at the cold mistrust of their masters, not clamorous for the honours so sparingly awarded to them, but satisfied with the daily work of their hands, and full of faith in the national destiny which they were daily accomplishing. If such humble instruments

of society are not to be compared, for the importance of their mission, with the votaries of speculative wisdom, who protested in their lives and in their deaths against the crimes of their generation, there is still something touching in the simple heroism of these chiefs of the legions. . . . Here are virtues not to be named indeed with the zeal of missionaries and the devotion of martyrs, but worthy nevertheless of a high place in the esteem of all who reverence human nature."

For these reasons, and more might be added—among them, the real reverence with which these fierce and successful soldiers regarded the arts, the pursuits, the dress of peace, and readily and willingly returned to them,—we may look back to the civilisation of Rome with an interest which we might not give to its buildings, its wealth, or its organisation of empire. It was a signal and impressive proof of what men might rise to be; of the height, too, to which the spirit of a nation might rise. The world is not rich enough in greatness to afford to forget men who, with so much that was evil and hateful about them, yet made the idea of law a common thing, and impressed on the world so memorably the obligations of public duty and the sanctions of a public trust.

How did such a civilisation come to nought? It is wonderful that it should have arisen; but it is more wonderful that, having arisen, it should have

failed to sustain itself. How did a civilisation so robust, aiming at and creating, not the ornamental and the pleasurable, but the solid and laborious, a character so serious and manly, austerely simple and energetic in men, pure and noble in women—how did it fail and perish? What was the root of bitterness which sprang up amid its strength, and brought it, through the most horrible epochs the world ever saw, of terror and tyranny, and the foulest and most insane licentiousness—epochs which St. Paul's words in his Epistle to the Romans are hardly strong enough to describe—to the most absolute and ignoble ruin? Of course there was evil mixed with it from the first; but evil is mixed with all human things, and evil was mixed to the full with the life and institutions out of which the best days of Christian civilisation have come, whether you put these days in what are called the ages of faith, or the age of the Reformation, or the ages of civil liberty. Pride and selfish greed, hypocrisy, corruption, profligacy, fraud, cruelty, have been as abundant in the centuries after Christ as they were in those before. But the civilisation of Europe is not ruined, in spite of its immense dangers; I see no reason to think that it will be;—why was that of Rome?

To answer this question duly would be to go through the Roman history. I must content myself with one general statement. Roman civilisation was only great as long as men were true to their principles;

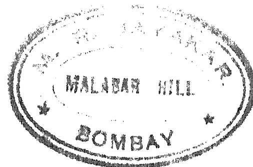
but it had no root beyond their personal characters and traditions and customary life; and when these failed, it had nothing else to appeal to—it had no power and spring of recovery. These traditions, these customs of life, this inherited character, did keep up a stout and prolonged struggle against the shocks of changed circumstances, against the restless and unscrupulous cravings of individual selfishness. But they played a losing game. Each shock, each fresh blow, found them weaker after the last; and no favouring respite was allowed them to regain and fortify the strength they had lost. The high instincts of the race wore out: bad men had nothing to do but to deny that these instincts were theirs. The powers of evil and of darkness mounted higher and higher, turning great professions into audacious hypocrisies, great institutions into lifeless and mischievous forms, great principles into absurd self-contradictions. Had there been anything to fall back upon, there were often men to do it; but what was there but the memories and examples of past greatness? Religion had once played a great part in what had given elevation to Roman civil life. It had had much to do with law, with political development, with Roman sense of public duty and Roman reverence for the State. But, of course, a religion of farmers and yeomen, a religion of clannish etiquettes and family pride and ancestral jealousies, could not long stand the competition of the Eastern faiths, or the scepticism

of the cultivated classes. It went; and there was nothing to supply its place but a Philosophy, often very noble and true in its language, able, I doubt not, in evil days to elevate, and comfort, and often purify its better disciples, but unable to overawe, to heal, to charm a diseased society; which never could breathe life and energy into words for the people; which wanted that voice of power which could quicken the dead letter, and command attention, where the destinies of the world were decided. I know nothing more strange and sorrowful in Roman history than to observe the absolute impotence of what must have been popular conscience, on the crimes of statesmen and the bestial infamy of Emperors. There were plenty of men to revile them; there were men to brand them in immortal epigrams; there were men to kill them. But there was no man to make his voice heard and be respected, about righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come.

And so Roman civilisation fell,—fell, before even the eager troops of barbarians rushed in among its wrecks,—fell because it had no salt in it, no wholesome and reviving leaven, no power of recovery. Society could not bear its own greatness, its own immense possessions and powers, its own success and achievements. It fell, and great was the fall thereof. The world had never seen anything like Rome and its civilisation. It seemed the finish and perfection of all things, beyond which human prospects could not go.

The citizens and statesmen who were proud of it, the peoples who reposed under its shadow, the early Christians who hated it as the rival of the Kingdom of God, the men of the Middle Ages who looked on it as the earthly counterpart and bulwark of that kingdom, and insisted on believing that it was still alive in the world,—Augustine who contrasted it with the city of God, Dante who trusted in it as God's predestined minister of truth and righteousness where the Church had failed,—all looked on it as something so consummate and unique in its kind, that nothing could be conceived or hoped for which could take its place. Before the tremendous destructions in which it perished the lights of man's heaven, of all human society, seemed to disappear. Cicero had likened the overthrow and extinction of a city and policy, once created among men, to the ruin and passing away of the solid earth. When the elder civilisation of Rome went to pieces, rotten within and battered by the storms without, it was a portent and calamity which the human imagination had almost refused to believe possible. It was indeed the foundering of a world.

How this lost civilisation was recovered, renewed, and filled with fresh and hopeful life, we may try to see in the next lecture.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LECTURE II

CIVILISATION AFTER CHRISTIANITY

THE failure of Roman civilisation, its wreck and dissolution in the barbarian storms, was the most astonishing catastrophe the world had yet seen in its history; and those who beheld the empire breaking up, as blow after blow was struck more home, ceased to look forward to any future for society. In this strange collapse of the strongest, in this incredible and inconceivable shaking of the foundations of what was assumed to be eternal, the end seemed come; and as no one could imagine a new and different order, men thought it useless to hope anything more for the world. It is not wonderful,—but they were too despairing. It is not wonderful,—for they had no example within their knowledge of the great lights of human life, which seemed destined to shine for ever, being violently extinguished, and then being rekindled, and conquering once more in heightened splendour the gloom and confusion. They had seen empires perish, but never before the defeat of a matchless structure of

law and administration without example in history, which was to provide security for empire. But they were too despairing. They thought too little of powers and principles new in the world, to which many of them trusted much, both in life and in death, but of which no one then living knew the strength or suspected the working. They guessed not how that while the barbarian deluge was wasting and sweeping away the works of men, God was pouring new life into the world. They guessed not that in that Gospel, which consoled so many of them in the miseries of this sinful world, which to so many seemed but one superstition the more, to which so many traced all their disasters, there lay the seeds of a social and civil revival, compared with which the familiar refinement and extolled civilisation of Rome would one day come to seem little better than an instance of the rudeness of antiquity.

The decay and fall of the old Roman civilisation, and the growth out of its ruins of a new one, infinitely more vigorous and elastic, steady in its long course, patient of defeat and delay, but with century after century witnessing, on one point or another, to its unrelaxed advance,—the giving way of one great system and the replacing it by another,—form a great historical phenomenon, as vast as it is unique and without parallel, and to practical people not less full of warning than it is of hope.

Let us cast a hasty glance upon it,—it can be but

a most hasty and superficial one. What was the change, what was the new force, or element, or aspect of the world, or assemblage of ideas, which proved able to make of society what Roman loftiness of heart, Roman sagacity, Roman patience, Roman strength had failed to make of it? What power was it which took up the discredited and hopeless work, and, infusing new energies and new hopes into men, has made the long history of the Western nations different in kind from any other period of the history of mankind; different in this, that though its march has been often very dark and very weary, often arrested and often retarded, chequered with terrible reverses, and stained by the most flagrant crimes, it has never been, definitely and for good, beaten back; the movement, as we can see when we review it, has been on the whole a uniform one, and has ever been tending onwards; it has never surrendered, and has never had reason to surrender, the hope of improvement, even though improvement might be remote and difficult.

We are told sometimes that it was the power of race, of the new nations which came on the scene; and I do not deny it. But the power of race seems like the special powers of a particular soil, in which certain seeds germinate and thrive with exceptional vigour, but for which you must have the seed, and sow it, before the soil will display its properties. It is very important, but it is not enough to say that Teutons took the place of Latins; indeed, it is not

wholly true. But what planted among Teutons and Latins the seeds and possibilities of a renewed civilisation was the power of a new morality. It is a matter of historical fact, that in the closing days of Rome an entirely new set of moral ideas and moral purposes, of deep significance, fruitful in consequences, and of a strength and intensity unknown before, were making their way in society, and establishing themselves in it. It is to the awakening of this new morality, which has never perished out of the hearts of men from that day to this, that the efforts and the successes of modern civilisation are mainly due; it is on the permanence of these moral convictions that it rests. What the origin and root of this morality really are, you will not suppose that in this place I affect to make a question; but the matter I am now dwelling on is the morality itself, not on its connection with the Christian creed. And it is as clear and certain a fact of history that the coming in of Christianity was accompanied by new moral elements in society, inextinguishable, widely operative, never destroyed, though apparently at times crushed and paralysed, as it is certain that Christian nations have made on the whole more progress in the wiser ordering of human life than was made in the most advanced civilisation of the times before Christianity.

Roman belief in right and law had ended in scepticism, whether there was such a thing as good-

ness and virtue: Roman public spirit had given place, under the disheartening impression of continual mistakes and disappointments, to a selfish indifference to public scandals and public mischiefs. The great principles of human action were hopelessly confused; enthusiasm for them was dead. This made vain the efforts of rulers like Trajan and the Antonines, of scientific legislators like Justinian, of heroes like Belisarius; they could not save a society in which, with so much outward show, the moral tone was so fatally decayed and enfeebled. But over this dreary waste of helplessness and despondency, over these mud-banks and shallows, the tide was coming in and mounting. Slowly, variably, in imperceptible pulsations, or in strange, wild rushes, the great wave was flowing. There had come into the world an enthusiasm, popular, widespread, serious, of a new kind; not for conquest, or knowledge, or riches, but for real, solid goodness. It seems to me that the exultation apparent in early Christian literature, beginning with the Apostolic Epistles, at the prospect now at length disclosed within the bounds of a sober hope, of a great moral revolution in human life,—that the rapturous confidence which pervades these Christian ages, that at last the routine of vice and sin has met its match, that a new and astonishing possibility has come within view, that men, not here and there, but on a large scale, might attain to that hitherto hopeless thing to the multitudes, goodness,—

is one of the most singular and solemn things in history. The enthusiasm of the Crusades, the enthusiasm of Puritanism, the enthusiasm of the Jacobins —of course I am speaking only of strength and depth of feeling—were not its equal. We can, I suppose, have but a dim idea of the strange and ravishing novelty with which the appearance of Divine and unearthly Goodness, in real human form, burst upon eyes accustomed, as to an order of nature, to the unbroken monotony of deepening debasement, wearied out with the unchanging spectacle of irremediable sin. The visitation and presence of that High Goodness, making Himself like men, calling men to be like Him, had altered the possibilities of human nature; it was mirrored more or less perfectly in a thousand lives; it had broken the spell and custom of evil which seemed to bind human society; it had brought goodness, real, inward, energetic goodness of the soul within the reach of those who seemed most beyond it—the crowds, the dregs, the lost. That well-known world, the scene of man's triumphs and of his untold sorrows, but not of his goodness, was really a place where righteousness and love and purity should have a visible seat and home, and might wield the power which sin had wielded over the purposes and wills of men. To men on whom this great surprise had come, who were in the vortex of this great change, all things looked new. Apart from the infinite seriousness given to human life by the cross of Christ,

from the infinite value and dignity given to it by the revelation of resurrection and immortality, an awful rejoicing transport filled their souls, as they saw that there was the chance,—more than the chance,—the plain forerunning signs, of human nature becoming here, what none had ever dared to think it would become, morally better. When they speak of this new thing in the earth, the proved reality of conversion from sin to righteousness, of the fruits of repentance, of the supplanting of vice by yet mightier influences of purity, of the opening and boundless prospects of moral improvement and elevation,—their hearts swell, their tone is exalted, their accent becomes passionate and strong. It was surely the noblest enthusiasm—if it was but rooted in lasting and trustworthy influences—which the world had ever seen. It was no wonder that this supreme interest eclipsed all other interests. It is no wonder that for this glorious faith men gladly died.

This second springtide of the world, this fresh start of mankind in the career of their eventful destiny, was the beginning of many things; but what I observe on now is that it was the beginning of new chances, new impulses, and new guarantees for civilised life, in the truest and worthiest sense of the words. It was this, by bringing into society a morality which was serious and powerful, and a morality which would wear and last; one which could stand the shocks of human passion, the

desolating spectacle of successful wickedness, the insidious waste of unconscious degeneracy, — one which could go back to its sacred springs and repair its fire and its strength. Such a morality, as Roman greatness was passing away, took possession of the ground. Its beginnings were scarcely felt, scarcely known of, in the vast movement of affairs in the greatest of empires. By and by its presence, strangely austere, strangely gentle, strangely tender, strangely inflexible, began to be noticed. But its work was long only a work of indirect preparation. Those whom it charmed, those whom it opposed, those whom it tamed, knew not what was being done for the generations which were to follow them. They knew not, while they heard of the household of God, and the universal brotherhood of man, that the most ancient and most familiar institution of their society, one without which they could not conceive its going on,—slavery,—was receiving the fatal wound of which, though late, too late, it was at last to die. They knew not, when they were touched by the new teaching about forgiveness and mercy, that a new value was being insensibly set on human life, new care and sympathy planted in society for human suffering, a new horror awakened at human bloodshed. They knew not, while they looked on men dying, not for glory or even country, but for convictions and an invisible truth, that a new idea was springing up of the sacredness of conscience, a new reverence beginning for

veracity and faithfulness. They knew not that a new measure was being established of the comparative value of riches and all earthly things, while they saw, sometimes with amazement, sometimes with inconsiderate imitativeness, the numbers who gave up the world, and all that was best as well as worst in it, for love of the eternal heritage—in order to keep themselves pure. They knew not of the great foundations laid for public duty and public spirit, in the obligations of Christian membership, in the responsibilities of the Christian clergy, in the never-forgotten example of One whose life had been a perpetual service, and who had laid it down as the most obvious of claims for those to whom He had bound Himself. They little thought of what was in store for civil and secular society, as they beheld a number of humble men, many of them foreigners, plying their novel trade of preachers and missionaries, announcing an eternal kingdom of righteousness, welcoming the slave and the outcast as a brother,—a brother of the Highest,—offering hope and change to the degraded sinner, stammering of Christ and redemption to the wild barbarian, worshipping in the catacombs, and meekly burying their dead, perhaps their wronged and murdered dead, in the sure hope of everlasting peace. Slowly, obscurely, imperfectly, most imperfectly, these seeds of blessing for society began to ripen, to take shape, to gain power. The time was still dark and wintry and tempestuous, and the night was long in going. It is hard even now

to discern there the promise of what our eyes have seen. I suppose it was impossible then. It rather seemed as if the world was driving rapidly to its end, not that it was on the eve of its most amazing and hopeful transformation. But in that unhappy and desponding and unhonoured time, borne in the bosom of that institution and society which the world knew and knows as the Christian Church, there were present the necessary and manifold conditions of the most forward civilisation; of its noblest features, of its substantial good, of its justice, its order, its humanity, its hopefulness, its zeal for improvement:—

> There is a day in spring
> When under all the earth the secret germs
> Begin to stir and glow before they bud.
> The wealth and festal pomps of midsummer
> Lie in the heart of that inglorious hour
> Which no man names with blessing, though its work
> Is blessed by all the world. Such days there are
> In the slow story of the growth of souls.[1]

And such a day there was in the "slow story" of the improvement and progress of civilised Christendom.

The point I wish to insist on is, that with Christianity, as long as there is Christianity, there comes a moral spring and vitality and force, a part and consequence of its influence, which did not and could not exist before it. You cannot conceive of Christianity except as a moral religion, requiring, inspiring moral-

[1] Story of Queen Isabel. By Miss Smedley.

ity; and it was just this spring, this force of morality, which was wanting, and which could not be, in Roman civilisation. Morality there was, often in a high degree; but it came and went with men or with generations, and there was nothing to keep it alive, nothing to rekindle it when extinct, nothing to suggest and nourish its steady improvement. At any rate there was not enough, if, when we remember the influence of great examples and great writers, it is too sweeping to say there was nothing. But with Christianity the condition was changed. I am sure I am not unmindful of what shortcomings, what shames and sins, what dark infamies, blot the history of Christian society. I do not forget that Christian morality has been a thing of degrees and impulses, rising and falling; that it has been at times impracticably extreme, and at times scandalously lax; that there have been periods when it seemed lost; that in some of its best days it has been unaccountably blind and perversely stupid and powerless, conniving at gross and undeniable inconsistencies, condoning flagrant wrong. This is true. Yet look through all the centuries since it appeared, and see if ever, in the worst and darkest of them, it was not *there*, as it never was in Rome, for hope, if not for present help and remedy. There was an undying voice, even if it came from the lips of hypocrites, which witnessed perpetually of mercy, justice, and peace. There was a seriousness given to human life, by a death everywhere died in the prospect of the

judgment. I am putting things at the worst. Christian morality lived even in the tenth century; even in the times of the Borgias and Medici. The wicked passed—the wicked age, the wicked men; passed, with the evil they had done, with the good which they had frustrated, with the righteous whom they had silenced or slain. And when they were gone, "when the tyranny was overpast," the unforgotten law of right, the inextinguishable power of conscience, were found to have survived unweakened through the hour of darkness, ready to reassert and to extend their empire. Great as have been the disasters and failures of Christian society, I think we have not yet seen the kind of hopeless collapse in which Roman civilisation ended. Feeble and poor as the spring of morality might be in this or that people, there has hitherto been something to appeal to, and to hope from, which was not to be found in the days of the Antonines, the most peaceful and felicitous of Roman times.

In this great restoration of civilisation, which is due mainly to the impulse and the power of Christian morality, a great place must be given to the *direct* influence of Christian aspects of life and ideas of duty. Christian ideas of purity acted directly on all that was connected with family and domestic life. They forbade, with intense and terrible severity, before which even passion quailed, the frightful liberty in the relations of the sexes which in Greece, and at last in Rome, had been thought so natural. Here was

one great point fixed: the purification of the home, the sanctity thrown round the wife and the mother, the rescuing of the unmarried from the assumed license of nature, the protection given to the honour of the female slave and then of the female servant, were social victories well worth the unrelenting and often extravagant asceticism which was, perhaps, their inevitable price at first. They were the immediate effects of a belief in the Sermon on the Mount; and where that belief was held, they would more or less consistently follow. So with the fiercer tempers and habits of men; against cruelty, against high-handed oppression and abuse of strength, there was a constant, unyielding protest in the Christian law of justice and charity, continually unheeded, never unfelt; even war and vengeance were uneasy under the unceasing though unavailing rebuke of the Gospel law, and made concessions to it, though too strong, too fatally necessary, to submit to it. Further, under the influence of Christian morality, later civilisation showed a power of appropriating and assimilating all that was noble and salutary in its older forms. It appropriated the Roman idea of law, and gave it a larger and more equitable scope, and a more definite consecration to the ends of justice and the common good. It invested the ancient idea of citizenship and patriotism with simpler and more generous feelings, and with yet holier sanctions. It accepted from the ancient thinkers their philosophic temper and open spirit of

inquiry, and listened reverentially to their lessons of wisdom. It reinforced the Roman idea, a confused and inconsistent though a growing one, of the unity of the human race; and though the victory over custom and appearances is hardly yet won, the tendency to recognise that unity can never fail, while the belief prevails that Christ died for the world. And once more, it is not easy to say what Christian belief, Christian life, Christian literature have done to make the greatest thoughts of the ancient world "come home to men's business and bosoms." No one can read the wonderful sayings of Seneca, Epictetus, or Marcus Aurelius, without being impressed, abashed perhaps, by their grandeur. No one can read them without wondering the next moment why they fell so dead—how little response they seemed to have awakened round them. What was *then* but the word of the solitary thinker has now become the possession, if they will, of the multitude. The letter of great maxims has been filled with a vivifying spirit. Their truths have been quickened into new meaning by the new morality in which they have found a place, by the more general and keener conscience which has owned them.

The direct effects of Christian morality on modern civilisation would be allowed by most people to be manifest and great. I wish to call attention to one or two points of its indirect influence. Civilisation, the ordering with the utmost attainable success, of

civil and secular life, is one thing; and Christian religion is another. They are two currents, meeting from time to time, inosculating, sometimes confused, at other times divergent and possibly flowing different ways; but, anyhow, they are two currents. Take such a picture of real daily human interests and human activity as is presented to us in so wonderful, so overwhelming, though so familiar a shape, in the columns, and quite as much in the advertisements, of a great newspaper; or again, when we thread the streets and crowds of a great city, and try to imagine the infinite aims and divisions of its business. There is the domain of civilisation, its works, its triumphs, its failures and blots; and its main scope is *this* life, whatever be the affinities and relations by which it has to do with what concerns man's other life. But the point that seems to me worth notice is this: the way in which the Christian current of thought, of aim, of conscience, of life, has affected the other current, even where separated and remote from it. We are told that the presence of electrical force in one body induces a corresponding force in another not in contact with the first, but adjacent to it; that one set of forces is raised to greater than their normal power and intensity by the neighbourhood of another; that currents passing in a given direction communicate, as long as they continue, new properties to a body round which they circulate: the neutral iron becomes a magnet, attracting, vibrating, able to hold up weights, as

long as it is encircled by a galvanic circuit, which does not touch or traverse it. So the presence of Christian forces acted, by a remote and indirect sympathy, even where they did not mingle and penetrate in their proper shape. Much of civilisation has always been outside of Christianity, and its leaders and agents have often not thought of Christianity in their work. But they worked in its neighbourhood, among those who owned it, among those who saw it, among those who lived by it: and the conscientiousness, the zeal, the single-mindedness, the spirit of improvement, the readiness for labour and trouble, the considerateness and sympathy, the manly modesty, which are wherever Christianity has "had its perfect work," have developed and sustained kindred tempers, where aims and pursuits, and the belief in which a man habitually lives, have been in a region far away from religion. Take the administration of justice. It *has* been, it *must* be, in society, whether there is religion or not. It was found in Roman times, up to a certain point, in a very remarkable degree of perfection. It has been, it may still be, in Christian times, carried on, and admirably carried on, by men who do not care for Christianity. I am very far indeed from saying that in these times it has always been worthy either of Christianity or civilisation. But I suppose we may safely say that it has been distinctly improving through the Christian centuries. We may safely say that in its best and most improved stages

it is an admirable exhibition of some of the noblest qualities of human character; honesty, strength without show, incorruptness, scrupulous care, unwearied patience, desire for right and for truth, and laborious quest of them, public feeling, humanity, compassion even when it is a duty to be stern. There were great and upright Roman magistrates; but whatever Roman jurisprudence attained to, there was no such administration of justice, where men thought and felt right, and did right, as a matter of course. And is it too much to say that the growing and gathering power of ideas of duty, right, and mercy, derived from Christianity, have wrought and have conquered, even when their source was not formally acknowledged, even when it was kept at a distance; and that they have given a security for one of the first essentials of civilisation, which is distinctly due to their perhaps circuitous and remote influence?

But, after all, it may not unreasonably occur to you that I am claiming too much for the civilisation of Christian times; that my account of it is one-sided and unfairly favourable. Putting aside the earlier centuries of confusion and struggle, when it might be urged that real tendencies had not yet time to work themselves clear, what is there to choose, it may be said, between the worst Roman days and many periods of later history, long after Christianity had made good its footing in society? What do we say to the dislocation, almost the dis-

solution, of society in great wars,—the English Invasion, the Wars of the League, in France, our own civil wars, the municipal feuds in Italy, the Thirty Years' War in Germany? What to the civilisation of the ages like those of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., full of brilliancy, full of most loathsome unrighteousness and corruption, gilded by the profoundest outward honour for religion? What shall we say of Inquisitions, and Penal Laws, and here, in our own England, of a criminal code which, up to the end of the last century, hanged mere children for a trifling theft? What shall we say of the huge commercial dishonesties of our own age, of our pauperism, of our terrible inequalities and contrasts of wealth and life? What shall we say of a great nation almost going to pieces before our eyes, and even now moving anxiously to a future which no one pretends to foresee? What advantage have we, how is civilisation the better for the influence on it of Christianity, if this, and much more like this, is what is shown by the history and the facts of the modern world?

It will at once suggest itself to you that when we speak of civilisation we speak of a thing of infinite degrees and variety. Every man in this congregation stands, probably, at a different point from all his neighbours in the success with which, if I may use the words, he *has made himself a man*; has developed the capacities and gifts which are in him, has fulfilled the purpose and done the work for which he was

made to live, has reached "the measure of the fulness of that stature" which he might and was intended to attain. And so with societies, and different times in the history of a society. There have been in Christian times poor and feeble forms of civilisation, there have been degenerate ones, as there have been strong ones; and in the same society there have been monstrous and flagrant inconsistencies, things left undone, unrighted, unnoticed, the neglect of which seems unaccountable, things quietly taken for granted which it is amazing that a Christian conscience could tolerate. Think how long and how patiently good men accepted negro slavery, who would have set the world in flame rather than endure slavery at home. Human nature is wayward and strange in the proportion which it keeps in its perceptions of duty, in its efforts and achievements. But for all this it seems to me idle to deny that men in Christian times have reached a higher level, and have kept it, in social and civil life, than they ever reached before, and that this is distinctly to be traced to the presence and action in society of Christian morality.

But this is not what I wanted specially to say. What I want you to notice, as new, since Christianity began to act on society, as unprecedented, as characteristic, is the power of recovery which appears in society in the Christian centuries. What is the whole history of modern Europe but the history of such recoveries? And what is there like it to be

found in the ancient world? Dark days have been, indeed, in Christendom. Society seemed to be breaking up, as it did at last at Rome. But wait awhile, and you saw that which you looked for in vain at Rome. The tide began to turn; the energy, the indignation, the resolute, unflinching purpose of reformation began to show itself; and whether wise or not, whether in its special and definite work a failure or even a mischief, it was at least enough to rouse society, to set it on a new course, to disturb that lethargy of custom which is so fatal, to make men believe that it was not a law of nature or of fate, that "as things had been, things must be." That terrible disease of public and stagnant despair which killed Roman society has not had the mastery yet in Christian; in evil days, sooner or later, there have been men to believe that they could improve things, even if, in fact, they could not. And for that power of hope, often, it may be, chimerical and hazardous, but hope which has done so much for the improvement of social life, the world is indebted to Christianity. It was part of the very essence of Christianity not to let evil alone. It was bound, it was its instinct, to attack it. Christian men have often, no doubt, mistaken the evil which they attacked; but their acquiescence in supposed evil, and their hopelessness of a victory for good, would have been worse for the world than their mistakes. The great reforms in Christian days have been very mixed

ones; but they *have been reforms*, an uninterrupted series of attempts at better things; for society, for civilisation, successive and real, though partial recoveries. The monastic life, which was, besides its other aspects, the great civilising agent in the rural populations; the varied and turbulent municipal life in the cities; the institutions in the Middle Ages, on a broad and grand scale, for teaching, for study, for preaching, for the reformation of manners; the determined and sanguine ventures of heroic enthusiasts, like St. Bernard, Savonarola, or Luther, or of gentler, but not less resolute reformers, like Erasmus and our own Dean Colet; the varied schemes for human improvement, (so varied, so opposed, so incompatible, yet in purpose *one*,) of Jesuits, of Puritans, of the great Frenchmen of Port Royal,—all witness to the undying, unwearied temper which had been kindled in society, and which ensured it from the mere ruin of helplessness and despair. They were all mistakes, you will say perhaps, or full of mistakes. Yes, but we all do our work through mistakes, and the boldest and most successful of us perhaps make the most. They failed in the ambitious completeness, the real one-sidedness and narrowness, of their aim; but they left their mark, if only in this—that they exhibited men in the struggle with evil and the effort after improvement, refusing to give up, refusing to be beaten. But indeed they were more than this. There are

none, I suppose, of these great stirrings of society, however little we may sympathise with them, which have not contributed something for which those who come after are the better. The wilder or the feebler ones were an earnest of something more reasonable and serious. They mark and secure, for some important principle or idea, a step which cannot easily be put back. They show, as the whole history of Christendom, with all its dismal tracts of darkness and blood, seems to me to show, that society in Christian times has somehow or other possessed a security, a charm against utter ruin, which society before them had not; that it has been able to go through the most desperate crises, and at length throw off the evil, and continue on its path not perhaps unharmed, yet with a new chance of life; that, following its course from first to last, we find in it a tough, indestructible force of resistance to decay, a continual, unworn-out spring of revival, renovation, restoration, recovery, and augmented strength, which, wherever it comes from, is most marked and surprising, and which forms an essential difference between Christian society and the conditions of society before and beyond Christian influences.

I must bring to an end what I have to say. I know quite well that the subject is not finished. But there are various reasons why at present I am unable to finish it. Yet I hope I shall not have quite wasted your time if I have said anything to

make you wish to inquire and to think about this supreme question; the relations of our modern civilisation, not only so refined, and so full of arts and appliances and great organisations, but so serious, to those eternal truths which lead up our thoughts to the ultimate destinies of man, to the Throne of the Most High and the Most Holy. Society is debating whether it shall remain Christian or not. I hope that all who hear me, the majority of whom twenty years hence, when I and my contemporaries shall have passed from the scene, will belong to the grown-up generation which then will have the fate of English society in their hands, will learn to reflect on that question with the seriousness which it deserves.

ON SOME

INFLUENCES OF CHRISTIANITY

UPON

NATIONAL CHARACTER

THREE LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

February 4th, 11th, and 18th, 1873

LECTURE I

INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY ON NATIONAL CHARACTER

I PROPOSE on this occasion to invite you to consider some of the ways in which national character has been affected by Christianity, and to trace these effects in certain leading types of national character which appear to have been specially influenced by Christianity:—The character of the European races belonging to the *Eastern Church*, particularly the Greek; that of the Southern, or, as they are called, the *Latin* races, particularly the Italians and French; and, lastly, that of the *Teutonic* races. These three divisions will supply the subjects of the three lectures which it is my business to deliver.

It is obvious that within the limits to which I am confined, such a subject can be treated only in the most general outline. Within these great divisions national character varies greatly. And national character, real as is the meaning conveyed by the term, is yet, when we come to analyse and describe it, so delicate and subtle a thing, so fugitive, and so

complex in the traits and shades which produce the picture, that its portraiture tasks the skill of the most practised artist, and overtasks that of most. But yet, that there is such a thing is as certain as that there is a general type of physiognomy or expression characteristic of different races. One by one, no doubt, many faces might belong equally to English men or Frenchmen, Italians, Greeks, or Russians. But, in spite of individual uncertainties, the type, on the whole, asserts itself with curious clearness. If you cannot be sure of it in single faces, it strikes you in a crowd. In one of the years of our Exhibitions, an illustrated paper published an engraving—it was the border, I think, of a large representation of the Exhibition building—in which were ranged in long procession representatives of the chief nationalities supposed to be collected at the Exhibition, or contributing to it. Dress and other things had, of course, much to do with marking them out one from another; but beyond dress and adjuncts like dress, there was the unmistakable type of face, caught with singular keenness of discrimination, and exhibited without exaggeration or a semblance of caricature. The types were average ones, such as every one recognised and associated with this or that familiar nationality; and the differences were as real between the more nearly related types as between the most strongly opposed ones,—as real between the various members of the European family as between European and Chinese,

though the difficulty of detecting and expressing the differences is greater in proportion as these differences pass from broad and obvious ones to such as are fine and complicated. So it is with national character. The attempt to define it, to criticise it, to trace its sources, to distinguish between what it is and what it seems, to compare and balance its good and its bad—this attempt may be awkward and bungling, may be feeble, one-sided, unjust. It may really miss all the essential and important features, and dwell with disproportionate emphasis on such as are partial and trivial, or are not peculiarities at all. Bad portrait-painting is not uncommon. Yet each face has its character and expression unlike every other, if only the painter can seize it. And so, in those great societies of men which we call nations, there is a distinct aspect belonging to them as wholes, which the eye catches and retains, even if it cannot detect its secret, and the hand is unequal to reproduce it. Its reality is betrayed, and the consciousness of its presence revealed, by the antipathies of nations, and their current judgments one of another.

The character of a nation, supposing there to be such a thing, must be, like the character of an individual, the compound result of innumerable causes. Roughly, it may be said to be the compound product of the natural qualities and original tendencies of a nation, and of a nation's history. The natural qualities and tendencies have helped largely to make the

history out of circumstances and events, partly, at least, independent of these inherent forces; and the history has then reacted on the natural qualities. What a nation has come to be has depended on the outfit of moral, intellectual, and physical gifts and conditions with which it started on its career in the world; and then, on the occurrences and trials which met it in its course, and the ways in which it dealt with them; on the influences which it welcomed or resisted; on critical decisions; on the presence and power of great men good and bad; on actions which closed the old, or opened the new; on the feelings, assumptions, and habits which it had allowed to grow up in it. All this needs no illustration. The Greeks never could have been what they have been in their influence on human history if they had not started with the rich endowments with which nature had furnished them; but neither could they have been what they were, wonderfully endowed as we know them to have been, if Athens had not resisted and conquered at Marathon and Salamis; if those victories had been mere patriotic assertions of independence and liberty, like the great Swiss victories of Morgarten and Sempach, and had not stimulated so astonishingly Athenian capacities for statesmanship, for literature, for art; if they had not been followed by the historians, the moralists, the poets of Athens; if there had been no Pericles, no Phidias, no Socrates; if there had been no Alexander to make Greek mind and

Greek letters share his conquest of the Eastern world. So with the nations of our living world. The sturdiest Englishman must feel, not only that his country would have been different, but he might himself have been other than he is, if some great events in our history had gone differently; if some men had not lived, and if others had not died when they did; if England had been made an appendage to the Spanish Netherlands in 1588, or a dependency of the great French King in 1688, or of the great French Emperor in 1805; if Elizabeth had died and Mary lived. It is idle to pursue this in instances. It is obvious that a nation's character is what it is, partly from what it brought with it on the stage of its history, partly from what it has done and suffered, partly from what it has encountered in its progress; giving to an external or foreign element a home and the right of citizenship within it, or else shutting its doors to the stranger, and treating it as an intruder and an enemy. And among these influences, which have determined both the character and history of nations, one of the most important, at least during the centuries of which the years are reckoned from the birth of our Lord, has been religion.

I state the fact here generally without reference to what that religion is, or of what kind its influence may have been. Everybody knows the part which Mahometanism has played, and is still playing, in shaping the ideas, the manners, and the history of

nations in Asia and Africa. In its direct and unambiguous power over the races in which it has taken root, and in the broad and simple way in which it has mastered their life and habits, and dominated in the direction of their public policy, I suppose that there is no religion which can compare with it. Its demands, devotional and moral, are easily satisfied but strictly enforced; and to a genuine Mahometan a religious war is the most natural field for national activity. As has been justly said[1]—"It has consecrated despotism; it has consecrated polygamy; it has consecrated slavery;" it has done this directly, in virtue of its being a religion, a religious reform. This is an obvious instance in which national character and national history would not have been what they have been without the presence and persistent influence of the element of religion. The problem is infinitely more complicated in the case of those higher races, for such they are, which escaped or resisted the Mahometan conquest; but there, too, the power of this great factor is equally undeniable, and is much richer and more varied in results, though these results are not so much on the surface, and are often more difficult to assign amid the pressure of other elements, to their perhaps distant causes.

To come, then, to my subject this evening. What have been the effects of Christianity on what we call national character in Eastern Christendom? I must

[1] Freeman, *Saracens*, p. 246.

remind you, once more, how very roughly and imperfectly such a question can be answered here. The field of investigation is immense, and in part very obscure; and the utmost that I can do is, if possible, to make out some salient points, which may suggest, to those who care to pursue it, the beginnings of further inquiry. I propose to confine myself to one race of the great family. I shall keep in view mainly the Greek race, as a typical specimen of Eastern Christendom. I am quite aware how much I narrow the interest of the subject by leaving out of direct consideration a people with such a strongly marked character, with such a place in the world now, and such a probable future, as the great Russian nation, —a nation which may be said to owe its national enthusiasm, its national convictions, its intense coherence, and the terrible strength it possesses, to its being penetrated with religion. But, having to choose a field of survey with reference to the time at our disposal, I prefer to keep to the Greek race, because the impression made on them was a primary and original one, and was communicated by them to other nations, like Russia, because they have had the longest history, and because their history has been more full than that of others of the vicissitudes of circumstance and fortune.

It requires an effort in us of the West to call up much interest in the Eastern Christian races and their fortunes. They are very different from us in great

and capital points of character, and our historians have given them a bad name. Many persons would regard them as decisive instances of the failure of Christianity to raise men, even of its liability under certain conditions to be turned into an instrument to corrupt and degrade them. The Greeks of the Lower Empire are taken as the typical example of these races, and the Greeks of the Lower Empire have become a byword for everything that is false and base. The Byzantine was profoundly theological, we are told, and profoundly vile. And I suppose the popular opinion of our own day views with small favour his modern representatives, and is ready to contrast them to their disadvantage with the Mahometan population about them. There is so much truth in this view that it is apt, as in many other cases, to make people careless of the injustice they commit by taking it for the whole truth. Two things, as it seems to me,—besides that general ignorance which is the mother of so much unfairness and scorn in all subjects,—have especially contributed to establish among us a fixed depreciation of all that derives its descent from the great centres of Eastern Christianity. One is the long division between Western and Eastern Christendom, which beginning in a rift, the consequences of which no one foresaw, and which all were therefore too careless or too selfish to close when it might have been closed, has widened in the course of ages into a yawning gulf, which nothing that human

judgment can suggest will ever fill up, and which, besides its direct quarrels and misfortunes, has brought with it a train of ever-deepening prejudices and antipathies, of which those who feel them often know not the real source. Another thing which has contributed to our popular disparagement of these races is the enormous influence of Gibbon's great History. It is not too much to say that the common opinion of educated Englishmen about the history and the character of everything derived from Byzantium or connected with it is based on this History, and, in fact, as a definite opinion dates from its appearance. He has brought out with incomparable force all that was vicious, all that was weak, in Eastern Christendom. He has read us the evil lesson of caring in their history to see nothing else; of feeling too much pleasure in the picture of a religion discredited, of a great ideal utterly and meanly baffled, to desire to disturb it by the inconvenient severity of accuracy and justice. But the authority of Gibbon is not final. There is, after all, another side to the story. In telling it, his immense and usually exact knowledge gave him every advantage in supporting what I must call the prejudiced conclusions of a singularly cold heart; while his wit, his shrewdness, and his pitiless sarcasm gave an edge to his learning, and a force which learning has not always had in shaping the opinions of the unlearned. The spell of Gibbon's genius is not easy to break. But later writers, with

equal knowledge and with a more judicial and more generous temper, have formed a very different estimate of the Greek Empire and the Greek race, and have corrected, if they have not reversed, his sentence. Those who wish to be just to a form of society which it was natural in him to disparage will pass on from his brilliant pages to the more equitable and conscientious, but by no means indulgent, judgments of Mr. Finlay, Mr. Freeman, and Dean Stanley.

One fact alone is sufficient to engage our deep interest in this race. It was Greeks and people imbued with Greek ideas who first welcomed Christianity. It was in their language that it first spoke to the world, and its first home was in Greek households and in Greek cities. It was in a Greek atmosphere that the Divine Stranger from the East, in many respects so widely different from all that Greeks were accustomed to, first grew up to strength and shape; first showed its power of assimilating and reconciling; first showed what it was to be in human society. Its earliest nurslings were Greeks; Greeks first took in the meaning and measure of its amazing and eventful announcements; Greek sympathies first awoke and vibrated to its appeals; Greek obedience, Greek courage, Greek suffering first illustrated its new lessons. Had it not first gained over Greek mind and Greek belief, it is hard to see how it would have made its further way. And to that first welcome the Greek race has been profoundly and

unalterably faithful. They have passed through centuries for the most part of adverse fortune. They have been in some respects the most ill-treated race in the world. To us in the West, at least, their Christian life seems to have stopped in its growth at an early period; and, compared with the energy and fruitfulness of the religious principle in those to whom they passed it on, their Christianity disappoints, perhaps repels us. But to their first faith, as it grew up, substantially the same, in Greek society, in the days of Justin and Origen, as it was formulated in the great Councils, as it was embodied in the Liturgies, as it was concentrated and rehearsed in perpetual worship, as it was preached by Gregory and Chrysostom, as it was expounded by Basil, Cyril of Jerusalem, and John of Damascus, as it prompted the lives of saints and consecrated the triumphs of martyrs, they still cling, as if it was the wonder and discovery of yesterday. They have never wearied of it. They have scarcely thought of changing its forms.

The Roman Conquest of the world found the Greek race, and the Eastern nations which it had influenced, in a low and declining state — morally, socially, politically. The Roman Empire, when it fell, left them in the same discouraging condition, and suffering besides from the degradation and mischief wrought on all its subjects by its chronic and relentless fiscal oppression. The Greek of Roman times was the ad-

miration and envy of his masters for his cleverness and the glories which he had inherited; and their scorn for his utter moral incapacity to make any noble and solid use of his gifts. The typical Greek of Juvenal's satire answered to the typical Frenchman of Dr. Johnson's imitation of it, the ideal Frenchman of our great-grandfathers in the eighteenth century. He was a creature of inexhaustible ingenuity, but without self-respect, without self-command or modesty, capable of everything as an impostor and a quack, capable of nothing as a man and a citizen. There was no trusting his character any more than his word: "unstable as water," fickle as the veering wind, the slave of the last new thing, whether story, or theory, or temptation, —to the end of his days he was no better or of more value than a child in the serious things which it becomes men to do. Full of quickness and sensibility, open to every impulse, and a judge of every argument, he was without aim or steadiness in life, ridiculous in his levity and conceit,—even in his vice and corruption more approaching to the naughtiness of a reckless schoolboy than to the grave and deliberate wickedness which marked the Roman sensualists. These were the men in whose childish conceit, childish frivolity, childish self-assertion, St. Paul saw such dangers to the growth of Christian manliness and to the unity of the Christian body—the idly curious and gossiping men of Athens; the vain and shamelessly ostentatious Corinthians, men in intellect, but in moral seriousness

babes; the Ephesians, "like children carried away with every blast of vain teaching," the victims of every impostor, and sport of every deceit; the Cretans, proverbially, "ever liars, evil beasts, slow bellies;" the passionate, volatile, Greek-speaking Celts of Asia, the "foolish" Galatians; the Greek-speaking Christians of Rome, to whom St. Paul could address the argument of the Epistle to the Romans, and whom yet he judged it necessary to warn so sternly against thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and against setting individual self-pleasing against the claims and interests of the community. The Greek of the Roman times is portrayed in the special warnings of the Apostolic Epistles. After Apostolic times he is portrayed in the same way by the heathen satirist Lucian, and by the Christian preacher Chrysostom; and such, with all his bad tendencies, aggravated by almost uninterrupted misrule and oppression, the Empire, when it broke up, left him. The prospects of such a people, amid the coming storms, were dark. Everything, their gifts and versatility, as well as their faults, threatened national decay and disintegration. How should they stand the collision with the simpler and manlier barbarians from the northern wastes, from the Arabian wilderness, from the Tartar steppes? How should they resist the consuming and absorbing enthusiasm of Mahometanism? How should they endure, century after century, the same crushing ill-treatment, the same misgovernment and misfortune,

without at last breaking up and dissolving into something other than they were, and losing the thread of their national continuity?

Look at the same group of races, and especially at the leading and typical one of the group, the Greeks in Europe and Asia, after the impending evils had fallen, after century after century had passed over it of such history as nations sink under, losing heart and union and hope. Look at them when their ill-fortune had culminated in the Ottoman conquest; look at them after three centuries and a half of Ottoman rule. For they have not perished. In the first place, they exist. They have not disappeared before a stronger race and a more peremptory and energetic national principle. They have not, as a whole, whatever may have happened partially, melted into a new form of people along with their conquerors. They have resisted the shocks before which nations apparently stronger have yielded and, as nations, have disappeared. And next, they have not only resisted dissolution or amalgamation, but in a great degree change. In characteristic endowments, in national and proverbial faults, though centuries of hardship and degradation have doubtless told on the former, they are curiously like what their fathers were. But neither faults, nor gifts reinforcing and giving edge to faults, have produced the usual result. Neither their over-cleverness, nor their lamentable want in many points of moral elevation and strength, have caused the decay which ends in

national death, have so eaten into the ties which keep a society together, that its disorganised elements fly apart and form new combinations. The Mahometan conquest has made large inroads on the Christian populations—in some cases, as in Bosnia and parts of Albania, it absorbed it entirely. But if ever nationality—the pride of country, the love of home, the tie of blood—was a living thing, it has been alive in the Greek race, and in the surrounding races, whatever their origin and language, which it once influenced, and which shared the influences which acted on it. These races whom the Empire of the Cæsars left, like scattered sheep to the mercy of the barbarians, lived through a succession of the most appalling storms, and kept themselves together, holding fast, resolute and unwavering, amid all their miseries and all their debasement, to the faith of their national brotherhood. Nothing less promised endurance than their temperament and genius, so easily moved to change, so quick to the perception of self-interest, and ready to discover its paths. Nothing seemed more precarious as a bond than national traditions and national sympathies. But at the end of our modern ages, the race on which Christianity first made an impression still survives, and, though scarred by disaster and deeply wounded by servitude, is now looking forward to a new and happier career.

What saved Greek nationality—saved it in spite of the terrible alliance with external misfortunes, of its

own deep and inherent evils; saved it, I hope, for much better days than it has ever yet seen—was its Christianity. It is wonderful that, even *with* it, Greek society should have resisted the decomposing forces which were continually at work round it and in it; but *without* its religion it must have perished. This was the spring of that obstinate tenacious, national life which persisted in living on though all things conspired for its extinction; which refused to die under corruption or anarchy, under the Crusader's sword, under the Moslem scimitar. To these races Christianity had not only brought a religion, when all religion was worn out among them and evaporated into fables, but it had *made* them—made them once more a people, with common and popular interests of the highest kind; raised them, from mere subjects of the Roman Empire, lost amid its crowd, into the citizens of a great society, having its root and its end above this world, and even in the passage through this world binding men by the most awful and ennobling ties. Christianity was the first friend and benefactor of an illustrious race in the day of its decline and low estate; the Greek race has never forgotten that first benefit, and its unwavering loyalty has been the bond which has kept the race together and saved it.

I think this is remarkable. Here is a race full of flexibility and resource, with unusual power of accommodating itself to circumstances, and ready to do so when its interest prompted, not over-scrupulous, quick

in discovering imposition and pitiless in laughing at pretence—a race made, as it would seem, to bend easily to great changes, and likely, we should have thought, to lose its identity and be merged in a stronger and sterner political association. And to this race Christianity has imparted a corporate toughness and permanence which is among the most prominent facts of history. Say, if you like, that it is an imperfect form of Christianity; that it is the Christianity of men badly governed and rudely taught for centuries, enslaved for other centuries. Say, if you like, that its success has been very qualified in curing the race of its ancient and characteristic faults. Say, too, that in hardening the Greek race to endure, it has developed in them in regard to their religion, an almost Judaic hardness and formalism and rigidity of thought, a local idea of religion which can scarcely conceive of Christianity beyond its seats and its forms in the East. Yet the fact remains, that that easy-going, pliable, childishly changeable Greek race at whom the Romans sneered, has proved, through the deepest misfortunes, one of the most inflexible nationalities that we know of; and that the root of this permanence and power of resisting hostile influences has been in Christianity and the Christian Church.

In this consolidation by Christianity of a national character, in itself least adapted to become anything stable and enduring, we may trace a threefold influence:—

1. In the first place, Christianity impressed on the minds of men with a new force the idea of the eternal and lasting. Into a world of time and death and change, in strange and paradoxical contrast with it, it had come announcing a one everlasting Kingdom of God, and a final victory over the worst that death can do on man. Rome and the Empire claimed to be eternal and unchanging; but they were too visibly liable, as other human greatness, to the shocks of fortune, and the inevitable course of mortal decay. But that everlasting order which was the foundation of all that Christianity supposed and taught, that "House not made with hands," that "Kingdom which cannot be moved," that Temple of souls dwelt in by the Eternal Spirit of God, that Throne of the world on which sate One, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"—this was out of the reach of all mutability. With their belief in Christianity, the believers drank in thoughts of fixedness, permanence, persistency, continuance, most opposite to the tendencies of their natural temperament. The awful seriousness of Christianity, its interpretation of human life and intense appreciation of its purpose, deeply affected, if it could not quell, childish selfishness and trifling; its iron entered into their veins and mingled with their blood. I am not now speaking of the reforming and purifying effects of Christianity on individuals: this is not my subject. But it put before the public mind a new *ideal of character*; an ideal of the deepest earnest-

ness, of the most serious purity, of unlimited self-devotion, of the tenderest sympathy for the poor and the unhappy, of pity and care for the weak, for the sinner. And it prevailed on the public mind to accept it, in exchange for more ancient ideals. Even if it failed to wean men from their vices and lift them to its own height, yet it gave to those whom it could not reform a new respect for moral greatness, a new view of the capabilities of the soul, of the possibilities of human character. It altered permanently the current axioms about the end and value of human life. At least it taught them patience, and hardened them to endure.

2. In the next place, the spirit of brotherhood in Christianity singularly fell in with the social habits and traditions of equality, ineradicable in Greece, and combined with them to produce a very definite feature in the national character. Greek ideas of society and government were always, at bottom, essentially popular ones: Greek revolutions and Greek misfortunes, from the Peloponnesian war to the Roman Conquest, if they had extinguished all hope of realising any more those democratic institutions under which Athens had achieved its wonderful but short-lived greatness, had developed and strengthened the feeling, that Greeks, while there was a broad line between them and those who were not Greeks, themselves stood all on the same social level one with another, and that only personal differences, not differ-

ences of birth, or even of condition or wealth, interfered with the natural equality which was assumed in all their intercourse. When Christianity came with its new principle of a unity, so high and so divine as to throw into the shade all, even the most real, distinctions among men—"Greek and Jew, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free," for all were one in Christ—and when in the Christian Church the slave was thought as precious as the free man in the eyes of his Father above, as much a citizen of the heavenly polity and an heir of its immortality—then the sense of popular unity and of common and equal interests in the whole body, which always had been strong in Greeks, received a seal and consecration, which has fixed it unalterably in the national character. This personal equality existed, and could not be destroyed, under the despotic governments by which, from the time of the Roman Empire till the emancipation of Greece from the Turks, in one shape or another, the nation has been ruled. It marks Greek social relations very observably to this day.

3. Finally, Christianity, the religion of hope, has made the Greek race, in the face of the greatest adversities, a race of hope. In its darkest and most unpromising hours, it has hoped against hope. On the bronze gates of St. Sophia, at Constantinople, may still be seen,—at least it might be seen some years ago,—the words, placed there by its Christian builder, and left there by the scornful ignorance or indifference

of the Ottomans—I. X. NIKA, *Jesus Christ conquers.* It is the expression of that unshaken assurance which in the lowest depths of humiliation has never left the Christian races of the East, that sooner or later theirs is the winning cause. They never have doubted of their future. The first greeting with which Greek salutes Greek on Easter morning, Χριστὸς ἀνέστη, *Christ is risen,* accompanied by the Easter kiss, and answered by the response, ἀληθῶς ἀνέστη, *He is risen indeed,* is both the victorious cry of mortality over the vanquished grave, and also the symbol of a national brotherhood, the brotherhood of a suffering race, bound together by their common faith in a deliverer.

This, it seems to me, Christianity did for a race which had apparently lived its time, and had no future before it—the Greek race in the days of the Cæsars. It created in them, in a new and characteristic degree, national endurance, national fellowship and sympathy, national hope. It took them in the unpromising condition in which it found them under the Empire, with their light, sensual, childish existence, their busy but futile and barren restlessness, their life of enjoyment or of suffering, as the case might be, but in either case purposeless and unmeaning; and by its gift of a religion of seriousness, conviction, and strength it gave them a new start in national history. It gave them an Empire of their own, which, undervalued as it is by those familiar

with the *ultimate* results of Western history, yet withstood the assaults before which, for the moment, Western civilisation sank, and which had the strength to last a life—a stirring and eventful life—of ten centuries. The Greek Empire, with all its evils and weaknesses, was yet in its time the only existing image in the world of a civilised state. It had arts, it had learning, it had military science and power; it was, for its day, the one refuge for peaceful industry. It had a place which we could ill afford to miss in the history of the world. Gibbon, we know, is no lover of anything Byzantine, or of anything Christian; but look at that picture which he has drawn of the Empire in the tenth century—that dark century when all was so hopeless in the West,—read the pages in which he yields to the gorgeous magnificence of the spectacle before him, and describes not only the riches, the pomp, the splendour, the elaborate ceremony of the Byzantine Court and the Byzantine capital, but the comparative prosperity of the provinces, the systematic legislation, the administrative experience and good sense with which the vast machine was kept going and its wealth developed, its military science and skill, the beauty and delicacy of its manufactures, —and then consider what an astonishing contrast to all else in those wild times was presented by the stability, the comparative peace, the culture, the liberal pursuits of this great State, and whether we have not become blind to what it *was*, and *appeared to*

be, when it actually existed in the world of which it was the brilliant centre, by confusing it in our thoughts with the miseries of its overthrow :—

"These princes," he says, "might assert with dignity and truth, that of all the monarchs of Christendom they possessed the greatest city, the most ample revenue, the most flourishing and populous state. . . . The subjects of their Empire were still the most dexterous and diligent of nations; their country was blessed by nature with every advantage of soil, climate, and situation; and in the support and restoration of the arts, their patient and peaceful temper was more useful than the warlike spirit and feudal anarchy of Europe. The provinces which still adhered to the Empire were repeopled and enriched by the misfortunes of those which were irrecoverably lost. From the yoke of the Caliphs, the Catholics of Syria, Egypt, and Africa retired to the allegiance of their prince, to the society of their brethren: the moveable wealth, which eludes the search of oppression, accompanied and alleviated their exile; and Constantinople received into her bosom the fugitive trade of Alexandria and Tyre. The chiefs of Armenia and Scythia, who fled from hostile or religious persecution, were hospitably entertained, their followers were encouraged to build new cities and cultivate waste lands. Even the barbarians who had seated themselves in arms in the territory of the Empire were gradually reclaimed to the laws of the church and state." "The

wealth of the province," he proceeds, describing one of them, "and the trust of the revenue were founded on the fair and plentiful produce of trade and manufactures; and some symptoms of a liberal policy may be traced in a law which exempts from all personal taxes the mariners of the province, and all workmen in parchment and purple."

And he goes on to describe, with that curious pursuit of detail in which he delights, the silk looms and their products, and to trace the silk manufacture, from these Greek looms, as it passed through the hands of captive Greek workmen, transported by the Normans to Palermo, and from thence was emulously taken up by the northern Italian cities, to the workshops of Lyons and Spitalfields. Who would think that he was describing what we so commonly think of as the wretched and despicable Lower Greek Empire, without strength or manliness; or that the rich province is what the Turks made into the desolate Morea?

We are accustomed to think only of its corruption and pedantry, its extravagant disputes, its court intrigues and profligacies, its furious factions. But there was really no want of heroic men and noble achievements to show in the course of its annals. Even Gibbon tells us, though he tells us, as usual, with a sneer, of "intrepid"[1] patriarchs of Constantinople, whom we speak of as mere slaves of despotism,

[1] Chap. xlviii. vol. vi. pp. 105, 106.

repeating towards captains and emperors, impatient with passion, or in the flush of criminal success, the bold rebukes of John the Baptist and St. Ambrose. And these captains and emperors appear, many of them, even in his disparaging pages, as no ordinary men. There were lines of rulers in those long ages not unworthy to rank with the great royal houses of the West. There were men, with deep and miserable faults no doubt, but who yet, if their career had been connected with our history, would have been famous among us. Belisarius, Heraclius, Leo the Isaurian,—the Basilian, the Comnenian line,—have a full right to a high place among the rulers and the saviours of nations. The First and the Second Basil of the Macedonian line, the Lawgiver, and the Conqueror: the Comnenian dynasty;—Alexius, who "in a long reign of thirty-seven years subdued and pardoned the envy of his equals, restored the laws of public and private order," cultivated the arts of wealth and science, "and enlarged the limits of the Empire in Europe and Asia";—John, "under whom innocence had nothing to fear and merit everything to hope," and "whose only defect was the frailty of noble minds, the love of military glory";—Manuel, "educated in the silk and purple of the East, but possessed of the iron temper of a soldier, not easily to be paralleled, except in the lives of Richard I. of England and Charles XII. of Sweden":—I am quoting in each instance the epithets and judgment of Gibbon—these are men whom a dif-

ference of taste and historical traditions makes us undervalue as Greeks of the Lower Empire. Let us not be ungrateful to them. Unconquered, when the rest of the Empire fell before the new powers of the world, Byzantium kept alive traditions of learning, of scholarship, of law and administration, of national unity, of social order, of industry, which those troubled and dangerous times could ill afford to lose. To the *improvable* barbarians of the North, to whom Old Rome had yielded, succeeded the *unimprovable* barbarians of the East and Central Asia, and against them, Saracens, Mongols, Turks, the New Rome was the steady and unbroken bulwark, behind which the civilisation of Europe, safe from its mortal foes, slowly recovered and organised itself. Alaric's Goths at the sack of Rome, Platoff's Cossacks at the occupation of Paris, were not greater contrasts to all that is meant by civilisation than were the Latins of the First and Fourth Crusade, the bands of Godfrey de Bouillon, Bohemond, and Tancred, and those of the Bishop of Soissons, the Count of Flanders, and the Marquis of Montferrat, in the great capital of Eastern Christendom, which they wondered at and pillaged. What saved hope for ages, on the edge of the world which was to be the modern one, was the obstinate resistance of Christian nationality to the mounting tide of Asiatic power.

But it was when the Empire perished that it fully appeared how deeply Christianity had modified the

national character. All the world was looking forward to the impossibility of that character holding its own against the pressure of Mahometanism, and to the disappearance by slavery, or forced conversion, of the representatives, in the East, of the Christian family. But the expectation has been falsified. It had not entered into the calculation how much of stubborn, unyielding faith and strength Christianity had introduced beneath the surface of that apparently supple and facile Greek nature. The spring of life was too strong to be destroyed; and now, after steel and fire have done their worst, fresh and vigorous branches are shooting up from the unexhausted rootstock. Then, when the greatness of Constantinople was gone, it appeared how the severe side of Christianity, with its patience and its hopefulness, had left its mark on Greek character, naturally so little congenial to such lessons. Then it appeared what was the difference between a philosophy and literature, and a religion and life. Then, when philosophy and literature, the peculiar glories of the Greek race, may be said to have perished, was seen what was the power of the ruder and homelier teaching—about matters of absorbing interest, the unseen world, the destiny of man—of teachers who believed their own teaching, and lived and died accordingly. Then was seen on the whole nation the fruit of the unpretending Christian virtues which grow from great Christian doctrines, the Cross, the Resurrection—compassionate-

ness, humbleness of mind, self-conquest, zeal, purity. Self-sacrifice became the most natural of duties—self-sacrifice, in all its forms, wise and unwise, noble and extravagant, ascetic renunciation of the world, confessorship and dying for the truth as men died for their country, a lifelong struggle of toil and hardship for a cause not of this world. The lives of great men profoundly and permanently influence national character; and the great men of later Greek memory are saints. They belong to the people more than emperors and warriors; for the Church is of the people. Greeks saw their own nature and their own gifts elevated, corrected, transformed, glorified, in the heroic devotion of Athanasius, who, to all their familiar qualities of mind, brought a tenacity, a soberness, a height and vastness of aim, an inflexibility of purpose, which they admired the more because they were just the powers in which the race failed. They saw the eloquence in which they delighted revive with the fire and imagination and piercing sarcasm of Chrysostom, and their hearts kindled in them when they saw that he was one of those who can dare and suffer as well as speak, and that the preacher who had so sternly rebuked the vices of the multitudes at Antioch and Constantinople was not afraid of the consequences of speaking the truth to an Empress at an Imperial Court. The mark which such men left on Greek society and Greek character has not been effaced to this day, even by the melancholy examples

of many degenerate successors. They have sown a seed which has more than once revived, and which still has in it the promise of life and progress.

Why, if Christianity affected Greek character so profoundly, did it not do more? Why, if it cured it of much of its instability and trifling, did it not also cure it of its falsehood and dissimulation? Why, if it impressed the Greek mind so deeply with the reality of the objects of faith, did it not also check the vain inquisitiveness and spirit of disputatiousness and sophistry, which filled Greek Church history with furious wranglings about the most hopeless problems? Why, if it could raise such admiration for unselfishness and heroic nobleness, has not this admiration borne more congenial fruit? Why, if heaven was felt to be so great and so near, was there in real life such coarse and mean worldliness? Why, indeed?—why have not the healing and renovating forces of which the world is now, as it has ever been, full, worked out their gracious tendencies to their complete and natural effect? It is no question specially belonging to this part of the subject: in every other we might make the same inquiry, and I notice it only lest I should be thought to have overlooked it. "Christianity," it has been said, "varies according to the nature on which it falls." That is, in modern philosophical phrase, what we are taught in the parable of the Sower. It rests at last with man's will and moral nature how far he will, honestly and un-

reservedly, yield to the holy influences which he welcomes, and let them have their "perfect work." But if the influence of Christianity on Greek society has been partial, if it has not weaned it from some of its most characteristic and besetting sins, it has done enough to keep it from destruction. It has saved it; and this is the point on which I insist. Profoundly, permanently, as Christianity affected Greek character, there was much in that character which Christianity failed to reach, much that it failed to correct, much that was obstinately refractory to influences which, elsewhere, were so fruitful of goodness and greatness. The East, as well as the West, has still much to learn from that religion, which each too exclusively claims to understand, to appreciate, and to defend. But what I have tried to set before you is this: the spectacle of a great civilised nation, which its civilisation could not save, met by Christianity in its hour of peril, filled with moral and spiritual forces of a new and unknown nature, arrested in its decay and despair, strengthened to endure amid prolonged disaster, guarded and reserved through centuries of change for the reviving hopes and energies of happier days. To a race bewildered with sophistries, and which by endless disputings had come to despair of any noble conduct of life, Christianity solved its questions, by showing it in concrete examples how to live and to walk; how, in the scale of souls, the lowest might be joined to the highest. Into men,

whom their own passions and subtlety had condemned to listless moral indifference, it breathed enthusiasm; the high practical enthusiasm of truth and a good life. And for a worship, poetically beautiful, but scarcely affecting to be more, it substituted the magnificent eloquence of devotion and faith, the inspired Psalms, the majestic Liturgies. It changed life, by bringing into it a new idea,—the idea of holiness, with its shadow, sin. That the Greek race, which connects us with some of the noblest elements of our civilisation, is still one of the living races of Europe, that it was not trampled, scattered, extinguished, lost, amid the semi-barbarous populations of the East, that it can look forward to a renewed career in the great commonwealth of Christendom—this it owes mainly to its religion.

What great changes of national character the Latin races owed to Christianity will be the inquiry of the next lecture.

LECTURE II

CHRISTIANITY AND THE LATIN RACES

UNDER the discipline of Christianity in the Eastern Church the Christians of the East were trained to endurance, to a deep sense of brotherhood, to a faith which could not be shaken in great truths about God and about man, to the recognition of a high moral ideal, to a purer standard of family and social life, to inextinguishable hope. They learned to maintain, under the most adverse and trying circumstances, a national existence, which has lasted more than fifteen centuries. They have been kept, without dying, without apostatising, without merging their nationality in something different, till at last better days seem at hand; and to welcome these days there is vigour and elasticity, a strong spirit of self-reliance, even of ambition. But what appears, at least to us, distant and probably superficial observers, is this. Their religion has strengthened and elevated national character: it seems to have done less to expand and refine it. At any rate, we do not see the evidence of it in what is

almost the only possible evidence of it to strangers, in a rich and varied literature. To their ancient treasures, to the wisdom and eloquence of the great Christian teachers and moralists of the early centuries, such as Basil and Chrysostom, the Greeks have added nothing which can be put on a level with them; nothing worth speaking of in secular literature; nothing of real poetry; nothing with the mark on it of original observation or genius; nothing which has passed local limits to interest the world without. Learning of a certain kind they have ever maintained. Up to the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans, Greek learning certainly did not contrast unfavourably with the learning of the West; and it was Greek teachers and scholars, flying from the Ottoman sword and the Ottoman tyranny, who brought Greek letters to the schools, the Universities, and the printing presses of the eager and curious West. But it was all ancient learning, or intellectual work connected with ancient learning. There was little to show the thought, the aspirations, the feelings, the character of the present time. All seems dry, stiff, pompous, pedantic, in curious contrast to the naturalness, the perception of the realities of character, the humour, the pathos, which are so often seen in the roughest monastic writings of the same period in the West. Echoes of what seems native poetry, the original expression, more or less graceful or pathetic, of feeling and imagination, come to us from portions of

Eastern Christendom—from Russia, from Servia, perhaps from other Sclavonic races; but little from Greece itself. Besides a few fragments, marked occasionally by genuine touches of feeling, its national poetry, exclusive of the noble but often florid ecclesiastical hymns, consists mainly of Klephtic ballads, recording feats of prowess against the Turks. In curious contrast with the versatility of the old Greeks, the character of their later representatives, with all their liveliness, has in it, along with its staunchness and power of resistance, a stereotyped rigidity and uniformity—wanting play, wanting growth. Looked at by the side of their Western brethren, they resemble the shapes and branch systems of the evergreen pines and firs of their own mountains, so hardy, so stern, often nobly beautiful, but always limited in their monotonous forms, when compared with the varied outline and the luxuriant leafage, ever changing, ever renewed, of the chestnuts of the Apennine forests, or of the oaks and elms of our English fields.

It is in Western Christendom that we must look for the fuller development of the capacities and the originality of man, in those broad varieties of them, which we call national character. There can be no doubt that in the later ages of the world men and nations have been more enterprising, more aspiring, more energetic in the West than in the East; that their history has been more eventful, their revolutions

graver; that they have aimed at more, hoped for more, ventured on more. And the subject of my lecture to-night is the effects of Christianity on the character of what are called the Latin races, especially in Italy and France.

The Latin races occupy the ground where Roman civilisation of the times of the Empire had its seat and main influence. When the Empire fell, its place and local home were taken by nations, closely connected by blood and race with its old subjects, which were to become, in very different ways, two of the foremost of our modern world. We know them well, and they have both of them been very intimately connected with us, in our history, and in the progress of our society and our ideas. With one we have had a rivalry of centuries, which yet has not prevented much sympathy between us, or the manifold and deep influence of one great rival on the intellectual and the political life of the other. To Italy, long bound to us by the ties of a great ecclesiastical organisation, we have, since those ties were broken, been hardly less closely bound by the strong interest created by Italian literature and art, and by the continual personal contact with the country of a stream of travellers. We all of us form an idea, more or less accurate and comprehensive, of what Frenchmen and Italians are like. Take the roughest and rudest shape of this idea, so that it has any feature and distinctness about it, and compare

it with whatever notions we can reach of the people of the same countries in the days of the Empire; with the notion which scholars can derive of them from reading their letters, their poetry, serious and gay, their plays, their laws, their philosophical essays, their political treatises,—with the notion which those who are not scholars get of them from our own historical writers. Two strong impressions, it seems to me, result from such a comparison. The first is, how strangely modern in many ways these ancient Romans look; what strangely modern thoughts they think; what strangely modern words they say. But then, when we have realised how near in many ways their civilisation and culture brought them to our own days, the next feeling is how vast and broad is the interval which lies between our conceptions, when we think of French or Italian character, its moral elements, habits, assumptions, impulses, its governing forces, with the ways in which it exhibits itself, and when we think of the contemporaries of Cicero, of Seneca, of Marcus Aurelius. Much is like; much in the modern form recalls the past; but in the discriminating and essential points, how great a difference.

I am not going to attempt anything like a survey and comparison, even of the most general kind, of these contrasted characters. All I propose to do is to take one or two important points of difference between them, and trace, if possible, where and from what causes the differences arose.

Let us, then, take the two chief peoples of what is called—what they themselves call—the Latin race; the Italians and the French. Rome had so impressed her own stamp on the populations which inherited what was then called Gaul, that no revolutions have effaced it. Though there has been since the fall of the Empire so large an infusion into them of Teutonic blood, and the name by which they are now known is a Teutonic one, yet Latin influence has proved the prevailing and the dominant one among them; a language of Latin stock and affinities expresses and controls their thoughts and associations: in the great grouping of modern nations, France, as a whole, goes with those of her provinces which geographically belong to the South, and claim a portion of the Mediterranean shore. Not forgetting their immense differences, still we may for our purpose class these two great nations together, in contrast with the people who, before them, in the great days of Rome, occupied the south of Europe, and ruled on the Mediterranean. And in those times, when Gaul was still but a province, we must take its provincial society, as represented by the better-known society of the governing race and of the seat of empire, whose ideas and manners that provincial society undoubtedly reflected and copied. Comparing, then, the Italians and French of modern times and history with the Romans of the Imperial city, of the Imperial peninsula, and of the provinces, one striking

difference seems at once to present itself before our eyes.

1. It is the different sphere and space in national character occupied by the *affections*. I use the word in the widest sense, and without reference now to the good or bad, the wise or unwise, the healthy or morbid exercise of them. But I observe that in the Roman character the affections — though far, indeed, from being absent, for how could they be in a race with such high points of human nobleness? — were yet habitually allowed but little play, and, indeed, in their most typical and honoured models of excellence jealously repressed—and that in the modern races, on the other hand, which stand in their place, character is penetrated and permeated, visibly, notoriously, by a development and life of the affections and the emotional part of our nature to which we can see nothing parallel in ancient times. I suppose this contrast is on the surface, in the most general and popular conceptions of these characters. One observation will at once bring up into our minds the difference I speak of. Take some of our common forms of blame and depreciation. We frequently attribute to our French neighbours, and still more to Italians, a softness of nature, a proneness to indulge in an excessive, and what seems to us unreal, opening and pouring forth of the heart, a love of endearing and tender words, an exaggerated and uncontrolled exhibition of feeling, which to us seems mawkish and unmanly, if not in-

sincere; we think we trace it in their habits, in their intercourse, in their modes of address, in their letters, in their devotions; we call it sentimental, or effeminate; we laugh at it as childish, or we condemn and turn away from it as unhealthy. But who would dream of coupling the word "sentimental" with anything Roman? Who, for instance, though we have a plaintive Tibullus and a querulous Ovid, could imagine a Roman Rousseau? That well-known idea which we call "sentiment" did not exist for them any more than that which we call "charity." They might be pompous; they might profess, as men do now, feelings in excess and in advance of what they really had; they could, for they were men, be deeply moved; they could be passionate, they could be affectionate, they could be tender. I do not forget their love poems, gay, playful, or melancholy; I do not forget their epitaphs on their dead, the most deeply touching of all epitaphs for the longing and profound despair with which they bid their eternal farewell; I do not forget the domestic virtues of many Roman households, the majestic chastity of their matrons, all that is involved of love and trust and reverence in their favourite and untranslatable word *pietas*; the frequent attachment even of the slave, the frequent kindness of the master. It was not that there were not affections in so great a people. But affections with them were looked on with mistrust and misgiving; it was the proper thing to repress, to disown them; they forced their way,

like some irresistible current, through a hard stern crust, too often in the shape of passion, and were not welcomed and honoured when they came. Between Roman gravity and Roman dignity on the one hand, and Roman coarseness and brutality, Roman pride, Roman vice, on the other hand, there was no room for the danger and weakness of sentimentalism—for it is a danger which implies that men have found out the depth, the manifoldness, the deep delight of the affections, and that an atmosphere has been created in which they have thriven and grown into their innumerable forms. The one affection which the true Roman thought noble and safe and worthy, the one affection which he could trust unsuspected and unchecked, was the love of his country,—his obstinate, never-flagging passion for the greatness and public good of Rome.

I have spoken of the unfavourable side of this increased development of the emotional part of the character in the Southern nations, because I wished to insist strongly on the fact itself of the change. But though this ready overflow of the affections can be morbid and may be weak, we should be not only unjust, but stupid and ignorant, to overlook the truth, that in itself it is also at the bottom of what is characteristically beautiful and most attractive in the people of the South. If you have ever met with anything in character, French or Italian, which specially charmed you, either in literature or in real life, I am sure that

you would find the root and the secret of it in the fulness and the play of the affections; in their unfolding and in their ready disclosure; in the way in which they have blossomed into flowers of strange richness and varied beauty; in the inexpressible charm and grace and delicacy and freedom which they have infused into word and act and demeanour, into a man's relations with his family, his parents, his brothers and sisters, into his friendships, and if he has been a religious man, into his religious life. In good and bad literature, in the books and in the manners which have half ruined France, and in those which are still her redemption and hope, still you find, in one way or another, the dominant and animating element in some strong force and exhibition of the affections. You will see it in such letters as those of Madame de Sévigné. You may see it in the pictures of a social life almost at one time peculiar to France—a life so full of the great world and refined culture, and the gaiety and whirl of high and brilliant circles in a great capital, yet withal so charmingly and unaffectedly simple, unselfish, and warm, so really serious at bottom, it may be, so profoundly self-devoted: such a book as one that has lately been lying on our tables, Madame Augustus Craven's *Récit d'une Sœur*, a sister's story of the most ordinary, and yet of the deepest family union, family joys, family attachments, family sorrows and partings,—a story of people living their usual life in the great world, yet as natural and

tender and unambitious as if the great world did not exist for them. You may see the same thing in their records of professedly devotional lives,—in what we read, for instance, about the great men and women of Port-royal, about Fénélon, about St. Francis de Sales, or, to come later down, about Lacordaire, or Eugénie de Guérin, or Montalembert. In French eloquence, very noble when it is real—in French bombast, inimitable, unapproachable in the exquisiteness of its absurdity and nonsense;—whether it is what is beautiful or contemptible, whether it subdues and fascinates, or provokes, or amuses you, the mark and sign is there of a nature in which the affections claim and are allowed, in their real or their counterfeit forms, ample range and full scope; where they are ever close to the surface, as well as working in the depths; where they suffuse all life, and spontaneously and irresistibly colour thought and speech; where they play about the whole character in all its movements, like the lightning about the clouds of the summer evening.

And so with the Italians. The great place which the affections have taken in their national character, and the ways in which the affections unfold and reveal themselves, are distinctive and momentous. More than genius by itself, more than the sagacity and temperate good sense which Italians claim, or than the craft with which others have credited them, this power of the affections has determined the place of Italy in modern civilisation. The weakness of which

her literature and manners have most to be ashamed, and the loftiness and strength of which she may be proud, both come from the ruling and prominent influence of the affections, and the indulgence, wise or unwise, of their claims. From it has come the indescribable imbecility of the Italian poetasters. From it has come the fire, the depth, the nobleness of the Italian poets; and not of them only, but of writers who, with much that is evil, have much that is both manly and touching—the Italian novelists, the Italian satirists. It has given their spell not only to the sonnets of Michel Angelo, but to the story of Manzoni, and to the epigrams, so fierce and bitter, but so profoundly pathetic, of Leopardi and Giusti. And you must not think that this is a thing of comparatively modern times. This spectacle of the affections bursting in their new vigour from the bands or the deadness of the old world soon meets us in the middle ages. Take, for instance,—an extreme instance, if you will,—one of the favourite Italian saints, St. Francis; one who both reflected and also evoked what was in the heart of the people; one who to us is apt to seem simply an extravagant enthusiast, but was once a marvellous power in the world, and who is beginning once more to interest our own very different age,—witness Mrs. Oliphant's life of him in the *Sunday Library*. In him you may see the difference between the old and the new Italians. An old Roman might have turned stoic or cynic: an old Roman might have

chosen to be poor, have felt the vanity of the world, have despised and resigned it. But when St. Francis resolves to be poor he does not stop there. His purpose blossoms out into the most wonderful development of the affections, of all that is loving, of all that is sympathetic, of all that is cheerful and warm and glad and gracious. Poverty he speaks of as his dear and glorious Bride, and the marriage of Francis and Poverty becomes one of the great themes of song and art; there must be something along with his tremendous self-sacrifice which shall invest it with the charm of the affections. Stern against privation and pain and the face of death as the sternest of Romans, his sternness passed on into a boundless energy of loving, a fulness of joy and delight, which most of us feel more hard to understand than his sternness. "He was a man," says Mrs. Oliphant, "overflowing with sympathy for man and beast—for God's creatures—wherever he encountered them. Not only was every man his brother, but every animal—the sheep in the fields, the birds in the branches, the brother ass on which he rode, the sister bees who took refuge in his protection. He was the friend of everything that suffered and rejoiced. . . . And by this divine right of nature everything trusted in him. . . . For he loved everything that had life.

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

"Such was the unconscious creed of the prophet of Assisi;" which made him salute the birds as his sisters in praising God, and the defenceless leveret as his brother; which inspired the legends of his taming fierce "Brother Wolf" in the streets of Gubbio; which dictated his "Canticle of the Creatures," praising God for all things He had made to give men help and joy — our brother the sun, our sisters the moon and the lovely stars, our "humble and precious" sister water, our brother fire, "bright and pleasant and very mighty;" praising his Lord for those who pardon one another for His Son's sake, and stilling with the spell of his song the rage of civil discord; praising his Lord, as the end drew near, "for our sister the death of the body, from which no man escapeth." This is what you see in one who in that age, among those people, had access, unabashed and honoured, to the seats of power; who cast a charm over Italian democracies; who woke up a response in the hearts at once of labourers and scholars. He is a man who in ancient Rome is inconceivable at once in his weakness and his strength. This is what I mean by the changed place of the affections in the new compared with the old Italians.

2. I will notice another point of difference between the ancient and modern nations of the south of Europe. It can hardly be said that the Romans were, in any eminent sense, an imaginative people. I know that I am speaking of the countrymen of

Lucretius and Catullus, of Virgil and Horace. And of course there was imagination in the grand ideas of rule and empire which filled the Roman mind. But they had not that great gift of which art is born; the eye to discern the veiled beauty of which the world is full, in form, in numbers, in sounds, in proportion, in human expression, in human character, the sympathy which can unveil and embody that beauty in shapes which are absolutely new creations, things new in history and in what exists. They had not that wonderful native impulse and power which called into being the Homeric poems, the stage of Athens, the architecture of the Parthenon, the sculpture of Phidias and Praxiteles, the painting of Polygnotus, the lyric poetry of Simonides and Pindar. I hope you will not suppose that I am insensible to the manifold beauty or magnificence of what Roman art produced in literature, in building, in bust and statue, in graceful and fanciful ornament. But in the general history of art, Roman art seems to occupy much the same place as the age of Dryden and Pope occupies in the history of our own literature. Dryden and Pope are illustrious names; but English poetry would be something very different from what it is if they were its only or its chief representatives. They might earn us the credit of fire, and taste, and exquisite and delicate finish of workmanship; nay, of a cautious boldness of genius, and chastened venturesomeness of invention; they would not entitle our literature to the praise of ima-

ginativeness and originality. For that we must look to Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, and to names which are yet recent and fresh among us; and I can hardly count the beautiful poetry of Rome to be of this order, or to disclose the same kind of gifts. The greatest of Roman poets, in the grandest of his bursts of eloquence, confessed the imaginative inferiority of his people, and bade them remember that their arts, their calling, their compensation, were to crush the mighty, to establish peace, and give law to the world.[1]

I need not remind you how different in genius and faculty were the later nations of the south of Europe. Degenerate as their Roman ancestors would have accounted them for having lost the secret of conquest and empire, they won and long held a supremacy, in some points hardly yet contested, in the arts, in which imagination, bold, powerful, and delicate, invents and creates and shapes. In the noblest poetry, in painting, in sculpture, in music, Italians led the way and set the standard; in some provinces of art they have been rivalled; in some, in time, surpassed; in some they are still unapproached. But without laying stress on their masterpieces, the point is that in

[1] Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra;
Credo equidem: vivos ducent de marmore vultus;
Orabunt causas melius, cœlique meatus
Describent radio, et surgentia sidera dicent;
Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento:
Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

the descendants of the subjects of the Empire, so hard and prosaic and businesslike, the whole temper and tendency of these races is altered. A new and unsuspected spring in their nature has been touched, and a current gushes forth, no more to fail, of new aspirations and ideas, new feelings to be expressed, new thoughts to be embodied. Imaginative faculty, in endlessly varying degrees of force and purity, becomes one of the prominent and permanent characteristics of the race. Crowds of unknown poets and painters all over Italy have yielded to the impulse, and attempted to realise the ideal beauty that haunted them; and the masterpieces which are the flower and crown of all art are but the picked and choice examples out of a crop of like efforts—a crop with numberless failures, more or less signal, but which do nothing to discourage the passionate wish to employ the powers of the imagination. The place of one of the least imaginative among the great races of history is taken by one of the most imaginative—one most strongly and specially marked by imaginative gifts, and most delighting in the use of them.

Whence has come this change over the character of these nations? Whence, in these races sprung from the subjects of the sternest of Empires and moulded under its influence, this reversal of the capital and leading marks, by which they are popularly known and characterised; this development of the emotional part of their nature, this craving after the

beautiful in art? Whence the inexhaustible fertility and inventiveness, the unfailing taste and tact and measure, the inexpressible charm of delicacy and considerate forethought and exuberant sympathy, which are so distinctly French, and which mark what is best in French character and French writing? Whence that Italian splendour of imagination and profound insight into those subtle connections by which objects of the outward senses stir and charm and ennoble the inward soul? What was the discipline which wrought all this? Who was it, who in the ages of confusion which followed the fall of the Empire, sowed and ripened the seeds which were to blossom into such wondrous poetry in the fourteenth century, into such a matchless burst of art in the fifteenth and sixteenth? Who touched in these Latin races the hidden vein of tenderness, the "fount of tears," the delicacies and courtesies of mutual kindness, the riches of art and the artist's earnestness? Who did all this, I do not say in the fresh natures of the Teutonic invaders, for whom the name barbarians is a very inadequate and misleading word, but in the spoiled and hardened children of an exhausted and ruined civilisation?

Can there be any question as to what produced this change? It was the conversion of these races to the faith of Christ. Revolutions of character like this do not, of course, come without many influences acting together; and in this case the humiliations and long affliction of the Northern invasions produced their

deep effects. Hearts were broken and pride was tamed, and in their misery men took new account of what they needed one from another. But the cause of causes, which made other causes fruitful, was the presence, in the hour of their distress, of the Christian Church, with its message, its teaching, and its discipline. The Gospel was—in a way in which no religion, nothing which spoke of the unseen and the eternal, ever had been or could be—a religion of the affections, a religion of sympathy. By what it said, by the way in which it said it, Christianity opened absolutely a new sphere, new possibilities, a new world, to human affections. This is what we see in the conversions, often so sudden, always so fervent, in the New Testament, and in the early ages. Three great revelations were made by the Gospel, which seized on human nature, and penetrated and captivated that part of it by which men thought and felt, their capacities for love and hope, for grief and joy. There was a new idea and sense of sin; there was the humiliation, the companionship with us in our mortal life, of the Son of God, the Cross and the Sacrifice, of Him who was also the Most Highest; there was the new brotherhood of men with men in the family and Church of Christ and God. To the proud, the reserved, the stern, the frivolous, the selfish, who met the reflection of their own very selves in all society around them, there was disclosed a new thing in the human heart and a new thing in the relations of men

to God and to one another. There woke up a hitherto unknown consciousness of the profound mystery of sin—certain, strange, terrible; and with it new searchings of heart, new agonies of conscience, a new train of the deepest feelings, the mingled pains and joys of penitence, the liberty of forgiveness, the princely spirit of sincerity, the ineffable peace of God. And with it came that unimaginable unveiling of the love of God, which overwhelms the imagination which once takes it in, alike whether the mind accepts or rejects it; which grave unbelief recoils from, as "that strange story of a crucified God"; which the New Testament expresses in its record of those ever-amazing words, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—the appearance in the world of time of the everlasting Word, of Christ the Sacrifice, Christ the Healer, Christ the Judge, Christ the Consoler of Mankind and their Eternal Portion. And then it made men feel that, bound together in that august and never-ending brotherhood with the Holy One and the Blessed, they had ties and bonds one to another which transformed all their duties into services of tenderness and love. Once caught sight of, once embodied in the words of a spokesman and interpreter of humanity like St. Paul, these revelations could never more be forgotten. These things were really believed; they were ever present to thought and imagination, revolutionising

life, giving birth to love stronger than death, making death beautiful and joyful. The great deeps of man's nature were broken up—one deep of the heart called to another, while the waves and storms of that great time of judgment were passing over the world. Here was the key which unlocked men's tenderness; here, while they learned a new enthusiasm, they learned what they had never known of themselves, the secret of new affections. And in the daily and yearly progress of the struggling Church, these affections were fed and moulded, and deeply sunk into character. The Latin races learned this secret, in the community of conviction and hope, in the community of suffering, between the high-born and the slave,—they learned it when they met together at the place of execution, in the blood-stained amphitheatre, in the crowded prison-house, made musical with the "sweet solemnities of gratitude and praise," with the loving and high-hearted farewells of resignation and patience; they learned it in the Catacombs, at the graves of the martyrs, in the Eucharistic Feast, in the sign of the Redeemer's Cross, in the kiss of peace; they learned it in that service of perpetual prayer, in which early Latin devotion gradually found its expression and embodied its faith,—in those marvellous combinations of majesty and tenderness, so rugged yet so piercing and so pathetic, the Latin hymns; in those unequalled expressions, in the severest and briefest words, of the deepest needs of the soul, and of all the ties which bind

men to God and to one another, the Latin Collects; in the ever-repeated Psalter, in the *Miserere* and *De Profundis*, in the Canticles of morning and evening and the hour of rest and of death, in the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis*, in the "new song" of the awful *Te Deum*—

Deep as the grave, high as the Eternal Throne.

They learned it in that new social interest, that reverence and compassion and care for the poor, which, beginning in the elder Scriptures, in the intercessions of the Psalms for the poor and needy, and in the Prophetic championship of their cause against pride and might, had become, since the Sermon on the Mount, the characteristic of Christ's religion. They learned it in that new commandment of the Divine Founder of the Church, the great all-embracing Christian word, charity. These are things which, sinking deep into men's hearts, alter, perhaps without their knowing it, the staple of their character. Here it is that we see, unless I am greatly mistaken, the account of one great change in the population of the South in modern and ancient times; of the contrast caused by the place which the affections occupy, compared with the sternness and hardness alike of what was heroic and what was commonplace in ancient Italian character. Imagine a Roman of the old stamp making the sign of the cross. He might perhaps do it superstitiously, as consuls might go to see the sacred chickens feed, or augurs might smile at

one another; but imagine him doing it, as Dante, or Savonarola, or Pascal might do it, to remind himself of a Divine Friend, "Who had loved him and given Himself for him."

And the same account, it seems to me, is to be given of the other great change in Southern character; the development of imaginative originality and of creative genius in all branches of art in later times. It was that the preaching and belief of the Gospel opened to these races a new world, such as they had never dreamed of, not only of truth and goodness, but of Divine beauty. Rugged and unlovely, indeed, was all that the outward aspect of religion at first presented to the world: it was, as was so eloquently said[1] some time ago in this place, the contrast presented by the dim and dreary Catacombs underground to the pure and brilliant Italian sky and the monuments of Roman wealth and magnificence above. But in that poor and mean society, which cared so little for the things of sense and sight, there were nourished and growing up—for, indeed, it was the Church of the God of all glory and all beauty, the chosen home of the Eternal Creating Spirit—thoughts of a perfect beauty above this world; of a light and a glory which the sun could never see: of types, in character and in form, of grace, of sweetness, of nobleness, of tenderness, of perfection, which could find no home in time—which were of the eternal and the unseen on which human

[1] By Professor Lightfoot.

life bordered, and which was to it, indeed, "no foreign land." There these Romans unlearned their old hardness and gained a new language and new faculties. Hardly, and with difficulty, and with scanty success, did they at first strive to express what glowed with such magnificence to their inward eye, and kindled their souls within them. Their efforts were rude—rude in art, often hardly less rude in language. But that Divine and manifold idea before them, they knew that it was a reality; it should not escape them, though it still baffled them;—they would not let it go. And so, step by step, age after age, as it continued to haunt their minds, it gradually grew into greater distinctness and expression. From the rough attempts in the Catacombs or the later mosaics, in all their roughness so instinct with the majesty and tenderness and severe sweetness of the thoughts which inspired them—from the emblems and types and figures, the trees and the rivers of Paradise, the dove of peace, the palms of triumph, the Good Shepherd, the hart no longer "desiring," but at last *tasting* "the water-brooks," from the faint and hesitating adumbrations of the most awful of human countenances—from all these feeble but earnest attempts to body forth what the soul was full of, Christian art passed, with persistent undismayed advance, through the struggles of the middle ages to the inexpressible delicacy and beauty of Giotto and Fra Angelico, to the Last Supper of Lionardo, to the highest that the human mind ever

imagined of tenderness and unearthly majesty, in the Mother and the Divine Son of the Madonna di San Sisto. And the same with poetry. The poetry of which the Christian theology was full from the first wrought itself in very varying measures, but with profound and durable effort, into the new mind and soul of reviving Europe, till it gathered itself up from an infinite variety of sources, history and legend and scholastic argument and sacred hymn, to burst forth in one mighty volume, in that unique creation of the regenerated imagination of the South,—the eventful poem which made the Italians one, whatever might become of Italy,—the sacred song which set forth the wonderful fortunes of the soul of man, under God's government and judgment, its loss, its discipline, its everlasting glory—the *Divina Commedia* of Dante.

I will illustrate these changes by two comparisons. First, as to the development of the imaginative faculty. Compare, and I confine the comparison to this single point—compare, as to the boldness, and originality, and affluence of the creative imagination—the *Æneid* of Virgil and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, whose chief glory it was to be Virgil's scholar. The *Divina Commedia* may, indeed, be taken as the measure and proof of the change which had come over Southern thought and character since the fall of the Empire. There can be no question how completely it reflected the national mind, how deeply the national mind responded to it. Springing full formed and complete

from its creator's soul, without model or precedent, it was at once hailed throughout the Peninsula, and acknowledged to be as great as after ages have thought it; it rose at once into its glory. Learned and unlearned, princes and citizens, recognised in it the same surpassing marvel that we in our day behold in some great scientific triumph; books and commentaries were written about it; chairs were founded in Italian Universities to lecture upon it. In the *Divina Commedia* Dante professes to have a teacher, an unapproachable example, a perfect master and guide;—Virgil, the honour and wonder of Roman literature. Master and scholar, the Mantuan of the age of Augustus, and the Florentine citizen of the age of the Guelfs and Ghibellines, his devout admirer, were, it need not be said, essentially different; but the point of difference on which I now lay stress is the place which the affections, in their variety and fulness and perpetual play, occupy in the works of writers so closely related to one another. From the stately grace, the "supreme elegance," from the martial and senatorial majesty of the Imperial poem, you come, in Dante, on severity indeed, and loftiness of word and picture and rhythm; but you find the poem pervaded and instinct with human affections of every kind; the soul is free, and every shade of its feelings, its desires, its emotions, finds its expressive note; they pass from high to low, from deep to bright, through a scale of infinite range and changefulness; you are astonished to find moods

of feeling which you thought peculiar and unobserved in yourself noted by the poet's all-embracing sympathy. But this is no part of the Latin poet's experience, at least of his poetic outfit; such longings, such anxieties, such despair, such indignation, such gracious sweetness, such fire of holy wrath, such fire of Divine love, familiar to our modern world, to our modern poetry, are strange to Virgil. Nay, in his day, to the greatest masters of the human soul, to the noblest interpreters of its ideals, they had not yet been born. I suppose that in Virgil the places where we should look for examples of this bursting out of the varied play of the affections, native, profound, real, would be the account of the last fatal night of Troy, the visit to the regions and shades of the dead, the death of Pallas and his slayer Turnus, the episode, above all, of the soldier friends, Nisus and the young Euryalus. Who shall say that there is any absence of tender and solemn feeling? The Italian poet owns, with unstinted and never-tiring homage, that here he learnt the secret and the charm of poetry. But compare on this one point —viz. the presence, the vividness, the naturalness, the diversity, the frankness, of human affection,—compare with these passages almost any canto taken at random of the *Divina Commedia*, and I think you would be struck with the way in which, in complete contrast with the *Æneid*, the whole texture of the poem is penetrated and is alive with feeling; with all forms of grief and pity and amazement, with all forms of love

and admiration and delight and joy. In the story of Francesca, in the agony of the Tower of Famine, in the varied endurance and unfailing hope of the Purgatorio, in the joys and songs of the Paradiso, we get new and never-forgotten glimpses into the abysses and the capacities of the soul of man.

In the next place, what I seek to illustrate is the difference in the place occupied by the affections in men of the old and the new race, in the same great national group, a difference made, as I conceive, by Christianity. Let us take, as one term of the comparison, the great and good Emperor Marcus Aurelius. His goodness is not only known from history, but we also have the singular and inestimable advantage of possessing "a record of his inward life, his *Journal*, or *Commentaries*, or *Meditations*, or *Thoughts*, for by all these names has the work been called." I take this description from an essay on him by Mr. Matthew Arnold, which gives what seems to me a beautiful and truthful picture of one of the most genuine and earnest and elevated souls of the ancient world. I cannot express my wonder, my admiration, my thankfulness, every time I open his book, and remember that it was written by a Roman Emperor in the midst of war and business, and remember also what a Roman Emperor, the master of the world, might in those days be, and what he often was. What is so touching is the mixture of heroic truth and purpose, heroic in its self-command and self-surrender, with a deep tenderness

not the less evident because under austere restraint. "It is by its accent of emotion," says Mr. Arnold, "that the morality of M. Aurelius acquires its special character, and reminds one of Christian morality. The sentences of Seneca are stimulating to the intellect; the sentences of Epictetus are fortifying to the character; the sentences of Marcus Aurelius find their way to the soul." In his opening pages, written apparently in camp in a war against the wild tribes of the Danube, he goes over in memory all his friends, remembering the several good examples he had seen in each, the services, great and small, to his moral nature he had received from each, and then thankfully refers all to the Divine power and providence which had kept his life, thanking the gods, as Bishop Andrews thanks God in his devotions, for his good parents and good sister, "for teachers kind, benefactors never to be forgotten, intimates congenial, friends sincere . . . for all who had advantaged him by writings, converse, patterns, rebukes, even injuries" . . . "for nearly everything good"—thanking them that he was kept from folly and shame and sin—thanking them that "though it was his mother's fate to die young, it was from her," he says, "that he learned piety and beneficence, and abstinence not only from evil deeds but from evil thoughts"—"that she had spent the last years of her life with him;" "that whenever I wished to help any man in his need, I was never told that I had not the means to do it: . . .

that I have a wife, so obedient, so affectionate, and so simple; that I have such good masters for my children."

Two centuries later we come upon another famous book, Latin in feeling, and in this case in language,—the record of the history and experience of a soul thirsting and striving after the best. After the Meditations of the Roman Emperor come the "Confessions" of the Christian saint—St. Augustine. It is not to my purpose to compare these two remarkable books except in this one point. In Marcus Aurelius, emotion there is, affection, love, gratitude to a Divine Power which he knows not; but his feelings refrain from speaking,—they have not found a language. In St. Augustine's Confessions they have learned to speak,—they have learned, without being ashamed of themselves, without pretence of unworthiness, to pour out of their fulness. The chain is taken off the heart; the lips are unloosed. In both books there is a retrospect, earnest, honest, thankful, of the writer's providential education; in both, the writers speak of what they owe to their mother's care and love. Both (the words of one are few) are deeply touching. But read the burst of passionate praise and love to God with which Augustine's Confessions open—read the account of his mother's anxieties during his wild boyhood and youth, of his mother's last days, and of the last conversations between mother and son in "the house looking into the garden at Ostia;" and I think we

shall say that a new and hitherto unknown fountain of tenderness and peace and joy had been opened, deep, calm, unfailing, and that what had opened it was man's new convictions of his relation to a living God of love, the Lord and object and portion of hearts and souls. "Thou madest us for Thyself," is his cry, "and our heart is restless till it repose in Thee." Here is the spring and secret of this new affection, this new power of loving:—

"What art Thou, O my God? What art Thou, I beseech Thee, but the Lord my God? For who is God, besides our Lord,—Who is God, besides our God? O Thou Supreme; most merciful; most just; most secret, most present; most beautiful, most mighty, most incomprehensible; most constant, and yet changing all things; immutable, never new and never old, and yet renewing all things; ever in action, and ever quiet; keeping all, yet needing nothing; creating, upholding, filling, protecting, nourishing, and perfecting all things. . . . And what shall I say? O my God, my life, my joy, my holy dear delight! Or what can any man say, when he speaketh of Thee? And woe to those that speak not of Thee, but are silent in Thy praise; for even those who speak most of Thee may be accounted to be but dumb. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, that I may speak unto Thee and praise Thy name."

To the light-hearted Greeks Christianity had turned its face of severity, of awful resolute hope.

The final victory of Christ, and, meanwhile, patient endurance in waiting for it—this was its great lesson to their race. To the serious, practical, hard-natured Roman, it showed another side—"love, joy, peace"; an unknown wealth of gladness and thankfulness and great rejoicing. It stirred his powerful but somewhat sluggish soul; it revealed to him new faculties, disclosed new depths of affection, won him to new aspirations and new nobleness. And this was a new and real advance and rise in human nature. This expansion of the power of feeling and loving and imagining, in a whole race, was as really a new enlargement of human capacities, a new endowment and instrument and grace, as any new and permanent enlargement of the intellectual powers; as some new calculus, or the great modern conquests in mechanical science, or in the theory and development of music. The use that men or generations have made of those enlarged powers, of whatever kind, is another matter. Each gift has its characteristic perversions; each perversion has its certain and terrible penalty. We all know but too well that this change has not cured the Southern races of national faults; that the tendencies which it has encouraged have been greatly abused. It has not extirpated falsehood, idleness, passion, ferocity. That quickened and fervid imagination, so open to impressions and eager to communicate them, has debased religion and corrupted art. But if this cultivation of the affections and stimulus given

to the imagination have been compatible with much evil,—with much acquiescence in wrong and absurdity, with much moral stagnation, much inertness of conscience, much looseness of principle, — it must be added, with some of the darkest crimes and foulest corruptions in history,—yet, on the other hand, it has been, in the Southern nations, the secret of their excellence, and their best influences. This new example and standard of sweetness, of courtesy, of affectionateness, of generosity, of ready sympathy, of delight in the warm outpouring of the heart, of grace, of bright and of pathetic thought, of enthusiasm for high and noble beauty—what would the world have been without it? Of some of the most captivating, most ennobling instances which history and society have to show, of what is greatest, purest, best in our nature, this has been the condition and the secret. And for this great gift and prerogative, that they have produced not only great men like those of the elder race, captains, rulers, conquerors, — not only men greater than they, lords in the realm of intelligence, its discoverers and its masters,—but men high in that kingdom of the Spirit and of goodness which is as much above the order of intellect as intellect is above material things,—for this the younger races of the South are indebted to Christianity.

LECTURE III

CHRISTIANITY AND THE TEUTONIC RACES

At the time when the Roman Empire was the greatest power in the world, and seemed the firmest, a race was appearing on the scene which excited a languid feeling of uneasiness among Roman statesmen, and an artificial interest among Roman moralists. The statesman thought that this race might be troublesome as a neighbour, if it was not brought under the Roman rule of conquest. The moralists from their heights of civilisation looked with curiosity on new examples of fresh and vigorous nature, and partly in disgust, partly in quest of unused subjects for rhetorical declamation, saw in them, in the same spirit as Rousseau in later times, a contrast between their savage virtues and Roman degeneracy. There was enough in their love of enterprise and love of fighting to make their wild and dreary country a good exercise-ground for the practice of serious war by the Legions; and gradually a line of military cantonments along the frontier of the Rhine and the Danube grew into important pro-

vincial towns, the advanced guard of Roman order against the darkness and anarchy of the wilderness outside. When the Roman chiefs were incapable or careless, the daring of the barbarians, their numbers, and their physical strength made their hostility formidable; the Legions of Varus perished in the defiles of the German forests, by a disaster like the defeat of Braddock in America, or the catastrophe of Afghanistan; and Roman Emperors were proud to add to their titles one derived from successes, or at least campaigns, against such fierce enemies. The Romans —why, we hardly know—chose to call them, as they called the Greeks, by a name which was not their own; to the Romans they were Germans; to themselves they were Diutisc, Thiudisco, Teutsch, Deutscher, Latinised into Teutons. What they were in themselves, in their ways and thoughts, the Romans in general cared as much as we in general care about the black tribes of the interior of Africa or the Tartar nomads of Central Asia,—must we not almost add, about the vast and varied populations of our own India? What struck the Romans most was that alternation of savage energy and savage indolence and lethargy, which is like the successive ferocity and torpor of the vulture and the tiger. What also partly impressed them was the austerity and purity of their manners, the honour paid to their women, the amount of labour allotted or entrusted to them. But, after all, they were barbarians, not very interesting except

to philosophers, not very menacing except to the imagination of alarmists; needing to be kept in order, of course, as all wild forces do, but not beyond the strength, the majesty, and the arts of the Empire to control and daunt. Tacitus describes the extermination of a large tribe by the jealousy and combination of its neighbours; he speaks of it with satisfaction as the riddance of an inconvenience, and expresses an opinion that if ever the fortunes of the Empire should need it, the discord of its barbarian neighbours might be called into play. But not even he seriously apprehended that the fortunes of the Empire would fail before the barbarian hordes. There was one apparently widespread confederacy among the tribes, which for a time disquieted Marcus Aurelius; but the storm passed—and this "formidable league, the only one that appears in the two first centuries of the Imperial history, was entirely dissipated, without leaving any traces behind in Germany." No one then dreamed that they beheld in that race the destroyers and supplanters of the ancient civilisation. Still less did any one then dream that in the forests and morasses of that vast region—"peopled by the various tribes of one great nation, and comprising the whole of modern Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Livonia, Prussia, and the greater part of Poland"—were the fathers of a nobler and grander world than any that history had yet known; that here was the race which, under many names, Franks and Allemanns, Angles

and Saxons and Jutes, Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, was first to overrun, and then revivify exhausted nations; that it was a race which was to assert its chief and lordly place in Europe, to occupy half of a new-found world, to inherit India, to fill the islands of unknown seas; to be the craftsmen, the traders, the colonists, the explorers of the world. That it should be the parent of English sailors, of German soldiers, this may not be so marvellous. That from it should have come conquerors, heroes, statesmen, "men of blood and iron,"—nay, great rulers and mighty kings—the great Charles, Saxon Ottos, Franconian Henrys, Swabian Frederics, Norman Williams, English Edwards, seems in accordance with the genius of the countrymen of Arminius, the destroyer of the legions of Augustus. But it is another thing to think that from the wild people described by Tacitus, or in the ninth chapter of Gibbon, should have sprung Shakespeare and Bacon, Erasmus and Albert Dürer, Leibnitz and Goethe; that this race should have produced an English court of justice, English and German workshops of thought and art, English and German homes, English and German religious feeling, and religious earnestness.

I need not remind you of the history of this wonderful transition—a transition lasting through centuries, from barbarism to civilisation. The story is everywhere more or less the same. First came a period of overthrow, wasting, and destruction. Then,

instead of the fierce tribes retaining their old savage and predatory habits, they show a singular aptitude for change; they settle in the lands which they have overrun; they pass rapidly into what, in comparison with their former state, is a civil order, with laws, rights, and the framework of society. Angles and Saxons and Danes in Britain, Norsemen by sea, and Franks and Burgundians across the Rhine in Gaul, come to ravage and plunder, and stay to found a country; they arrive pirates and destroyers, urged on by a kind of frenzy of war and ruin, a kind of madness against peaceful life; and when the storm in which they come has passed away, we see that in the midst of the confusion they have created the beginnings of new nations; we see the foundations distinctly laid of England, Normandy, and France. And next, when once the barbarian is laid aside, and political community begins, though the early stages may be of the rudest and most imperfect, beset with the remains of old savagery, and sometimes apparently overlaid by it, yet the idea of civil society and government henceforth grows with ever-accelerating force, with ever-increasing influence. It unfolds itself in various forms and with unequal success; but on the whole the development of it, though often retarded and often fitful and irregular, has never been arrested since the time when it began. The tribes of the same stock which continued to occupy the centre of Europe had the same general history as their

foreign brethren. The great events of conquest, the contact of civilisation outside, the formation and policy of new kingdoms, all reacted on the home of the race; Germany became the established seat of an Empire which inherited the name and the claims of Rome, the complement and often the rival of the new spiritual power which ruled in the ancient Imperial city.

Many causes combined to produce this result. The qualities and endowments of the race, possibly their traditional institutions, certainly their readiness to take in new ideas and to adapt themselves to great changes in life and manners; their quickness in seizing, in the midst of wreck and decline, the points which the ancient order presented for building up a new and advancing one; their instinct, wild and untamed as they were, for the advantages of law; their curious power of combining what was Roman and foreign with what was tenaciously held to as Teutonic and ancestral; their energy and manliness of purpose, their unique and unconquerable elasticity of nature, which rose again and again out of what seemed fatal corruption, as it rose out of defeat and overthrow;—all this explains the great transformation of the invading tribes, the marvellous history of modern Europe. It was thus, no doubt, that the elder civilisations of Greece and Rome had arisen out of elements probably once as wild and unpromising as those from which our younger one has sprung; it was thus that, coming

from the mountains and the woods, from the chase or the pasture-grounds, they learned, in ways and steps now hidden from us—

> To create
> A household and a father-land,
> A city and a state.

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But the fortunes of the elder and the newer civilisations have hitherto been different in fruit and in permanence, and a force was at work in moulding the latter which was absent from the earlier. The Teutonic race found an unknown and unexpected spiritual power before them, such as early Hellenes and Latins had never known. They found, wherever they came, a strange, organised polity, one and united in a vast brotherhood, coextensive with the Empire, but not *of it*, nor of its laws and institutions; earthly in its outward aspect, but the representative and minister of a perpetual and ever-present kingdom of heaven; unarmed, defenceless in the midst of never-ceasing war, and yet inspiring reverence and receiving homage, and ruling by the word of conviction, of knowledge, of persuasion; arresting and startling the new conquerors with the message of another world. In the changes which came over the invading race, this undreamt-of power, which they met in their career, had the deepest and most eventful share.[1] That

[1] In the new era, the first thing we meet with is the religious society; it was the most advanced, the strongest; whether in the Roman municipality, or at the side of the barbarian kings, or in the

great society, which had half converted the Empire, converted and won over its conquerors. In their political and social development it took the lead in conjunction with their born leaders. Legislation, political and social, the reconstruction of a society in chaos, the fusion of old things with new, the adaptation of the forms, the laws, the traditions of one time to the wants of another, the smoothing of jars, the reconciling of conflicting interests, and still more of conflicting and dimly-grasped ideas, all that laid the foundations and sowed the seeds of civil order in all its diversified shapes, as it was to be,—was the work not only of kings, princes, and emperors, but, outwardly as much, morally much more, of

graduated ranks of the conquerors who have become lords of the land, everywhere we observe the presence and the influence of the Church. From the fourth to the thirteenth century it is the Church which always marches in the front rank of civilisation. I must call your attention to a fact which stands at the head of all others, and characterises the Christian Church in general—a fact which, so to speak, has decided its destiny. This fact is the unity of the Church, the unity of the Christian society, irrespectively of all diversities of time, of place, of power, of language, of origin. Wonderful phenomenon! It is just at the moment when the Roman Empire is breaking up and disappearing that the Christian Church gathers itself up and takes its definitive form. Political unity perishes, religious unity emerges. Populations endlessly different in origin, habits, speech, destiny, rush upon the scene; all becomes local and partial; every enlarged idea, every general institution, every great social arrangement is lost sight of; and in this moment this Christian Church proclaims most loudly the unity of its teaching, the universality of its law. And from the bosom of the most frightful disorder the world has ever seen has arisen the largest and purest idea, perhaps, which ever drew men together,—the idea of a spiritual society.—*Guizot*, Lec. xii. p. 230.

the priests, bishops, and councils of the Christian Church.

These results and their efficient causes are in a general way beyond dispute. But can we trace, besides these political and social changes, any ethical changes of corresponding importance? Such changes, of course, there must have been, in populations altering from one state to another, where the interval between these states is so enormous as that between uncivilised and civilised life. But it is conceivable, though, of course, not likely, that they might have been of little interest to those who care about human goodness and the development of the moral side of human nature. China has passed into a remarkable though imperfect civilisation, but without perceptible moral rise. Or the changes may be perceptible only in individual instances, and not on that large scale which we take when we speak of national character. Do we see in the Teutonic races changes analogous to those which we believe we can trace in the Greek and the Latin races since they passed under the discipline of Christianity?

I think we can. We must remember that we are on ground where our generalisations can but approximate to the true state of the case, and that when we speak of national character we speak of a thing which, though very striking at a distance and in gross, is vague and tremulous in its outlines, and in detail is full of exceptions and contradictory instances. Come

too near it, and try to hold it too tightly, and it seems to elude our grasp, or, just when we have seized a distinct thought, to escape from us. We are made to feel by objectors that what is shared by so many individual and definite characters, and shared in such endlessly varying proportions, must be looked upon more as an ideal than as anything definitely and tangibly realised. And, again, when we speak of something common to the Teutonic race, we must remember the differences between its different great branches,—in Germany, in the Netherlands, in the Scandinavian countries, in England and its colonies. But for all that, there seem to be some common and characteristic features recognisable in all of them, in distinction from the Latin or Latinised races; gifts and qualities to be found, of course, in individuals of the other races, but not prominent in a general survey; ideals if you like, but ideals which all who are under the ordinary impressions of the race welcome as expressing what they think the highest and presuppose as their standard. There must be some reality attaching to such ideals, or they would never have become ideals to which men delight to look. Fully admitting all the reserves and abatements necessary, we can speak of general points of character in the Teutonic race and try to trace their formation.

There is a great and important difference in the conditions under which Christianity came to the dif-

ferent populations of the old world. To Greeks and to Latins it came as to people who had long been under a civilisation of a high order, whose habits and ideas were formed by it, and who had gone further in all that it can do for men than had ever been known in the world before. To the Teutonic races, on the contrary, it came when they had still to learn almost the first elements of civilised life; and it was along with Christian teaching that they learned them. It took them fresh from barbarism, and was the fountain and the maker of their civilisation. There was yet another difference. Christianity gained its hold on the Greeks and Romans in the time of their deep disasters, in the overthrow and breaking up of society, amid the suffering and anguish of hopeless defeat. It came to them as conquered, subjugated, down-trodden races, in the lowest ebb of their fortunes. It came to the Teutonic races as to conquerors, flushed with success, in the mounting flood of their new destiny. In one case it had to do with men cast down from their high estate, stricken and reeling under the unexampled judgments of God; it associated itself with their sorrows; it awoke and deepened in them the consciousness of the accumulated and frightful guilt of ages; it unlocked and subdued their hearts by its inexhaustible sympathy and awful seriousness; it rallied and knit them once more together in their helplessness into an unearthly and eternal citizenship; it was their one and great

consoler in the miseries of the world. In the Christian literature of the falling Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, in such books as St. Augustine's *City of God*, or Salvian's book on the *Government of God*, we may see, in its nascent state, the influence of Christianity on the shattered and afflicted race which had once been the lords of the world. But with the new nations which had arisen to be their masters the business of Christianity and the Church was not so much to comfort as to tame. They had not yet the deep sins of civilisation to answer for. The pains and sorrows of all human existence had not to them been rendered more acute by the habits, the knowledge, the intense feeling of refined and developed life. They suffered, of course, like all men, and they sinned like all men. But to them the ministry of Christianity was less to soothe suffering, less even, as with the men of the Roman world, to call to repentance for sins against conscience and light, than to lay hold on fresh and impetuous natures; to turn them from the first in the right direction; to control and regenerate noble instincts; to awaken conscience; to humble pride; to curb luxuriant and self-reliant strength; to train and educate and apply to high ends the force of powerful wills and masculine characters. And, historically, this appears to have been its earliest work with its Teutonic converts. The Church is their schoolmaster, their legislator, their often considerate, and sometimes over-indulgent, but always resolute, minister of discip-

line. Of course, as time went on, this early office was greatly enlarged and diversified. But it seems to me that the effects of Christianity on their national character, as it was first forming under religious influences, are to be traced to the conditions under which those influences were first exerted.

I have said that the great obvious change observable in the Latin nations since they passed under Christianity seemed to me to be the development of the affections; the depths of the heart were reached and touched as they never were before; its fountains were unsealed. In the same school the German races were made by degrees familiar with the most wonderful knowledge given *here* to man to know,—an insight into the depths of his own being, the steady contemplation of the secrets, the mysteries, the riddles of his soul and his life. They learned this lesson first from Latin teachers, who had learned it themselves in the Psalms, the Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. John, and in whom thought had stirred the deepest emotions, and kindled spontaneously into the new language of religious devotion. How profoundly this affected the unfolding character of the Teutonic peoples; how the tenderness, the sweetness, the earnestness, the solemnity, the awfulness of the Christian faith sank into their hearts, diffused itself through their life, allied itself by indestructible bonds with what was dearest and what was highest, with their homes, their assemblies, their crowns, their

graves—all this is marked on their history, and reveals itself in their literature. Among them, as among the Latin races, religion opened new springs in the heart, and made new channels for the affections; channels, as deep, as full, as diversified, in the North as in the South; though they were less on the surface; though they sometimes wanted freedom and naturalness in their flow; though their charm and beauty, as well as their degeneracy or extravagance, forced themselves less on the eye. We may appreciate very variously the forms and phases of religion and religious history in the Northern races. You may find in them the difference, and the difference is immense, ranging between mere vague, imaginative, religious sentiment, and the profoundest convictions of Christian faith. The moment you touch particular questions, instantly the divergences of judgment and sympathy appear, as to what is religion. But the obvious experience of facts and language, and the evidence of foreigners alike attest how, in one form or another, religion has penetrated deeply into the national character both of Germany and England; how serious and energetic is the religious element in it, and with what tenacity it has stood its ground against the direst storms.

But the German stock is popularly credited with an especial value for certain great classes of virtues, of which the germs are perhaps discernible in its early history, but which, in their real nature, have been the

growth of its subsequent experience and training. It is, of course, childish and extravagant to make any claims of this kind without a vast margin for signal exceptions; all that can justly be said is that public opinion has a special esteem and admiration for certain virtues, and that the vices and faults which it specially dislikes are their opposites. And the virtues and classes of virtues which have been in a manner canonised among us, which we hold in honour, not because they are rare, but because they are regarded as congenial and belonging to us,—the virtues our regard for which colours our judgments, if it does not always influence our actions,—are the group of virtues connected with Truth; the virtues of Manliness; the virtues which have relation to Law; and the virtues of Purity.

I mean by the virtues connected with *Truth*, not only the search after what is true, and the speaking of what is known or believed to be true, but the regard generally for what is real, substantial, genuine, solid, which is shown in some portions of the race by a distrust, sometimes extreme, of theories, of intellectual subtleties, of verbal accuracy,—the taste for plainness and simplicity of life and manners and speech,—the strong sense of justice, large, unflinching, consistent; the power and will to be fair to a strong opponent,—the impatience of affectation and pretence; not merely the disgust or amusement, but the deep moral indignation, at shams and imposture,—

the dislike of over-statement and exaggeration; the fear of professing too much; the shame and horror of seeming to act a part; the sacrifice of form to substance; the expectation and demand that a man should say what he really means — say it well, forcibly, elegantly, if he can; but anyhow, rather say it clumsily and awkwardly than say anything *but* what he means, or sacrifice his real thought to his rhetoric. I mean, too, that unforced and honest modesty both of intellect and conduct which comes naturally to any man who takes a true measure of himself and his doings. Under the virtues of *Manliness*, I mean those that belong to a serious estimate of the uses, the capacities, the call of human life; the duty of hard work; the value and jealousy for true liberty; independence of soul, deep sense of responsibility and strength not to shrink from it, steadiness, endurance, perseverance; the power of sustaining cheerfully disappointment and defeat; the temper not to make much of trifles, whether vexations or pleasures. I include that great self-commanding power, to which we give the name of moral courage; which makes a man who knows and measures all that his decision involves, not afraid to be alone against numbers; not afraid, when he knows that he is right, of the consciousness of the disapprobation of his fellows, of the face, the voice, the frown, the laugh, of those against him;—moral courage, by which a man holds his own judgment, if reason and conscience bid

him, against his own friends, against his own side, and of which, perhaps, the highest form is that by which he is able to resist, not the sneers and opposition of the bad, but the opinion and authority of the good. All these are such qualities as spring from the deep and pervading belief that this life is a place of trial, probation, discipline, effort, to be followed by a real judgment. I mean by the virtues having relation to *Law*, the readiness to submit private interests and wishes to the control of public authority; to throw a consecration around the unarmed forms and organs of this authority; to obey for conscience sake, and out of a free and loyal obedience, and not from fear: the self-control, the patience, which, in spite of the tremendous inequalities and temptations of human conditions, keep society peacefully busy; which enable men, even under abuses, wrong, provocation, to claim a remedy and yet wait for it; which makes them have faith in the ultimate victory of right and sound reason; which teaches men in the keen battles of political life, as it has been said, to "quarrel by rule"; which instinctively recoils from revolution under the strongest desire for change. The phrase, a "law-abiding" people, may as a boast be sometimes very rudely contradicted by facts; but it expresses an idea and a standard. I add the virtues of *Purity*—not forgetting how very little any race or people can venture to boast over its neighbours for its reverence and faithfulness to these high laws of God and man's

true nature; but remembering also all that has made family life so sacred and so noble among us; all that has made German and English households such schools of goodness in its strongest and its gentlest forms, such shrines of love, and holiness, and peace, the secret places where man's deepest gladness and deepest griefs—never, in truth, very far apart—meet and are sheltered. These are things which, in different proportions and different degrees of perfection, we believe to have marked the development of character in the German races. I do not say, far indeed from it, that all this is to be seen among us,—that we *do* according to all this; but I do say that we always honour it, always acknowledge it our only allowable standard.

These things are familiar enough. But it is not always so familiar to us to measure the immense interval between these types of character and the rude primitive elements out of which they have been moulded, or to gauge the force of the agencies which laid hold of those elements, when it was quite within the compass of possibility that they might have received an entirely different impulse and direction;—agencies which turned their wild, aimless, apparently untameable, energies from their path of wasting and ruin, into courses in which they were slowly to be fashioned anew to the highest uses and purposes of human life. There is nothing inconceivable in the notion that what the invading tribes were in their original seats for centuries they might have continued

to be in their new conquests; that the invasion might have been simply the spread and perpetuation of a hopeless and fatal barbarism. As it was, a long time passed before it was clear that barbarism had not taken possession of the world. But the one power which could really cope with it, the one power to which it would listen, which dared to deal with these terrible newcomers with the boldness and frankness given by conviction and hope, was the Christian Church. It had in its possession, influence, ideas, doctrines, laws, of which itself knew not the full regenerating power. We look back to the early acts and policy of the Church towards the new nations, their kings and their people; the ways and works of her missionaries and lawgivers, Ulfilas among the Goths, Augustine in Kent, Remigius in France, Boniface in Germany, Anschar in the North, the Irish Columban in Burgundy and Switzerland, Benedict at Monte Cassino; or the reforming kings, the Arian Theodoric, the great German Charles, the great English Alfred. Measured by the light and the standards they have helped us to attain to, their methods no doubt surprise, disappoint—it may be, revolt us; and all that we dwell upon is the childishness, or the imperfect morality, of their attempts. But if there is anything certain in history, it is that in these rough communications of the deepest truths, in these often questionable modes of ruling minds and souls, the seeds were sown of all that was to make the hope

and the glory of the foremost nations. They impressed upon men in their strong, often coarse, way that truth was the most precious and most sacred of things,—that truth-seeking, truth-speaking, truth in life, was man's supreme duty,—the enjoyment of it his highest blessedness on earth; and they did this, even though they often fell miserably short of the lesson of their words, even though they sometimes, to gain high ends, turned aside into the convenient, tempting paths of untruth. Truth, as it is made the ultimate ground of religion in the New Testament; Truth, as a thing of reality and not of words; Truth, as a cause to contend for in lifelong struggle, and gladly to die for—this was the new, deep, fruitful idea implanted, at the awakening dawn of thought, in the infant civilisation of the North. It became rooted, strong, obstinate; it bore many and various fruits; it was the parent of fervent, passionate belief—the parent, too, of passionate scepticism; it produced persecution and intolerance; it produced resolute and unsparing reformations, indignant uprisings against abuses and impostures. But this great idea of truth, whatever be its consequences, the assumption of its attainableness, of its preciousness, comes to us, as a popular belief and axiom, from the New Testament, through the word and ministry of the Christian Church, from its first contact with the new races; it is the distinct product of that great claim, for the first time made to all the world by the Gospel, and earnestly responded to by strong and

simple natures—the claim of reality and truth made in the words of Him who said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

I have spoken of three other groups of virtues which are held in special regard and respect among us—those connected with manliness and hard work, with reverence for law and liberty, and with pure family life. The rudiments and tendencies out of which these have grown appear to have been early marked in the German races; but they were only rudiments, existing in company with much wilder and stronger elements, and liable, amid the changes and chances of barbarian existence, to be paralysed or trampled out. No mere barbarian virtues could by themselves have stood the trial of having won by conquest the wealth, the lands, the power of Rome. But their guardian was there. What Christianity did for these natural tendencies to good was to adopt them, to watch over them, to discipline, to consolidate them. The energy which warriors were accustomed to put forth in their efforts to conquer, the missionaries and ministers of Christianity exhibited in their enterprises of conversion and teaching. The crowd of unknown saints whose names fill the calendars, and live, some of them, only in the titles of our churches, mainly represent the age of heroic spiritual ventures, of which we see glimpses in the story of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany; of St. Columban and St. Gall, wandering from Ireland to reclaim the barbarians of the Burgun-

dian deserts and of the shores of the Swiss lakes. It was among men like these—men who were then termed emphatically "men of religion"—that the new races first saw the example of life ruled by a great and serious purpose, which yet was not one of ambition or the excitement of war; a life of deliberate and steady industry, of hard and uncomplaining labour; a life as full of activity in peace, of stout and brave work, as a warrior's was wont to be in the camp, on the march, in the battle. It was in these men, and in the Christianity which they taught, and which inspired and governed them, that the fathers of our modern nations first saw exemplified the sense of human responsibility, first learned the nobleness of a ruled and disciplined life, first enlarged their thoughts of the uses of existence, first were taught the dignity and sacredness of honest toil. These great axioms of modern life passed silently from the special homes of religious employment to those of civil; from the cloisters and cells of men who, when they were not engaged in worship, were engaged in field-work or book-work,—clearing the forest, extending cultivation, multiplying manuscripts,—to the guild of the craftsman, the shop of the trader, the study of the scholar. Religion generated and fed these ideas of what was manly and worthy in man. Once started, they were reinforced from other sources; thought and experience enriched, corrected, and co-ordinated them. But it was the power and sanction of a religion and a creed

which first broke men into their yoke that now seems so easy, gradually wrought their charm over human restlessness and indolence and pride, gradually reconciled mankind to the ideas, and the ideas to mankind, gradually impressed them on that vague but yet real thing which we call the general thought and mind of a nation. It was this, too, that wrought a further and more remarkable change in elevating and refining the old manliness of the race. It brought into the dangerous life of the warrior the sense of a common humanity, the great idea of self-sacrificing duty. It was this religion of mercy and peace, and yet of strength and purpose, which out of the wild and conflicting elements of what we call the age of chivalry gradually formed a type of character in which gentleness, generosity, sympathy were blended with the most daring courage,—the Christian soldier, as we have known him in the sternest tasks and extremest needs, in conquest and in disaster, ruling, judging, civilising. It was the sense of duty derived from this religion to the traditions and habits of a great service, which made strong men stand fast in the face of death, while the weak were saved, on the deck of the sinking *Birkenhead*.

So with respect to law and freedom. I suppose that it may be set down as a characteristic of the race, that in very various degrees and proportions, and moving faster or slower in different places and times, there has been throughout its history the tendency and persistent purpose to hold and secure in combination

both these great blessings. Of course there are tracts of history where this demand of the national conscience seems suspended or extinguished; but it has never disappeared for a time, even under German feudalism or despotism, without making itself felt in some shape, and at last reasserting itself in a more definite and advanced form. It involves the jealous sense of personal rights and independence along with deference, respectful, and perhaps fervently loyal, to authority believed to be rightful; a steady obedience to law when law is believed to be just, with an equally steady disposition to resent its injustice. How has this temper been rooted in our race? The quick feelings and sturdy wills of a high-spirited people will account for part, but not for all; where did they learn self-command as well as courage, the determination to be patient as well as inflexible? They learned it in those Christian ideas of man's individual importance and corporate brotherhood and fellowship, those Christian lessons and influences, which we see diffused through the early attempts in these races to state principles of government and lay down rules of law. They learned it in the characteristic and memorable struggles of the best and noblest of the Christian clergy against lawlessness and self-will, whether shown in the license of social manners, or in the tyranny of kings and nobles; in their stout assertion against power and force, of franchises and liberties, which, though in the first instance the privileges of a few, were the seeds of the

rights of all. We see in the clergy a continued effort to bring everything under the sovereignty of settled, authoritative law, circumscribing individual caprice, fencing and guarding individual rights; from them the great conception passed into the minds of the people, into the practice and policy—in time often the wider and more comprehensive policy and practice—of civil legislators and administrators. The interpretation of the great Christian precepts connecting social life and duties with the deepest religious thought passed into the sphere of political principles and order: "to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's";—"let every soul be subject to the higher powers";—"as free, yet not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness"; "God hath set the members in the body as it hath pleased Him . . . and the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." These and such like great rules of order and freedom, coupled with the tremendous words of the Psalms and Prophets against oppression and the pride of greatness, found sympathetic response in Teutonic minds and germinated in them into traditions and philosophical doctrines, the real root of which may be forgotten, but which indeed come down from the Christian education of the barbarian tribes, and to the attempts of their teachers to bring out the high meaning of the Christian teaching about what is due from man to man in the various relations of society. Be it so, that these attempts

were one-sided and crude ones, that the struggles to seize this meaning were often baffled. But all history is the record of imperfect and unrealised ideas; and nothing is more unphilosophical or more unjust than to forget the place and importance which such attempts had in their time, and in the scale of improvement. We criticise the immature and narrow attempts of the ecclesiastical champions of law. Let us not forget that they were made at a time when, but for them, the ideas both of law and of liberty would have perished.

And one more debt our race owes to Christianity —the value and love which it has infused into us for a pure and affectionate and peaceful home. Not that domestic life does not often show itself among the Latin races in very simple and charming forms. But *Home* is specially Teutonic, word and thing. Teutonic sentiment, we know, from very early times, was proud, elevated, even austere, in regard to the family and the relations of the sexes. This nobleness of heathenism, Christianity consecrated and transformed into all the beautiful shapes of household piety, household affection, household purity. The life of Home has become the great possession, the great delight, the great social achievement of our race; its refuge from the storms and darkness without, an ample compensation to us for so much that we want of the social brilliancy and enjoyment of our Latin brethren. Reverence for the household and for household life, a high sense of its

duties, a keen relish for its pleasures, this has been a strength to German society amid much to unsettle it. The absence of this taste for the quiet and unexcited life of home is a formidable symptom in portions of our race across the Atlantic. And when home life, with its sanctities, its simplicity, its calm and deep joys and sorrows, ceases to have its charm for us in England, the greatest break-up and catastrophe in English history will not be far off.

And now to end. I have endeavoured to point out how those great groups of common qualities which we call national character have been in certain leading instances profoundly and permanently affected by Christianity. Christianity addresses itself primarily and directly to individuals. In its proper action, its purpose and its business is to make men saints; what it has to do with souls is far other, both in its discipline and its scope, from what it has to do with nations or societies. Further, its effect on national characteristics must be consequent on its effect on individuals; an effluence from the separate persons whom it has made its own, the outer undulations from centres of movement and tendency in single hearts and consciences. Of course such effects are quite distinct; they differ in motive, in intensity, in shape, and form. What is immediate and full in the one case is secondary and imperfect in the other, largely mixed and diluted with qualifying, perhaps hostile, influences. But nations really have their fortunes and history

independently of the separate individuals composing them; they have their faults, their virtues, their crimes, their fate; and so in this broad, loose, and yet not unreal way, they have their characters. Christianity, which spoke at first to men one by one, went forth a high Imperial power, into the "wilderness of the people," and impressed itself on nations. Christianity, by its public language and public efforts, made man infinitely more interesting to man than ever he was before. Doubtless, the impression was much more imperfect, inconsistent, equivocal, than in the case of individuals. But for all that, the impression, within its own conditions and limits, was real, was strong, was lasting. Further—and this is my special point now,—it was of great importance. National character is indeed a thing of *time*, shown on the stage of this earthly and transitory scene, adapted to it and partaking of its incompleteness. The interests, the perfection of souls, are of another order. But nothing can be unimportant which affects in any way the improvement, the happiness, the increased hopes of man, in any stage of his being. And nations and societies, with their dominant and distinguishing qualities, are the ground on which souls grow up, and have their better or worse chance, as we speak, for the higher discipline of inward religion. It is all-important how habits receive their bias, how the controlling and often imperious rules of life are framed; with what moral assumptions men start in their course. It is very

important to us, as individuals, whether or not we grow up in a society where polygamy and slavery are impossible, where veracity is exacted, where duelling is discountenanced, where freedom, honour, chastity, readiness for effort and work, are treated as matters of course in those with whom we live.

We have seen that Christianity is very different in its influence on different national characters. It has wrought with nations as with men. For it does not merely gain their adherence, but within definite limits it develops differences of temperament and mind. Human nature has many sides, and under the powerful and fruitful influence of Christianity these sides are brought out in varying proportions. Unlike Mahometanism, which seems to produce a singularly uniform monotony of character in races, however naturally different, on which it gets a hold, Christianity has been in its results, viewed on a large scale, as singularly diversified — not only diversified, but incomplete. It has succeeded, and it has failed. For it has aimed much higher, it has demanded much more, it has had to reckon with far more subtle and complicated obstacles. If it had mastered its special provinces of human society as Mahometanism has mastered Arabs and Turks, the world would be very different from what it is. Yes; it has fallen far short of that completeness. The fruits of its power and discipline have been partial. It is open to any one, and easy enough, to point out the shortcomings of

saints; and, much more, the faults and vices of Christian nations. But the lesson of history, I think, is this: *not* that all the good which might have been hoped for to society has followed from the appearance of Christian religion in the forefront of human life; *not* that in this wilful and blundering world, so full of misused gifts and wasted opportunities and disappointed promise, mistake and mischief have never been in its train; *not* that in the nations where it has gained a footing it has mastered their besetting sins, the falsehood of one, the ferocity of another, the characteristic sensuality, the characteristic arrogance of others. But history teaches us this: that in tracing back the course of human improvement we come, in one case after another, upon Christianity as the source from which improvement derived its principle and its motive; we find no other source adequate to account for the new spring of amendment; and, without it, no other sources of good could have been relied upon. It was not only the strongest element of salutary change, but one *without* which others would have had no chance. And, in the next place, the least and most imperfect instance of what it has done has this unique quality—that Christianity carries within it a self-correcting power, ready to act whenever the will arrives to use this power; that it suggests improvement, and furnishes materials for a further step to it. What it has done *anywhere*, what it has done where it has done most, leaves much to

do; but *everywhere* it leaves the ground gained on which to do it, and the ideas to guide the reformer in doing it. We should be cowards to think that those mighty and beneficent powers which won this ground for us, and produced these ideas in dark and very unhappy times, cannot in our happier days accomplish even more. Those ancient and far-distant ages, which have been occupying our attention here for a little while, amid the pressure and strain of our busy present, we may, we ought, to leave far behind, in what we hope to achieve. But in our eagerness for improvement, it concerns us to be on our guard against the temptation of thinking that we can have the fruit or the flower and yet destroy the root; that we may retain the high view of human nature which has grown with the growth of Christian nations, and discard that revelation of Divine love and human destiny of which that view forms a part or a consequence; that we may retain the moral energy, and yet make light of the faith that produced it. It concerns us to remember, amid the splendours and vastness of a nature, and of a social state, which to *us*, as individuals, are both so transitory, that first and above everything we are moral and religious beings, trusted with will, made for immortality. It concerns us that we do not despise our birthright, and cast away our heritage of gifts and of powers, which we may lose, but not recover.

THE SACRED POETRY

OF

EARLY RELIGIONS

TWO LECTURES

DELIVERED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

January 27th and February 3rd, 1874

NOTICE

My excuse for venturing to speak in these lectures on matters about which I have no knowledge at first hand, is that these matters have lately been brought very fully before English readers in a popular form by those who have. In essays of great interest, from time to time inserted in the *Times* and other widely read periodicals, one of the chief living masters of Oriental scholarship, Mr. Max Müller, has made us familiar with some of its most important achievements. My authorities are his *History of Sanscrit Literature*, 1860 ; his Essays on the Vedas, the Zendavesta, and *Semitic Monotheism*, republished in the first volume of *Chips from a German Workshop*, 1868 ; his translation, of which one volume has appeared, of the Rig-Veda-Sanhitâ, 1869 ; his *Lectures on the Science of Religion*, 1872 ; the first volume of Bunsen's *God in History*, translated by Miss Winkworth, 1868 ; and Barthélemy St. Hilaire, *Le Bouddha et sa Religion*, 1862.

R. W. C.

LECTURE I

THE VEDAS

THE subject on which I propose to speak to you is the sacred poetry of early religions. I need hardly tell you that the subject is a very wide one, and that we have not much time at our disposal. In what I have to say I can but deal with it very generally, and by way of specimens and examples.

The sacred poetry of a religion is the expression of feeling, in its more elevated and intense forms, towards the object of its worship. A creed expresses belief. Prayers set forth needs, present requests, ask for blessings, deprecate evils. Psalms and hymns are the voice of the religious emotions, the religious affections, it may be the religious passions. They assume what a creed asserts. They urge what a prayer urges, but they do it under more vivid impressions of the power addressed, from the larger and more inspiring aspect given by an awakened imagination or a heart deeply stirred. They carry to the highest point whatever there is in a religion; they mark the level to which

in idea and faith, in aspiration and hope, it can rise. The heart of a religion passes into its poetry,—all its joy, its tenderness and sweetness, if it has any, its deepest sighs, its longings and reachings after the eternal and unseen, whatever is most pathetic in its sorrow or boldest in its convictions. Its sacred songs give the measure of what it loves, what it imagines, what it trusts to, in that world out of sight, of which religion is the acknowledgment, and which it connects with this one.

With the sacred poetry of one ancient religion, the religion which as a matter of history enshrined and handed on from primitive times the faith and worship of the One Living God, we are familiar. The Psalms of those far distant days, the early utterances of their faith and love, still form the staple of the worship and devotion of the Christian Church. But side by side in the course of the centuries with this religion were other religions of unknown antiquity, the religions of great tribes and races and multitudes, forefathers of nations which have come down, from the days before history, into the days when history began to be written, and at length to our own. With the earliest forms of these religions, all of them religions of Asia, with their ideas of the divine, with their ways of worship, we have only of late years become even partially acquainted. But Oriental learning, in the hands of great scholars of this century, from Sir W. Jones, whose monument faces me under this dome, to

Burnouf and Max Müller, has opened to us a glimpse of that primeval and mysterious world. They believe themselves to have succeeded in disengaging the earlier and primitive documents from those of later date, and in reproducing with approximate accuracy the religious language and ideas of ancient races in China, in India, in Persia.

The early religions of China, the great Indian reform of Buddhism, are full of a strange and melancholy interest; but they are mostly didactic in form and expression, and there seems to be little in them which can be called poetical. In the case of the primitive religions of India and Persia their earliest language is poetry, and speaks in the form of hymns. This primeval poetry is, we are assured, perfectly distinct,—in its natural freshness and comparative simplicity, in its apparent effort really to recognise and express the mystery of what is seen in nature and believed beyond it—from the coarse mythologies and gross idolatry of subsequent ages. It is to this early poetry that I venture to invite your attention this evening; and it is of this, viewed in comparison with the sacred poetry of another early age, the collection which we call the Psalms, that I propose to speak in the lecture of next Tuesday.

You will understand that I have no pretence to speak about it from first-hand study. But we have in our hands the results of the work of most patient and sagacious scholars; and we may be assured that,

under their guidance, we know as much as any one can know in the present state of our information. I take for granted—and I suppose that we are safe in doing so—the general accuracy of their statements as to the character and meaning of what they cite and translate.

The most ancient relics of primitive Indian religion are the hymns of the Vedas, the sacred books of Brahman religion. The age of these hymns can only be guessed at, but by those who know best it is carried back some 3000 years to the centuries between 1200 and 1500 before our era. They are over a thousand in number, and they represent the early religious thoughts and feelings of a great race in Central Asia, the Aryan branch of the human family, the stock which was to people not only India and Persia, but the greater part of Europe—the fathers of Greeks and Italians, of the Teutonic, the Celtic, the Slavonic nations, as well as of those who crossed the Himalayas to the banks of the Indus and the Ganges. The language of these Vedic hymns is the oldest form of that which is often spoken of as the oldest of languages, the sacred language of the Brahmans, the Sanscrit. They are too old to have anything of a history besides what can be gathered from their language and matter. We know next to nothing of their authors, or the condition under which they were first uttered: in reading them, "we stand in the presence of a veiled life," on which nothing external of record or monument throws light. It is only of late years that scholars have been able successfully

to decipher what Mr. Max Müller calls "the dark and helpless utterances of the ancient poets of India." The clue, however, has been found. The difficulties of interpretation have, we are assured, yielded in great degree to the skill and patience which have been expended on them; and the exceeding interest of the knowledge thus for the first time opened of these early thoughts of men has been an ample reward.

And certainly it is most remarkable and most impressive that though, as I have said, they have no history, though there is not the slenderest thread of surrounding or accompanying record to connect them with the men who must have lived and the events which must have happened before they could be composed, though they stand out like constellations, projected, singly and in isolation, against an impenetrable depth of dark sky behind them, yet the poems bear in themselves the evidence of a very high advance in men's mastery of the faculties of their own mind and the arts of speech. When they were composed, the interval had already become a long one, from the rudeness and grossness of savage existence. Thought had learned to grasp and express feeling, and language had found out some of its subtlest expedients. They are the foundation of the later forms of Indian religion; but they are, we are told, absolutely distinct in ideas and spirit from the ceremonial and the mythologies afterwards built on them.

The common and prominent element in these hymns

is their sense of the greatness and wonder and mystery of external nature. The composers of them were profoundly impressed by the conviction that in its familiar but overpowering magnificence and behind its screen there was a living presence and power greater than itself and its master, to which, though out of sight and beyond reach, man could have access :—

> A presence that disturbed them with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.

And what they so keenly felt and so awfully acknowledged, they had attained an adequate instrument to body forth in words.

Whence their religious ideas came must still be counted among the unsolved, if not the hopeless, problems of human history. Indeed, what these ideas distinctly were must always be imperfectly known, for this reason, if for no other—that the thoughts and the words of men living in times so far apart as ours from theirs are practically incommensurable. The great wastes of time lie between us and them. We cannot, with the utmost helps of scholarship, with the highest effort of imagination, see things as they saw them, and think with their thoughts, with their knowledge, their habits, their associations. What we and

the centuries before us have passed through, what we know, what we have become, prevents us. But we can know something, though not all. The most elaborate investigations, the most indefatigable and refined comparisons, have sorted out and approximately arranged for us these ancient hymns. Many of them have been translated; in the last instance by one who moves with ease under an accumulation and weight of the most varied and minute knowledge sufficient to crush most minds, but who brings to it a power and versatility of genius and interpreting imagination which invests his learning with the grace of poetry, and who, a German, has gained a command over the resources of English which an Englishman may envy. In Mr. Max Müller's translations of the Vedic Hymns we may feel confident that we come, as near as we can come, to an authentic representation of these earliest utterances of Indian religion.

What then do these hymns of the Veda show us of that which is the foundation of all religion? They are the language of fervent, enthusiastic worshippers. What do they tell us of the worshippers' thoughts about God?

The hymns of the Veda are addressed to various names of divine beings, which may be in the first instance described as personifications of the phenomena of external nature. It is not unreasonable to call this, as it has been called, a worship of nature. But we are cautioned that this may not be an ade-

quate representation of what was really meant, and that it would be more justly called a worship of God in nature, "of God appearing behind its veil, rather than as hidden in the sanctuary of the human heart and conscience." At any rate, in a great number of these hymns, such as those which compose the first volume of Mr. Max Müller's translation of the Rig-Veda, the Hymns to the Maruts, the Storm Gods (attendants on the Sun and the Dawn), we may watch, to use his words, "the almost imperceptible transition by which the phenomena of nature, if reflected in the mind of the poet, assume the character of divine beings." In these hymns it seems to me that the effort to employ imagination to the utmost in order to express and do justice to the wonders of the Wind and the Storm is much more distinct and characteristic than the religious sense of divinity. So, again, with the hymns to the Dawn, on which Mr. Max Müller comments. We, he reminds us, on whom the ends of the world are come, have mostly lost that early feeling of surprise and admiration of the daily wonder of sunrise. The feeling was strong when minds were fresher and life more simple. "The Dawn," he says, "is frequently described in the Veda as it might be described by a modern poet. She is the friend of men, she smiles like a young wife, she is the daughter of the sky. She goes to every house; she thinks of the dwellings of men; she does not despise the small or the great; she brings wealth; she

is always the same, immortal, divine; age cannot touch her; she is the young goddess, but she makes men grow old. All this may be simply allegorical language. But the transition is so easy from *Deví*, the Bright, to *Deví*, the Goddess; the daughter of the Sky assumes so readily the personality given to the Sky (Dyaus), her father, that we can only guess whether in each passage the poet is speaking of a bright apparition, or a bright goddess; of a natural vision, or of a visible deity":—

"She shines on us like a young wife, rousing every living being to go to his work. The fire had to be kindled by men; she brought light by striking down the darkness.

"She rose up, spreading far and wide, and moving towards every one. She grew in brightness, wearing her brilliant garment. The mother of the morning clouds, the leader of the rays, she shone gold-coloured, lovely to behold.

"She, the fortunate, who brings the eye of the gods, who leads the white and lovely steed [of the Sun], the Dawn was seen, revealed by her rays, with brilliant treasures she follows every one.

"Thou who art a blessing where thou art near, drive far away the unfriendly; make the pastures wide, give us safety! Remove the haters, bring treasures! Raise up wealth to the worshipper, thou mighty Dawn.

"Shine for us with thy best rays, thou bright Dawn, thou who lengthenest our life, thou the love of all, who givest us food, who givest us wealth in cattle, horses, and chariots.

"Thou, daughter of the Sky, thou high-born Dawn, whom the Vasishtas magnify with songs, give us riches high and wide: all ye gods, protect us always with your blessings."

This hymn, we are told, is an example of "the original simple poetry of the Veda. It has no reference to any special sacrifice. It contains no technical expressions; it can hardly be called a hymn in our sense of the word. It is simply a poem, expressing without any effort, without any display of far-fetched thought or brilliant imagery, the feelings of a man who has watched the approach of dawn with mingled delight and awe, and who was moved to give utterance to what he felt in measured language." It is, in fact, the poetical counterpart of Guido's *Aurora*.

Hymns such as these make up a great portion of the collection. But there are others more distinctly intended as expressive of worship, invocations of beings regarded as divine, the objects of religious faith and reverence and hope. They are described in language applicable only to the Highest of all Beings. They are addressed in words fittingly spoken by man only to his Maker and Almighty Ruler. Do we find here the worship of one or of many gods?

Now the remarkable feature about these early hymns is the absolutely indeterminate character of the object of worship and praise. Different names appear of the divine powers addressed in them. They are names, as I have said, denoting, or taken from, the primary phenomena or powers of the natural world—the Sky, the Light, the Sun, the Dawn, the Winds, the Fire. The divinity, who is in the sky or the fire, or whom they veil, or whom they symbolise, is separately invoked, adored, magnified. But yet it seems that it is impossible to tell whether these names are thought of as names of really separate powers; whether they are the same essential power, invoked under separate names, according as the manifestation of his marvellous doings impresses the mind of the worshipper; whether, if they are different, or different aspects of the Supreme and Infinite, there is gradation or subordination between the divine powers, or the several phases of the one; whether they do not pass into one another, and now one of them, now another, does not take the place in the composer's thoughts of the one Most High. The distinctness of the later Hindu pantheon, with the definitely assigned characters and names and functions of its gods and goddesses, is not here; certainly not at least as regards the highest names. The pictures given of the doings and the glories of the Being celebrated in each hymn are drawn with the most vivid and brilliant imagery, freshly derived from sights of nature, watched

and gazed on and remembered with admiration and delight; but who is the unknown reality behind the name?

In the worshipper's mind apparently, certainly in the minds of those who after centuries attempt to understand it, the idea dissolves into a luminous mist, baffling all attempt to make it assume shape and substance. "When the individual gods," says Mr. Max Müller, "are invoked, Varuna (the Heaven), Agni (Fire), the Maruts (the Storm Gods or the Winds), Ushas (the Dawn), they are not conceived as limited by the power of others, as superior or inferior in rank. Each god is to the mind of the suppliant as good as all the gods." . . . "It would be easy to find, in the numerous hymns of the Veda, passages in which almost every single god is represented as supreme and absolute." "What more could human language achieve in trying to express the idea of a divine and supreme power, than what the poet says of Varuna?" "Thou art Lord of all, of heaven and earth;" or, in another hymn, "Thou art King of all, of those who are gods and those who are men." He knows all the order of nature and upholds it; he looks not only into the past, but the future. But, more than this, Varuna watches also over the order of the moral world. Sin is the breaking of his laws; but he can be approached in prayer for his mercy, and in his mercy he pardons sinners. Can there be any other god who can be thus thought of and spoken of? Yes,

a whole brotherhood of gods (the Adityas) are addressed in the same way. Indra, called the greatest of gods, is addressed in the same way as the pardoner of sin. "We can hardly understand," says Mr. Max Müller, "how a people who had formed so exalted a notion of the Supreme God, and embodied it in the person of Indra, could at the same time invoke other gods with equal praise. When Agni, the Lord of Fire, is addressed by the poet, he is spoken of as the first god, not inferior even to Indra. While Agni is invoked, Indra is forgotten; there is no competition between the two, nor any rivalry between them or any other god."

Explain it as we will, the poets and psalmists of this early religion looked with a dizzy and uncertain eye upon that marvellous spectacle of man and nature, in which undoubtedly they believed that they saw manifest tokens of the Divine and Eternal, signs of a Presence at which their hearts kindled, and their heads bowed, and their humble offerings were presented. They recognised the "witness" of what was greater and higher than all things seen and known, tokens of the "Eternal Power and Godhead"; they recognised the Hand "which did them good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But they looked with unsteady and wavering vision; they saw, and they saw not; one impression came and was chased away by another; all was full of confusing appear-

ances and fitful glimpses and interfering lights; they spoke in words of stammering enthusiasm of wonders which only raised in them inconsistent and contradictory images. They seem like men striving after a great truth apparently within their reach, but really just beyond it. Serious questioners, I do not doubt that many of them were, of what they saw, of their own souls, of what had been handed down from their fathers; seekers after God, and of "the invisible things of Him," they may have been. But who will say that they were *finders*?

This "feeling after God" among the works of His hands—this anxious and perplexed, yet resolute groping in the light for Him who is equally above the light and the darkness, is expressed in a remarkable hymn of early date. It has been often cited by recent writers. "This yearning after a nameless deity," says Baron Bunsen, "who nowhere manifests himself in the Indian Pantheon of the Vedas, this voice of humanity groping after God, has nowhere found so sublime and touching an expression":—

"1. In the beginning there arose the Source of Golden Light—He was the only born Lord of all that is. He stablished the earth and this sky;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"2. He who gives life, He who gives strength;

whose blessing all the bright gods desire; whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"3. He who through His power is the only King of the breathing and awakening world; He who governs all, man and beast;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"4. He whose power these snowy mountains, whose power the sea proclaims, with the distant river—He whose these regions are, as it were, His two arms;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"5. He through whom the sky is bright and the earth firm—He through whom the heaven was stablished—nay, the highest heaven—He who measured out the light in the air;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"6. He to whom heaven and earth, standing firm by His will, look up trembling inwardly—He over whom the rising sun shines forth;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"7. Wherever the mighty water-clouds went, where they placed the seed and lit the fire, thence arose He who is the only life of the bright gods;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"8. He who by His might looked even over the water-clouds, the clouds which gave strength and lit the sacrifice, He *who is God above all gods*;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

"9. May He not destroy us—He the Creator of the earth; or He the righteous, who created the heaven; He who also created the bright and mighty waters;—

"Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?"

There was the question, the misgiving; but where was the answer? Instead of the one only answer, firmly given and never let go, there were the multiplied, hesitating, varying alternatives, in which the true answer was but one among many, and the one

finally abandoned. "They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, the Light, the Sun, the Sky, the Fire; that which is One, the wise call it many ways." Just that which He was, separate from all things, and above all things, beyond compare, unique, alone,—if they confessed it one moment, the next they had lost it. They looked—we are told apologetically—they saw, they thought, they spoke, as children; it was the childhood of the world, and the childhood of religion, seeking as it could by inadequate instruments to give body to impressions themselves imperfect. "The spirit was willing, but the language weak. It was a first attempt at defining the indefinite impression of deity by a name that should approximately or metaphorically render at least one of its most prominent features"—infinity, brightness, awfulness, beneficence. "And this is not all. The very imperfection of all the names which had been chosen, their very inadequacy to express the fulness and infinity of the Divine, would keep up the search for new names, till at last every part of nature in which an approach to the Divine could be discovered was chosen as a name of the Omnipresent. If the presence of the Divine was perceived in the strong wind, the strong wind became its name; if its presence was perceived in the earthquake and the fire, the earthquake and the fire became its names." It was the "infantile prattle" of that early world on the deepest of all subjects.

Thus, in eloquent pages, does a great scholar plead for "charitable interpretation" of this "childish" faith. But we must not confound the manner of expression with the substance of the thing expressed. The manner of expression may be strange, rude, indicative of a primitive and imperfect state of thought and language; the thing itself, the idea, may be clear, distinct beyond mistake, steadily held without wavering or confusion. Doubtless, we must make allowances for all ancient language, its metaphors, its modes of expressing the unseen by the seen, the divine by the natural. But this is a question not of language, but of substance—of the central substance of an idea, upon which the whole meaning, and fate, and history of a religion depend. There is no bridging over the interval between the one Supreme, Almighty, Most Holy God, and any idea of divinity or of divine powers, many or few, which comes short of it. The belief is there, or it is not; and if it is there, no weakness or imperfections of language will stand in the way of its expression. Language which belongs to a very early period of the world's history did not prevent the thought of the one living God, "I am that I am," from being grasped and held fast by another Asiatic people, did not for a moment cloud or perplex it—that thought which the poets of the Veda just saw, without recognising its value, its final and supreme truth.

The analogy of childish thought and speech applied

to periods of human history is partly just, but partly misleading. The Aryan singers in Central Asia or by the rivers of the Punjâb were in mind and mental outfit at least as much men as the Hebrews; the Hebrews in the imperfection and immaturity of language and intellect, just as much children as their Aryan contemporaries. But the Hebrews, limited as they might be in speech, had and kept the one adequate idea of God; no imagery about voice, and hands, and mouth, and countenance, for a moment obscured or disguised it. The Vedic poets, with all the genius and enthusiasm of which we seem to discern the traces, missed the way. They lost the great central truth, of which from time to time they seem to have had glimpses. They took the wrong turn in the eventful road along which their people and their religion were to travel. Their poetic names were condensed, dulled, petrified, debased into the increasingly grotesque and evil idolatry of Brahmanism, from which there was no return, no recovery, except in the mournful reform of Buddha, which swept away ancient idols by extinguishing the idea of God. The religion of the Vedas could not save itself or India; whatever may have been its beginnings, it led by irresistible steps to what Bunsen calls the "great tragedy of India and of humanity," and to the "tragic catastrophe" which saw in annihilation the only refuge, the single hope of man; which raised the great Oriental faculty of resignation to the power of absolute, universal, passionless despair.

I will pass from the object of faith and worship in these hymns to their moral views. What do they show of the relations of man to God, and to the law of right and wrong? We find in them unquestionably the idea of righteousness and sin; we find, also, less distinctly, the idea of a life after death. "The keynote of all religion, we are assured, natural as well as revealed, is present in the hymns of the Veda, and is never completely drowned by the strange music which generally deafens our ears, when we first listen to the wild echoes of the heathen worship." Doubtless it is "a mistake to deny the presence of moral truths in the so-called nature-worship of the Aryans." But it is also true, and very observable, that the expressions of these moral ideas occupy but a very small space, compared with the prolonged and sometimes gorgeous descriptions of natural phenomena, uttered with enthusiasm in praise of the Being whom the poem celebrates. And further, the moral ideas themselves are rudimentary, general, vague to the last degree.

The value of moral terms must depend on what is involved in them, on the standard that governs them, on the power of conscience, on the earnestness of will and purpose, which they presuppose. Children divide the world easily into good people and bad people; such divisions do not tell us much of the characters or the qualities thus rudely classified. And though in these ancient hymns sin is confessed and its con-

sequences deprecated, though they praise the righteous and denounce the deceitful and the wicked, there is but little to show what was the sin, and what constituted the righteousness. Of that moral conviction, that moral enthusiasm for goodness and justice, that moral hatred of wrong and evil, that zeal for righteousness, that anguish of penitence, which has elsewhere marked religious poetry, there is singularly little trace.

Here is a hymn addressed to Varuna, "the Greek *οὐρανός*, an ancient name of the sky and of the god who resides in the sky":—

> "Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
>
> "If I go trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
>
> "Through want of strength, thou strong and high God, I have gone on the wrong shore; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
>
> "Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
>
> "Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break Thy law through thoughtlessness; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy."

I will take as another example a hymn specially commended to our notice by men who from knowledge and learning are most competent to do so. "The presence," says Bunsen, "of a moral and spiritual apprehension of God is most vividly brought out in Vasishta's magnificent hymn to Varuna, which will even remind our readers of the 51st Psalm." Let me read it. The hymn is a striking one. But I think that you will say, when you hear it, that only unconscious prepossession could blind a sagacious and religious mind to the immeasurable interval between it and such a Psalm as the 51st. Here is Mr. Max Müller's translation of the hymn:—

"Wise and mighty are the works of Him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments. He lifted on high the bright and glorious heavens: He stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth.

"Do I say this to my own self? How can I get near to Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with quiet mind, see him propitiated?

"I ask Varuna, wishing to know this my sin: I go to ask the wise. The wise all tell me the same: Varuna it is who is angry with thee.

"Was it for an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend, who always praises Thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable Lord, and

I will quickly turn to Thee with praise, freed from sin.

"Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which we have committed with our own bodies. . . . It was not our own doing, O Varuna, it was a slip; an intoxicating draught, passion, vice, thoughtlessness. The old is there to mislead the young; even sleep is not free from mischief.

"Let me without sin give satisfaction to the angry God, like a slave to his bounteous lord. The Lord God enlighteneth the foolish; He, the Most Wise, leads His worshippers to wealth.

"O Lord Varuna, may this song go well to thine heart! May we prosper in keeping and acquiring. Protect us, O God, always with your blessings."

I have dwelt upon what seem to me the most impressive features of this ancient religious poetry of India. There is much besides, which to us, after the utmost allowances made for immense differences of time and thought, for "mental parallax," must appear unintelligible, grotesque, repulsive. But I wanted here to do justice to the higher and better side of it.

And I have confined myself to this Vedic poetry, partly because my space is limited, and next because this poetry is, on the whole, the most remarkable of

what the earliest stage of the heathen world has left us. In no others that I am acquainted with does the poetical element hold so large a place. I could refer, no doubt, to wonderful passages—wonderful both in their religious feeling and their moral earnestness and depth, from the lyric and tragic poetry of Greece, and even from its epic poetry; but this is the poetry, not of an early stage of human society and thought, but of a very advanced and mature one; and I am concerned only with the earliest. Fragments have come down to us from the old religions of China; but they are rather moral reflections, or simply prayers, than what we call hymns. The Buddhist books, again, as many of you last year heard in a singularly interesting historical survey of Buddhism given from this place by Dr. Liddon, are full of thoughts and words that astonish us, by the awful sense of duty, the moral insight and power which they express, and by the tremendous daring with which Buddhism faced the vanity and evil of the world, and met it with the completeness of religious despair. But I do not see that these passages can be called hymns.

In the Zendavesta, on the other hand, the ancient book of the disciples of Zoroaster, the teacher and prophet of Persia, who is described like Elijah, calling on his King and people to choose for good between truth and falsehood, there have been deciphered what from their form and manner of expression may be better termed hymns. In these compositions we come

upon a moral force and purpose, which is but little apparent in the hymns of the Veda. The religion of Zoroaster is regarded as a reaction against that of the Vedas, and there is a seriousness about its language which is very significant. The hymns—they are but few and hard to interpret—attributed to Zoroaster are marked by a solemn earnestness, an awestruck sense of the deep issues of right and wrong, which contrasts with the delight in nature, the vivid imaginativeness, the playful fancy of the Vedic poems. There is a profound reverence for an All-wise and Living God; there is a terrible consciousness of the conflict going on between good and evil, and of the power of both. Under the pressure of that consciousness, Zoroaster took refuge in that fatal theory which was to develop in after ages into such portentous and obstinate mischiefs; the theory of two eternal and co-ordinate principles. He believed in an eternal God of Goodness; but he taught also, uncreated and everlasting, a coequal "Twin" principle and Power of Evil. He taught men to take their side with truth and right in the great battle; he taught them to trust to the God of Goodness, and to nourish a high confidence that the victory must be His. But at the bottom of his religion was the poison-root of a Dual Divinity; of a divided idea, framed of moral opposites, of the divine government of the world, and of the law which ruled it.

It is not surprising that these mysterious utter-

ances, breaking on us by surprise from the dawn of time, should have awakened a very deep interest. They seemed to require us to revise our judgments and widen our thoughts, about what we vaguely call heathen religion. It was obvious that, even if they were the words of those "who worshipped what they knew not," and worshipped under divers names and forms, still there was the greatest difference between their ideas of the Divine, and the mythology of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; between their hymns to the Storm Gods and the Sky, and the Homeric mythology and hymns to Apollo and Aphrodite—the mythology of any of the countries or ages by which we commonly know heathenism.

These utterances have been read to mean, not a worship of nature or natural objects, but of God, unknown but yet instinctively and irresistibly believed in, behind the veil of Nature. They have been pointed to as consoling proofs that there was more religion in the world than we knew of, even if it was but a religion of children: "praise from the weak lips of babes and sucklings," who knew not the greatness of which they spoke. They rebuke us at once, and they encourage us, by showing that heathenism, so multitudinous and so ancient, was not all the base superstition and wild idolatry which it seemed; but under it, as under a true dispensation, the Gentiles had much that was needful, perhaps as much as was possible; that they had deeper thoughts in reality,

and more earnest longings after their hidden yet present Father, than we knew before, and drew nigh to Him, if not yet to see behind the veil, yet at least to show that in wish and intention they sought to know and honour Him.

I for my part am only too glad to believe all that can be shown of what is unexpectedly noble and hopeful in these ancient remains. Prophets and Apostles, face to face with the gross darkness of idolatry, appeal beyond it to man's deeper faith in God; and here we have marks of it.

If that was all, we are but acknowledging what they have taught us. But there is besides this a disposition to place these remains on a level with what Christians consider as the authenticated records of God's inspiring guidance, to merge in one common category, differing endlessly in degree, but at bottom and essentially the same in kind, at least in origin and authority, the words, the documents, the ideas of all religions. But if there is one rule to be kept in view in the pursuit of truth, it is this: that differences are as important as points of likeness, and that we must never give way to tempting and seductive analogies till we have thoroughly investigated the perhaps obscure and intractable distinctions which so inconveniently interfere with our generalisations.

Are there any such differences, do any such broad and undeniable distinctions present themselves between these earliest utterances of heathen religion and the

early religious poetry of the Old Testament as to make it impossible to confound the one with the other, as expressions of religious thought and faith and trust? Surely the differences are obvious and enormous. There are two things, which, apart from their substance, deprive these Indian and Persian hymns of the value which is sometimes put upon them.

1. They are and have been for ages *dead relics.* No one pretends that they are now used as they were when they were composed, and as a living part of worship. Those who actually felt and meant them in their real sense have passed away long ago; and "then all their thoughts perished." The poems have been enshrined as sacred foundations and originals in systems unsympathetic and at variance with them; and the life that is in them is drawn out by antiquarian and philosophic labour in the West, and has long ceased to breathe in the worship of the East.

2. Whatever these religions were at first, and I am quite ready to see in them "grains of truth,"—to believe that there were in them often honest, earnest attempts to "feel after" and win "Him who is not far from any one of us,"—they all have a common and an unvarying history. They end in hopeless and ignoble decay. Their singers sought Him, it may be; but it was in vain. In all cases, among all races, it is only at their first beginning that their words command our reverence.

In all instances, in all races, Aryan, Semitic,

Turanian, as far as we see, the original religion, or the religious reform, failed, dwindled, passed into a formal and pedantic ceremonial—passed into coarser and yet coarser forms of undisguised idolatry, monstrous, impure, or cruel. In the stir and changes of life from generation to generation, the old spirit could not hold its own; new necessities, new appearances, new feelings clamorously exacted a place for new creations of the restless mind, new ventures of worship, new ways of dealing with the problems of the world. In the uncertainty of decaying traditions and altering points of view, the process of interpretation hardened into a prosaic literalness and formality the play of imagination, the enthusiasms, the raptures, the sportive audacities of fresher and simpler times. "*Who* is the God to whom we shall offer sacrifice?" was the *refrain* of the early Vedic Hymn: the ingenuity of Brahman commentators turned the interrogative pronoun into the name of a god, and the interrogative sentence into a command to sacrifice to a god whose proper name was "*Who.*"

It is impossible, it seems to me, to overlook, to over-estimate the contrast. There is a collection of sacred poetry, not so old, it may be, certainly not in parts, as the Vedic and Zend hymns, but belonging to very early times—belonging certainly to what we now call the childhood of the race. The Vedic hymns are dead remains, known in their real spirit and meaning to a few students. The Psalms are as living as when

they were written; and they have never ceased to be, what we may be quite certain they have been *to-day*, this very day which is just ending, to hundreds and thousands of the most earnest of souls now alive. They were composed in an age at least as immature as that of the singers of the Veda; but they are now what they have been for thirty centuries, the very life of spiritual religion—they suit the needs, they express, as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of "the foremost in the files of time."

The Vedic hymns, whatever they have meant originally, stand at the head of a history not yet over —and never once broken, except by atheism — of irretrievable idolatry.

The Psalms too stand, in a very important sense, at the head of a great religious history, as the first great outburst of the religious affections and emotions in the people of Israel. But what they once proclaimed, as the truth of truths, about God and righteousness, *that* they kept alive, unquenched, unmistaken, undoubted to this hour. The Jewish religion, of which they were the soul and the guardian, passed through as many disasters, as many dangers, as any other. Its tendencies to degenerate were as obstinate; none ever sank at last under a more tremendous catastrophe. But the faith which was at its heart never was utterly lost in the darkest days and the foulest apostasies. It went on from one step to

another, of higher thought and clearer light. It had risen from the Law to the Psalms; it went on from the Psalms to the Prophets, from the Prophets to the Gospel. And the Psalms, which had expressed, in so many strains and in so many keys, the one unwavering belief of the people of Israel,—that belief which neither idolatry, nor its punishment, the captivity, nor the scepticism of Sadducees, nor the blindness of Pharisees, had impaired or shaken,—passed on, unchanged but transfigured, to be the perpetual language of the highest truth, of the deepest devotion, in the Christian Church.

LECTURE II

THE PSALMS

THERE is one book of sacred poetry which is unique of its kind, which has nothing like it or second to it. It expresses the ideas and the feelings of a religion of which the central and absorbing object of faith is One who is believed to be the absolute, universal, Living God, the one God of the world and all things, Almighty, All-Holy, Supreme. It not only expresses this religion, but as a matter of fact, it has been one of the most certain means of maintaining unbroken the tradition and fullest conviction of it. From age to age this book has been its companion and its minister. And there is this to be observed about it. It has been equally and in equal measure the prayer-book of public and common worship, and the chosen treasury of meditation, guidance, comfort to the individual soul. To each of these two purposes, in many respects widely different, it has lent itself with equal suitableness; and it has been to men of the most widely different times and ideas what no other book has been. When-

ever the Book of Psalms began to be put together, and whenever it was completed, from that time in the history of the world, the religious affections and the religious emotions, the object of which was the One Living God of all, found their final, their deepest, their unsurpassed expression. From that time to this there never has been a momentary pause, when somewhere or other the praises of His glory and the prayers of His worshippers have not been rehearsed in its words.

There are other collections of ancient religious poetry venerable for their age, for which our interest and respect are bespoken. In the preceding lecture I glanced at two examples of them, the primitive utterances of two great religions of Asia—the Indian hymns of the Veda, the Persian hymns of the Zendavesta. Separated as we are from these by great chasms of time and still greater differences of ideas, we have been taught, rightly, I think, to see in them the words of men "feeling after" Him whom they could not see but could not help believing, and expressing, as best they could, their thoughts of His footsteps and His tokens. But put at the highest what they were in religious significance to their own age, they were so to their own age alone. They were the seeds of no spiritual truth to the ages after them or to mankind; whatever there was of it in them, though they were themselves preserved with jealous reverence, was overlaid and perished. There were, I am ready to believe,

in the ancient world, many attempts to know God, to learn His mind, to rest under His shadow, to lay hold on His hope. There was only one which as a religion attained its end; only one acknowledged by God, by the blessing of vitality and fruitfulness. Compared with the Psalms of that religion which was going on, side by side with them, in a little corner of the world, the preparation for the "fulness of time"—these remains of early heathen religion are like the appearance of the illuminated but dead surface of the moon, with its burnt-out and extinct volcanoes, contrasted with the abounding light and splendour of the unexhausted sun, still, age after age, the source of life and warmth and joy to the world, still waking up new energies, and developing new wonders.

We find in these hymns a high imaginative sense of divine power and goodness to man; an acknowledgment of human weakness and dependence; a sense of sin and wrong-doing, childish and vague, yet sincere, and leading men to throw themselves on Divine compassion for forgiveness;—and a growing sense, more observable in the Zend hymns ascribed to Zoroaster than in the songs of the Veda, of the greatness of the moral law, of truth, of righteousness, of duty. But that of which, as it seems to me, we do not find the faintest trace, is the meeting and, so to speak, the contact of the spirit of man with the God whom he worships and celebrates. The position of the worshipper and the singer is absolutely an external one;

and he thinks of no other. He gazes up with wonder and it may be hope at the Sky, the Sun, the Fire, the Storm; he invokes That of which they are the garment, the manifestation or the disguise; he urges the fulfilment of the Divine moral rule of right and wrong; he loses sometimes the thought of power shown in the fire or in the sky, in the deeper and all-embracing thought of the Father in heaven. But to approach Him with the full affections of a human soul—to draw nigh in communion with Him, heart to heart—to rejoice in him, to delight in Him, to love Him—all these inward movements of the unseen spirit of man to the one unseen source and centre of all good—this, as far as my knowledge goes, is an unknown experience, an undiscovered sphere, to the poets of the Veda or the Zendavesta. When in later times Nature ceased to satisfy, and the riddles of the world became importunate and overwhelming in their hopelessness, the religious feeling which worshipped God, hidden and veiled in nature, could not endure the strain; it passed away, and the refuge was Pantheism or Annihilation.

To pass from the Veda to the Psalms is to pass at one bound from poetry, heightened certainly by a religious sentiment, to religion itself, in its most serious mood and most absorbing form; tasking, indeed, all that poetry can furnish to meet its imperious and diversified demands for an instrument of expression; but in its essence far beyond poetry. It is passing at one bound from ideas, at best vague, wavering, un-

certain of themselves, to the highest ideas which can be formed by the profoundest and most cultivated reason, about God and the soul, its law, its end, its good.

The contrast is absolute as to *the object of worship*. I am ready to see in the early Indian hymns something very different from the idolatry and the Pantheism of later times—a genuine feeling after the Unseen and the Almighty Father, a glimpse caught from time to time of His glory, an awful belief, not unnatural though mistaken, that He, a God that hideth Himself, was in the wind, and in the fire, and in the storm, rather than in the still small voice. But the best that can be said is that "they did not know what they worshipped." They failed to seize firmly the central truth, without which religion cannot live; if ever they saw it, it faded immediately; it melted away into endless changes. What a gap between that and the steady, clear, unwavering thought of the Psalms:—He, and He only, the One Living God, from first to last the burden and the worship of each successive Psalm—He and He only, addressed without doubt, confounded with nothing else, invoked without misgiving, or possibility of the thought of another; He, the foundation and maker and hope of all things, recognised in His glorious works, yet never for a moment identified with them; worshipped without fear under various names, spoken of without fear in His mighty doings in such phrases as human language

in its weakness could supply, surrounded without fear in thought by powers awful in their unseen and unknown greatness to human imagination—"God standing as a Judge among gods"—*without fear*, I say, because there was no risk of the supreme, central, immovable idea of the Godhead being disturbed or impaired—the Lord of Hosts, the God of Gods, the King of Glory. This one marvellous belief (assumption, tradition, revelation, according to our point of view) runs through the Psalms, clearly, naturally, with the freedom and steady force of the stream of a great river. Do those who are for putting all ancient religious poetry on the same general level take in the significance of this characteristic of the Psalms?

The first volume of Mr. Max Müller's translation of the Rig-Veda is composed of Hymns to the Storm-Gods, or the Winds, awful in their might and terror, and yet the givers of rain and fruitfulness. Under this aspect, veiled under these natural wonders, the Infinite, it is supposed, was worshipped. The frequent power and beauty of these songs, in the midst of passages to us unintelligible and grotesque, is undeniable. The Storm-Gods are invoked along with Indra, "Him who created light when there was no light, and form when there was no form, and who was born together with the dawns:" along with Agni, the Fire-God, whose might no god or mortal withstands. They are the "wild ones who sing their song, unconquerable by might," companions of those "who in heaven are

enthroned as gods, who toss the clouds across the surging sea." They are pictured as an "exulting and sportive host," riding in their chariots, with swift steeds, with their spears and bright ornaments, driving furiously, rejoicing in their fierce career, darkening the earth under the storm-cloud, dealing the thunderbolt and the abundance of rain:—

> "I hear their whips (the thunder peals) almost close by, as they crack them in their hands; they gain splendour on their way.
>
> "Who is the oldest among you here, ye shakers of heaven and earth, when ye shake them like the hem of a garment?
>
> "At your approach the son of man holds himself down; the wreathed cloud fled at your fierce anger. . . . They at whose racings the earth, like a hoary King, trembles for fear on their ways.
>
> "From the shout of the Storm-Gods over the whole space of the earth men reeled forward.
>
> "They make the rocks to tremble, they tear asunder the trees of the forest. Come on, ye Storm-Gods, like madmen, ye gods with your whole tribe."

And their blessings are invoked, their anger deprecated; wielders of the lightning, they are besought to aim their bolts at the enemy and the wicked:—

> "What now, then? When will you take us as a dear father takes his son by both hands? Whither now? On what errand of yours are you going in heaven, not on earth; where are your newest favours, O ye Storm-Gods; where the blessings? Where all the delights?
>
> "Let not one sin after another, difficult to be conquered, overcome us: let it depart, together with evil desire. . . . Give to the worshippers strength, glorious, invincible in battle, brilliant, wealth-giving, known to all men. Grant unto us wealth, durable, rich in men, defying all onslaughts—wealth, a hundred and a thousand-fold, ever-increasing."

I add an extract given by Mr. Max Müller from the Zendavesta:—

> "I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura (the Living one)! Who was from the beginning the father of the pure world? Who made a path for the sun and for the stars? Who but thou makest the moon to increase and decrease? That, O Mazda (the Wise) and other things, I wish to know.
>
> "I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! Who holds the earth and the clouds that they do not fall? Who holds the sea and the trees? Who has given swiftness to the wind and the clouds? Who is the creator of the good spirit?

> "I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! Who has made the kindly light and the darkness? Who has made the kindly light and the awaking? Who has made the mornings, the noons, and the nights, they who remind the wise of his duty?"

The Psalms are full of the glory of God in the "heaven and earth and sea and all that is therein." Their writers are not insensible to those wonders, so familiar, yet so amazing, which woke up a "fearful joy" in the singers of the far East:—

> "The day is Thine, and the night is Thine; Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
>
> "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy-work. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another. . . . Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words to the ends of the world.
>
> "Thou hast set all the borders of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter. Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth; and maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of men.
>
> "Praise the Lord upon earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, fulfilling His Word."

But there is one Psalm where the awful might and grandeur of the storm fills the writer's mind, the Psalm, as it has been called, of the "Seven Thunders"; of the seven times repeated "Voices of God," over the sea and the mountains, the forest and the wilderness, as the storm travels onward; "beginning with *Gloria in Excelsis* and ending with *In terris Pax*"—the 29th:—

> "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.
>
> "Give the Lord the honour due unto His name; worship the Lord with holy worship.
>
> "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; it is the glorious God that maketh the thunder.
>
> "The voice of the Lord is upon many waters.
>
> "The voice of the Lord is mighty in operation.
>
> "The voice of the Lord is a glorious voice.
>
> "The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedar trees; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Libanus.
>
> "He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Libanus also and Sirion like a young unicorn.
>
> "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; yea, the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kades.
>
> "The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to

calve, and discovereth the forests; in His temple doth every one speak of His glory.

"The Lord sitteth above the waterflood; the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

"The Lord shall give strength unto His people; the Lord shall give His people the blessing of peace."

Am I not justified in saying that, in passing from the hymns of the Veda to the Psalms, we pass from poetry to serious and grave religion?

And yet it is in the fresh and bold expression of an indefinite religious sentiment, of indefinite yet real religious awe and delight and admiration in the presence of the glories and wonders of nature, an expression not troubling itself about logical consistency, and not yet stiffened and cramped by the rules and forms of definite superstitions, that the charm and interest of the Vedic hymns chiefly consist. If the contrast is great between them and the Psalms, in respect to the way in which each sees God in Nature, it is immeasurably greater between what each understood by religion, both as regards God and as regards man; in what each thought of God, in what each desired of Him and trusted Him for; in what each thought of man's relation to God, of the meaning and the law of man's life, of man's capacities, of his sin, his hope, his blessedness.

The following is not from the Rig-Veda, but from

the Zendavesta, in which a moral earnestness is more observable. It is part of what is supposed to be a hymn of Zoroaster. I give it in Mr. Max Müller's translation :—

"1. Now I shall proclaim to all who have come to listen, the praises of Thee, the all-wise Lord, and the hymns of Vohumano (the good spirit). Wise Asha! I ask that (thy) grace may appear in the lights of heaven.

"2. Hear with your ears what is best, perceive with your minds what is pure, so that every man may for himself choose his tenets before the great doom! May the wise be on our side!

"3. Those old spirits who are twins, made known what is good and what is evil in thoughts, words, and deeds. Those who are good distinguished between the two, not those who are evildoers.

"4. When these two Spirits came together, they made first life and death, so that there should be at last the most wretched life for the bad, but for the good blessedness.

"5. Of these two Spirits the evil one chose the worst deeds; the kind Spirit, he whose garment is the immovable sky, chose what is right; and they also who faithfully please Ahuramazda by good works.

"6. Those who worshipped the Devas and were deceived, did not rightly distinguish between the two; those who had chosen the worst Spirit came to hold counsel together, and ran to Aeshma in order to afflict the life of man.

"7. And to him (the good) came might, and with wisdom virtue; and the everlasting Armaiti herself made his body vigorous; it fell to thee to be rich by her gifts.

"8. But when the punishment of their crimes will come, and, O Mazda, thy power will be known as the reward of piety for those who delivered (Druj) falsehood into the hand of Asha (truth).

"9. Let us then be of those who further this world; O Ahuramazda, O bliss-conferring Asha! Let our mind be there where wisdom abides.

"10. Then indeed there will be the fall of the pernicious Druj, but in the beautiful abode of Vohumano, of Mazda, and Asha, will be gathered for ever those who dwell in good report.

"11. O men, if you cling to these commandments, which Mazda has given, . . . which are a torment to the wicked, and a blessing to the righteous, then there will be victory through them."

Beyond this these hymns do not go; above this they do not rise. Compare with their meagreness on these points, the fulness of the Psalms: compare these hesitating though deeply touching essays at religion, halting in the outer courts of the Temple, with the majestic and strong confidence of the Psalms, leading the soul through the manifold experiences of the spiritual life to the inmost shrines. Compare *the idea of God.* He is not only the One, and the Everlasting, and the Most Highest, the living God, but He has what in default of a fitter phrase we call *a character.* He is not only the Maker, the Wonder-worker of the world; He is its Holy Ruler and King; "its righteous Judge, strong and patient," "set in the throne that judgest right"; the Hand that feeds all its creatures; the Eye that watches all its revolutions, and pierces to all its lowliest corners; its Joy, its Hope, its Refuge. He is "the God of Truth," "the God that hath no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with Him." He is the "Lord that hath never failed them that seek Him." He is the "Helper of the friendless," "the Father of the fatherless," "the Hearer of the complaint and the desire of the poor"; He is "the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house." "Who is like to Him, who hath His dwelling so high, and yet humbleth Himself to behold the things in heaven and earth?" And so, from end to end of the Psalms, we have the clear, varied, unstudied recognition of a *moral character.* In

the certainty and consciousness of this most holy sovereignty, the trust and joy of the Psalmists are without restraint. The enthusiasm and imagination of the Vedic poets were kindled at the greatness of nature; the enthusiasm and imagination of the Psalmists, not insensible to that greatness, were far more inspired by the everlasting righteousness of the Kingdom of God.

> "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation . . . for the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are all the corners of the earth, and the strength of the hills is His also. . . . O come, let us worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." "Thou didst cause thy judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled, and was still: When God arose to judgment, and to help all the meek upon earth." "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea make a noise, and all that therein is. Let the field be joyful and all that is in it; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; and with righteousness to judge the earth, and the people with His truth."

The deep, *insisting* faith in God's righteousness cannot find strength enough in language for its triumphant conviction, and never tires of reiteration :—

> "*The Lord is King*, the earth may be glad thereof: yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord; at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."

Great as is the earth, great as is nature, its magnificence, its fearful and tremendous powers, One is still seen a King above them, to whom they are but part of the adornment of His royalty :—

> "*The Lord is King*, and hath put on glorious apparel; the Lord hath put on His apparel and girded Himself with strength. Ever since the world began hath Thy seat been prepared: Thou art from everlasting. The floods are risen, O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly; but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier."

Great, too, are the uprisings and storms of the moral world, the shock of nations, the breaking up of empires, the madness of raging peoples, the fury of

tyrants; but—"*the Lord is King*, be the people never so impatient: He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet. The Lord is great in Sion and high above all people." And it is not in *power* that the Psalmist finds the matchless prerogative of this kingdom — it is in power, thought of always with absolute moral goodness, power with a yet higher greatness belonging to it, the greatness of righteousness and holiness:—

> "They (all nations) shall give thanks unto Thy name, which is great, wonderful, and holy. O magnify the Lord our God, and fall down before His footstool, for He is holy." "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh Thine house for ever." "Thou, Lord, art higher than all that are in the earth. Thou art exalted far above all gods. O ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil. . . . There is sprung up light for the righteous, and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks for a remembrance of His holiness."

The God of the Psalms is the gracious God of the Present, "whose mercy endureth for ever"; the God not only of Sion and His chosen people Israel, but of all the heathen, of all the nations, of all the islands of the sea and the ends of the earth: the God of the

Future, from generation to generation; the God of the future to them that love Him, their certain hope and Saviour, in some unexplained way, in spite of the visible ruin and vanishing of death; the God of the future, also to the mighty, the cruel, and the proud, their certain judge and avenger. Over all human power, however irresistible, over all human pride, however beyond rebuke, over all human wrongfulness and oppression, however unchecked, there is ever present the all-seeing God of judgment, ever beholding, ever trying the hearts and reins, ever waiting His time of deliverance and retribution, ever preparing the refuge which shall at last shelter the innocent, the doom which must at last smite down the proud:—

> "For the sin of their mouth, and for the words of their lips, they shall be taken in their pride." "The Lord also is a defence for the oppressed, even a refuge in due time of trouble." "His eyes consider the poor, and His eyelids try the children of men. O put your trust in Him always, ye people; pour out your hearts before Him, for God is our hope. O trust not in wrong and robbery, give not yourselves unto vanity; if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God spake once, and twice I have also heard the same; that power belongeth unto God. And that Thou, Lord, art merciful; for Thou rewardest every man according to his work."

I say nothing here of the prophetic element in the Psalms. It is most characteristic—the way in which they look onward, the way in which they dare to be prophetic—to tell of one, in whom, through suffering and through glory, the world should find its redemption and its peace—"Desire of me, and I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." It is characteristic, unique. But I do not dwell on it here. What I wish to point out is, that all that what is called natural religion, even in its highest speculation, has concluded, of the power, the justice, the goodness of God, is found, clothed with life and recognised in actual deed, with joy and love, in the Psalms, centuries before natural religion was heard of. The Psalm of Creation (civ.) sets forth the magnificence of His bounty over all His works, from the light with which He "decks Himself as with a garment," to the rivers running among the hills, from which the wild asses quench their thirst, the grass for the cattle, and the green herb for the service of men, the wine that maketh glad, the bread that strengtheneth his heart, the lions roaring after their prey, man going forth to his work and his labour till the evening, the great and wide sea also, with its creatures great and small innumerable, "the ships, and that leviathan," whom Thou hast made "to play and take his pastime there." The Psalm of Mercy (ciii.)—mercy, as high as the heaven is in comparison with the earth, forgiveness,

putting away sins as far as the west is from the east, —sets forth His dispensations of compassion and remedy,—forgiving all our sins, healing all our infirmities, satisfying our mouth with good things, making us young and lusty as an eagle, executing righteousness and judgment for all them that are oppressed with wrong, long-suffering, and of great goodness— "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear Him." I will only call attention to one other feature of these expressions of joy and awful exultation at feeling ourselves encompassed by the mercy and righteousness of God; and that is the way in which, as in the 65th Psalm, the thought of His power and His overflowing bounty in Nature—"Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to praise Thee— Thou visitest the earth and blessest it — Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness—the valleys laugh and sing" — how this is entwined and enwreathed with the thought of His *moral* empire, providing for the cravings, overruling the turmoil, of the world of souls:—

> "Thou that hearest the prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come. Thou shalt show us wonderful things in Thy righteousness, O God of our salvation; Thou that art the hope of all the ends of the earth and of them that remain in the broad sea. . . . Who stilleth the raging of the sea,

and the noise of his waves, and the madness of the people."

Or, again, as in the 147th Psalm, the supreme wonders of the universe are strung and linked together in successive verses with His sympathy for the daily sorrows of mankind. "He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness. He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names."

Compare again in the Psalms *their idea of man*; there is nothing even approaching to it in that early religious poetry which is sometimes classed along with them. Take, for instance, the view which pervades them of the unity of mankind. The horizon of the Vedic hymns, *e.g.*, is confined to the worshipper who sings them. The Psalms, the songs of that chosen people which God "led like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron," and expressing in every form the glory and the blessing involved in that wondrous election—"In Jewry is God known, His name is great in Israel, at Salem is His tabernacle, and His dwelling in Sion"—yet claim as the subjects of their King, and the sharers in their worship, every nation, every family of mankind. No feature is more striking in the Psalms than the unquestioning and natural directness with which they embrace the heathen, the nations, as equally included with Israel, in the purposes and the Kingdom of God. The question asked

by the Apostle in a degenerate age of Judaism, "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?" was never a question to the writers of the Psalms, even under the bitterness of heathen oppression, even under the keenest sense of the prerogative of God's people, whether in triumph or in punishment. There is no lack of sorrowful sighing to the God of Israel against the heathen that "do not know Him"—no lack of the stern joy of victory and vengeance, when the day of the heathen came. But this does not interfere with the primary belief that the whole human race belongs to God *now*, and has to do with Him *now*; that it is destined for Him more completely hereafter. "He who is praised in Sion 'is also' the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea":—

> "I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing praises unto Thee, among the nations." "The Lord's name is praised from the rising up of the sun unto the going down thereof. The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens." "All nations which Thou hast made shall come and worship Thee, O Lord, and shall glorify Thy name." "God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon His holy seat. The princes of the people are joined unto the people of the God of

Abraham. God is very high exalted; all the shields of the earth are His."

And with this *universal* idea of human nature and its relation to God, there is joined an equally characteristic view of its depths and heights, of its greatness, of its vanity. Nothing is more easy than to take a high view of it, *alone*, or a low view, *alone*: there are facts and appearances in abundance to account for and justify either. But the view of the Psalms combines them; man's *littleness* and insignificance, in relation to the immense universe about him, and to its infinite and everlasting God; man's littleness in his relation to time, to his own short passage between its vast before and after, his feebleness, his misery, his sin:—on the other side, man's *greatness*, as the consummate work of God's hands, thought worthy of His care, His choice, His provident and watchful regard; man's greatness and responsibility, as capable of knowing God and loving Him, of winning His blessing and perishing under His judgment: man's greatness even as a sinner able to sink so low, and yet to rise by repentance out of the deepest degradation and most hopeless ruin. The riddle of man's existence could be no unfamiliar subject, wherever men reflected at all: it certainly was not in India, in China, in Greece. Those deep and awful strains of the 88th and 90th Psalms have their counterpart in the profound despair of the sacred books of

Buddhism, in the solemn, measured truth, in the plaintive perplexities of the choruses of Greek tragedy. But they painted it to the life, and there they stopped short. The Psalms confessed it and laid it up in the bosom of God, confident, rejoicing, that though they saw not yet the light, "all would at last be well."

And then think of the high moral ideal of what they look for in those whom God approves; the hunger and thirst after righteousness which they reveal:—

> "Lord, who shall dwell in Thy Tabernacle, and who shall rest upon Thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He that hath not slandered his neighbour—he that sitteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes—he that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not, though it be to his own hindrance." "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart." "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?—O cleanse thou me from my secret faults."

Think of the boldness with which they take hold of the great depths and problems of man's existence, the triumph of evil, the oppression of the poor, the

sufferings of the good; the fearless way in which these enigmas are faced, the reverent and trustful answer given to them:—

> "Fret not thyself because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil-doers." . . . "Put thy trust in the Lord and be doing good." . . . "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noonday. Hold thee still in the Lord and abide patiently on Him; but grieve not thyself at him whose way doth prosper, against the man that doeth after evil counsels."

Think of that high faith in the unseen Goodness, of that high desire after His love and His unseen reward, which animate the Psalms:—

> "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my salvation; of whom then shall I be afraid?" . . . "My heart hath talked of Thee. Seek ye my face: Thy face, Lord, will I seek." . . . "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto Thee." . . . "The Lord Himself is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

Where, except in the Psalms, did ancient religion think of placing the blessedness of man, whether in this life or beyond it, not in the outward good things which we know on earth, not in knowledge, not in power, but *in the exercise of the affections?*

To take one point more. There is one feature about the Psalms which it requires an effort to disengage, because it is so universal in them, and has become so familiar to us, and which yet is in that age of the world peculiar to them—the assumption that pervades every one of them, the vivid sense which shows itself in every conceivable form, of the relation, the *direct, close, immediate relation of the soul of man to God.* To us Christians this has become the first axiom of religious truth, the first element of our religious feeling: to the ancient thought of the world, God, because of His unapproachable greatness, was, to each single man, whatever He might be to the community, a *distant* God. Who would think of pouring out his heart to the Indra of the Vedas; who would dream of being athirst for the Father Zeus of Homer, or longing after the Jupiter, though styled the Best and Greatest, of later times? It never occurred to those worshippers, that besides the sacrifices and praises, besides the prayer for protection, for deliverance, for benefits, to powers supreme but far off, and still further removed from the sympathies and the troubles of mankind,—besides these outward ways of religion, the soul could have secret yet real access,

everywhere, every moment, to Infinite compassion, Infinite loving-kindness, Infinite and all-sufficing goodness, to whom, as into the heart of the tenderest of friends, it could pour out its distresses, before whom, as before the feet of a faithful Comforter and Guide, it could lay down the burden of its care, and commit its way. But this, I need not remind you, is the idea of religion which appears on the face of every single Psalm. It is the idea of the unfailing tenderness of God, His understanding of every honest prayer, the certainty that in the vastness and the catastrophes of the world the soul in its own singleness has a refuge, is linked at the throne of the worlds to its own reward and strength, is held by the hand, is guided by the eye, of One who cares for the weakest as much as He is greater than the greatest of His creatures.

And there is no mood of mixed and varied feeling, no form of deep and yearning affection, no tone of absorbing emotion, in which this sense of what God is to the soul does not express itself. It allies itself to the most poignant grief, to the bitterest self-reproach and shame; even a despair, which, like in the 88th Psalm, will allow itself to mention no word of hope, betrays the hope which yet lurks under it in its passionate appeal to God, in its unquenchable confidence in prayer: "O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: O let my prayer enter into Thy presence, incline Thine ear unto

my calling." Sometimes it puts into words its belief—"O Thou that hearest the prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come"; sometimes it delights in the briefest and most emphatic word that implies it—"O God, Thou art my God, early will I seek Thee"; "I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God, hear the voice of my prayer, O Lord." There is a fearless freedom, a kind of buoyancy and elasticity in the way in which human feeling and affection expand and unfold themselves in the Psalms, and press upwards in eager and manifold desire. They are winged with joy and inexpressible delight: or the soul brings before itself with unrelenting keenness how it is seen and pierced through and through, from the first instant of existence, and in depths inaccessible to itself, by the eye of wisdom and holiness which goes through the world; or it looks up to that eye, meeting it in return and guiding it; looks up with tender and waiting confidence—"As the eyes of a maiden to the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, till He have mercy upon us";—or, "Out of the deeps it calls to Him," "fleeing to Him for refuge," waiting for Him "more than they that watch for the morning, yea, more than they that watch for the morning"; or it refrains itself and keeps itself still, "like as a child that is weaned resteth on his mother"; or it throws itself blindly on His mercy, in affectionate, all-surrendering trust—"Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou

God of truth"; or it rebukes itself for its impatience —"Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God, which is the help of my countenance, and my God";—or, without the faintest hesitation of doubt in His marvellous loving-kindness, it makes sure of His answering sympathy, "for *Thou shalt hear me*; —keep me as the apple of an eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings"; or it confides to Him its entreaty for a little respite as the end draws near— "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen." Or, the helpless creature, it appeals beseechingly to the Creator's mindfulness of that which He thought it worth His while to call into being—"Thy mercy endureth for ever: despise not then the work of Thine own hands"; or it exults in the security of its retreat—"O how plentiful is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee. . . . Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues"; or it gives utterance to its deep longings, and finds their full satisfaction in the unseen object of its love —"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, even so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"—"O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee; my

soul thirsteth after Thee, my flesh also longeth after Thee, in a barren and dry land where no water is. . . . For Thy loving-kindness is better than the life itself. . . . My soul shall be satisfied even as it were with marrow and fatness, when my mouth praiseth Thee with joyful lips. Because Thou hast been my helper, therefore under the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

What was there anywhere else, like this intensely human outpouring of affection, in its most diversified and purest forms, affection fastening itself with the most natural freshness and simplicity on things unseen; so exulting, yet so reverent; so tender, yet so strong, and manly, and severe; so frank and unconstrained in its fears and griefs and anxieties; so alive to its weakness, yet so willing to accept the discipline of affliction, and so confident of the love behind it; so keenly and painfully sensitive to the present ravages of evil and sin and death, so joyfully hopeful, and sure of the victory of good? There is an awful yet transporting intuition which opens upon the Christian soul in some supreme moment of silence or of trial. "We feel"—so do they tell us, on whom that experience has come—"we feel that while the world changes, we are one and the same. We are led to understand the nothingness of things around us, and we begin, by degrees, to perceive that there are but two beings in the whole universe,—our own souls and the God who made us." "We rest in the thought of two, and two

only, supreme and luminously self-evident beings—myself, and my Creator." We stand face to face with the certainty of our Maker's existence. We become conscious of being alone with the Eternal. This great experience had been the Psalmist's. In this the Psalmist took refuge from the perplexities of life. "His treadings had wellnigh slipped," when he saw "the prosperity of the wicked"—not thinking of their "fearful end." But at once the thought comes on him, in whose hands he was:—

> "Nevertheless I am alway by Thee; for Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory; whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." . . . "I have set God always before me; for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall. Therefore my heart was glad and my glory rejoiced; my flesh also shall rest in hope." . . . "Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." . . . "When I wake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it."

I am surely not saying too much in asserting that

nothing in kind like this, nothing in any way comparable with it, is to be found in the noblest and highest examples of any other ancient religious language. We know what there was in the world besides; where do we look for its counterpart? The Psalms stand up like a pillar of fire and light in the history of the early world. They lift us at once into an atmosphere of religious thought, which is the highest that man has ever reached; they come with all the characteristic affections and emotions of humanity, everything that is deepest, tenderest, most pathetic, most aspiring, along with all the plain realities of man's condition and destiny, into the presence of the living God. I am justified in saying that in that stage of the world's history this is absolutely unique. I am now only stating it as a fact, however to be accounted for. Christians account for it from the history in which the Psalms are embedded, and by the light and guidance from above, implied in that history; and what other account can be given I find it hard to imagine. That such thoughts, such words, so steady and uniform in their central idea, so infinitely varied in their forms of expressing it, should have been produced in any of the nations which we call heathen, is to me absolutely inconceivable. That they should have been produced among the Hebrews, if the Hebrews were only as other nations, is equally inconceivable. But I want only to impress the fact, one of the most certain and eventful in the history of the world. It

is idle to talk of Semitic Monotheism, even if such tendency at that time can be proved. There is Monotheism and Monotheism: the Monotheism even of the Koran is not the Monotheism of the Psalms; and Monotheism is a poor and scanty word to express the continued flow of affectionateness, of joy and mourning, of hope and love, of every tone, of every strain, high and low, in the human soul, which we find in the Psalms. Nor does it avail to say that they are more modern than the songs of the Veda, or the Zendavesta. Chronology is a very uncertain measure of national development and culture, and the men who sang the Vedic hymns had a language, and therefore had had a training of thought and experience, as advanced as the Hebrew Psalmists. The Psalms are certainly no product of civilisation and philosophy; the differences of date among them, which are considerable, from the days of David, perhaps of Moses, to the "Pilgrim Songs" of the returning exiles in the days of Zerubbabel, make no difference in this respect. Nor is it relevant to point out alleged imperfections in the morality of some of the Psalms. This is not the occasion to go into the allegation itself; but were it sustainable, it would only make the wonder of the whole phenomenon more surprising. Here is a nation certainly rude and fierce, certainly behind its neighbours in the arts of life, in the activity and enterprise of intelligence which lead to knowledge, to subtlety or width of thought, or to the sense and creation of

beauty, and described in its own records as beset with incorrigible tendencies to the coarsest irreligion and degeneracy. Are we not constantly told that the songs of a people reflect its character; that a religion in its idea of God reflects its worshippers? What sort of character is reflected in the Psalms? They come to us from a people like their neighbours, merciless and bloody, yet they are full of love and innocence and mercy. They come from a people whose deep sins and wrong-doing are recorded by their own writers; yet the Psalms breathe the hunger and thirst of the soul after righteousness. They come from a race still in the rude childhood of the world: yet they express the thoughts about God and duty, and about the purpose and reward of human life, which are those of the most refined, the gentlest, the most saintly, the most exalted, whom the ages of the world have ever seen, down to its latest.

The question is asked in these days, Is God knowable? The answer depends on a further question. Whether God can be known by man depends on whether we have the faculties for knowing. We have faculties which enable us to know the phenomena of sense and of the outward world. We have faculties different from them, which enable us to know the truths of mathematics. Have we anything else? By whatever name we call them, we have powers very unlike, both in their subjects and in their mode of

working, to the knowledge of sense or the processes of mathematical science. There is a wonderful art, connected on the one hand with the senses, on the other hand with mathematical truth, yet in itself having that which belongs to neither, and which we call music. There is another, closely connected also with the senses, but, except in the most general way, beyond the domain of mathematical precision, which we call painting. There is yet a third—the art, or the power, or the gift, of calling into existence out of the imagination and the feelings and the language of men, by means of choice words and their measured rhythm, new creations of beauty and grandeur, which keep their hold on the minds and history of men for ages—the wondrous art of poetry. In music, in painting, in poetry, we say that we *know*. There are powers in human nature and in the human mind of dealing with these subjects, powers of the greatest activity and energy, most subtle and most delicate, yet most real, undoubting of themselves and undoubted in their effects, of which no one makes any question; *certain*, within limits, of what they know and do, but which yet in their tests of certainty are absolutely different from mathematical or physical knowledge, and absolutely impatient of the verifications which are indispensable in sensible and mathematical proof. And a man might be the greatest physicist and the greatest mathematician, while all their marvellous regions were to him absolutely a blank; though his mind was one

to which, say music, its meaning and its laws, were absolutely incomprehensible, the most impossible of puzzles. He might not know a false note in music from a true one; he might be utterly unable to see the difference between what is noble and base in it, or to distinguish the greatest work of Handel or Beethoven from any other collection of sounds. And yet the musician *knows*; he knows the glory and the truth, and the ordered perfection of which he speaks; he knows that this perfection is governed by the exactest laws; he knows that, like all perfection, it depends on *infinitesimal differences,* which yet are most real ones: his faculty of knowing and his knowledge, however he has got to them, and although other men or other races have them not, and he knows not the channel of communication between his own knowledge and their minds, are their own warrant and witness. The musical unbeliever might question the possibility of knowing anything about what to him would be so vague and misty, full of arbitrary definitions and unintelligible rules, and, if he was obstinate, might vainly seek to be convinced. Yet the world of music is a most real world; man has faculties for reaching it and judging of it; and the evidences of its reality are in the domain of fact and history.

Is there in human nature such a faculty, separate from the faculties by which we judge of the things of sense and the abstractions of the pure intellect, but

yet a true and trustworthy faculty for knowing God —for knowing God, in some such way as we know the spirits and souls, half disclosed, half concealed under the mask and garment of the flesh, among whom we have been brought up, among whom we live? Can we know Him in such a true sense as we know those whom we love and those whom we dislike; those whom we venerate and trust, and those whom we fear and shrink from? The course of the world, its history, its literature, our everyday life, presuppose such knowledge of men and character; they confirm its existence and general trustworthiness, by the infinitely varied and continuous evidence of results. The question whether there is such a faculty in the human soul for knowing its Maker and God—knowing Him, though behind the veil,—knowing Him, though flesh and blood can never see Him,—knowing Him, though the questioning intellect loses itself in the thought of Him,—this question finds here its answer. In the Psalms is the evidence of that faculty, and that with it man has not worked in vain. The Book of Psalms is like the fact of the production, by the existence and exercise of a faculty in man's nature, of vast results, such as a great literature, a great school of painting, a great body of music. If it is not a proof and example of this power of knowing, I cannot imagine what a proof can be. The proof that the living God can be known by man is that He can be loved and longed for with all the freedom and naturalness and hope of human affec-

tion. The answer whether God has given to man the faculty to know Him might be sought in vain in the Vedas or the Zendavesta. It is found in the Book of Psalms.

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