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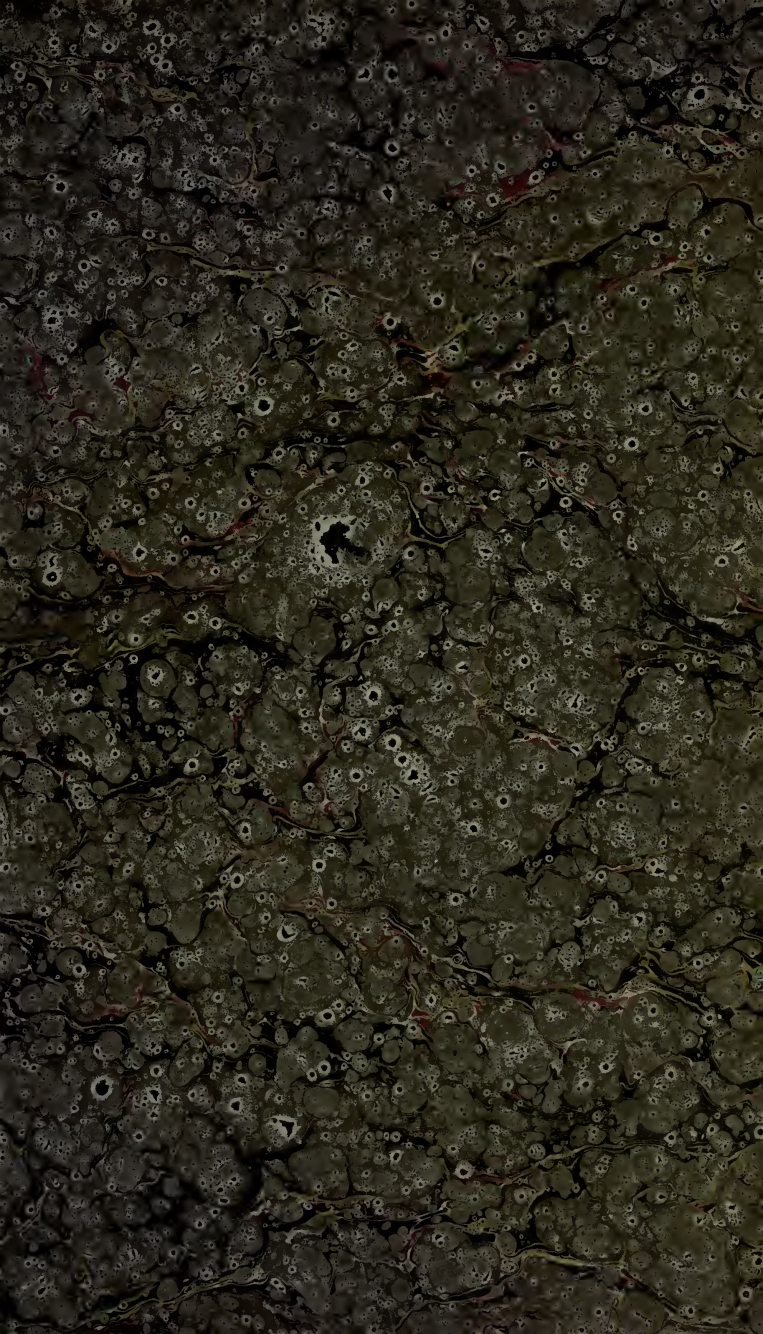


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# RELIGIOUS DUTY.



BY

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THIS Essay on RELIGIOUS DUTY was originally destined to form portion of a treatise which should have included both the Theory of Morals and also three books of Practical Morals, Religious, Personal, and Social. The volume on the *Theory of Intuitive Morals*\* has been published both in England and America, and the latter edition is still to be procured; but the books on Personal and Social Duty will probably never see the light. The present volume (which forms a complete treatise on its own topic) is re-published therefore independently, the first edition having been long ago exhausted.

\* *An Essay on Intuitive Morals*, by FRANCES POWER COBBE, 12mo, pp. 279, uniform with *Religious Duty*. Boston: Crosby & Nichols. London: Trübner & Co.





## PREFACE.

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THE Treatise on Religious Duty contained in the present volume is designed as a contribution towards a vast object—the development of Theism as a Religion for the Life no less than a Philosophy for the Intellect. Hitherto the latter task has necessarily engaged chief attention ; but now that Free Thought has sufficiently vindicated itself, it would seem that the time has arrived when Free Feeling also may begin to trace out the fresh channels into which a wider and purer faith will henceforth cause it to flow. No pretension can be made in this book to accomplish such a purpose in any way adequately, far less exhaustively. It will be the endless, happy work of better minds, better ages, better worlds than the present, to follow out to its consequences the doctrine of the

Absolute Goodness of God, and demonstrate all which that creed demands from us of love and veneration, all its sanctions for us of trust and joy. These pages contain only such simple results of the great truth as the writer perceives. At best they may show a few paces of the path of Right immediately before us, a faint gleam of that Paradise ever descried through the strait vista of Duty.

F. P. C.



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## CHAPTER I.

### RELIGIOUS DUTY.

It is not the concern of the moralist, but of the psychologist, to investigate the fundamental principle of the Religious Sentiment in the human soul. That sentiment may be, in its germ (as Schleiermacher has affirmed), a mere "sense of dependence." More accurately defined (as by Schenkel), it may be "a sense of dependence ethically induced,"\* In its perfect form it would seem to be best described as "*the sense of abso-*

\* "A mere feeling of dependence still falls short of any *moral* element, which is never wholly absent from religion. Hence Schleiermacher's view decidedly needs correction on the ethical side. Not till it is ethically induced—not, that is to say, till it arises from a function of the conscience—does the feeling of dependence properly pass into religion. And if we may say that there is no religion void of the element of dependence, we must, on equal grounds, affirm that there are (absolute) feelings of dependence which do not fall within the province of religion."—Article "Abhängigkeitsgefühl," by Dr. Schenkel, in the *Real Encyclopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, quoted in the *Westminster Review*.

The doctrine of Schleiermacher has been ably attacked by Mansell, *Limits of Religious Thought*, Lecture iv.



*lute dependence united with the sense of absolute moral allegiance;*" the Being on whom we depend being recognised as possessing the Right to claim, as well as the Power to enforce, our absolute obedience.

In whatever depths of our nature the religious sentiment may find its source, it is, however, sufficiently patent that the duty which it entails upon us is a real and actual one, not lying hidden among the obscure and vague feelings of the heart, but rising to the surface of speech and action, and demanding even the highest place among our recognised affections. Through that sentiment we have received intimation of, and have entered into relation with, a Being who, *when* so recognised, acquires in the nature of things a whole series of claims upon us. Had we no such sentiment, our understandings might possibly have worked out inductively the "hypothesis of a God," though it is far more probable they would have utterly failed to do so. But the "Great First Cause," even if thus brought within the field of our philosophy, and recognised further to be necessarily a perfect moral Being, would have remained for ever on the outside of our consciousness and beyond the sphere of human duty, had He not given to our souls an organ to perceive Him, a sentiment which can love our unseen Father. Possessed of this religious Sentiment, our religious Duty follows of necessity; nay, it follows that all duty acquires a religious obligation, and man becomes, before all other characteristics, a religious being.

In the first place, religion is ethically incumbent on all moral agents, because the absolute holiness of God constitutes Him their moral King and Master. This truth, in a certain vague manner, is so commonly recognised that there seems almost a degree of irreverence in attempting to show the grounds of that Divine authority which in our ordinary consciousness precedes any abstract morality, and is itself the sanction of all right. Nevertheless, for religion's own sake it is most needful that we apprehend truly its real basis, whereon alone we may build such a faith as shall include all duty and all love, and shall exclude alike all idolatrous worship of the imperfect, and all demonolatrous dread of evil power or evil wisdom. God Himself, in making us rational creatures, has implicitly rested his title to our allegiance on His own moral perfection, for to such perfection alone is it lawful for such creatures to bow. He has given us natures which can regard with no veneration even Omnipotence itself, if represented as united with the moral attributes of a fiend. We must know that God Himself is righteous before those hearts which he has made can adore Him. He deigns to receive no servile homage. Further, a religion which shall be identified with sound morality must recognise distinctly, not only that God is *good*, and so deserving our love and reverence, but that He is *infinitely* good, and so entitled to our absolute fealty and obedience. We must not regard Him (as a finite being, however *virtuous*, must be regarded) as a fellow-subject of the necessary law. He resumes the

whole of it in His own absolute *holiness*, and therefore rules us as King. His will is co-ordinate with all right; He is the impersonation thereof, Himself the eternal Living Law. No ethical limits exist to His jurisdiction over us, for it is conterminous with morality itself. Inasmuch as any act is right, in so far it is God's command: inasmuch as it is God's command, in so far it is right.

According, then, to this first grand view of the case, it appears that ALL duty, whether towards ourselves, our neighbour, or more immediately to God, is properly in strict ethics *Religious Duty*.

But beside this primary relation of moral subjects to our King, whereby all our duties acquire religious character, we stand in several other most intimate relations to God, and from the union of these necessarily arises the special duty which constitutes the third great branch of practical morality. This directly and exclusively RELIGIOUS DUTY, comprehending the actions and sentiments due by man immediately to his Maker, is the subject of the present book. We must briefly review the nature of these human and Divine relations before investigating the principle of the obligations which are their ethical result.

"Man owes all to God." It is a common kind of phrase. We rarely pause to consider what it includes. Physically, he owes Him life, here and hereafter, his body and his soul, all his past, present, and future possessions. Intellectually, he owes Him all he knows, all



he can ever know—the mental powers by which he acquires knowledge, and the instruction which men, books, and nature, have given him. Morally, he owes Him freedom—the vast and wondrous power of his own will to choose the right and reject the wrong; and he owes Him the inward grace and outward moral providence by which he is continually assisted in so doing. All these are his debt to God in the one character of his *Creator*, and a religion of *gratitude* necessarily founds itself upon them. But God is man's *Judge*, as well as his Creator. To Him it pertains to uphold the moral law throughout the universe of which he is King. Every breach of that law must be an offence against Him, as every act of obedience to it is one of obedience to Him. The sins we have committed during our lives, even those which were most directly offences against our neighbour or ourselves, were also so truly sins against God, that the cry of penitence (overlooking the lesser in the enormity of the greater offence) is almost justified, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." We are thus placed before our Judge in a different position from that which we should have held had we not broken His laws. It is true that He knows no "wrath," that His goodness remains for ever unchanged while acting in accordance with His justice in executing the retribution, which is also correction. Nevertheless, *we* have become criminals before Him. To our religion is added, then, a third element beside moral allegiance and gratitude—that of

*contrition.* And lastly, God is something else to us beside Creator, Benefactor, Teacher, Helper—something else beside Moral King and Judge. He is also the *End* and Aim of our whole being. We are created on purpose that we may know the ineffable glory and bliss of loving and adoring Him. We are moral beings, because such alone can apprehend his moral perfection ; we are immortal, and eternity will not be long enough to learn all His goodness, and grow more fit to worship it. In Him, and to Him, and for Him, are all things that we are or ever shall be—all the duty, glory, and joy of our everlasting existence.

These things being so, the relation of man to God being such as I have described, the task seems no difficult one to discover some *maxim* which shall express, at once, all the multitudinous rights of action and sentiment thence arising, the *axiom* which shall embody all our own past and present intuitions of religious duty. Whenever these relations in which we stand to God have come out clearly before our minds or hearts, when we have studied His works and thought of Him as Creator, when we have striven for the right and looked to Him as Helper, when we have sinned and recognised that he was our Judge, when we have rejoiced in our human affections and thanked Him as our Father, when we have mourned beside the dead and turned to Him who alone is Lord of Death and Life, what are the *intuitions* which have come to us concerning the *right* tribute owed to Him ? Indifference, hatred, fear, irre-

verence, thanklessness, or thanks of lip-service? Such ideas are absurd. Probably not one of them, save fear, has ever even presented itself to a human mind, far less commended itself as necessary and universal. Supposing that fear *has* sometimes seemed the fitting tribute from the powerless to the Omnipotent, will it stand the test of Necessity? Can we imagine no hour of joy, no paradise of blameless delights, wherein some other sentiment, save dread, should move the heart of the blessed towards the Benefactor? Has it ever been our own sole intuition that we should *fear* God? When we have awakened from our sins to abhor and renounce them, and turned in contrition, and yet in infinite hope of succour and restoration, to the Father of the Prodigal, was our cry one of slavish fear? Only in the most immature and partial religious experience can this sentiment have suggested itself at all, and even here it could never be recognised by the mind as of universal obligation, as a necessary result in all time and space, and under every varying condition of the whole compound relation of man to God. But if fear cannot be accepted, nor bear the test of a sentiment of universal obligation, and if indifference, or irreverence, or thanklessness, be too obviously absurd to deserve consideration, what sentiment is there remaining which can possibly apply to the case? There is but one, and that is *love*. The canon of Christ offers the definition of man's religious duty—

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL  
THINE HEART, AND SOUL, AND STRENGTH.

*This* answers to the intuitions which have sprung in all our hearts in life's most living hours. And *this* finally approves itself as the one sole "*law fit for law universal*," the only principle which we can represent to ourselves as applicable to every case, holding good for all creatures for ever.

Love is claimed from us by the perfections we perceive in our Creator and the benefits we receive from Him, and it is actually the only reciprocation possible under the circumstances. It is the sole *reality* in that return of debt which the eternal right requires should be made to such a benefactor as God; and it ought to be the germ of every outward religious service or sacrifice which, *with* that love, and springing from it, is holy and good, and, *without* it, is worthless and insulting. It is true that objections have been sometimes made to the propriety of ranking the love of God as, literally speaking, a moral *duty*. "Love," it is argued, "is an emotion which is called forth by the presentation of lovable objects, and its nature is necessarily free, and unconstrained by the rigid mandates of the moral will." This view, if fully carried out, would strike at the root of all morality, inasmuch as it would forbid the attempt to regulate those Emotions which are not only the springs of our outward actions, but are themselves *inward acts*, far more closely connected than any



external ones with our progress towards that virtue of rational souls which is the ultimate fulfilment of the moral law. It is an indispensable postulate of all sound ethics, that the *sentiments* of all rational free agents possess a moral character no less real and necessary than their actions. And if this be so, the love of God must stand in the very foremost rank of those sentiments which are eternally and necessarily right for man to feel.

We may prove the same truth negatively. The hypothesis is absurd that the performance of any number of outward *actions* of respect, obedience, or worship, would fulfil the duty of spiritual beings towards the Lord of Spirits, while unaccompanied by any *feelings* of gratitude, trust, or adoration. We, ourselves, who can but little discern the inward movements of our brothers' hearts, and who can and do receive benefit from outward actions performed in our favour, though unaccompanied by genuine sentiments in the actor, even we disdain the offering of respectful but insincere words, unloving benefits, and heartless eye-service. How doubly monstrous, then, it is to think of outward duty towards God, otherwise than as the manifestation of *sentiments* on which the value of those outward acts depends, as shadows depend on substance! There is here no distinction of subjective and objective duties, no question of acts having an external legality divisible from the internal morality of their motives. God can be benefited by nothing that the whole created universe can do. There

is no virtue or happiness of *His* to be aided or produced by the children of earth. Our position is clear. We owe Him our all, and we must pay that debt to Him with LOVE, or pay it with MOCKERY.

We *ought* then to love God. It is a hateful and odious thought, that of a moral being receiving such benefits as we receive, and recognising such perfections as we recognise, and yet feeling no love for the Good and Holy One. Does any man still reply, that whatever he *ought* to do, he *cannot* love at word of command? Let him ponder a little Who it is that he is commanded to love. Cannot he, indeed, love *that* Being? Does he feel that he must wrench his nature with some terrible violence, to *make* himself love the All-adorable Lord of Love and Goodness? Questions like these are rank absurdities applied to the religious duty of a worshipper of the true God. So long as men believe that the Deity has displayed in human history a multitude of characteristics repugnant to their natural ideas of justice and goodness, so long there is perfect reason in the complaint that they are commanded to love that which, from the constitution of their hearts, they cannot love. But the case is reversed the moment we gain the blessed faith, that whatever *we* feel to be just and good, *that*, and infinitely more than that, is God—that whatever we feel to be unjust and evil, *that* He never has been nor will be. To love God now is merely to love that which *we feel to be lovely*—our own ideal of all amiable and venerable attributes. Thus the “command”



to love God, issuing, as it does, from our own true self, is simply the legitimation and consecration of our highest spontaneous affections, not the forcing of them into unnatural channels. As has been often said, it is much more the permission, "Thou *mayest* love thy Lord," than the command, "Thou *shalt* love Him." Here is the culminating point of humanity and morality, and the result is a sublime and transcendent harmony. But, on the other hand, it is not *only* a permission. So weak are we, so easily led away by our lower interests, that we continually cease to think of God's claims to our love, cease to cherish our holy affections, cease, perhaps, to live in such wise as that we *dare* to love God. Then comes in the command, "Thou *shalt* love the Lord." It is a *duty* incumbent on us to do so. He has a right to it: our nature is in disorder and degradation without it: the eternal law of the universe is unfulfilled till we do it. It is indeed a privilege, a birthright, but tremendous is our sin if we relinquish or renounce it!

One objection, however, to the whole doctrine of religious duty (and more especially to that of religious worship or service) may possibly have presented itself to the reader. "We may owe service," it might be said, "to any being whom such service can benefit. For example, we owe personal duty to ourselves, and can actually benefit our own natures; we owe social duty to our neighbours, and can contribute in reality to their welfare. These are intelligible duties, because their performance actually tends to a good result. But

how can we owe a duty to a Being whose holiness and happiness cannot be increased? God does not want either the love in our hearts or the outward acts by which we display it. Our thanks, adoration, faith, can no more make Him happier or better than our blasphemy, sacrilege, or atheism could injure Him. Unless, then, as a mere branch of personal duty, as an artifice for increasing our own sentiments of gratitude and reverence, what is the meaning of a religious duty? Why should we do service to One who cannot be served by anything we can do? ”\*

Here comes in one of the grand distinctions between dependent and independent morality, between a system of ethics which assumes the right to be merely the shortest path to the useful, and a system which proclaims it to be the sacrosanct necessary obligation of all rational free agents. If “right” and “useful” were really convertible terms, it would be impossible to find any warrant for religious services of love and thanksgiving other than in the direct mandates of the Being to be worshipped; and these, if accepted as veritable, could, on the assumption in question, be only supposed to be

\* “Inter Deistas quidam fuerunt, licet perpauci numero, qui omnem cultum etiam internum rejecerunt, asserentes Deum nihil de illo curare, religiosisque actibus non moveri.”—*Angladis Ethica*, Pars. ii. Dis. 1.

It is necessary often to *state* objections and difficulties preparatory to demonstrating the true ground of doctrines, but it is not always necessary to attribute every possible error to an actual flesh and blood heretic.

issued for the benefit and educational training of the worshipper. Such, indeed, is the aspect given to their cultus by many Churches (especially of the Evangelical class), and the result is undoubtedly a lowering of the conception of worship from its proper character of the most sublime office of which man is capable, to the rank of a mere method of improvement, little, if at all, above that of listening to sermons or reading books of divinity. Further, the worship which is consciously self-educating, and nothing more, is, from that very circumstance, disqualified, in a great measure, from that purpose itself. A man who should offer thanks to the Giver of his happiness solely because he hoped, in accordance with the laws of his mind, to increase his own virtue by such spiritual gymnastics, such a man's self-prospective thanksgivings would possess little or no warming or elevating power, even if his system permitted him to seek his virtue as an end in itself, and not merely the means of his admission to Paradise. Each great branch of human duty has its own independent claims as a separate law of the eternal right. A man's own virtue is the end of his creation. "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect," is the first law of his being, which can be postponed to no other. But as it is not merely to warm his own benevolent affections that he is bound to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, so neither is it merely as an excitement of his sentiments of gratitude and veneration that he is bound to offer thanksgiving and adoration for the infinite blessings and

perfections of his Creator. He is bound to worship because it is *right* that such a being as man should worship such a being as God. It is as much a part of eternal justice that the rational recipient of unnumbered benefits should return gratitude to his benefactor, as it is a part of justice that a murderer should be punished. It is Right, necessarily and immutably Right, antecedently to all consideration of additional benefits to be obtained by such gratitude for the creature, or the expression of a desire for it by the Creator.

In the first place, then, as I have said, worship is demanded abstractedly by the eternal moral law. We have sufficient intimation of this truth by intuition; nay, the recognition of it seems to have long preceded the Evangelical idea of worship as merely the "means of grace." Heathens, in very low stages of religious development, have counted *thanksgiving* as a debt obviously due to their invisible benefactors—to Jupiter the Liberator, to Phœbus Epicurios, to Æsculapius the Healer. All ancient liturgies, Jewish and Christian, are full of that Praise which the more or less anthropomorphic creed of the worshipper substituted for *adoration*.\*

In the second place, worship is incumbent on us as the means whereby we may obtain God's aid towards

\* "For with us, too" (as with the early and middle periods of the Church), "the burden, the staple of the service is, it may be confidently affirmed, and will be more fully shown hereafter, Praise."—*The Principles of Divine Service in the English Church*. By Philip Freeman. Chap. i. sect. vii.



the perfecting of our natures by His grace and inspiration. It is obvious that if we be morally bound to seek our personal virtue, we must be bound to seek the best assistance offered thereto.

From the direct rightfulness of the case, arising simply from the relative positions of man and God, all religious Offences stand condemned, and the Duties proceed of Thanksgiving, Adoration, Repentance, Faith, and Self-consecration.

From the indirect rightfulness of the case, arising from the assistance offered therein to personal virtue, the duty proceeds of Prayer.

The various religious obligations deducible from the canon of love to God may now be discussed in succession.

Like social and personal duties, those of religion may of course be either fulfilled, or neglected, or contravened. The fulfilment of our duties towards God is (what may be termed) religious Virtue; the neglect of them is a religious Fault; the contravention of them a religious Offence.

*Religious obligations* may be included under the heads of Thanksgiving, Adoration, Prayer, Repentance, Faith, and Self-consecration. The first three are the right *acts* for man to perform towards God; the last three the right *conditions* of his soul.

*Religious faults* may be similarly classified, as Thanklessness, Irreverence, Prayerless habits, Impenitence, Scepticism, and Worldliness.

*Religious offences* are Blasphemy, Apostacy, Hypo-

crisy, Perjury, Sacrilege, Persecution, Atheism, Pantheism, Polytheism, Idolatry, and Demonolatry.

I shall commence by discussing Religious Offences and Faults, of which a slight notice will show the immorality, and then proceed to a more ample view of religious Obligations.



## CHAPTER II.

### RELIGIOUS OFFENCES.

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#### SECTION I.

##### BLASPHEMY.

THE moral law requires us to love God. This love is claimed by His moral perfection and by His beneficence specially displayed towards us. Now, a love which arises from adoration of moral perfection and gratitude for benefits received is manifestly exclusively a Reverential Love. In such a case it cannot be said that Reverence is founded on Love, but that Love is the climax and culmination of Reverence, the flower which ought to bloom out of its highest shoot. Further, in the case of a purely spiritual object of love, no human affection, no pathological *liking*, being possible, the simply moral sentiment alone is capable of application. To detract then from Reverence towards God is to cut from under us the sole support of Divine love. Man could not pay, nor God receive, the smallest bud of love growing on any other stem.

Of all actions which detract from Reverence, the first which present themselves are *Blasphemies*. These are not mere Faults of Irreverence, negations of due

honour. They are affirmative insults. The question which involuntarily suggests itself on contemplating in this light the sin of Blasphemy is, "How comes it that such a crime has ever been committed? Where could this world produce the temptation overwhelming enough to force any rational creature to so mad an act?"

Alas! it is precisely the sin of all others most commonly perpetrated with temptations so small, that the moralist is at a loss to define wherein they may consist!

Objectively considered, the degree of guilt of a blasphemy is of course determined by the amount of contemptuously expressed therein. This standard, however, will be modified, and often reversed, by the subjective measure of the blasphemer's temptation. Phrases so hideous that to repeat them would be itself impiety have often been wrung by sharp agony from human lips. Are these to be compared to the sacrilegious scoffs of men in health and ease, whom the vanity of creating surprise at their audacity, or the merest wantonness of irreligion and carelessness, lead to hurl insults at the awful majesty of God?

In these, as in all other religious offences, there is a singular sort of self-deception often existing in the mind of the offender. Accustomed to dread only the punishment, and not the guilt of sin, the man no sooner rises so far above anthropomorphic ideas of God, as to see that He can feel no *personal* vindictiveness against those who offend Him, than he leaps to the conclusion that there is no further fear of the great Judge inflicting any

retribution whatever on religious delinquencies. It is almost superfluous to refute such a delusion. Sin against God can possess none of the palliations which the character or conduct of any other being sinned against may place in behalf of the offender. Objectively, therefore, religious offences are the greatest of sins. Ingratitude to a human benefactor, be it never so little excusable, cannot be equal in guilt to ingratitude to the Divine Benefactor, whose gifts have incalculably exceeded all others, and from whose love no mutability or fickleness has ever detracted. This moral guilt God, as Judge of the universe, will assuredly visit in exact proportion to its absolute demerit. It is not a vindictive being, neither an unheeding one, whom the blasphemer reviles; but it is an all-righteous Judge, an ever-vigilant Witness, in whose presence he commits an offence of magnitude stupendous and terrific.

The mildest form of this sin, which yet must be classed under the same head, is the practice of "taking God's name in vain"—using, in carelessness and jest, a reference to Him whose awful holiness should be present to our hearts in solemn veneration whensoever we think of Him. Of course custom is commonly the immediate cause of blasphemies of this sort; but it may well "give no pause" to think how such habits can ever have been formed and have become common. How little can any man revere, in his graver hours, the dread sanctity of his God, who, in his lighter ones, is for ever associating His name with folly and profaneness!

## SECTION II.

## APOSTACY.

BETWEEN the offences of Blasphemy, Hypocrisy, and Perjury, and partaking of the guilt of all three, lies that of Apostacy.

It is obvious that to constitute a moral crime this act must be either—

1st. A genuine lapse from a higher to a lower faith, or—

2nd. A false recantation of a faith really held by the apostate, and recanted hypocritically, from hope of some advantage or fear of some injury.

As it is impossible, according to the constitutions of our minds, that the lure of a reward or threat of punishment can actually *change* the opinions of any one, and as such lures and threats can only *warp* the judgment where moral earnestness is deficient, we may consider that the first class of apostacies must always result either from such spiritual unfaithfulness as blinds the inward sight to the difference of truth and falsehood, or to such moral declension as exposes the judgment to be perverted by external hopes and fears. The offence then lies in such unfaithfulness and declension. The final act of profession is only the appearance on the surface of deep-



seated mischief below. There is no offence, however, of which we are less competent than this to form a judgment of guilt in any individual case. Even when we have convinced ourselves that one creed is actually purer than another, *when both are thoroughly developed*, it by no means follows that the particular proselyte to the lower creed has understood the developments of either. Probably, in nine cases out of ten, public recantations which seem to us apostacies are actually, so far as the individual is concerned, the renunciation of doctrines which brought him no spiritual light, and the adoption of others among which he found some truths specially needful to his soul.

The second class of apostacies, or those recantations which hope or fear leads a man *falsely* to make, constitute an offence against God of patent heinousness. That light which has been vouchsafed to us we deny and repudiate. We speak and act a lie in God's sight, concerning directly God's own truth. I have said that the sin is related in guilt both to blasphemy and perjury. To the latter it belongs, inasmuch as the sanctity of the subject, even if no direct oath be made, involves the case in similar reference to God. To the former it belongs also, from the fact that the apostate must always profess to believe and actually assert God to be *less* perfect than in his heart he knows Him to be. He blasphemes, by affirming that the heathen Jove's character and history were attributable to the Father of Christ, or that a wafer could become a portion of Godhead,

An apostacy committed from hope of some advantage, as to obtain favour, rise to a higher rank, or form a desirable alliance, is so manifestly impious that it is unnecessary to discuss it further.

Very different, however, from the renegade who seeks *reward*, is the unhappy apostate who shrinks from such *punishments* as human tyranny has often inflicted on the professors of an outlawed faith. Here is, indeed, the ultimate test and supreme trial of morals, that a man be called on to choose between death and a crime.

That he *is* morally bound to suffer any torments, and sacrifice his life, sooner than renounce his religious faith, it ought to be superfluous to demonstrate. Yet, since the happiness-seeking philosophers have leavened the whole mass of popular thought, it has become not uncommon to hear it asked, "Were the martyrs bound to suffer as they did? Should we, in similar persecutions, be morally obliged to follow their example? No doubt their acts were heroic and magnificent, but, surely, though duty may sanction, it cannot *demand* such a sacrifice. We might refuse it, and commit no heinous crime after all. What signify a few words of recantation obviously insincere, compared to a human life?"

In the first place, it may be observed that the Personal duty of veracity ought, singly considered, to be felt sufficient to forbid all such lying recantations. The law of truth permits of *no* exceptions. A man must not lie to save his own or any other life.



Nay, as personal virtue is the end of the creation of each rational soul, the achievement of so noble a degree of it as the sacrifice of life in the cause of truth would be one of the terminations of this stage of existence which a man, fully imbued with the desire of that holy end, would accept in all readiness and cheerfulness.\* Secondly, false recantations are also offences against the Social duty of conducing to our neighbour's virtue. God has granted us a certain truth, and instead of sharing it with our brother, and proving to him how dear and sacred we hold it, we solemnly abjure it before him, and show it to be powerless over our dastard fears.

Thirdly, and chiefly, false recantations are, as we have seen, Religious offences of direst guilt, involving at once perjury and blasphemy, the solemn, deliberate repudiation of God's most sacred lessons of truth.

It is no marvel that the noblest human souls have preferred all deaths and agonies sooner than commit a crime like this, which seems the direct self-exclusion of the apostate from all future enlightenment of God's spirit. How dare a man hope to be led further to truth, nay, to be permitted to retain any spiritual sight, after he has deliberately abjured the light God's mercy has already bestowed ?

\* If we may trust the history, the heathen Regulus attained this supreme achievement of virtue ; and that, too, when men believed the future life to be only a realm of shade, and that—

“ Better, though on the worst of terms, is life  
Than the most glorious death.”

But none the less—ay, all the more—for its imperative obligation, ought we to look to that awful duty of constancy with a veneration, making the martyrs' names the dearest in all human story, the glorious incentives to every achievement of virtue. They are the heroes of the van-guard, who have stormed the citadel while we are lying without feebly beleaguering the outermost walls. And shall we dare, like the cold-blooded critics of the last degenerate age, to make light of those deeds which are the glory of our race? It will freeze every generous impulse in our hearts to do so. "Vanity," "love of admiration," these, in sooth, are the springs to which men like Gibbon, writing in their luxurious libraries, would strive to trace the martyrs' valour. "Vanity?" If *vanity* can do miracles like these, if vanity can make men stand firm to be devoured by lions and torn by human devils, to be lashed, crushed, flayed, and slowly roasted to death, then this vanity must be a splendid, a stupendous thing! something, I ween, capable of more glorious achievements than any sentiment in the powdered head of an eighteenth century historian! Away with such folly.

Few evidences of scepticism show it to be more profound than the effort to trace great events to base causes, and heroic actions to degraded motives. There is, in truth, nothing more unphilosophic than such an attempt. The human soul, with all its failings, is capable of being roused by noble motives and great demands, as it can never be wakened by selfish and petty ones. Who has

not seen how some poor, feeble-brained man or woman has answered the call of some emergency of affection, and has displayed a courage and wisdom such as the selfish cares of ordinary life had never brought to light? And when we see a really great achievement of human virtue, we may ever feel assured that there is a great and a true motive in the heart of him who accomplishes it. Perhaps he does not recognise it himself: perhaps he may profess that he has some lower one—the hope of heaven or fear of hell. Believe him not. He could not have done a really noble deed had it been so. Love of God or love of man must needs have nourished the root of every martyr's palm.

And what, after all, if, with the pure love of God, the sufferer for religion's sake has sometimes asked also for some last drops of the sweet love of human hearts to taste once more upon his cross of agony? What if that "thirst for the crown of martyrdom" which the happiness-seeking moralists of our day dare to speak of contemptuously, what if this almost superhuman ambition have mingled sometimes into one aspiration the elements of that Divine love which longs to suffer in God's cause, with that thrice purified human love which desires to bequeath a *memory which shall be a religion*—what of this, O scorner? Are thy motives in seeking ease and wealth, and the pitiful distinctions of social life, so super-exalted, that thou mayest justly point the finger at the one poor human hope which the martyr has not resigned upon God's altar?

Never must we suffer the honour of these heroes of our race to be tarnished by vile suspicions; never must we rob a leaf from their palmy crowns. Such glories as theirs are of endless use in showing us what man may become of great and holy, even here on earth. They are "the stars of our mortal night," and to draw a cloud over them is to consign ourselves to gloom. But pointing to them, believing, as we may believe, that what was of such radiant glory to human eyes was no less pure before Him who saw their consecrated souls, how fearlessly may we answer all the dark doubts and accusations brought against humanity! Is that nature "totally depraved," all baseness, all weakness, which has proved its capacity for such transcendent virtue? Against the hosts of sin we set the noble army of martyrs, and we challenge all the fanatics in the world to scorn a race from which that God-like band has been recruited from age to age in every land beneath the sun. Herein, too, lies the glory of it, that no Church can claim to be the sole "mother of the martyrs," or say that the nature originally "depraved" has been regenerated in her communion alone.\* Every creed, even down to hea-

\* I have been anxious to form a list of the martyrs who suffered expressly for their denial of that doctrine of redemption whose acceptance the popular creed asserts can alone restore virtue to our degenerate race. It is very difficult to construct such a martyrology, owing to the extreme paucity of sympathizers to record them—a paucity, by the way, which removes from these martyrs the last suspicion of a motive lower than the purest self-devotion. The following are a few of the best known :—



thenisms, poor and low, have sent their contingent to the ranks; nay, it is the *rule* that men and women prefer martyrdom to apostacy, and the *exceptions* are the cases wherein they have swerved before any torment which cruelty could invent.

The guilt of apostacy which would attach itself to a recantation uttered from fear of death belongs, of course, with infinitely less palliation, to those repudiations of religious faith which are made continually in our day, from motives of interest, subservience, dread of ridicule,

Valentine Gentilis, a Neapolitan Arian, suffered death at Berne, 1566. (Mosheim.)

Jacob Palæologus, of Chio, burnt at Rome for Unitarianism. (Mosheim.)

Servetus, burnt by Calvin for Anti-Trinitarianism.

George Van Paris, burnt in Smithfield, temp. Edward VI., at the request of Cranmer, for denying the proper Divinity of Christ. (Tayler's *Retrospect*, p. 324.)

Francis Wright, burnt for Deism at Norwich, in 1588.

Bartholomew Legate, burnt in Smithfield in 1612, for Arianism. His life was offered at the stake, but refused. (See Robert Vaughan's *Memorials of the Stuart Dyn.*, p. 331.)

Edward Wightman, burnt at Lichfield for Ebionite and Arian heresies, 1612. (He and Legate were the last martyrs burnt in England.)

Bainham—burnt in Smithfield for asserting that “if a Jew, Turk, or Saracen do trust in God and keep His law, he is a good Christian”—may perhaps be regarded in a still more interesting light, for *his* heresy consisted in denying the importance of creeds to salvation, yet he died sooner than recant his own. (See Froude, *Hist. Eng.*, vol. ii. p. 85.)

To these may doubtless be added the hundreds of Arian, Jewish, and Moorish martyrs of the Middle Ages. Among *Confessors* stand foremost the Unitarians Davidis and Emlyn.



in a word, from the thousand petty hopes and fears which our social state brings to bear on the actions of daily life. In some cases these hopes and fears may, even now, be of considerable force. Some *charitable* persons and societies do not scruple to offer the bribe of their dole to the subscription of their peculiar confession of faith. To refuse such terms when that assistance is really wanted must be an act of virtue in whose performance the charitable association has the share which Calvin had in the virtue of Servetus. On the other hand, parents, employers, teachers, in a word, superiors of all classes, work on the fears of those beneath them in thousands of cases, and bend to an outward acquiescence in their creed many a soul which inwardly revolts from it. Even when there is no actual power of persecution, ridicule, or withdrawal of wonted kindness and affection, are influences of terrible weight on natures over-sensitive or deficient in moral courage.

Very miserable sophistries are current on the subject of our duties in these matters. Few of us have not much to repent in the way of unworthy silences on our true faith, silences which, if caused by tenderness, were weak—if by any fear, cowardly and base. Vast numbers of free-thinkers especially, and, above all, the elder deists, seem actually to have accepted their antagonists' view of their own creed, and to consider that the next best thing to not knowing a truth was the not spreading it. Others, like Sterling, say that, as they are not *professional* teachers of religion, they may teach (even their

own children!) the opposite errors! It is marvellous that men do not see the turpitude, religious, personal, and social, involved in such conduct. For ourselves, a life in which the inward and the outward are in harmony is absolutely needful to all moral health and progress; and that the stunted religious growth of many free-thinkers may be attributable to this inner rottenness, no one who knows his own nature can doubt.

As to our neighbour, the simplest principles of benevolence require us to share with him the truths which have been vouchsafed to us, and, even if he will not accept them from us, to set them before him freely with all the attractions we can give them. Each religious truth is an aid to virtue, it is a thought to enlarge the mind and to make it better. True, our power to spread it may seem almost null, but Moses was "slow of speech," yet his stammered words are echoing still, and shall for ever echo down "the corridors of time." Who knows what fires we may kindle if we will but speak that which we know—fires "to shine all England through;" ay, through all the world, perchance, when we lie sleeping? It is not the strength of the hand which holds the torch, but the flame which crowns it, which causes the fuel to blaze. But be our powers small or great, they are *those which God has committed to us*. We are more accountable in his sight for not exchanging this talent of truth, than for hoarding all the gold in a miser's coffers. There is no measuring the consequences which would ensue if we all took to heart this duty of "casting our

spiritual bread on the waters." Twelve fishermen changed the world's history by possessing a truth and believing that God required them to spread it. "There is plenty of truth in the world," says Philip Harwood, "but until it is *spoken* truth, nobody is the better for it. There is truth enough in England at this moment to bring the whole ecclesiastical and sectarian power of the country to the ground in one week, if it were but spoken truth."\* Suppose that Luther had been checked by his fears from without, his self-distrusts within!†

\* *Lecture on Priestley*, p. 13.

† "How often have I," he writes, "in the bitterness of my soul, pressed myself with the Papists' argument, 'Art thou alone wise? are all others in error? have they been mistaken for so long a time? What if you are yourself mistaken, and are dragging with you so many souls into eternal condemnation?'"—Sir J. Stephen's *Essays*, b. i. p. 315.

## SECTION III.

## HYPOCRISY.

IN the preceding section I spoke of that form of Hypocrisy which is more accurately classed as Apostacy, and consists in the profession of a creed in which we do not really believe, or the abjuration of one which in our hearts we hold to be true. Hypocrisy, as I shall here regard it, does not refer to the intellectual *creed*, but to the religious and moral *feelings*. It is the offence of pretending that we are more pious and virtuous than we know ourselves to be, or (singular paradox) of pretending that we do *not* feel and care about religion and duty, as in truth we do.

Assuming that we are bound to "love God with all our hearts," and that He, at all times, sees into those hearts, and knows whether we fulfil this obligation, it is clear enough that to act before Him the living lie of a pretended piety is, in an outrageous degree, offensive and insulting. It is unnecessary to enlarge on a topic so fully understood. The actual gross hypocrisy of the Tartuffe and the Mawworm is abhorred and condemned by every heart and tongue.

Not equally recognised, however, is the guilt of some of the milder forms of this vice, wherein the simplicity

of religion is still, although less grossly, violated. Nay, to many the concealment of serious religious feelings under a light demeanour is, doubtless, an act of hypocrisy done out of the very hatred of the offence in its opposite development—yet, in whatever way we *falsify* our true religious condition to the eyes of our fellows, must it not always involve offence before God? Are we not bound to live out simply and uprightly before men that which He sees us to be; to acknowledge alike our heart's fealty to our liege Lord, and the miserable short-comings by which we fail in our allegiance?

In the first place, there is an hypocrisy of appearing *better* than we are, which shelters itself under the pretence of serving as an example to others. The man is not base enough to seek worldly gain or aggrandizement by such means, but he conceals his sins and errors on the ground of "preserving his usefulness," "saving the credit of his sacred profession," not "throwing a stumbling-block before the weak," or "giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." He also attends public worship, observes the Sabbath, frowns down free talk, and affects great gravity on religious matters; all for the sake of good example, and because such things, though of no consequence to *his* soul, are doubtless so to the weak and ignorant. What ruin to the singleness of a human heart must be such a course as this! How all real earnest repentance for a sin must be stopped, when, instead of sorrow for the past and resolution for the future, the mind is occupied by efforts



to make the spectators believe it has never slipped, or, perhaps, that its fall was no moral lapse at all ! To be a contrite sinner in the eyes of God, while we strive to be a stainless saint in the eyes of men—what a contradiction ! The pretence, too, of avoiding injury to the cause of religion is utterly futile. The world always *does* know, sooner or later, the most secret errors. There is no word more true in the Bible than that which declares “that what is spoken in the ear shall be proclaimed on the house-tops.” Hypocrisy only adds a double shame to the sins of “ professors.” And if there be any way in which erring man may really help his brother’s soul, it is by showing him that he hates his own sin so heartily that he is willing to bear its shame, and hastens to renounce it openly and utterly. The more the repentant man is raised above us by age, character, parenthood—the more his frank avowal of error would affect us beneficially. Of all this much will be said hereafter in discussing the subject of repentance. As for the attendance at worship, &c., “ for the sake of example,” it is marvellous how any human creatures have ever had the presumption to entertain such an idea. Let any sane man consider what he does when he enters a church, and ask himself how his “ exemplary ” behaviour therein must appear to God, and I cannot but suppose he will be sufficiently shocked to abandon such attempts for the future. For, either he must intend really to worship, to thank, to adore, and pray to the great Lord of all, or he must intend to make an outward

show of so doing without any uplifting of soul. The latter conduct is grossly insulting to that God who watches him entering, with affected meekness, His house of prayer, and going through a pantomime of supplication and adoration which he declines to offer in earnest to that awful Searcher of hearts! On the other hand, if he intends really to pray and give thanks, is it not the extreme of folly and presumption to think of performing such acts (the most solemn and sublime a created being can aspire to do) for the sake—*not* of his own soul, which he is imploring God to save—*not* of the endless mercies for which he is thanking his Benefactor—*not* of the Holiness he is adoring—but to show his neighbours that he thinks it fit and proper that men should worship God! Conceive a man speaking out to God such ideas as these! Conceive him commencing his prayers by the preamble, “O Lord, I come into Thy presence principally that I may show my servants, and my poor neighbours, that I consider it right and proper to honour Thee. And, being here, I confess I have sinned grievously,” &c., &c.

Either “going to Church for example’s sake” means this, or it means nothing, and the sooner we abolish the cant of it the better.

On the other hand, the man whose hypocrisy consists in making himself appear *worse* than he is, stands in a position scarcely less false and morally wrong. Whatever his motive be—the fear of ridicule, or hatred of the opposite canting sort of hypocrisy, or false

humility\*—in any case he sins both against God, his fellows, and his own soul. For ourselves, nothing is more needful to the health of conscience than that our inward life and outward profession should be in harmony. Well said Chaucer—

“Truth to thine own heart thy soul shall save.”

If we desire to grow *better* than we are, we must, in the first place, be openly *what* we are. We must live out our own life of duty faithfully, uprightly, humbly, never trying to conceal our faults, and making no prudery about such poor withered charms as our virtues ever possess. The life of virtue is before all things a life of simplicity. The man who professes selfish worldly motives when he is conscious of better ones, who jests about lax and vicious habits when his own are pure, runs most imminent risk of very shortly adopting those motives in earnest, and falling actually into those evil habits. When good thoughts come to him, as they come to us all, he is placed in the contemptible dilemma of either keeping silent *because* they are good, or uttering them with a blush, mayhap an apologetic sneer. But in larger ways than these, also, the position in which we stand with our fellows reacts on our own minds, and in a thousand different channels brings to us good or evil influences according as this position is true or false.

\* “Dost thou for humility’s sake lie? Know that God doth not accept thy lying humility.”—St. Augustine, *Serm.* cxxxi.

In social duty such hypocrisy makes us offenders also. To show our brothers the "practicability of virtue,"\* that is, of a hearty pursuit of it, even with all the failings they see, is the one great service we can render to their moral natures, and instead of this we do them the grievous injury of countenancing their errors. None may calculate the influence which we exert over each other in these ways for good or evil; none may calculate the good which one individual may accomplish by simply and invariably (whenever it may be done without presumption) upholding the right in every argument at which he chances to be present, the true, just, kind, noble view of every question mooted before him; none may calculate how the petty, but most grievous oppressions of domestic life are repressed by the knowledge that one spectator sees and reprehends them, if it be but by a reproving look to the offender, an encouraging smile to the sufferer; none may calculate how many bad feelings die out under the consciousness that their utterance will find no sympathy, and how many good ones blossom and bear precious fruit in their natural atmosphere of confidence. In the case of very close relationships, where such influences for good or evil go on reacting immediately, the result is soon visible. A little preponderating good or evil at first start often decides the whole upward or downward tendency in the characters of husbands and wives for life. It is true that mere

\* See Kant's *Didactic of Ethics*.



*negative* virtue is always impotent. Divines tell us that "man brings with him a corrupt nature into the world," that "one bad example can draw him into further wickedness than twenty good ones will avail for his reformation," that "one corrupting discourse will instil more evil than twenty demonstrations from the pulpit will be able to overcome."\* It is all very true as regards the powerlessness of "twenty examples" of no other good than external decent demeanour, or "twenty demonstrations" of utter platitudes, such as we commonly hear from the pulpit. But let the examples be of living, loving, energetic virtue, the "demonstrations"—

"Words fierily furnaced

In the blast of a life which has struggled in earnest,"†

and we shall hear another story of their influence. The kingdom of heaven will spread like the "little leaven," and shoot aloft like the tiny "mustard seed." But all influence for good is abdicated by him who is either weak enough to be ashamed of his true honour, or unfaithful enough to shrink from *committing* himself in the eyes of men to a consistent course of virtue. And lastly, towards God what cowardice, what meanness it is for a man to hesitate to own openly his allegiance to duty, to fear to wear always on his breast the badge of his liege Lord! Truly there are canting, whining formulas,

\* Jones of Nayland, *Serm.* xxiv.

† Lowell, said of Theodore Parker.



which a self-respecting spirit will infallibly spurn ; but when is a man ever so manly as when, amid the thoughtless or the scoffing, he simply avows that he does believe in the God of Heaven, and does desire to obey His righteous law ?

It must not be urged that such simple acknowledgment of fealty as this, is in the remotest way to be identified with that profaning of sacred feelings by exposure which is even more odious as regard religious affections than human ones. The distinction is immense, and is recognised on all hands in every other relation. Before an *enemy* every son will proudly confess his father, every soldier his sovereign. If either ever stand by silent while parent or king are insulted, and claim not to be his child or servant, we do not deem it “ delicacy,” but meanness and poltroonery. But, on the other hand, to speak to a stranger of the inner affections of the heart, for a husband to describe his tenderness for his wife, a friend for a friend, is felt by every one to be worse than indecorous—unfeeling. The deep personal sentiments, whether human or religious, are so sacred that no hand save that of love should ever be permitted to draw aside their veil. There is a spiritual immodesty as well as a corporeal one, and both are hideous.

Yet I have sometimes thought that there lies a large margin beyond these purely personal experiences and sentiments, wherein we well might strive to meet our fellow-creatures’ sympathies far oftener than we do. Our brothers are not *all* enemies, *all* scoffers, for all that

fanatics may say. In thousands and millions of hearts at this moment we may be assured a love warmer than we know is glowing unseen, or smouldering for want of aid which we perhaps might give with a few words. That we ought sometimes to share such blessed sympathies, to strive to kindle and cherish each other's good, none will deny. But how is this ever to be done if we take such precautions never to reveal any share of our own feelings till our brother has shown us his? Who is to begin? I doubt not, if we sought it more, and in fitting time and place, we should often find that between us and God's other children, instead of a barrier of separation, there is a bond of tenderest and holiest union.

## SECTION IV.

## PERJURY.

ANOTHER form of direct insult to God is Perjury. It is a mooted question among moralists whether a judicial oath can properly be considered a "calling on God to witness our words," or a simple expression of our conviction that He *does* witness them. Under either view an oath is an introduction of God's name into transactions not strictly religious, and its lawfulness stands open to the question which from very early times has been asked, "Is it consistent with the reverence we owe to God, thus to make His name a guarantee of veracity in the petty concerns of human life?" \*

\* The Christian ethics of swearing are altogether undeterminable. Christ says (Matt. v. 34), "Swear not at all." St. James repeats the injunction (James v. 12): "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." Yet, not to mention the instances in the Old Testament (*e.g.*, Psalm cx. 4; Gen. xxii. 16; Num. xiv. 28) wherein God Himself is represented as performing the act, in Him so incomprehensible, we find also the chiefest of the Apostles swearing in his inspired writings (2 Cor. i. 23): "Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul," &c.; and (Gal. i. 20), "Behold, before God, I lie not." St. Chrysostom tried to escape the difficulty by the dangerous expedient of a shifting morality: "What, then, is not swearing of the Evil One? Yes, indeed, it is altogether of the Evil One, that is *now*, after so high a rule of self-restraint, but then not so. But how, one may say, should the same thing be at one time good and at another not good? Nay, I say

The intuitive view of the case would, it seems, be this: that, as God is the Supreme Judge of the universe, wherever the sacred interests of justice are at stake it must be *His* justice which is concerned, and we may fearlessly consecrate our acts by invoking His presence as witness. Also, when a man undertakes an office to which solemn moral obligations are attached, such as a legislator's or a magistrate's, a minister of religion's or a husband's, it seems perfectly reverent that his engagement to perform those sacred duties should be made with an appeal to God. On the other hand, to take oaths for the convenience of a mercantile transaction, and use God's name to save other security, this is so obviously profane, that if custom did not blind him to its nature, no pious person could endure to do it.\*

the very contrary, how could it help becoming good and not good, while all things else are crying aloud that they are so—the fruits of the earth, the arts, and all things else? And why do I mention these things, when killing, which among all is acknowledged to be of the Evil One, caused Phinehas to be honoured with the priesthood, and Abraham also, on becoming, not a manslayer only, but, which was far worse, the slayer of his child, won more and more approbation?" (Chrys., *Hom.* xiv.) Slippery grounds, these, of traditional morals. St. Paul's Epistles were written *between* the issuing of the inspired precepts of Jesus and James. Was *he* inspired to disobey them?

\* "A judge may acquire a knowledge of the truth by the oath of the parties, if he cannot otherwise ascertain it. But let no man of sense take an oath in vain, or on a trifling occasion; for the man who takes an oath in vain shall be punished in this life or the next. Headlong in utter darkness shall the impious wretch tumble into hell who, being interrogated in a judicial inquiry, answers one question falsely."—*Institutes of Menu*, b. vi. v. 109, and b. xii. v. 16.

Supposing the oath taken to be on a lawful matter, of what nature is the guilt of perjury? Excluding all consideration whether the false witness we give be for or against any one, or whether benevolent or malevolent motives may incite us, the sin is this: we appeal to *Him* to witness a lie, of whose law that lie is an infraction, and thereby we insult Him in a manner at once outrageous and complex; God's omnipresence, His legislative and His retributive characters, being each especially contemned, and in the peculiarly offensive manner of an outward semblance of respect.

This crime is manifestly so great, that even the most abandoned criminals have commonly showed a dread of committing it. It ought to be equally borne in mind by legislators, or any persons imposing oaths, that to require them of our fellow-creatures when we have reason to fear they will be taken falsely, is a social offence of deep character—it is leading our brother into the temptation of an enormous sin. The irreverent manner in which oaths are often administered, and the levity displayed by lawyers in their questions to sworn witnesses, are of course offences to be classed under the head of blasphemy.

Of the casuistics of perjury nothing need be said. Those moralists who admit that the law of truth has exceptions are necessarily sorely puzzled when the case becomes complicated with oaths; but he who holds that "*nothing* can justify a lie" has no difficulty in adding that, *à fortiori*, nothing can justify a perjury.



## SECTION V.

## SACRILEGE.

AN unusual number of errors have crept into the popular idea of this sin. They have arisen from the common anthropomorphous views of the nature and character of the Being against whom it is committed, and it would be a divergence from the path of the philosophic moralist to expose and refute them. To *rob* the Possessor of heaven and earth is as impossible as to *strike* the incorporeal spirit, and it is scarcely less absurd to define the one imaginary crime than the other.

Nevertheless, there is undeniably such a sin as sacrilege, and it consists in this: the *desecration of holy things*. Externally considered, the ethical delinquency of such acts lies herein, that they are obstructions to the performance of man's religious duty of worship. The means which we or others possess for that purpose are thereby removed. It is not that the sacrilegist "robs" *God* of His Church—for the universe of suns is but the porch of His infinitude—but he takes from *man* his "house of prayer;" and man cannot always pray equally in all places. Thus sacrilege is an offence against God, inasmuch as it is the placing of a stumbling-block, the addition of some new difficulty, or the sub-

traction of some facility, in that path of approach towards Himself which it is His great design that all His creatures should tread.

Considered with reference to the offender's own sentiments, sacrilege has this guilt : that it evidences want of loving reverence towards God, in want of respect towards objects associated with His service. The principle in the human mind is fully recognised whereby all things animate and inanimate become endeared to us by association with beloved persons, and receive, as it were, the shadows of the sentiments we give to them. It has been the spring, not only of many of the tenderest passages of private life, but also of great historical events and institutions—of the Crusades and Moslem pilgrimages, and of the whole Christian and heathen relic-worship. And as this principle holds fully in religious matters, it is clear that we must manifest contempt towards God when we display it towards objects which are connected with Him. They are “consecrated” by the unchanging natural law of association of ideas. Of course it is not as directly an insult to God to commit such sacrilege as it is to commit blasphemy or perjury. The objects we misuse are only secondarily connected with religion ; their sanctity is a derived one, and must depend altogether on the fact and on the degree of their association with His worship.

By viewing this crime thus, in its rational light, a great many difficulties are obviated respecting the nature of a consecrated thing. Beyond his Bible and

his bishop-sanctified church and burial-ground, the Englishman is not a little at a loss to define what is an object which it would be sacrilege to treat contemptuously, or apply to profane uses. Now it becomes manifest that the crime of sacrilege is involved only in two cases—1st. When it deprives ourselves or others of the means of worship. 2ndly. When it proves want of reverence to God in want of reverence to objects associated in our minds with Him. The narrowest closet, the poorest melody, may be as much needed by some human soul for its prayers, as the grandest cathedral ever consecrated by the pomp of a hierarchy, or the most exquisite *Miserere* ever sung by the papal choir. And to take the “poor man’s lamb,” his small and humble “means of grace,” away from him, may be a greater sacrilege than ever Cromwell’s troops committed in the proud fanes of England. Thus, however, we arrive at the discovery that sacrilege, instead of being a rare and almost unheard-of crime, against which it seemed superfluous to guard ourselves, is, in fact, one continually committed by all classes. The ruffian who breaks into the church to steal the sacramental plate, he is not the sole sacrilegist amongst us. Even supposing that we have never interfered with the physical facilities offered to our fellows’ worship, never kept them from services they desired to attend, never deprived them of opportunities which separate apartments, books, good companions, might give them, still which of us can say that in our assumption of knowledge and fastidious taste we have

not desecrated to their *minds*, books, places, music, sermons, poetry, which were to *them* actual aids to devotion? And to ourselves also, have not our irreverent modes of speech and thought, our carelessness of the externals of private worship, deprived us of many a holy influence?

## SECTION VI.

## PERSECUTION.

THE crime just discussed of sacrilege has been commonly defined to include the injury of *persons* (as well as *things*) consecrated to God. I consider that all injuries of persons which can be classed as religious offences will, with greater propriety, be ranked under the separate head of Persecution.

The injuring of a man because he holds an office which the injurer's conscience admits to be sacred, or has done an act which he feels to be right, or upholds a faith he believes to be true—these are offences we cannot suppose have ever taken place. Two modes of this offence then are alone possible:—

1st. Injuries done from some personal malice or interest, of which the religious character of the injured party is either made the excuse, or is not so sufficiently regarded as to form his protection.

2nd. Injuries done from mistaken ideas of religious obligation, the injurer believing himself called upon to punish the man who holds a faith he believes to be false, or performs actions he conceives to be impious.

It cannot be doubted that a considerable number of the acts of persecution recorded and unrecorded in



history would be placed, by any one who could see the hearts of the persecutors, in the category of injuries done through personal interest or malice, and falsely coloured by the pretence of religious zeal. In all great national persecutions these private feelings must have had considerable share in guiding both accusers and judges. The charge of heresy or of witchcraft was the easiest weapon for the destruction of a rival or a foe which interest could use, and the cruellest which malice could desire. It is superfluous to point out all the personal and social crimes, falsehood, injustice, and cruelty involved in such acts. Their religious offence also is patent, the insulting God by using the pretence of zeal for His service to cover a crime.

Injuries which are not done on pretence of religion, but from which the religious character of the injured might have guarded him had it been duly regarded, are acts whose share of religious offence, over and above their social crime, seems to be on this wise:—All men are God's creatures, children of His love. Thus (as I shall show in speaking of social offences), whatsoever injury we do any man, it is an offence also to God as *his* Creator and Protector, as well as *our* Judge. Some men are in a more peculiar manner God's children. They are saints living visibly in the light of His smile, and imitating His goodness. Some of them are of the greatest service to mankind, assisting both by precept and example in the general virtue and religion. To injure such men is necessarily more closely to offend

God than to injure others ; and if we go so far as to take from such saints their lives or means of spiritual usefulness, we commit a sacrilege more fatal in its results than the demolition of any temple made with mortal hands. Lastly, the guilt of such acts reaches its culmination when the most saintly and useful man is engaged in such acts as cannot fail to remind the injurer of his relation to God, and consequently of the religious offence he will incur by his crime. A murder would undoubtedly bear the added shade of sacrilege which should be committed on a good man at his prayer, on a minister of religion striving to quell the rage of an insurrection with Divine lessons of peace. It is manifest, however, that these principles afford no shelter to the by-gone superstitions, which represent as sacrilegious the infliction of deserved punishment on the priest or king whose outward consecration has neither made him a saint of God nor an auxiliary of the virtue of mankind.

2nd. Persecution committed in sincerity, from a mistaken sense of religious duty, must always be ranked as a crime of error, and its guilt must be calculated by the sin involved originally in the reception of such error. The usual way in which persecutors have argued seems to be this :—The religious opinion which they persecute they have conceived to be not only false, but *productive of mischievous results*, temporal or eternal. To the Roman Proconsul the Christian was a rebel, a partisan and propagator of doctrines subversive of civil order. To the Papist the Protestant is a reprobate, a holder and

teacher of doctrines leading men to eternal damnation. The Roman punished the rebel on the usual principles of state policy, precisely as a military tribunal in our own times orders the execution of a mutineer, not concerning itself to hold the balance between crime and retribution, but simply adopting the readiest means at hand for preserving discipline. The Papist punished the Protestant on still stronger grounds. The mischief he strove to prevent was as much greater than the other as the perdition of souls is worse than the disturbance of public order : nay, he had further some actual show of justice ; viz., the *retribution* on a crime which he rated equal to high treason against God.

If expediency, then, were to be admitted as the fundamental principle of civil government, the modern Englishman would find it hard to define wherein lay the offence of the Pagan or Papist persecutor.\* The

\* Unless, indeed, on the plea that their persecutions were *not* expedient, in which case the objector is compelled to admit the morality of those which actually extirpated the offence. Thus an *exterminating* persecution (like those of Charles IX. and Louis XIV., which saved France from Protestantism) would be moral, and only those *less* cruel and complete, immoral ! Again, it is sometimes said that persecutions are inexpedient because the “blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.” But though everybody thinks this of the martyrs to what he deems *truth*, nobody pretends it holds good of the martyrs of error, at least with equal weight. We say, “*Magna est veritas et prevalebit*,” but we do not think a *falsehood* can never be nipped in the bud. As each persecutor, then, necessarily thinks he is only trying to extirpate *error*, he is entitled to hope that the means of axe and halter may prove perfectly expedient for that purpose.

\* first acted precisely according to the received European mode of dealing with political rebels (allowing for the grosser cruelties of the earlier times). The second possessed a justification which no moral system is qualified to confute. The existence of that eternal hell from which he sought to save the souls of the nations is a doctrine whose admission would terminate all rational ethical discussion. If such an abyss really yawned at our feet, it would be vain to urge any principle, even that of the eternal right itself, against any conduct which promised to save ourselves or our fellows from the endless *criminality* of a reprobate immortality. To argue justly the absurd dilemma would be impossible. "Ought we to obey the law now, if by doing so we lose the power to obey it through all eternity?" But, in fact, we could not even advance so far as to prove to a Romanist that the slaughter of men for heresy was an injustice and contravention of the law. Believing that *God* will punish heresy with hell, he is driven to believe that, though *his* conscience may not condemn it, heresy is a crime, nay, a most heinous crime. Every apology for toleration may be met in the same way: "Your heresy must be a moral offence because God will punish it; but even were it not so, and as such deserving of *retribution*, I am bound, in mercy to my fellows, to *prevent*, by every means in my power, the spread of a mischief so enormous as to place the case quite beyond the bounds of ordinary morality."

The truth is, that before we can rationally condemn



either Pagan or Papist persecutors, we must go back to the original principles of just governments, and must discard some political and theological errors nearly universal. We must put aside, once for all, that Medusa shield of fanaticism which turns to stone every antagonist, the hideous doctrine of hell; and we must so define the duties of a state as to leave to every citizen the free exercise of any innoxious religion. Had the Roman state required of its subjects no more than a state has a right to demand, and punished nothing but what a state has a right to chastise, the Ten Persecutions would never have existed.

The guilt, then, of persecution lies altogether *higher up* than is commonly understood. It is the adoption and maintenance of a false system of government, or the acceptance of a theologic dogma impiously derogatory to the Divine goodness. The Roman ought not to have sacrificed justice to expediency, and inflicted a tremendous penalty where there was no moral guilt, simply because it seemed to him that such was the interest of the state.\*

\* It ought not to be forgotten, however, as one great palliation of the Roman persecutors, that they *had* some plausible reasons for believing that the Christians were really guilty of hideous practices, and that the Church was simply a society of fanatics, no less morally depraved than politically dangerous. The absurd stories concerning the infant sacrifices and wholesale debaucheries said to have been practised in the Christian mysteries (which, unhappily, were rendered difficult of confutation by the secrecy of the nocturnal celebrations in the catacombs)—these stories, I say, were bandied from Catholic to heretic, and from heretic to Catholic, in a way which really afforded to



The Papist ought not to have believed the human testimony which asserted that God would burn his creature for ever in hell as a punishment for heresy.

In a lesser way the offence of persecution is every day incurred by all those who treat differences in religious opinion as moral derelictions, and punish them by any of those thousand rods which society leaves in the hand of every man wherewith to vex his brother. Here, although objectively the injury done may be of very trifling nature, the subjective offence can have no such excuses as belong to the public persecutions of Roman or Papist. Public order is not maintained by domestic unkindness, nor is the damnation of souls to be prevented by the worrying of heretics. If we allow our religious sympathies and their evil antiparts of suspicion and dislike to distract us from absolute justice in our judgments of, and conduct towards, those around us, we are guilty of an offence against God. Nor is it merely that we risk the crime of doing injury to a man because he has been given a truer faith than our own, and thus "haply be found to war against God," who gave him

the heathen some presumption of their truth. "A pagan magistrate," says Gibbon, "who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical pravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt." (*Decline*, vol. i., four vol. edition, p. 312.) When Tertullian became a Montanist, he aspersed the morals of the Church which he had so resolutely defended. (*De Jejuniis*, c. xvii.)

that faith. This guilt each soul will confidently repudiate, for the persecutor must needs believe his own creed the truth, and that of his victim an error. But the real crime, of which we may all be cognizant, is this : we neglect or contravene our social duty of conducing to our brother's happiness, on grounds which are ostensibly religious, but are actually insults to God. And why are they so ? Because, as God is the kind and loving Father of that supposed heretic, because He requires us to imitate Himself in pouring ever the rain of mercies on the heads of *all*, we are precisely disobeying His will under the pretence of special zeal for His truth.\*

That such a remark as the above is not unnecessary will be recognised by every one who knows his own heart, and feels how inevitably we incline to depreciate the virtues and exaggerate the faults of those who differ from us in religious creed, and how difficult it is to preserve the true charity of cordial esteem, of kindliness and tenderness, towards those who stand outside our "household of faith."

\* This is not the doctrine of St. Cyril. "Abhor, therefore, the Gnostics, and flee from them. If he who attaches himself to a thief is punishable, what hope shall he have who offends against the Holy Ghost ? And abhor the Marcionites also. Let the Cataphrygians be thy abhorrence. Let us hate them who are worthy hatred. Let us also say unto God with all boldness concerning heretics, Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee ?" &c., &c.—St. Cyril, *Lect.* xvi.

## SECTION VII.

## ATHEISM.

THERE seems, at first sight, an absurdity involved in ranking under the category of religious offences the disavowal of the cardinal fact on whose veracity the existence of any duty connected with religion must depend. If (as the atheist affirms) the existence of God be an intellectual problem insoluble by man, then it is clear that his assertion that such is the case must be without offence to any being whatsoever. And should he even err in this matter, and the existence of God *be* demonstrable to human reason, yet if his assertion be subjectively true (*i.e.*, the veritable expression of his genuine conviction), his error may plausibly be represented as a purely intellectual mistake, and, as such, exonerated from all moral guilt.

The whole ethical importance of this subject depends, I conceive, upon the answer which experience warrants us in making as to a point of fact. *Is* atheism, practically speaking, as its adherents affirm, a matter of intellectual conviction only? If it be so, purely and simply, then it is indeed absurd to attach to it any ethical offence whatever. But if, on the contrary, the human will has

a certain share of delinquency wheresoever man has failed to become conscious of the supreme righteous Will above him, then *that* share of delinquency must constitute the moral offence of atheism, and the universal sense of mankind stands justified in treating the rejection of religion as sinful. It would lead far beyond the limits of this book to argue this matter of fact; and he who has acquainted himself most intimately with the lives and writings of atheists will probably be diffident of asserting respecting any one of them that he, individually, has displayed moral pravity in his decision. Undoubtedly, in some cases, a pure loyalty to supposed truth has led men to quench their natural impulses to believe and to love, and the faithfulness with which they have obeyed those laws of personal and social duty, which are the laws of God, must close the lips of every just man who would be disposed to condemn their atheism as a crime.\* Nevertheless, it remains for every one who finds himself verging towards such a conclusion, or already arrived at it, to solve for his own conscience the question on which *his* guilt or innocence depends. Even admitting, for argument's sake, that his denial of God is objective truth, yet if he have arrived at it by evil ways, if he have lost a sentiment all but universal in his race by means of the paralysis of conscience, then he must at least admit that his atheism is a most fearful

\* See, for example, George Jacob Holyoake, for whose life, and for a masterly review of this whole subject, I would refer the reader to *Modern Atheism*, by Sophia D. Collet. Trübner, 1855.

test and symptom of the extremity of his moral disease. But, in truth, the assumption of the veracity of atheism on this hypothesis is absurd; for *if* the delinquency of the will (*i.e.*, the indulgence in the sinful desires of the lower nature) have, in any case, proved the cause of atheism, then it is an insult to the moral law to assume that that can be a *truth* to which its neglect has led the atheist. Of course the application of this test, of *how* we have arrived at our theological convictions, must always be of nice application, and open to error on the negative side. Nevertheless, the connection is so intricate between the condition of the will and the action of the reason, the apprehension of truth is so dependent on the readiness with which we wait to obey that truth when discovered, that it may, in the vast majority of cases, be held the rule, WHAT FAITH SOEVER A MAN HAVE REACHED WHILE MORALLY RETROGRADING IS A LESS TRUE FAITH THAN HE WILL ATTAIN WHILE MORALLY PROGRESSING. A new creed, even if a lower one *on the whole*, may, and does commonly spur a man temporarily to a stricter morality (probably because it presents along with its errors some one truth which his soul wanted); but, on the other hand, though the creed which makes him *better* may not be true, the creed which makes him *worse* must needs be altogether false and evil.

I may further remark that there is great error in the notion which seems prevalent among liberal minds in our day, that atheism is to be considered always merely



as one form of religious error, often amply atoned by the honesty shown by the atheist in the avowal of his convictions. Let us test this false indulgence by the supposition of another case. A man says, "I have arrived at the conviction that *morality* is all a mistake. There is no such thing as right and wrong. It is all the same whether I am truthful or perfidious, chaste or profligate, benevolent or malignant. Justice is the invention of *lawyers*." Now, it cannot be shown that this *anethicist's* convictions are fictitious. The logical demonstration of the existence of moral distinctions takes more for granted than the demonstration of the existence of God. It rests more exclusively on a consciousness which (like the religious) varies in the ratio of its cultivation. I believe that a man who has persisted in sin for years may very sincerely persuade himself that sin and virtue have no essential difference. When his will is *thoroughly* asleep he can ignore its existence. This man, we will suppose, has the candour to own these convictions (though why he should be candid it is hard to say). Do we feel that our indulgence can be stretched so far as to count *his* heresy a venial one? Would it not be, on the contrary, the token that he had reached the very zero of worthlessness?

If it be true (as I shall endeavour to prove hereafter) that genuine and *original* faith in God is but faith in goodness at its crystallizing point, and that, though it may be adopted or preserved traditionally or thoughtlessly without such warmth of virtue, yet that there

alone it is at once spontaneous and secure; if this be true, then atheism must mark a declension below that standard, just as the above described anethicism would mark the lowest degree of moral descent attainable by a rational creature.\*

The share attributed to metaphysical subtleties in the causation of atheism is doubtless the source of much of the indulgence shown to it by those who have just gone far enough to perceive the difficulties of the subject viewed as a problem for philosophic demonstration. But religion is *not* a metaphysical demonstration. We do not arrive at it by any process of logic, though we may use processes of logic to ratify our intuitions. Not easily, then (though I will not deny that it be possible), do we lose our intuitions when our logic fails us. Through antagonism with our lower desires we gain full consciousness of our own righteous wills: through those wills we come in contact with the all-righteous will of God. If these wills be in full action, they can hardly fail to bring to our souls such a sense of God's existence as shall leave all our metaphysical difficulties quite on the outside of our lives, during the little space that may intervene before we find their solution.† There

\* "Injustice, like a cloud, hides the light of faith."—*Proverbs of Ali*.

† "*Socrates*. If thou wouldst experience what the wisdom and what the love of God, render thyself deserving the communication of those Divine secrets which may not be penetrated by man, and are imparted to those alone who consult, and adore, and obey the Deity.

are numberless things, even the existence of the material universe, or of the souls of our friends, which at the outset of our philosophy, and perhaps during all our lives, we are never able to prove—nay, every argument we can find lies against them. But do we, therefore, dash ourselves against a rock because we cannot refute Berkeley? Do we renounce our friends because we cannot demonstrate they are not spectral illusions? No. The consciousness of the truth is strong enough to counteract all our logic, and to neutralize it altogether. We are ready to leap into the sea for that “illusion” of a friend just as readily as if there had never been a Pyrrho in the world. If, then, our consciousness of God be maintained at its true height by full exertion of our righteous will, all our metaphysical doubts will fall off powerless. We shall, as it were, keep hold on God even while our intellects may be employed in solving the problem of His existence.

Again, the argument for the existence of a Supreme moral Will, drawn from the moral government which may be perceived overruling the destinies of nations and individuals, the rewards and punishments inflicted on us (altogether independently of our volitions) by

Then shalt thou, my Aristodemus, understand that there is a Being whose eye pierceth through all nature, and whose ear is open to every sound, extended to all space, extending through all time, and whose bounty and care can know no other bounds than those fixed by His own creation.”—Xenophon, *Memorab.* (Socrates’ reply to the idle wish of Aristodemus that the Gods would make revelation to him of his duty.)

conscience, the moral guidance which every religious man may trace in the review of the events of his life—this argument, I say, points so directly and inevitably to God, that for any one to fail in reaching the conclusion seems to prove either that he is without the commonest faculties of reasoning, or that he has shut out from his mind and heart those thoughts and feelings which must have conducted him to such results. If a man's own sense of justice be strong, he will have looked for it and found it in the past and present history of his race. If he have habitually obeyed the dictates of his conscience, it will have remained so tender that each good and evil action will have brought sensations of joy or pain, for which no account, save the will of his Creator, could possibly be given. "Let a man once feel the law of duty in his soul; let him feel within him, as with articulate distinctness of a living voice, the absolute imperative 'Thou Shalt' and 'Thou Shalt Not;' let him feel that the only hell is the hell of wrong-doing; and if that man does not believe a God, all history is false."\*

That atheists deny these things does not prove that the facts are not true to which the noblest human souls have unanimously borne testimony. It only proves that they find themselves driven to deny that "justice is sovereign of the world," as an indispensable preliminary to the denial that there is a God. But who made the

\* *Robertson's Lectures*, p. 71.



souls by which *justice* is recognised to be proof of God? How does the atheist know there can be no God, or, at least, that he cannot worship Him, unless He be just? Who is the author of that principle in his soul?

Paradoxical, then, as the statement may seem, there is a profound truth in the instinctive sense of mankind that atheism is an offence against religious duty. The reason is this:—Consciousness of God must, indeed, precede religion, as the atheist urges, but it also actually precedes all those logical arguments wherein he finds objections to religion. If he had felt that consciousness clearly, as he would have done had it been evolved by virtue, then his objections would be practically powerless. He would still be *religious*, let his logical understanding be never so perplexed.\*

\* Kant has admirably proved that it must be on *moral* grounds that a true faith in God is alone to be obtained. He justly adds, "This *moral* theology has the peculiar advantage, in contrast with speculative theology, of leading inevitably to the conception of a *sole, perfect, and rational* First Cause, whereof speculative theology does not give us any indication on objective grounds. . . . On the other hand, if we take our stand on moral unity as a necessary law of the universe, and from this point of view consider what is necessary to give this law adequate efficiency, and for us obligatory force, we must come to the conclusion that there is only One Supreme Will, which comprehends all these laws in itself. This Will must be omnipotent, that all nature and its relation to morality in the world may be subject to it; omniscient, that it may have knowledge of the most secret feelings and their moral worth; omnipresent, that it may be at hand to supply every necessity to which the highest weal of the world may give rise; eternal, that this harmony of nature and liberty may never fail, &c. . .



Of course these observations can only apply to cases wherein the atheist's mind has its fair chance of deve-

Hence, also, we find, in the history of human reason, that before the moral perceptions were sufficiently purified and determined . . . the knowledge of nature, and even a considerable amount of intellectual culture in many other sciences, could produce only rude and vague conceptions of the Deity, sometimes even admitting of an astonishing indifference with regard to this question altogether. But the more enlarged treatment of moral ideas which was rendered necessary by the extremely pure moral law of our religion awakened the interest, and thereby quickened the perceptions of reason in relation to this object. In this way, and without the help either of an extensive acquaintance with nature or of a reliable transcendental insight, a conception of the Divine Being was arrived at which we now hold to be the correct one, not because speculative reason convinces us of its correctness, but because it accords with the moral principles of reason."—Kant's *Kritik*, "Transcendental Doctrine of Method." Chap. ii. Lect. ii.

It must not be thought, however, that there is any one channel in which the streams of human thought can continuously flow without reaching at last that ocean of Deity. Physical and metaphysical sciences often seem to pass underground into sunless caverns of atheism ; but sooner or later, if they be followed patiently, they are found to rise upward again, and pour their floods more mightily than ever. But the grand difference between *moral* theology and all other theologies is this, that it *begins* with a God, nay, rather, with *the* God, the One Righteous Will of the universe, whose moral attributes alone constitute Him the God of moral agents. Other theologies reach Him at last, that is, reach a "Necessary Being," a "Creative Intelligence," whose moral attributes are finally evolved from the rest. Thus these other theologies do but *corroborate* the moral, and ratify to the intellect of man that which his consciousness had taught him at the outset. All philosophers must err who, like Ferrier, would make the *summit* of metaphysics "the *basis* of all religion." Alas for the millions of our Father's sons and daughters if so it were ! But the bread of life

lopment under the normal conditions of human education. A man who has been all his life sunk in bodily want and mental darkness—a man who has breathed from infancy an atmosphere of blasphemy and pollution—a man whose thought of God has been inextricably associated with the cruelties and injustice attributed to His name by superstition—in none of these men can atheism be an offence; and rarely can it belong to man to decide, of any atheist, that under one or other of these categories (especially the last) he cannot claim to stand and be acquitted.

grows in every field, and not alone in the half-dozen hot-houses of philosophy.

See, however, the very interesting evolution of Theism from metaphysics in the *Institutes*, Prop. xi.

## SECTION VIII.

## PANTHEISM.

PANTHEISM, in any sense in which it can constitute a religious offence, is the adoption of a theology which disowns the moral attributes of God, by denying such personality in the Deity as affords a ground for those attributes; thereby withdrawing from God that which constitutes His special claim to the reverence of moral agents, and depriving morality of all assistance from religion. "The All of Things is God" is a formula within whose limits the purest ethical religion, and a creed morally tantamount to atheism, may both subsist; and it is needful thoroughly to define how far the pantheist retains or excludes that moral idea of God which, as we have said,\* is necessary to constitute any sentiment religious, before we attempt to class his creed among those involving any moral delinquency. All that has been said in the preceding section regarding the possible guilt of atheism applies, of course, equally to such unmoral pantheism as a man may have reached through the neglect of a moral religion. In a succeeding section† I shall notice the manner in which an extreme love of the Beautiful, when unaccompanied by a still stronger love of the Good, tends to the production of this form of religious error. Doubtless by many other roads the neglect of the moral side of religion leads to the same result.

\* Page 2.

† Chap. iv. Sect. ii.

## SECTION IX.

## POLYTHEISM.

It is not in the earlier stages of human progress that any guilt can attach to the purely intellectual error of polytheism. Further advance, however, in the various mental and physical sciences elucidatory of theology modifies the exculpation of ignorance. There must be a degree of guilt incurred by a man, when his reason and understanding have deductively and inductively demonstrated the existence of one sole infinite God, when his intuition and his logic alike call upon him to worship that One, and forbid him, by every protest they can enter, to believe that the attributes of Deity can be communicable or divided, when, under *these* circumstances, he bows tamely to the traditions of darker ages, when he yields to the fond propensity of weakness to exaggerate hero-reverence into hero-worship, and consents to offer to a second or a third, or a thousandth, the honour and the gratitude he owes to the first and only God.

## SECTION X.

## IDOLATRY.

To arrive at any philosophical definition of the much-misunderstood offence of idolatry it will be needful to analyze, as accurately as possible, the difference between the acts and sentiments properly addressed to God, and those rightly given to any other being.

It is on His *moral attributes* that God founds His claim to the allegiance of rational creatures. An all-powerful, omniscient evil spirit could inspire in souls, constituted as God has made ours, only reprobation and abhorrence. Thus, in investigating the accurate definition of religious acts and sentiments, we must confine ourselves to the *moral* difference between God and all creatures. His incorporeality, omnipresence, &c., are not directly involved in the question; and to make the offence of idolatry turn on mistakes in these matters is to ignore the substance of religion while attending to its accidents. These may and will modify our idea of the substance. When the mind is clearly directed to the subject, it discovers that it is impossible even to imagine a corporeal, and consequently limited Being, possessed of infinite



attributes of any kind.\* Therefore the imaging of God in bodily form involves as its *result* the loss of the absolute moral ideal. But it is not because it thus misrepresents His incorporeality, but because it entails the misrepresentation of His moral nature, that idolatry is a religious offence.

What is precisely this absolute moral ideal ?

It is HOLINESS, properly so called ; the *infinite* impersonation of the whole eternal right ; the absolute freedom from all the weaknesses and limitations of other beings. In virtue of this holiness God claims from us that peculiar homage which alone confers on our sense of dependence a *religious* nature ; namely, *moral allegiance*. As the absolute impersonation of the law His authority is co-ordinate, nay, identical with it. He is our moral King, the liege Lord under whom our own moral natures place us for ever as subjects.

All other beings in the universe, as they cannot be infinite, are necessarily finite—there is in their moral natures some limitation, some weakness. VIRTUE, then, or the finite impersonation of the right, is the highest moral status to which they can attain—a status, be it remembered, which is for ever shifting, through the infinite degrees of which it is susceptible.

Now, this *virtue* manifestly cannot claim the same sort of homage which belongs of right to the *holiness* of God. We cannot owe to the virtuous being ALLEGIANCE.

\* “ No one infinite attribute is compatible with any finite attribute ; that is certain.”—Ferrier's *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 37.

His authority can only, in any case, extend within the limits of his virtue, nor can he claim to stretch it at all over us, unless under special conditions and particular circumstances. There is nothing in our moral nature and in his out of which the relation of subject and king necessarily arises, as it does in those of man and God. The homage, then, due to the most virtuous being in the universe differs not in degree only (as seems commonly supposed), but altogether in kind, from that owed to God. The one, in short, is fealty to the Being whose every command we are bound to obey, and whose perfections we adore, but can never attain; the other is honour to the fellow-subject who has reached a grade higher than we at present have gained.

It is obvious that to confound these two distinct relations is to infringe seriously on the veracity of both. Were we only to honour God as if He were nothing more than virtuous, the union between morality and religion would be destroyed; we could no longer regard our duties as Divine commands—the commands of a Being whose will is co-ordinate with the whole moral law. On the other hand, if we pay fealty and adoration to a virtuous fellow-subject, we are guilty of a species of treason against God; we divide our allegiance between a rightful and an unrightful sovereign, and by so doing detract from the worship we owe to our true Lord.

Herein, then, lies the offence of IDOLATRY, that the fealty and adoration due only to the Perfect Being are

paid to beings contemplated as not endowed with such perfection.\*

Now, this offence of idolatry takes various forms. It may exist in the ascription to the supreme God of moral attributes recognised as imperfect, or of moral characteristics belonging to finite virtue and not to infinite holiness (*e.g.*, the conquest of lower desires). Or it may represent the supreme as *physically* finite (*e.g.*, corporeal), from whence, as I have shown, the notion of His moral finiteness and imperfection follows as a corollary. Lastly, it may ostensibly leave to the supreme God His moral and physical perfection, but by, presenting other and morally imperfect beings as co-claimants of fealty and adoration, detract directly and indirectly from the homage we owe to Him.†

\* "Why should we pay obedience to any man who was a mortal like ourselves, and was subject to anger, and lust, and pain, and joy? For if this mortal should teach knowledge and thanksgiving, we have been already made acquainted with these by the assistance of our own understandings; and if he should teach what is contrary to reason, this would alone be a sufficient proof of his falsehood. For reason assures us that the Creator of the world is wise, and a wise Being would not prescribe to the created any worship which would appear to their reasons to be evil, since what appears evil cannot remain permanent. Now, all religions are founded on circumstances which must be considered evil, such as believing in the conversations of God, the incarnation of the incorporeal essence, and His reascension into heaven in a human body. . . . It is evident that for remembering and praising God no medium nor particular place is at all requisite."—*The Dabistan*, by the Emperor Acbar.

† A very curious investigation it would be to trace how far idolatry

The two last forms of idolatry, though only indirectly involving religious offence, are so much more obvious and definite than the others that they have given their proper appellation to the sin itself. A few observations on the palliations and tendencies of this offence are all that need be here attempted.

has mingled in all the great forms of human religion. In the earlier Judaism, nobly as *material* idols were denounced, we cannot acquit of the encouragement of a *mental εἰδωλον*, a creed containing such myths as those in Gen. iii., xviii., xxxii. ; Exod. xxiv., xxxiii. ; and Ezek. i., viii. A God who “walks in a garden in the cool of the day ;” who eats and drinks with men, and permits His feet to be washed “to comfort His heart ;” who shows His “back parts,” though not his face ; who has the semblance “like the body of heaven in His clearness ;” who is “the colour of amber, with loins having the appearance of fire ;” who is “to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone”—such a God is quite as difficult to identify with the Infinite Holy Spirit as any marble “likeness ” could have made Him. The Egyptian, Syrian, Greek, Roman, Scandinavian, and Hindoo religions are all unmistakably idolatrous. The Zoroastrian emblem of fire for Ormusd, and the Druid emblem of an oak for Hesus, seem considerably more elevated, and, in fact, hardly to be counted as involving offence, inasmuch as the type by no means professed to offer a *semblance* of God, or to convey any idea of a finite *form*. Buddhism stands in singular relation to Christianity in many ways. These two great creeds, which probably contain within their folds the two largest sections of the human family, have each placed as the special object of their worship a *man* elevated to Deity—Goutama and Christ—both miraculously born, but still inheritors of human nature ; both teachers of righteousness, and adored unquestionably from the influence their moral elevation exercised on the minds of men : these are their resemblances. Their difference, philosophically speaking, lies in this : that Christ is the ideal of *virtue*, the finite impersonation of right, in a soul exposed to trial and shut in by all the limitations of creaturehood, and yet absolutely victorious



It is undoubtedly the most *natural* of all theological errors, to imagine that that Will which we recognise as the Supreme Will of the universe should resemble all other wills with which we are acquainted, and be in some similar manner enshrined in a material body. Probably no religion can ever have sprung up indigenously in a nation without passing through a stage of anthropomorphism. Further, such conceptions of the Divine nature have the additional attraction of seeming to present a firmer hold for our religious affections. The more we represent God to ourselves in the likeness of a man, the more tangible points seem offered for our sympathy, admiration, and love. No one

over every temptation. Goutama, on the contrary, seems to confound in his own person the moral attributes of God and man. There is no Infinite Creator or Father above him. He has surpassed Mahabrahm, and before his human birth he was a god. Born the son of a rajah, ignorant, till maturity, of pain and death, he attained his dignity of Buddha solely, as it would seem, by solitary, contemplative asceticism. Whether this name of Buddha signifies "Wise," or, as others interpret it properly, "Holy," it would seem that the essential idea connected with Goutama is far more the divine repose of absolute *sanctity* (attempted to be represented in his statues), than the *virtue* victorious over agony eternized in the crucifix of Christ.

Perhaps our present knowledge of Buddhism hardly warrants the above parallel; and in the innumerable discrepant statements made concerning its doctrines there are some which assert that suffering formed the step to Goutama's deity. . (See *A Description of the Buddhist Doctrine*, sent, in 1766, to the Governor of Ceylon, by the High Priest of the Temple of Mulgirri Galle, trans. in British Museum. But see, *per contrà*, the Buddha Guadmu's doctrine, by Modeliar Rajah Paxe, in the *Mahawanse*, p. 161.)



wonders at the Swedenborgian reaction against spiritualism, any more than at the lamentations of Serapion for his embodied Deity.\*

Nevertheless, it is but a specious illusion which makes us thus suppose we could love God better if we believed Him corporeal. It is the living *soul* itself, the righteous *will*, which we love in our human friends. Their bodies are dear to us only for the sake of the unseen, intangible reality of which the flesh is the clothing and the index. Take away the fairest of earthly forms, and suppose the spirit within still able to commune with our own, and impress it equally vividly with its existence and love; our affections, so far from being impaired, would only rise to still greater heights of purity and fervour. Thus, in the endless oscillations of the human soul between pantheism and anthropomorphism, though the first has much to lose, the second has nothing to gain, over the most philosophic and spiritual theism.

The sin of idolatry possesses, then, no excuse in the real constitution of the human heart. On the contrary, it distinctly tends to reduce the power of the religious sentiment. Whatsoever it gains in human sympathy, *that* it loses in the awful reverence, the trustful dependence which belong to Divine religion.

I may here remark, that much of the Protestant reprobation of Romish image-worship is singularly

\* "Heu me miserum ! Tulerunt a me Deum meum, et quem nunc teneam non habeo, vel quem adorem aut interpellem jam nescio."—GIBBON, chap. xlvii.

illogical. The idolatry of the Papist is chiefly directed to pictures and statues of Christ and the Virgin. In the latter case, polytheism is the offence involved, and not the particular mode of worshipping a fictitious deity. In the case of Christ, the Trinitarian Protestant believes that a God was actually incarnated in material form, and consequently he himself worships him (I assume) nearly always under the mental image of the "Man of Nazareth." Certainly he would deem it no duty to endeavour to dissipate any such Eidolon into an incorporeal Deity ; but, on the contrary, would probably congratulate himself on the vivacity with which he was able to picture the affecting countenance of the Saviour. If such *mental* imagery be lawful, wherein can lie the offence of perpetuating it in stone and canvas to waken the same lawful feelings in all beholders ?

A human face expressing any virtue, such as courage, resignation, gratitude, benevolence, is actually a lesson of that virtue, not only of wider comprehension than any which written language is suited to convey, but also possessing far transcending power of inspiration. And why ? Because the human soul which obeys the right becomes the finite impersonation of it, even as God is the infinite impersonation of all right ; and it is the nature of the body to serve as an index of the soul, and "show through the alabaster the lamp within." When we see a human countenance radiant with love, glorified in adoration, we behold those blessed things shining through their veil of flesh, or rather moulding

that flesh into a form most mystically embodying themselves. In raising the minds of the ignorant outcasts of society, next to a living righteous man or woman moving and spreading love among them, there is no lesson equal to a picture which delineates the face of such a person idealized and perfected.\* “Words (it cannot too often be repeated) have no *absolute* meaning, and can only signify to any individual what he is able to convey into them from the results of his own inward life.”† The abstract *names* of goodness and wickedness, honesty and dishonesty, chastity and profligacy, are mere sounds to those unhappy beings who have passed their whole lives steeped to the lips in the dread cess-pools of a great city’s vice. Even to the educated, and those who are not practically ignorant of the deep meaning of moral truths, how often it occurs to discover all at once how words and formulæ they have used for years have failed, till that happy moment, to bear to their minds any sort of reality! Now, just as a virtue acted out before our eyes, as a loving, forgiving, truthful deed, will speak to us and claim our veneration long before an abstract, verbal definition of the virtue will so impress us, in like manner, and sometimes hardly in a lesser degree, a picture will do the same. I cannot attempt here to discuss the philosophy of the Beautiful, or show

\* See the accounts of soft feelings first manifested by juvenile criminals at the sight of religious pictures.—Miss Carpenter’s *Reformatory Schools*, p. 45.

† Morell’s *Psychology*, p. 197.

how it co-acts with the Good. It is enough to notice a fact which none will dispute. The heroic patience of a St. Sebastian, the divine tenderness of the Virgin, the rapt adoration of St. Cecilia, the heart-rent repentance of Magdalen, the resignation of Christ, these are lessons in which the painters of Christendom have taught as many souls, and taught them better than ever the priests have done from all their pulpits.

To condemn an engine to which God has given such beneficent power as this, it must be shown that the mischiefs it works surpass the benefits. But what, then, are the mischiefs which the iconoclast would obviate? It is not the abstract worship of the Virgin and saints. That is another matter from idolatry. It is the offence of polytheism, and may be carried on perfectly well without any statues or pictures whatever. It is not the attributing a human form, and consequently the limitations of humanity, to beings receiving Divine honours. This he does himself, and defends unhesitatingly in the case of Christ. There remains nothing for him to condemn unless he maintain that the image-worshipper actually transfers to the material stone or canvas his adoration of the invisible saint or Saviour it represents. Now, it may be reasonably doubted whether the worship of stocks and stones *as* stocks and stones has ever existed, even among the veriest fetichist savages in Africa or Polynesia. The notion that some unseen potentate lurks in the block, and may be there addressed and conciliated, seems to be the very lowest idolatry to which man ever



descends.\* When an image or picture, however rude, is attempted, it may be understood either to be an *emblem* of the attributes of the Deity (like the half-animal forms of Egypt and the many-headed, many-handed figures of India), or else to be intended as a portrait of what the god, when visible to mortal eyes, resembled. If Protestants imagine that an Athenian of the days of Pericles believed any one of the three Minervas on his Acropolis to be actually *the goddess herself*, wooden, marble, or chryselephantine, they are as absurdly mistaken as if they believe that other “virgin queen of heaven” is now worshipped by two-thirds of Christendom as composed of Raphael’s pigments and canvas.† Superfluous it doubtless is to refute an error so gross as this, yet it is well, in all discussions on idolatry, to keep clearly in view wherein the offence thereof really lies, lest, while

\* Iamblichus indeed especially asserts that the image is only externally enlightened and adorned by the divinity, and asks if a man be not ashamed to introduce the idea of circumscription of a corporeal form into the notion of Deity.—See *Iamblichus on the Mysteries*, c. ix.

† “What temple by a skilful builder reared

Can in the circuit of its walls contain

The person of a God?”—EURIP. *Frag.*

“Canst thou believe the vast eternal Mind

Was e’er to syrts and Libyan wastes confined ?

Is there a place which God would call His own

Before a virtuous soul, His Spirit’s noblest throne ?

Why seek we further ? Lo ! above, around,

Where’er thou gazest, there may God be found,

And prayer from every land is by His blessing crowned.”

LUCAN.—*Pharsalia*, b. 9.



condemning the vast majority of our race for a sin no man ever committed, we fail to note that in which we may be falling at the same moment.

The only religion which can unite with pure morality is the worship of an absolutely *holy* being. No being can be absolutely holy unless he be *Infinite*. No corporeal being can be infinite. To worship, then, a being whom we believe to be corporeal is not (in so far as the rigid science of the case can be applied) to worship an absolutely Holy Being—*i.e.* God. Our religion, such as it is, may be exonerated by morality as *involuntarily* false, but it cannot be sanctioned by it, or accurately and perfectly united with it.

Where this error thus exists, and God is not worshipped as absolutely holy, it matters nothing at all, except as it affects the degree of distinctness in the error, whether any image or picture be used to represent the supposed Finite Deity.

Where, on the other hand, true worship and allegiance are paid alone to the absolutely Holy God, and the broad line drawn between such fealty to our king, and the esteem due to our fellow-subjects, then no possible offence, but great benefit, can be obtained by *imaging* that VIRTUE which in those fellow-subjects we esteem, and conveying its glory to our souls by every means within the resources of art.

## SECTION XI.

## DEMONOLATRY.

THE distinction between idolatry and demonolatry is this: that while idolatry worships an imperfectly righteous God, a being whose finite nature precludes infinite holiness, demonolatry worships a being not righteous at all, and whose nature is recognised as not merely *falling short* of the moral law, but as *opposed* to it. Religion and morality are here not merely severed as in idolatry, but pitched directly against one another. It is needless to point out the immense offence, amounting to entire dereliction from duty, involved in any conscious act of demonolatry. There is always some truth at the bottom of any great popular sentiment, and it may be believed that the persecution of witchcraft, dark and bloody chapter as it is in human history, may not be without some palliation in the intuitive consciousness of men, that if a rational being were to renounce the worship of a beneficent deity for that of a maleficent one, his crime would be of mortal magnitude. Whether such maleficent deity actually existed or accepted the demonolatrous worship, is a question morally unimportant in determining his guilt.

Two forms of demonolatry are possible and extant.

1st. The first consists in paying homage to one or more beings *ostensibly* evil, and believed to oppose the supreme good God. Yezidism, with sorcery and witchcraft (wherever the latter were not conscious impostures), are the patent instances of this offence.

2nd. The second consists in attributing to a supreme and nominally good God, actions and sentiments which actually *are* evil, though decorated by specious titles. The worship of Jupiter, who was styled "Optimus Maximus," but whose supposed actions were cruel, vindictive, and impure, entailed obviously this form of demonolatry.

It is of far less consequence to us, however, to discover what ancient creeds involved religious offence, than to note how far opinions, even now commonly received in Christendom, may not entail the very guilt for which we condemn them. Our interest is with the question, Does not the acceptance of such a doctrine as the existence of a devil, and the attribution to him of such powers as excite our *fears*, involve a modified degree of the guilt of demonolatry? Are not such fears and belief in his successful opposition to God's designs a species of worship, a *Dulia* if not a *Latria* derogating from the claims of the good God to infinite trust and absolute reliance on His solipotence? Doubtless, it would shock those many excellent persons who lay immense stress on the belief in a personal devil, to think that by doing so they are paying to another the homage due to God alone. But the line between such

fear as they give to Satan, and such other fear as *they* most especially deem part of the honour owed to God, is altogether evanescent and undistinguishable. When we find the precept of Christ, to "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," interpreted by one divine\* as a recommendation to fear the devil, and by another as an exhortation to fear God, we cannot deny that in a religion which inculcates such fear, it is sufficiently perilous to pure monotheism to admit the existence of a "ghostly enemy."

"When the ungodly curseth Satan," says the son of Sirach, "he curseth his own soul." A true theist knows that his sins are all his own; he reproaches not an imaginary devil but his own weakness for their perpetration, and he places absolute trust in God's will and power to bring about at last that end of virtue for which he made him. But he who believes that whenever he breaks the law, there is a personal tempter seducing him by quasi-godlike spiritual influences, and that this tempter has succeeded, and shall while the world lasts succeed, in enticing millions to their everlasting perdition—how can he rightly take on himself the *whole* weight of his transgressions, how can he lean with *absolute* trust on God?† Take it how he will, shuffle as he may between God's "permission" and His "will," it remains that a God *in whose universe there is a devil*

\* Maurice's *Theological Essays*.

† Ipse Diabolus gaudet cum accusatur vult ut a te ferat criminationem, cum tu perdas confessionem.—S. Aug. Sermon. xx.

*and a devil's hell*, is not a perfect God, or one whose power and will we may absolutely trust, and whose justice and goodness we may absolutely adore.

All that is deducted from God's power by this doctrine is given necessarily to a devil, and precisely in the same ratio must the creed inclusive of it be held to involve the guilt of demonolatry.

And for the second form of this offence, is there nothing in the Calvinist's creed that "attributes to a supreme and nominally good God, actions and sentiments which *are* evil, though decorated by specious titles?" If an action or sentiment be not *what we call* "right," it is not right at all, but, according to the laws of language, must be called wrong; precisely as a line which, if it be not *what we call* "straight," must, by the laws of language, be called curved or crooked. The righteousness of God must be *what we call* righteousness; *i. e.*, *that* character adorable and venerable which we designate by the word, and which *our Creator* (whoever he be) has made it our nature to adore and venerate, while we despise and abhor its opposite. Nothing, then, can be more monstrous than the practice of attributing to God acts and sentiments which depart altogether from *our* idea of right, and then justifying the blasphemy by the odious scholastic doctrine of an "Occulta Justitia," different from natural justice, yet not the less to be revered. The admission of a doctrine like this is tantamount to the destruction of all true religion, whose root is veneration for the moral perfec-



tion of God. If this perfection involve acts and sentiments which *our* hearts do not, and cannot from their very natures venerate, but, on the contrary, despise and abhor, then there is an utter end of all religion for beings so constituted.

But if an "Occulta Justitia" cannot for a moment be admitted to cover ascriptions of unrighteous acts and sentiments to the Deity, then it follows that every such ascription involves the guilt of the second form of demonolatry. Whoever affirms that God has at any time done anything which in his own heart he cannot justify, he is guilty of this sin.

Well said Malebranche: "Il faut aimer l'Etre infiniment parfait, et non pas un fantôme épouvantable, un Dieu injuste, absolu puissant, mais sans bonté et sans sagesse. S'il y avait un tel Dieu, le vrai Dieu nous défendrait de l'adorer et de l'aimer. Il y a peut-être plus de danger d'offenser Dieu lorsqu'on lui donne une forme si horrible que de mépriser ce fantôme."\*

\* *Traité de la Morale*, c. viii.

## CHAPTER III.

### RELIGIOUS FAULTS.

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#### SECTION I.

##### THANKLESSNESS.

IN Social Ethics it is universally admitted that there is a double dereliction from the law of love involved in Ingratitude. There is in the nature of things an obligation on all rational free agents to testify *special* benevolence towards those who have already displayed it towards themselves. The principle of Religious duty by which the fault of Thanklessness towards God stands morally condemned differs from the social principle only in this, that none of the palliations of human ingratitude can be admitted, and that every enhancement possible must belong to its guilt. We are bound to love God for His perfect goodness, and we are bound *specially* to love Him for His unnumbered benefits bestowed on ourselves. No human benefactor can be equally love-worthy, nor can his benefits be of comparable magnitude.

In the succeeding chapter (Section I.), I shall endeavour to set forth at some length the grounds of that Duty of Thanksgiving from which this fault is the obvious dereliction, and by the imperativeness of whose obligation its amount of guilt is determined.

## SECTION II.

## IRREVERENCE.

REVERENCE for the moral attributes of God is the nucleus of religion. Between that Duty of Adoration, which embodies such reverence, and the opposite Offences of Blasphemy and Sacrilege, there lies the negative Fault of Irreverence. It consists in this : that the goodness and justice of God are either forgotten and disregarded, or remembered with no fitting sentiments of veneration or actions of homage ; that the things associated with religion derive thence no sanctity, and are treated with no tenderness.

In thus withholding from God the debt which, as moral agents, we owe to the Supreme Holiness, we of course incur the guilt of a religious delinquency proportioned to the exalted rank of that duty in which we fail.

It is, however, a matter of no easy decision to mark the point whereto the natural principle of association of ideas ought to carry us in affixing reverence to things connected with religion. Many causes have contributed to the practice of attaching to objects a sanctity quite disproportionate with their real relation to religion. Besides the arts naturally employed by a sacerdotal

order to magnify themselves and everything connected with their office, and besides the natural gravitation of the human mind from the spiritual to the material, two other reasons are obvious to every reader of history why such excess of claims should be advanced in our day for the sanctity of the two greatest of these "idols of the theatre." There is a Book so full of wisdom, grandeur, piety, that all other books sink in comparison with it. The great souls of the Hebrews, rising almost from the first from the vantage-ground of the purest of the early monotheisms, fulfilled most perfectly the conditions under which inspiration is granted to man. The literature which they have bequeathed is the noblest heirloom of the human race. But as the child deems his father's knowledge infinite because it far exceeds his own, so have men still further exaggerated the marvellous wisdom of the Bible. From the Greatest of Books it came to be deemed a book altogether *sui generis* and alone. It was not the "large sheaf" in the harvest of human thought, it was bread-corn of heaven, sent miraculously to a sterile and famishing earth. But still higher have risen the Bible's claims since the days when the far-seeing pilots of the Reformation left the old ship of the Papacy to settle down slowly into the ocean of time, and looked around anxiously to find whereto they might anchor the new-launched boats which tossed about so wildly under "every wind of doctrine." There was but one ground near, and into it they drove their grapnels. "The Bible, the Bible only,



is the religion of Protestants." But lo! the deep divers of modern criticism have shown that the old anchorage of Luther and Calvin is, after all, but shifting sand, and ere our chains are dragged too far our new pilots look ahead, and cry, "Behold the Church! Let us take shelter in the safe harbour beneath its holy walls."

It may not be! That semblance of a Church is but a *Fata Morgana* after all; and no devices of man will give to it material substance or open out a haven beneath, wherein the storms of doubt may not make shipwreck of our souls.

One believer may inspire a million more, but a million of unbelievers will never make one believer. The dead soldiers on a battle-field will form no army, even if found in strictest uniform. Festivals and sacraments, rubrics, and articles, richly endowed hierarchies and splendid fanes, cannot infuse the vital spirit into a Church. Nay, if the life be departed, such outward vestments show ghastlily, like the gorgeous robes on a dead Greek bishop, carried rocking on his throne through the busy streets, and offering to living men the mock-benediction of his stiffened hand. Either the Church of England is a true Church, "a congregation of faithful souls," and then the faith of each soul is its own salvation; or it is a mere effigy of what a Church ought to be, and will never support the weight of a soul burdened with a doubt.

Neither Bible nor Church can afford a final resting-place for the soul. *Both* are venerable, rightly under-

stood. *Neither* have a right to the blind unreasoning homage which has been claimed for them. Nothing can be more unwarrantable than the attempt to force us to revere, as a Divine Oracle on which all our conduct and all our hopes must depend, a Book, and every sentence in a Book, the evidence of whose authenticity would be insufficient to establish our claims to the smallest heritage disputed in an English court of justice. Nothing can be more puerile than the attempt to elevate the trifling details of a cultus into matters of vital importance, while the spiritual earnestness, which alone can make worship real, receives comparatively small attention. To hear some divines talk, we should be tempted to believe that such things as actual *sin*, profligacy, dishonesty, drunkenness, and impiety, were things unheard of in a Christian land, and that the great concern of our pastors was to intone the appointed prayers with accuracy, and to compel the congregation to turn their faces to the east. Another party are equally intent to stir heaven and earth to make one proselyte; but when we ask to *what* is he converted, we find it is to reading the Bible and adopting the passwords of "depravity" and "salvation," not to becoming a manly and virtuous human being. Who would dream that our great army of souls is every hour in fierce warfare with our deadly foe of sin, and that the half of us are sluggards sleeping at our posts, or traitors deserting to the enemy, while all the time our leaders do but exhort us to a little greater accuracy of *drill*?

For those who push the claims of reverence to every article of Church furniture, every page of either Testament, this answer must suffice:—*Proportion* must be observed in all our sentiments. If we adore the One Great God of heaven so that we name Him only with heartfelt awe; if we give to the earnestness of prayer and thanksgiving all the care we can bestow; if we deem the moral nature of our fellow-men inexpressibly venerable; if we hearken with ready submission to every whisper of the divine voice of conscience; *then* it is not possible for us equally to talk “with bated breath” of altar-cloths and faldstools, to attend anxiously to the thorough-bass with which our prayers are chanted, to treat episcopal ordination as altering the moral relations of men, or to revere alike the curses of David and the precepts of Christ. We honour God before His Church; God’s law in our hearts before any law in a book; a godlike man before an ungodlike priest. God, and virtue, and conscience are venerable *primarily*, in their own right. The Church, the Bible, the priest must prove themselves first to be God’s Church, a true Bible, a virtuous priest, and then we will give them the *secondary* reverence they derive from such relation. Just in *proportion*, and neither more nor less, that anything is united with God and goodness, in so far, and no more, is it deserving of our reverence.

If these views of the grounds of the duty of reverence be correct, it will follow that the claims advanced by Christians for holy places, books, and days are all to be

admitted under the conditions—first, of entire subordination to the realities of religion ; and secondly, to the establishment of their actual relation to those realities. Within these limitations, however, many will be startled to find can very easily come the claims of other religions than the Christian to a share, though it be comparatively a trifling one, in our respect.

Surely the time has arrived when the absurd notions of the Fathers concerning the demoniacal nature of heathen gods ought to cease to influence men of the nineteenth century in their treatment of creeds differing from their own.\* It would seem as if the reaction from the old Roman and Greek latitudinarianism had bequeathed to Christendom the conviction that if we disapprove of any one article in our brother's creed, his religion loses every claim to our regard, nay, that it is a mark of our orthodox piety to pour some degree of contumely thereupon ! Since a better light is rising amongst us ; since we begin to recognise that God is the One

“Father of all, in every age, in every clime adored,”

it is fit we should renounce this vulgar and ignorant contempt for the religion of our brothers. Though, as we have seen, nothing short of the recogni-

\* See Tertullian, *Apol.* i. 23. His translator, in the *Lib. Anglo-Catholic Theol.*, says that the notion that demons actually lurked in the heathen idols was maintained by Justin Martyr, Tatian, Origen, Minucius Felix, Chrysostom, and Gregory Nazianzen. See also Athenagoras, *Leg.*, p. 27.



tion of the Infinite Impersonation of the right in the Deity, constitutes a religion strictly and scientifically identifiable with morality, yet it is not endurable to suppose that involuntary mistakes in such matters have excluded the millions of God's children from a real access to Him, however much they have clouded His aspect to their sight. Does a mother, leaning over her infant's cradle, refuse to attend to its cries because its utterance is inarticulate, or because it babbles some other name than "mother?"\*

No man, howsoever enlightened, can boast of being removed above error to such height that he may repudiate all fellowship in the religion of another. Absolutely true theology, absolutely perfect worship, is not

\* The names which have been given to God by different nations afford a curious insight into the theology of the people choosing them, and also have doubtless contributed to influence by reaction those theologies themselves. The power, wisdom, eternity, goodness, fatherhood of God, must in each case be the central idea of the creed which calls Him by names derived from one or other of those attributes. Even the shades of feeling of members of the same nation in different ages may be traced by the preference manifested among the various titles proposed by their creed. How the noblest of all His names, our glorious old Saxon "GOD," is removed from us into the cold pseudo-philosophy of the last century by the phrases of "the Deity," "the Supreme Being!" We may *love* our "God," our GOOD ONE, but we can only bow the head before an impersonal abstraction of the Deity. Again, the still common name for Him, "the Almighty," how little does it express the loving reverence of a *moral* being for his Father in heaven, like whom he aims to be perfect? The whole *point* of religion is lost when we adopt such words as the natural utterance of our idea of God.



for man. It is all a question of degrees. In his gaudy wihare, the Buddhist to-day lifts feebly his wavering hands to "feel after God," the unknown Holiness above him. In the mighty fanes where, in future ages, the Theist nations shall adore their only Lord, still poor and all inadequate must be their offerings of prayer. There is no line to be drawn ; lower and lower we may descend, till the ONE seems lost in the MANY, and all the moral attributes are soiled by the foulest mythologies. Less and less must of necessity grow our sympathy in such worship, less is it possible for us to join for a moment in the prostration or the sacrifice. Yet at its utmost depth of ignorance and degradation, the religious sentiment of a human soul has a right to receive from us whatever share of deference its claims to *be* religious may warrant. It may be that we see the first feeble struggles of a new-born life ; it may be that we witness the expiring throes of an outworn faith. Tenderness is the due, then, of infancy, and mournful pity of old age.

Methinks that to a religious man, standing amid the ruins of Luqsor or Baalbec, beneath the columns of the Olympium or in the sculptured caverns of Elephanta, it would seem only a natural impulse to turn his thoughts upward where those who could not love God as he may do, had yet striven through darkness and error to approach Him—that it would be a blessed thing to bow where dead generations had bowed, and draw perchance once more from the sublime creations of their awe and veneration, fresh hallowing influences to a living soul.

## SECTION III.

## PRAYERLESSNESS.

PRAYER, in its direct aspect, is more immediately a Personal than a Religious duty. The neglect of it is primarily a disuse of the most powerful instrument in our reach for the assistance of our virtue. Nevertheless, the unspeakable blessing and honour of communion offered to us by God in prayer renders our rejection of them a religious Fault tantamount to a general delinquency in all religious duty. He who cares not to obtain the aid of God's grace, or feel the joy of His presence, is manifestly in a condition wherein the religious part of his nature must be dormant. Such sentiments as remain to him can scarcely possess ethical merit, inasmuch as they must be merely the residue of those natural instincts which, if duly cherished, must have led him to prayer. The occasional God-ward impulses which show themselves in all men, so far from constituting the fulfilment of this obligation, form the very ground of their guilt when left barren. *Without* such religious sentiments, man could have no religious duty at all. Possessed of them, he is bound to cultivate and display them in all the forms of direct and indirect worship.

These observations of course refer only to such as accept the great lesson of both intuition and experience, and believe that prayer for spiritual good receives a real answer from God. It is possible for religious minds at an early stage to make mistakes for a time on this matter, and to suppose that it were better for them not to pray than to presume to approach the Majesty of Heaven in the imperfect attitudes of reverence to which alone they could force their wandering thoughts. Doubtless there is no moral sin in such error, and doubtless God never leaves any loving child to suffer from it long, but by some tender kindness touches the heart so that its flood of gratitude breaks forth and carries away for ever the gates of overstrained awe and fear.

## SECTION IV.

## IMPENITENCE.

IMPENITENCE is the persistence in any offence or fault, personal, social, or religious. The original transgression being accomplished, and the righteous will so far overpowered, impenitence consists in the prolonged subjugation of the higher self to lower desire, the continuance, either by sentiment alone or by both sentiment and action, of the offence or fault.

It is obvious that in a state of impenitence we momentarily accumulate fresh guilt in addition to the primary transgression. Nay, in many cases the stubborn sentiments and slow determined actions so committed, must be held far to exceed the measure of the first offence, even as rancorous and unrelenting hatred and cruelty exceed in guilt the anger excited by momentary provocation. Impenitence usually lacks the palliations of the primary sin. Either the sudden overwhelming desire or passion has somewhat subsided, or conscience has had time to recover from her surprise, to review the field of contest, and perceive the whole magnitude of her defeat. When all hurry and surprise are over and we stand calmly face to face with our sin, if we *then* resolve to persist in it, we surely incur a new guilt

which must go on growing in an ever-increasing ratio while we resist each softening influence of time.

In the aspects now described, impenitence is a fault in personal duty, and such of course, in a great measure, it must be considered. Its religious bearing is, however, so much more prominent in the intuitions of every believer in a God "who forgiveth sins," that it is under the head of a fault towards Him that it will most fitly be classed. In the ensuing chapter the grounds of the Duty of Repentance will be so set forth as to show, as far as possible, the guilt incurred by its neglect.



## SECTION V.

## SCEPTICISM.

THE causes of scepticism are somewhat paradoxical. It may arise either from fervent Love of Truth or from Indifference towards its attainment.

Scepticism exists as a *constitutional tendency* where the Love of Truth is great, but displays itself rather on its negative side as Hatred of Error, and is insufficiently balanced by the affirmative tenacity of discovered truth. An intellect Sceptical in this way presents the converse weakness of the Dogmatic mental constitution, which sees whatsoever truths it has found in a light so vivid that it perceives none of their collateral modifications.

Scepticism exists as a *moral fault* (and can therefore alone concern us now), when it arises either from Indifference towards Truth or else from Faithlessness in Goodness. *Indifference to truth* produces a scepticism of a very opposite kind from that which, as we have just noticed, springs from an imperfectly ordered love of it.

In the book on Personal Duty, I shall hope to show that the endeavour to form our opinions with the utmost possible approach to absolute verity, is not only innocent, but notably one of the foremost duties a man

owes to himself. The unwearied and disinterested pursuit of truth is in fact *the* duty attaching to our intellectual natures ; and like all other virtues, the love of truth must have its negative side in due correspondence (though, as above shown, not in preponderance), and must include the careful rejection of error. It is absurd to suppose that a man can seek truth and be content to receive what, for all he knows, may be a falsehood. People who adopt opinions without scrutiny, and boast of "entertaining no doubts" concerning them, do not merely risk failure in intellectual duty, if it chance that their opinions be erroneous : \* they incur the certain delinquency ; for no man holds a truth morally till he has examined his tenure of it. Only when he has a right to say "It is true," he possesses it *as a truth*. Until then it is to him merely a notion acquired by haphazard ; and to be content with such, in serious matters, is a moral fault.†

Such being the nature of man's duty as regards the pursuit of truth, it is clear that no moral dereliction can lie in the same line as that of free earnest inquiry. If there be such a fault as scepticism at all (as the universal intuition of mankind pronounces there be), it must be of altogether a different kind. Nay, as it concerns the

\* "If your religion is too good to be examined, I doubt it is too bad to be believed."—TILLOTSON.

† "As I take my shoes from my shoemaker, and my coat from my tailor, so I take my religion from my priest."—GOLDSMITH, quoted by Boswell.

very same department of our natures, it can only be a failure in that precise duty of seeking for truth which concerns that department. Thus I should have classed scepticism under the same head as other Personal Faults, save for the reason that it is the scepticism of *religious* and moral truths, which so far exceeds the importance of all others as to monopolize our attention when we consider the subject, and that thus scepticism being, *in its religious aspect*, a religious fault, and herein acquiring a peculiar guilt, it will more fitly be here discussed. It is not that other scepticism involves no sin, that all indifference to the truths of science and history is not a Personal fault, and all distrust in the fundamental spring of goodness in our fellow-creatures a Social fault. These have their place; but infinitely more injurious and universal in its action is that scepticism which consists in indifference to Religious truth or faithlessness in God's goodness.

But, now, as regards this religious scepticism, wherein must lie actually its guilt? Assuredly we cannot fail in our duty towards God by fulfilling the duty He has appointed us towards ourselves. It is gross superstition to suppose that while He desires us to seek all other truth *as truth*; that is, by the use of the mental powers He has given us for its discovery—He desires us to accept the truths which concern Himself *as if they were falsehoods*; that is, by a blind acquiescence in unscrutinized testimony. Our duty towards religious truth must only be to give it *greater* earnestness and patience

of investigation in proportion to its greater importance. Thus, then, our sin of religious scepticism must be to fail in this duty. And how is this done? I have already indicated the two chief lines in which this fault may work.

“Indifference towards truth” is displayed, first, by those who never make any inquiries at all respecting the grounds of their faith; and, secondly, by those (to whom the name of sceptic is usually applied) who stop short at that stage of inquiry where they have only learned to doubt, and, lacking interest and patience to pursue the road to “the new firm lands of faith beyond,” remain wandering idly about the “howling wilderness” for the rest of their lives.

“Faithlessness in Goodness” is displayed by those who would fain make such inquiries *if they dared*, but are withheld (perhaps unconsciously) by the hidden fear lest their search for truth might either displease God or lead them to conclusions they are beforehand resolved to reject. In all the churches there are, doubtless, thousands of persons who go through life timorously, as if walking on thin ice; knowing and dreading the cold waters below, and aware of the weakness of their frail support; yet without courage or faith to trample through and take their stand on the rock which lies beneath both the water and the ice. Priests have everywhere persuaded men that to leave *their* narrow folds is to enter upon a path whereon no smile of God can lighten, and leading every wanderer sooner or later



to the bottomless pit of atheism. Who has not felt the influence of this threat? To which of us was it not a discovery of unutterable joy that he *could* pray to God beyond the walls of the churches, and lift to heaven the hands from which the manacles had fallen for ever? Everywhere there is this faithlessness. The churches will not reform their creeds, translations, liturgies, and politics, because they have no faith in them. Move a beam in those rotten houses, and they fear that all will crash in dust. Men of intelligence will neither examine their traditional creeds nor quit them, nor suffer their wives or dependents to do either the one or the other, for they have no faith either in the creeds or in any truth beyond, or in the chastity of woman or the honesty of man, save backed by the very threats and bribes which, beyond all other things, they disbelieve. How many thousands of men now living in England, tell us, in every key, that without hell in the background private virtue and public order would be at an end! Yet, meet those thousands in a theatre, where the jest turns on the perdition of some Don Juan, and what tale tell the shouts of laughter in our ears concerning the faith of the assembly in the reality of any hell or devil?

Now, both these forms of Scepticism, indifference and faithlessness, must be religious faults of great magnitude. The sin, as has been well said, is precisely this, "that there is not in the soul a deep and strong yearning and earnest desire to find solutions of our theological difficulties, and that the great facts of Divine religion are



not experienced to the required degree ; that we are not sufficiently religious to be assured of certain facts of which religion in its lofty moods would inform us.”\* Whensoever we find ourselves wanting either in interest in truth or faith in goodness, we may be assured that we are *morally* deficient somewhere : in fervour, in sincerity, in earnestness of obedience, or above all, in seeking to renew, in God’s communion, our spiritual sight.

\* *Quinquenergia*, p. 51.

## SECTION VI.

## WORLDLINESS.

IT was a grand contribution to moral science, that which we attribute to Christ in the severance of "World" or "Mammon" service from the service of God. Much as bigotry and spiritual pride have misused it, the distinction has been of infinite use in clearing up to the consciences of men that hazy portion of self-consciousness which belongs to inner feelings and motives when outward actions are not visibly implicated. There is a mode of life adopted by thousands, in all ages, in which the external conduct is decent and unexceptionable, and the social sentiments on the whole kindly and good-natured. Religious services are performed with punctuality, and the personal duties of temperance, chastity, and veracity receive no infraction. At first sight a life of this kind appears unquestionably to take place in the ranks of virtue; nor can it often belong to any save the man who leads it to question its right to do so. Yet if (as he himself may know) the ambitions and pleasures of earth occupy the foreground in his thoughts, cares, and desires, it is clear that he fails in the whole spirit of virtue, which must needs "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." He is guilty of that *fault of worldliness* which is co-extensive with his entire inner life.

Of the universal deterioration of the character which has once been inoculated with the taint of a worldly spirit, it needs small observation of life to detect. There are probably few who have not known the pang of gazing, after a lapse of years, into some once single and beloved heart, and finding that "the world's breath hath been there." There is no simple affection or enjoyment left. All are sunk together in that base pitiful care, "how will it *seem*?"

Of all faults, worldliness brings the largest share of punishment in thus poisoning all the springs of pleasure, and leaving nothing to be done or enjoyed for its own sake, but everything for the sake of an intangible something else beyond. We do not half realize to ourselves the fact that *petty* cares and gratifications of vanity and ambition, being opposed to the natural expansion God intends for our souls, are necessarily full of uneasiness. The mind, which is hourly bound down to the pitiful details of worldly cares, is like the foot of a Chinese woman, ever cramped and aching. *Duties*, however small in outward guise, have always a moral grandeur, in which the soul expands healthfully. But selfish ambitions bring nothing but pain, or if they *have* pleasures at any time, it is only (as Mackintosh says of spite and revenge) the pleasure the gout or the toothache may be said to bring when they obtain momentary relief. 'Twere better far for us to endure real privations, real sufferings, than to have our souls dwindled by worldly struggles. 'Twere better to live

in the shadow of some tremendous gloom—even of Calvinism itself—than to be blinded by the glare of the thousand foot-lamps of social vanities.

I know not whether this fault be really increasing among us. All such things alter their aspect with changing manners, and we notice the new form and forget the old, and so conclude we are worse than our forefathers. It startles us to find Longinus say of avarice, that “the whole world is sick of it beyond a cure.” But, growing or stationary, worldliness is, indeed, fearfully prevalent amongst us; which of us can say he is free? It seems as if the seeds were latent in us all, and that the moment we come under conditions favourable for their growth, they spring up spontaneously. Once developed, nothing but a strong pure love of God or man ever stops their fatal luxuriance.

A fair test of our own worldly spirit, I think, is this. It happens to us all often to consider the difference which some lapsed period of time, a year or a decade, has made in our condition. Honestly let us answer, What circumstances of that condition is it that we regard with most interest? Are we saying to ourselves, with complacency, “I have risen a grade in my profession; I have become more respected; I have added to my capital; I have made an honourable alliance?” If these things be so, we may rejoice at them, but must we not much more rejoice to say, “I have conquered such a vice; I have improved in such a virtue; my heart is wider than it was in human benevolence; my faith

firmer. God has surely blessed my efforts, and will help me to subdue the errors which remain?" That these are our *real* interests, after all, I suppose every one will admit. God did not create this world of trial, and place His children's souls at school therein, that they might win toys. If the end of a man's existence were that he might become a general or a millionaire, God would hardly have made all this paraphernalia of a moral life. Such "ends" might have been accomplished easily for a nation of ants. In so far as we are men and women, we can only be in the pursuit of our right interest when we simply and unaffectedly place our progress in Virtue foremost in all our hopes and efforts, and every other object subordinate and secondary thereto.

It is needless, however, to enlarge on a fault which is, at least theoretically, well recognised, and whose condemnation is reiterated more frequently perhaps than any other from the pulpits of Christendom. Let it suffice to note, that so insidious is this endemic of earth, that some of its most virulent and complicated forms fester perennially those very circles of exclusive religious profession wherein are loudest heard the reprobation of its simple manifestations. Rarely is it, that in the veriest devotee of fashion, whose years are wasted between the park, the opera, the race-course and the ball-room, there is half the essential spirit of worldliness which exists in the Pharisee of the country town, who shakes his or her head with sternest rebuke at the follies out of reach. Whether we consider that worldliness be,



more basely displayed in the worship of wealth, or of rank, or of notoriety, or in the excessive desire of approbation and fear of censure, or in the attaching of vital importance to trifling details of comfort or gossip which deserve no attention from rational moral creatures, in each case the members of our pious coteries must stand the worst in the comparison with those who, at least, do not add to their fault the assumption of superior sanctity or the profession of a higher morality, and who seldom descend to the *pettiness* of ambition or of spite which marks too often the behaviour of their judges.

## CHAPTER IV.

### RELIGIOUS OBLIGATIONS.

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#### SECTION I.

#### THANKSGIVING.

A CAUSE to which I have already adverted, namely, the ordinary ignoring of the abstract Rightfulness of worship, has tended in modern times to displace Thanksgiving in an extraordinary manner from its natural important position. Let any dispassionate person examine the Liturgy of any one of the great Christian Churches, or let him collect together what he may remember of the extempore prayers of Dissenters, and he will, I venture to predict, be surprised to observe how marvellously the story of the lepers is verified every day; how for ten Prayers there is but one Thanksgiving. "We bless Thee for creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." Some few short words like these at the end of whole Litanies of minute petitions are thought sufficient to dismiss the million million benedictions which our Creator is for ever pouring like sunbeams on our heads. Now, if it be right to *pray* for every sort of desirable object, for dry weather and for

rain, for victory over our enemies and for deliverance from lightning and tempest, plague, pestilence, and famine, battle, murder, and sudden death, surely it cannot be thought superfluous to *thank* God for similar blessings with at least equal assiduity. Yet, for the sunshine and the moonlight, for summer's stores and winter's healthful snow, for the radiant earth and solemn sea, for fruits and flowers, and brutes and birds, for our own wondrous frames of flesh, for sight and hearing, taste and smell and feeling, for sleep, for language, for human love, for intellect and memory, for all the wondrous powers which permit the child of yesterday to converse with the dead of all the ages, and to soar in thought through the realms of boundless space—for *these* blessings what liturgy pours its long strains of thanksgiving before the throne of the merciful Benefactor?

It would seem, too, as if the things for which we do return some expressions of gratitude were only the blessings which come to the lower part of our nature—traditional thanksgivings, if I may call them so, for the mercies men in ages of barbarism felt to be greatest. We say “grace before and after meat;” we have forms of public thanks for good harvests and for victory over our enemies. These are well. Even that poor formality of grace, as it is commonly understood, it would be sad to abandon, profaned though it so often be by the levity of its insertion between the paragraphs of a jesting tale, or the retorts of an angry argument. But why are no

other blessings save food and safety made themes of praise? These are the dews about our feet; have we no thanks for the showers on our heads? It might almost be questioned whether any of the peculiar mercies which we possess over those which belonged to our ancestors have been recognised in any social worship by thanksgiving. What forms have been ever proposed for blessing God for the great discoveries of modern science and the progress of political freedom?—for our fire-horse, the steam-engine, whose fodder of coal was laid up so carefully a million years ago; for the facilitation of all kindly intercourse throughout the world; for medical and surgical discoveries without number for the relief of human suffering; for the unspeakable blessing of a righteous jurisprudence? Have we no thanks for things like these? Should the Benedicite of the “heir of all the ages” be no stave the longer than that of the serf and monk of the centuries when oppression and ignorance darkened Europe with their double night? Methinks that each generation of men ought to add a strophe, and that ours ought to add many a strophe, to the universal hymn of God’s happy children.

If we would understand the nature of the blessings God bestows on us, we should do well to remember that in Him are united the two characters to which we look with greatest trust and veneration. He is at once the *Father* and the *Mother* of the world. It is only human nature completed and perfected, male and female united, that can offer to us any Image of Him. If we think, as

we so often do, of Him only in one relation, we shall lose unspeakably. The "Parent of Good, Almighty" is *both* Parents in One. As the FATHER of the universe, He gives us life and provides with all a father's care for our preservation and for our progress towards that immortal virtue for whose sake the life was given. As the MOTHER of the world, He adds to our existence every unhurtful pleasure which the tenderest of woman's hearts could devise for the innocent happiness of her child. If the Father's gifts be greatest, these are perhaps dearer still, for they prove the love of God to be something so tender, so inexpressibly gentle and indulgent, that our hearts at their very hardest are melted when we do but remember it;\* even as the most abandoned of reprobates are softened when reminded of the mother's love which once has blessed them. Surely there is something wonderful in the thought of those countless millions of little joys which the Wisdom and the Power which guide the systems of the suns have designed and wrought out for every child amongst us ! Let us note a few of these *little* tokens of God's tender love.†

\* "Car l'amour nous touche beaucoup plus que les bienfaits, parceque faire du bien aux autres n'est que donner quelque chose de ce que nous avons, au lieu qu'en les aimant c'est nous donner nous mesmes à eux." —St. Jean d'Avila, *Discours de l'Amour de Dieu*. Œuvres in fol.

† They were very heathen gods truly of whom it was said "They take care of great things, and disregard the small." (Cicero, *de Nat. Deor.*, b. ii. c. lxvi.) These are the *finite* deities whom it is Idolatry to worship.



It is a trite remark that we are nearly always stimulated to the various actions needful for our life by a sense of *pleasure* quite superfluous, where mere want and pain would have equally compelled us to exertion. Men eat, drink, sleep, or take exercise, because these acts are pleasures much oftener than because forbearance from them entails pain. Each sense has indeed for itself a garden of its own delights:—Beauty, and music, and perfume, and the tastes of food and drink, and the alternations of warmth and coolness, exercise, and repose. Blanco White said that a whole Bridgewater Treatise might be written on the proofs of beneficent design manifested in the laws of harmonious sounds and the adaptation of the human ear to their enjoyment. Still wider diffused is the delight in beauty, of which the whole earth and sky afford one endless spectacle. Even the humbler sense of smell gives us a variety of delicate pleasures which we should rank higher than we do were we to pay attention to their beneficent power over the memory and the animal spirits. Why has God made us to enjoy beauty and music? or why simply has He made the flowers but out of love like that of a mother? We could have lived very well, I suppose, without roses, and jessamine, and heliotrope, and mignonette. They do not seem of any sort of use to our life, nor do they afford special service (at least their beauty or perfume do not) to any bird or insect. Why, then, did God make those little flowers so bright and sweet? Why did He give

man the innocent occupation of improving them by culture, and yet spread wild ones almost as fair over every spot of earth? Why, but to make us happy, to gladden our hearts with His beautiful works, to put some proof of His love into every path our feet may tread? Even among our human friends, we feel that there is a peculiar tenderness in a gift of flowers which the donor has culled especially for us. Many a large dotation of lands or gold from a father has called forth less grateful feelings than the little bunch of our favourite roses which a mother's gentle hands have arranged to greet us in our chamber. And shall we have no swelling heart, no tearful eye, for Him who gave us *all* the flowers?

This is an endless theme, wide as man's nature and his world. If I should begin to speak of the joys of the affections and of the intellect, instead of a section of a chapter, I should write volumes on the duty of thanksgiving. Perhaps it would help us to understand a little the amount of our debt to the pure benevolence of God if we could picture what our life would be *without* it. Let us suppose, *not* that God is cruel, and determined to pierce our defenceless souls and bodies with all the darts in the arsenal of Omnipotence, or that He is revengeful, and will punish us rigorously for our offences against Him, but simply that *He does not love us*. Let us suppose that He has made us for some other sake beside our own virtue or happiness, and that He sustains our lives for that unknown purpose, just as a

man keeps a flock of sheep without any more regard for their enjoyment than is included in care for their growth and preservation. In such a case as this, we should expect that there would still be given us powers of motion and means of protecting ourselves, and that the external world would supply the necessities of our animal life. Food would be provided, and keen hunger would force us to swallow it. We should hear sounds sufficient to guide us, as the beasts are guided by the calls of their kind. We should perceive those odours which mark our food to be proper or improper for us. We should see the forms and distances of surrounding objects. We should have intelligence to make ourselves protections from the atmosphere, and to grow corn and tend cattle. All these things, and perhaps many more, must of necessity have been left to us if we were to exist at all; and the atheist's argument may be granted, so far as regards them, that the one chance which threw our being must have thrown them all.

But let us see what is *not* included in the mere necessity of life—what proofs of God's actual love and tenderness to us might be deducted from the conditions of our existence, and that existence still left untouched. Let us suppose that the senses ceased to convey *pleasure* to our brains, that the food which hunger made us eat had no taste, the sounds which guided us had no sweetness, the odours no perfume, the sights no colour. Let us suppose a world in which there was still light enough to plough and reap, but over whose sky stretched one

unbroken cloud, through which no sun ever shone to brighten with its noonday glory or hallow with its evening lustre, and through whose nights no moon or star ever opened up the infinite to the gazer's heart. The earth is all colourless, the waters gray like lead, grass and corn and trees are all one hue, and there is no flower save the black scentless blossoms of the tasteless roots. The birds have no song, the insects no merry hum; there is no such thing as music nor the sweet soft voice of human love and human wisdom; man has no converse with his kind, for he has no joys of intellect or affection to convey. He loves no one—his words are merely a call or a command. There is no literature, no art, no virtue, no religion. But there is life left? Oh, yes! abundance of life. The creature lives out securely his threescore years and ten, for he is goaded every moment by a want which he is always able to supply; and to end his existence would be a worse pain than to prolong it. So man lives on in that great silent, sunless, loveless, Godless world.

Now suppose, reader, that you were brought from some planet where existence was such living death as this; and that God took you and placed you on our radiant earth, some summer morning, while the sun was rising over the sea, and the woods were glittering in the dewy light, while the birds were pouring forth their songs, and the fragrance of the grass and flowers filled the air with sweetness: suppose that you entered a human abode, and saw in one chamber a mother



caressing the child on her breast, and in another a youth poring over pages fraught with noblest thoughts; and yet again, in another, a strong man on his knees wrestling with all his soul for the strength to do some great right, and grasping in his faith that Hand which can do all things, till at length the victory was won, and the loving heart broke forth in praise and adoration: suppose you could see these things with the eye of one who saw them for the first time—would it seem to you that a *few* words of thanks dismissed justly the claims of God's tenderness on His thrice-happy children?

But, as I have said, there is a greater cause for our gratitude to God than the pleasures of this palace-world He has built for our present abode. Beyond it lies boundless, everlasting life. We are not made for this happiness alone, great as it is. It is but an accident of the road, a *mere* world of joys thrown into the great design! What we are made for, what we shall all reach at last, is a height of being, a Virtue including such love, such joy, that, could we see it now, our dazzled sight would never more perceive either the pleasures or the trials which belong to mortal life. God throws our immortality into the background of our consciousness, probably because were we clearly to behold it, there could be no salutary punishment, no strengthening trial, in our earthly lot. We should feel such things no more than we heed the little pebbles which lie under our feet when we spring forward into



the arms of a long-parted friend. But though our immortality cannot now be realized by our feeble brains, it is still *there*—it is waiting for us. In the eye of Him to whom the future is as the present, we are even now the blessed creatures we shall be hereafter ; pure, and good, and strong, beyond our highest aspirations. Love of God and of the myriads of our brothers will swell with rapture the vast expanse of our hearts, while our minds will grow in knowledge, God-like and illimitable, as we rove from world to world throughout the clusters of the suns, doing indeed at last “the will of our Father, even as it is done in heaven,”\* and growing ever more “perfect, even as He is perfect.”

Is this hope, this faith in the great end and meaning

\* If we could “look up steadfastly,” and see the heavens of the future opened, and all the sons of men standing at last beside the throne of God, all the stories of human wrong and suffering would fall from us unfelt. Any one feature in this view of a future life is enough to fill us with delight—to make us exclaim—

“To think, to feel, to love, and be beloved  
By beings sinless, stainless, and by Him  
Whose smile lights up this radiant universe !  
Oh, 'tis a dream too glorious for man's soul  
To grapple with !”

I cannot help attempting, however, to fix attention on one particular which seems to have scarcely received all the consideration it merits. Carlyle tells us that Mahomet promised his followers that in Paradise “Ye shall sit on seats opposite one another. All grudges shall be taken away out of your hearts.” (*Heroes and Hero-worship*, sect. ii. I cannot discover the authority for this in the *Koran*.) And truly this would be much, that we should at last look straight at each other's souls, free from all the veils our poor mortality is ever clothed with,

of our existence no cause for thankfulness? Have we no gratitude to God that He has not made us like the grass, to spring up for an hour in the morning sunlight

and feel that every cloud of resentment was gone to return no more. But this is only the negative side of the case. We may all have noted in life how, when we do see into the depths of any human heart, we discover, almost with a start, something which calls forth a peculiar love to *that* being. It is the mysterious *self* we have seen at last, and each living soul has its own awful individuality, known perfectly to God alone, yet when in any way revealed to us, calling forth its special love. We often institute comparisons between the *degrees* of our love for one or another of those dear to us, and then seem to make a new distinction, saying that "we love them in different ways." But did any one ever love any two *souls* in the same way? Is there not, as it were, a different sentiment in our hearts for every one of our friends? Some of these may be more vivid than others, but this fluctuates from a thousand causes. The kind of love which each individual calls forth is incapable of being reduced to a thermometric scale. If a mother have ten children she loves them all separately, with feelings quite individual and distinct, so far as the human affection prevails beyond mere animal instinct. With the growth of our nature the power of multiplying such individual affections increases illimitably. A pure, unselfish, spiritual love, so far from *using up* any portion of our affectional power, only brings fresh fuel to the fire, a light to brighten a new facet of the many-sided diamond. What world-wide capacity for joy lies then latent in us all in the Love which is to expand throughout our immortality! What happiness even now can claim to parallel that swelling of the heart in perfect tenderness and reverence which we sometimes feel towards some noble human friend? Nor will the self-reflective desire to be beloved detract always, as it does now, from our full joy. We may be loved hereafter even as we love, for we may become worthy of all love, and may then be known truly as we are, without terror of misapprehension or mistrust.

But further. Love is perfected only in triune sympathy. It is when

and to be cut down at even, dried up and withered for ever? Some time or other we shall learn what it is to have been created an IMMORTAL, RATIONAL, FREE AGENT.

There are, I think, several reasons why the belief in a future state, though all but universal among human beings, has yet failed to quicken, in any very noticeable degree, the general gratitude of the race. In the first place, it has been (as above remarked) left by the Creator in the background of our consciousness. We believe in it, but we can hardly ever realize our belief. In the second place, this great *hope* of the world has been perverted by priestcraft and superstition into its great *fear*. It is only when religion is another name for base self-interestedness that any one can really rejoice and find cause for thankfulness in the expectation of a private happiness which will be balanced by the eternal misery

the chord of religious feeling in our brother's heart sounds in harmony with our own that friendship forms its deepest, tenderest tie—the tie which we instinctively recognise as eternal. Death may thenceforth sever us outwardly, and sin even seem to do so inwardly, but we can never feel the same as before to one with whom our hearts have ascended in love to God. We shall all love God in the bright “beyond”—love Him as now we cannot dream.

If it be true, as seems very likely, that we must begin our future life in a somewhat childlike state, both as regards the new senses whose use we must learn, and our relation to the elder-born souls who have had longer experience of those greater worlds, how blessed will it be to renew once more all those *fresh* delights, that sweet trustfulness whose departure filled the close of youth with such regret; to be young again in all that makes childhood beautiful and holy!

of others. There is no better proof of the power and vitality of man's consciousness of immortality than that it has supported for ages such a solid mass of horrors as the doctrine of eternal hell.

But to us, who are assured that God has made every rational creature to be for ever good and happy—to *us*, I say, is there any excuse why the faith in immortality should not call forth gratitude? Does it not complete into one perfect harmony alike our highest thought of God's great goodness, and the fond, natural longings of our poor human hearts? Without this faith we should not merely lose our own infinite hope, precious as that needs must be; we should also lose much of the completeness of our idea of God, and even of the moral law. To have created such beings as we are, endowed us with such powers, led us by such laborious training to virtue, and accepted from us and granted to us so much love, and then to leave us to fade away and perish, all our high thoughts, our holy aspirations, our fervent efforts, quenched in endless night—*that* would not be God-like. We could not bear to think of God's work so ending. Nay, the law itself, immutable as it ever would stand, would lose its crown of royalty could we not believe that *sooner or later* God would make it triumphant throughout the universe. That he who deserves punishment should be punished, that he who has obeyed the eternal right should be made happy; these are the natural fulfilments of the law for which we cannot help looking from the justice and the



benevolence of Him in whom it is impersonated. Take away immortality, and the law is left without supremacy *de facto*, or with such only as may be exercised in the narrow field of earthly existence.\*

There are some who say that the intuitive doctrine of immortality offers a prospect far less bright than that held out by the traditions of Protestant Christendom.

\* "The whole course of life must be subject to moral maxims ; but this is impossible, unless with the moral law, which is a mere idea, reason connects an efficient cause, which ordains to all conduct which is in conformity with the moral law an issue, either in this or in another life, which is in exact conformity with our highest aims. Thus without a God, and without a world invisible to us now, but hoped for, the glorious ideas of morality are indeed objects of approbation and of admiration, but cannot be the springs of purpose and action ; for they do not satisfy all the aims which are natural to every rational being, and which are determined, *à priori*, by pure reason itself, and necessary (*i.e.*, both virtue and happiness). Happiness alone is, in the view of reason, far from being the complete good. Reason does not approve of it (however much inclination may desire it), except as united with desert. On the other hand, morality alone, and with it mere desert, is likewise far from being the complete good. To make it complete, he who conducts himself in a manner not unworthy of happiness must be able to hope for the possession of happiness. Even reason, unbiassed by private ends or interested considerations, cannot judge otherwise if it puts itself in the place of a Being whose office it is to dispense all happiness to others. For in the practical idea both points are essentially combined, though in such a way that participation in happiness is rendered possible by the moral disposition as its condition, and not, conversely, the moral disposition by the prospect of happiness. For a disposition which should require the prospect of happiness as its necessary condition would not be moral, and hence also would not be worthy of complete happiness."—Kant's *Kritik*, "Transcendental Doctrine of Method," chap. ii. sect. 2.



These persons commonly thrust out of sight the alleged destiny of the wicked, and rest their gaze exclusively on a brilliant picture of ecstatic Paradise, to which they expect direct admittance through the door of the tomb. Dazzled by the visionary glitter of the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, they turn contemptuously from the man who can only point calmly to the stars of an actual heaven, and avow that he looks for a continuance in other worlds of the laws which have ruled his existence here. Absolute and immediate happiness, which shall never know diminution or increase, and a sinlessness which shall for ever exclude the possibility of trial or temptation ; these are the hopes which are said to leave the faith of nature in the shade.

I will not now ask whether these brilliant pictures be *true*, whether they be even *possible*. Let us suppose that a finite creature could be impeccable, and yet something higher than a brute. Let us suppose that we have evidence that God has revealed to His creature that such a Heaven awaits the just. Would it be, indeed, a joy to anticipate it? Should we *prefer* it (even after refining away every image of earthly grandeur into an emblem of purity and spiritual glory) to the immortal Progress which intuition teaches us to expect?

It seems to me that the higher we have ascended in the path of virtue and religion, the *less* we should desire the Paradise of unbroken repose which is offered to us. It is the best—perhaps the only—test of the

sincerity of repentance for past sins, that we should be willing and glad to suffer their just expiation. If a man feel in dying that justice has not had its claims satisfied as regards him, that he has suffered very little and sinned a great deal, such a man ought undoubtedly to look forward with a solemn *rejoicing* to the fulfilment, in another life, of that Divine retribution which he adores. A stricter school and severer chastisement have nothing to dismay him. He feels that they would be Right and in accordance with God's character; and the wish of his heart is, that the Right may be done, and God's perfect attributes maintained. This he must feel independently of the knowledge that the Divine Retribution is also the Divine Correction, and that the faults of his present disposition will be healed by such merciful medicine. To tell a man who feels like this, that he is going to instant, endless beatitude, would only be to throw his mind into amazement and to confound all his sense of justice.\*

On the other hand, let us suppose that a man has faithfully worked his way through the trials of life, and stands on the shore of the dark river with his loins still girded for the great race of virtue, and his heart filled with holy ambition to grow evermore better and nobler. And let us suppose that after the first burst of joy at

\* Nor would the latter be satisfied by the additional assurance that this unaccountable defalcation in the Divine Justice was the result of the sufferings of a being who had *not* sinned or deserved any suffering whatever.

finding himself suddenly advanced to that incomprehensible state of sinlessness, an angel should convey to him this decree :—"The stage you have now reached of moral progress is the highest to which you shall ever be permitted to attain. Throughout all the millenniums of your immortality your felicity shall remain unbroken, and never once be ennobled or freshened by a single act of self-sacrifice. Never more shall you be allowed to offer to God one poor effort of obedience, or do for Him a task which shall cost you a moment's pain. And, as the consequence of this, you shall never be nearer to God than you are at this moment, never gain that larger, stronger soul which would make you more sensible of His presence, and enable you better to apprehend His goodness. You shall love Him and know his love only as you do now through all the ages of eternity." Would not a sentence such as this sound like a *curse* to the ears of the true child of God? After centuries of that stagnant heaven, would he not pine even for our world of trial, where virtue is at least a thing living and growing, not a mere embalmed mummy, and where love can yet offer the sacrifice in which it is its nature to delight?\*

\* Perhaps it will be answered that there is no necessity for supposing that the absolute felicity, of the blessed should exclude them from progress. I answer that the hypothesis that a finite being *could* enjoy absolute felicity, and could be absolutely impeccable, are already two absurdities, to which it is indeed easy to add a third; namely, that, *being* impeccable, he could still grow in virtue (*i.e.*, in the strength acquired by self-conquest in peccable beings). It is, however, suffi-

No! there is nothing happier to be conceived of by heart of man than that which is actually true; that which the intuition God has given us, and the whole analogy of His government, lead us to expect: an immortality of progress, an everlasting growth in virtue and in love. If, then, we are grateful to that Good One for the "life that now is," should we not also bless Him for "that which is to come?" Should we not sometimes raise our thoughts to view the whole scope of our existence, and the nature of the boon it really is, viewed in one vast perspective of endless good? It would have been a great benefaction (as many a noble soul doubtful of its immortality has cheerfully admitted) merely to have been given existence for a few years in this world of beauty, to have been called to behold even one little scene of this splendid drama. But when our faith embraces what God has actually designed for us through all the cycles of unending futurity, it is something so stupendous that we become ungrateful from the very impossibility of conceiving the magnitude of the gift.

Rightly comprehending the meaning of our existence as an everlasting progress, in which Happiness is only the secondary, and Virtue the primary end, we shall also be better able to estimate the value of those blessings which tend more directly to assist our

ciently foolish to argue at all on a self-contradictory hypothesis. I wished simply to show the *moral* answer to the objection sometimes made to the philosophic idea of the immortal life.



moral life. Of course, *all* that God does for us helps this great design, for which He made us at first, clothed us with garbs of flesh, and built for us this planet-home. We may take everything that preserves our animal life, everything that assists our intellect and our affections, as God's instrument to bring us onward and upward. The *necessaries* of existence do this by affording a ground for the moral life. The *luxuries*, which add happiness to that physical existence, do it by warming and encouraging the better sentiments of our nature, proving to us God's tender care, and offering us opportunities of self-sacrifice for others. Further yet, beside the necessities of life and the joys thereunto added, God helps us by *sufferings*. These are often the very best helps, and consequently the best blessings of all, healing our sinful hearts and making us advance with tenfold rapidity on the path towards our glorious end. Hereafter, I doubt not, when we look back to earth from the high spheres of our future being, we shall all thank God most fervently for these very sufferings. The memory of the dear homes of our childhood, of the scenes of requited affection, or of honest joy in the success of noble labours—even these will fade before the still more grateful recollection of the sick-beds where our strength and health were struck down, and of the graves where our dearest human affections lay buried.

And yet further does God help us, and more powerfully, more directly, than by suffering itself. Over the



chaos of our conflicting will and desires His Spirit broods, "moving on the face of the deep," and stilling into sunniest calm the night-storm of those howling waves. For the inspiration which has enlightened the conscience, for the grace which has melted and purified the heart, who shall thank God enough? Who shall count the value of each holy thought, each tear of penitence, each throb of aspiration, which he has caused to start in the darkened mind, the hardened conscience?

Let us hope that these *spiritual* blessings at least are rarely received thanklessly. Perhaps their most unfailing result is to flood the soul with a sense of gratitude unutterable, while we think that to sinners like us the holy Lord of Heaven stoops to give His aid.

If these be the grounds for gratitude from man to God, we ought not, I think, to have much hesitation in granting the principle with which I started; namely, that it is absolutely Right for man to pay the direct worship of Thanksgiving to his Creator. Antecedent to the demand of it from God, or from any prospect of gain to our own virtue, is it not *right* that such gifts should draw forth thanks? When we read of some cruel despot going down peacefully and triumphantly to the grave, unrepentant and even exulting, we feel that there would be *something wrong somewhere* if that wretch did not suffer a portion of the agonies he has inflicted. When we contemplate the immeasurable benefits which God has heaped on his creatures, do we

not also feel that there would be wrong somewhere if He received no gratitude in return?

But how is such gratitude to be displayed? I answer, Let it only be *felt*, and then it will be displayed in every action of our existence. If we could but feel it as we ought, ay, or but a hundredth part as much, it would colour our whole nature, and break out in every brightened glance of our eyes and gladdened tone of our voices. It is the *sentiment* of gratitude which the Eternal Right demands as the tribute from a finite to an infinite *Spirit*, and the action can be of value only as the token of that sentiment.

Man is a being so constituted that his sentiments naturally express themselves in his deportment, words, and actions. We are all so well aware of this, that, unless we have reason to suppose the exertion of a strong volition to control the display of any sentiment, we invariably doubt the veracity of such as do not show themselves externally in all these ways. In like manner we may well suspect the sincerity of our own gratitude to God when we find that the expression of it begins and ends in a few words of formal thanksgiving, mostly repeated with even greater coldness and carelessness than degrades our prayers. To make our gratitude credible to ourselves we ought to be able to trace its impulse through our whole outward bearing. Beings blessed as we are, and capable of comprehending our blessings, ought to live and move in an atmosphere of love and trust ineffable. Our faces ought to reflect

back the sunshine of heaven, and the joyful tones of our voices to seem the echo of its halleluiahs. What fitness have the clouded brow, the peevish whine, for the creature who knows that Infinite Love is guiding every turning of his path, purposely to lead him to everlasting blessedness? Our forefathers attributed to Odin himself the saying, "There is no malady more severe than not to be contented with our lot."\* Perhaps we might add further, "Nor any sin worse than a repining of spirit."

If we were really thankful, we should show it in some such ways as these:—

We should be absolutely *CONTENT* at heart; not merely *resigned*, but *cheerful*. There seems great error current still in the world on this point. True religion is and ought to be something more than "Islam." Resignation, patience, submission, belong, not to the happy *rule* of human life, but to the exceptional hours of grief and agony, when our poor hearts can ascend to nothing beyond. For the vast majority of our days, when God is actually loading us with joys of the senses, the intellect, and the affections, to talk of "resignation" seems almost a mockery. What if we can *imagine* some other pleasures beside those He has seen best for us; if we yearn for larger spheres of mental action, or more tender bonds of human love; if we chafe against the fetters which weakness, or poverty, or the conduct of others, places on our freedom; if we smart under

\* *Havà-mal* (Song of Songs), trans. Mallet.

frequent bodily pain, or the worse pangs inflicted by unkindness—what are all these, and the thousand trials like them, compared to the great overweight of blessings in the opposite scale? Cannot we trust God, who has given us ninety and nine pleasures, that, if He withhold the hundredth, it is from no forgetfulness, no niggardliness? Cannot we feel assured that He ever makes us—

*“As blest as we can bear ;”*

as happy as will consist with our highest welfare now and for ever? We all believe this in theory, but yet our spirits are for ever falling back into the same repining state, which we attempt to cloak under the name of resignation. The martyr of an agonizing disease, who knows he must endure tortures ending only with his life, the bereaved heart which aches in utter solitude ; these may be “resigned.” It is a noble and holy sight to see how in such trials even the weakest often rise to most beautiful virtue, and “in patience possess their souls.” Sometimes even under such torments men have ascended still higher, and have spoken of joys of Divine Love pouring into their wounds a peace ineffable.

But is it for the healthy and the beloved to talk of the same “resignation,” as if, in relinquishing the one pleasure denied them out of their full harvests, they were exercising the same virtue? When we cease to relish the joys God grants us because there is still another He does not grant; when we sit down with



folded hands and say to our great Parent, "Without *this* gift we cannot enjoy any other of Thine innumerable provisions for our happiness, so we do not pretend to be cheerful; but we are *resigned*, oh, perfectly resigned"—is it not most puerile pretence? Does not old Selden say well, "If a king should give you the keeping of a castle, with all things belonging to it, orchards and gardens, and bid you use them, and withal promise you after twenty years to remove you to the court and make you a privy-councillor; if you should neglect your castle, and refuse to eat of those fruits, and sit down and whine and wish you were a privy-councillor, do you think the king would be pleased with you? Whilst you are upon earth enjoy the good things that are here (to that end were they given), and be not melancholy and wish yourself in heaven." \*

It was a great word of Paul, and worthy of his mighty soul, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice."† Only with the spirit of religious joy

\* *Table-talk.* Butler understands resignation in a far nobler sense than this. "Our resignation to the will of God may be said to be perfect when our will is lost and resolved up in His; when we rest in His will as our end, as being itself most just, and right, and good. And where is the impossibility of such an affection to what is just, and right, and good, such a loyalty of heart to the Governor of the universe as shall prevail over all sinister indirect desires of our own? Neither is this at bottom anything more than faith, and honesty, and fairness of mind, in a more enlarged sense, indeed, than those words are commonly used."—Butler, *Sermons on Human Nature*, xiv.

† Phil. iv. 4.



can the great duty of gratitude be fulfilled, and every other duty made perfect by alacrity and delight.

Surely it ought not to be very hard to be content with that lot which Wisdom Infinite sees to be best to bring us to the very highest end attainable by a created being, and which the God we love guides every moment accordingly! Even if this were not so, if it were for other great and holy ends in His creation that God sometimes withheld our joys or inflicted our sufferings, and if we obtained no individual benefit thereby, could we give up *nothing*, endure *nothing*, for His sake, and to aid His blessed designs? It is utterly vain to talk of religion at all, unless we can be Content, unless we can merge our selfish cravings for happiness in God's righteous will.\*

Animal spirits, there is no doubt of it, have much to do with cheerfulness and contentment. Many of us can be gay and satisfied under circumstances which would sorely try our less elastically constituted neighbours. To one the duty is generally so easy as to demand no moral exertion whatever. To another it is the very culmination of his highest efforts. But small or great the difficulty, on all of us it lies. If we have natural cheerfulness, we must keep it equable, when our spirits (as they do in every one) fluctuate from want of excite-

\* "Believe me now, when I tell you the very bottom of my heart. In all the difficulties and crosses of my life this is my consideration : since it is God's will, I do not only obey, but assent to it ; nor do I comply out of necessity, but from choice."—SENECA.

ment or over-excitement. If our cheerfulness comes not naturally from our bodily state, then it must come from something far higher, from the resolute virtuous will, at one with God, and loving all that God appoints.

Secondly. We should show gratitude by actually expressing our thanks in the words which would spontaneously issue from our lips were our hearts truly kindled. Our acts of worship would often include recitals of the benefits we receive, and at every moment of enjoyment where formal worship was impossible we should send up to God the *thought* of gratitude.

I believe that few things would more completely modify our lives than such habitual thanksgiving. Suppose that, instead of confining our grace to one meal in the day, we were each to say in our own hearts a little grace after each successive occupation. The business of the field or the office honestly and punctually performed to the best of our abilities—a kind act which we have been permitted to accomplish, whether with or without self-denial—a study which we have pursued to the enlargement of our minds—a conversation which has aided our own or another's good thoughts, or warmed our kindly sympathies with friendly intercourse—a walk or ride in the fresh air, invigorating brain and limbs—are not all these worth a “grace” as well as the best of good dinners?\*

\* The Rabbins appoint benedictions for every event of life. The following are from Leo of Modena. In the morning, on awaking :

to accustom ourselves to thank God for the *innocent* pleasures of life, how sharp a line would it force us to draw between them and the *guilty* ones, for which we could not dare to bless Him! After spending hours of idleness, when labour was due; after self-indulgence, when we might have benefited our brother; after reading bad books; quarrelling, slanderous or unclean talk; meals at which we sunk our souls in gluttony and excess—could we offer thanks after these things to Him whose gifts we had polluted? Surely not the most impious among us all! Thanksgiving then would divide, as with chemical test, the evil pleasures from the good. And it would hallow and endear these good ones beyond our conception. To a loving heart even the merest trifle becomes precious when accepted as a token of care for our welfare; and so every blessing of mortal life may be taken as proving the tender mercy of Him whom we may reverence and love beyond the noblest and nearest of earthly friends. These feelings come to us all, at times. There are days (perhaps most commonly when the heart is softened by penitence), blessed days, when we trace everything to God's hand,

“Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the world, who restorest life to the dead, and who enlightenest the blind.” On applying themselves to study the law: “Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hast given us the law.” On taking food: “Blessed be Thou, who bringest bread out of the earth. Blessed be Thou, Creator of the fruit of the vine.” On smelling flowers, &c.: “Blessed be Thou, who hast created odour.” On seeing a high mountain or the sea: “Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, Creator of all things at the beginning,” &c.

and are ready to weep in very tenderness for the primrose which has blossomed in our favourite nook, or the caresses of the poor dog, which its Maker and ours has taught to sympathize so wondrously with our joy and sorrow. Oh that we could keep for ever fresh such feelings as these ! It is not *they* which are false and exaggerated. It is our ordinary coldness which is a mockery of the great reality of God's goodness and man's obligations.

Nor is it only for ourselves and our own blessings that we ought to give thanks to God. I have already said that we should bless Him for the beautiful and beneficent Order of His creation, and it is not merely inasmuch as this benefits *us* that we ought to do it. Surely a good given to our brother is a source of gratitude. Surely the happiness of the myriad millions of our fellow-creatures, rational and irrational, in the past and in the future, is a subject fit for thanksgiving. We have spoken often of the abstract wrong there would be were crime to remain for ever unpunished. Does it not seem there would be also a wrong if this whole lovely planet should roll on for age after age around the life-giving sun, followed by the sweet, holy moon, enjoying all the beneficent alternations of summer and winter and day and night, freshening its great oceans with the tides, and covering its shores with the gorgeous robe of vegetable life, giving birth and sustenance to all the joyous tribes of insect and fish and bird and brute, and yet that from this happy sphere



no incense of thanks should ever ascend into the heavens to bless the Lord of all for the order of His beautiful universe?

A thousand centuries ago, when God looked down on this third planet of this solar system in this galaxy of suns, there was (as we think) no living soul who trod its surface endowed with the power to apprehend its bounteous intent, or to return Him an expression of gratitude. The mighty Ichthyosaurus wallowing in those turbid waves, the fearful Pterodactyle spreading his bat-wings in the heated air, the giant Megatherium trampling through the forests of primeval pines—what knew they of the Maker who built their monster forms, and planted their luxuriant woods, and sent the light of His sun to their large horny eyes, and made His rain to grave its traces on that red sandstone of the olden world, even as to-day He sends it on the cultured fields of the rational sons of men? And now, when perchance many a hundred thousand years have passed away since the far-off epochs of the Saurian and the giant Sloth, when God looks down now on our garden-globe, how many does He see, upon all its smiling surface, offering up the dumb world's thanks to Him, its kind and careful Lord? It is but a few, even now, who can thus be the spokesmen of the silent earth. The brutes, and birds, and fish of our time are as insensible of religion as the monster creatures of old; the ass and the ox of to-day know the crib and the fold, as the mammoth and the hyena knew the ancient



caverns where their petrified bones have lain all these millenniums ; but no steps of advance can we yet trace in their knowledge of Him to whose infinite heart their hungry cries have never appealed in vain, " who openeth His hand, and fulfilleth the desire of every living thing." Man's sacred race alone may yet produce aspirants for the solemn priesthood of our world ; and of that great family how few are the happy sons who can stand forth in that high office ? Take away the child in years and the child in knowledge ; take away the savage whose creed has not yet reached even the polytheist's power to thank under many names the One Giver of all good ; take away all these, and how few remain who can look up to God with that tear-brimming eye which must ever turn to Him after any wide survey of His bounteous world !

Surely, then, it becomes well every soul amongst us which is capable of it to take on itself this blessed work, to leave not wholly and for ever unthanked God's goodness to those who *cannot* thank Him, but to put aside for awhile the thought of our own present and everlasting joy, and turn to bless *our* Benefactor for being *also* the kind and tender Parent of all our countless fellow-creatures. Let us thank God for ourselves ; but let us also thank Him for others. Let us thank Him for His good providence towards all the tribes of men now living or departed ; for His care of them on earth, for His love for them when gathered in by death

still closer to His infinite bosom. Let us thank God that there are millions who share all our joys, and that there are millions who have joys which we shall never share. Let the blind, and deaf, and crippled thank God for the seeing, and the hearing, and the healthy limbs of their brothers. Let the hungry praise God that others have food, the bereaved that others have the joys of affection, the orphan that others have parents, the childless that others have children.

And what if we should go yet a step beyond our own race, and bless God sometimes for the brutes ; bless Him not only that He has made so many of them useful to *us*, but that He has made them all for *their* happiness ? If we could embrace in one view all the innocent delights of all the dwellers in earth, and sea, and air, what mountainous worlds of bliss would seem piled up before us ! The shoals of the merry fish swimming in the blue waters those same endless dances which the insects fly in the summer air and the little rabbits and mice run along upon the ground ; the stately beasts browsing or ruminating gently over earth's broad pastures, from the Tartar's grassy plains to the measureless savannahs of the West ; the birds singing at their work as they build their nests in the love that knits their little fluttering hearts, whether beating beneath the splendid plumes of the tropic tribes or clothed in the "russet livery" of those humble sparrows whose fall Christ knew that God will mark—what oceans of joy are here ! The elements absolutely swarm with beings whose delight is visible to

our eyes every day ;\* and if we turn to count the tiny beings which dwell unperceived around us, down to the infusoria, of which two drops of water hold a population larger than the whole human race, by what arithmetic

\* "Look over the bountiful distribution of joy in the world. It abounds in the lower walks of creation. The young fish you shall even now find on the shallow beaches of some Atlantic bay, how happy they are! Voiceless, dwelling in the cold, unsocial element of water, moving with the flapping of the sea, and never still amid the ocean waves' immeasurable laugh—how delighted are these little children of God ! Their life seems one continuous holiday, the shoal waters a playground. Their food is plenteous as the water itself. Society is abundant, and of the most unimpeachable respectability. They have their little child's games, which last all day long. No one is hungry, ill-mannered, ill-dressed, dyspeptic, love-lorn, or melancholy. They fear no hell. These cold, white-fleshed, and bloodless little atomies seem ever full of joy as they can hold—wise without study, learned enough without book or school, and well cared for amid their own neglect. They recollect no past ; they provide for no future : the great God of the ocean their only memory or forethought. These little short-lived minnows are to me a sermon eloquent : they are a Psalm to God above the loftiest hymnings of Theban Pindar or the Hebrew king. On the land see the joy of the insects just now coming into life—the adventurous birds—even the reptiles. — The young of all animals are full of delight. A new lamb, or calf, or colt, just opening its eyes on the old world, is happy as fabled Adam in his Eden. As they grow older they have a wider and a wiser joy—the delight of the passions and the affections, to apply the language of men to the consciousness of the cattle. It takes the form not of rude leapings, but of quiet cheerfulness. The matronly cow, ruminating beside her playful and hornless little one, is a type of quiet joy and entire satisfaction ; all her nature clothed in well-befitting happiness."—Parker's *Sermons of Religion* : Sermon vii., *Conscious Religion as a Source of Joy*.

shall we estimate the gifts of life and joy rained down from the infinite love of Heaven?

Surely, surely, it would be *right* that we should sometimes lift our souls to God in thanksgiving for all His endless care and goodness towards the creatures whom He has not disdained to make happy, though they can never bless Him for their happiness.

## SECTION II.

## ADORATION.

IF we distinguish the duty of Adoring God (that is, of feeling and expressing towards Him a reverential love founded on His moral perfection) from the duties of Thanksgiving and Prayer, we shall arrive at a more accurate comprehension than is usual of the various phases of the religious sentiment. The moral love of God, which is the spring of Adoration, is in fact the primary fount of the whole religion of all moral creatures; for (as I observed in discussing the canon of religious duty) a mere Sense of Dependence, be it never so entire, even if it include dependence for existence itself and all its blessings, still falls short of being a Religious Sentiment till the ethical element of a sense of Moral Allegiance be added thereto. *Adoration*, to our moral ideal, is that which makes *thanksgiving* to our heavenly Benefactor a Religious act; and the same holds good with respect to *prayer*, since it would be altogether out of question to implore grace and light, except from a Being recognised as the All-Righteous God of Truth.

Adoration, then, taken in its largest sense, *is* religion: it is the nucleus round which all grateful feelings, all



holy aspirations, cluster and shine together in that one heavenly star. This may be deduced from the great canon of religious duty itself, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." If we understand this Divine love in its *strictest* sense, we shall find the law of adoration, properly so called, the law of that reverential love towards the morally perfect Being which it behoves all moral creatures in the universe to entertain. If we give a *wider* significance to the canon, it includes all those sentiments of gratitude and aspiration (besides subordinate feelings of the love of the beautiful and of the true) which, as I have said, cluster round adoration, and, while deriving their sanctity from it, add doubly to its attraction and its lustre.

For the present I shall confine myself to the topic of adoration considered in its stricter sense as that form of worship which consists in reverent love both felt and expressed for the moral attributes of God. And, in the first place, I hope I may assume that it is practically superfluous to *prove* to any one that it is right he should adore God so soon as he recognises His goodness. Nevertheless, as it is the office of a moralist to show the derivation of each duty on which he would insist, I shall briefly observe that the actual rightfulness of adoration must be understood to stand immediately on the nature of God and man, and to result necessarily from the moral relation of the latter to the former. We are here absolutely at the basis of all

morals; for the original obligation to feel and do all those sentiments and actions which according to the necessary eternal distinction are Right, that same obligation holds us to venerate that Right, not only in the abstract as the ideal Law, and in its imperfect concrete presentations in human Virtue, but supremely in its perfect personification in the absolutely Righteous God. So clear is this great truth, that it seems not only superfluous, but almost impious, thus to demonstrate the duty of adoring God, as if *all* duty was not linked by a thousand chains to His throne, from which alone it has reached and bound our souls! But unhappily such arguments are not wholly needless. On one side men have lost sight of the *necessity* of moral distinctions, and so, by making good and evil consist merely in the arbitrary decree of God, have practically denied the reality of His moral attributes, and thus have, to a certain extent, demoralized religion. On the other hand, men have recognised the necessity of moral distinctions, but have failed to perceive with sufficient clearness the absolute identity of that eternal necessary Right with the one holy Will of infinite God, and so have aimed at morality dissociated from religion, and, by severing it from all the hallowing influences of piety, have, as far as such a thing was possible, desecrated morality. A true scheme of ethics must steer clear of both errors. It must show the absolute *unison* of morals and religion. It need not be ashamed to *prove* that "the Law requires man to adore his God," for

that truth (which God Himself, be it remembered, gives us in our moral natures to discover and obey), that same truth will help hereafter to strengthen its great converse, "God requires man to obey the Law." Led for ever nearer to God by Duty, that *personal* love and adoration which abstract Duty itself cannot win, but which our souls are made to give to God, shall roll back with tenfold force the whole strength of our natures into the channels of Duty, and we shall love the Right *as* God's own Right all the more for this, because we have learned truly to adore God *for His Righteousness*. And this is, as I have so often repeated, the true ground and centre of religion, the Adoration for the Moral Perfection of the Supreme Being.\*

The greatness of God, His stupendous power and wisdom, and the unnameable magnitude of His eternal and infinite existence, these are no uncommon themes of human thought. They are by no means, however, the topics of most vital interest to us as concerns our relation to Him. Wonder and overwhelming awe are the sentiments which mere greatness is calculated to awaken in our souls; and though these have their use in affording a continual balance, a sort of centrifugal force to counteract the familiarizing effects of constant

\* "Epicurus says the Divine nature is the best and most excellent, but he will not allow it to be susceptible of any benevolence. By this he destroys the chief and peculiar attribute of the most perfect Being; for what is better and more excellent than goodness and beneficence?"

—Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, b. i. c. 44.

approaches to God in supplication, yet in an ethical point of view mere wonder and awe have not a moral character, and only acquire one in a secondary sense by such utility as that above stated. Like the delight in Beauty and the love of Truth (of which I shall presently speak), they serve to unite our souls to God in admiration and sympathy *when* we keep duly in pre-eminence of adoration the *moral perfection* of the All-Powerful, All-Beautiful, All-Wise One. But awe without such moral reverence has no ethical merit whatever. The awe, for instance, in which our ancestors stood of the imaginary devil was actually a *wrong* sentiment, implying as it did a want of faith in the supremacy of good and a belief in the potency of evil, indicative of a low state of moral energy.

The mere greatness of God is not, then, the foundation of the duty of adoration for a free intelligence. Were He as great as He is, and evil also, should we still adore him? It would be impossible. So nobly has he Himself constituted our souls, that the moment such a chimera rises before us as that of personified evil clothed in the grandeur of a God, that moment no sentiment save horror attaches itself to the attributes of mere greatness, to absolute wisdom and almighty power. There is no fear we lack reverence for the true God in thus rendering our adoration to that in Him which is of right adorable. He Himself has so made us that it must be thus. Not on His greatness, not even on His benefits, has He founded His claim to the homage of



beings to whom He has given the rank of moral intelligences. Man may not love the holy Lord of Good as a dog loves his master, or as Ecloge and Acte loved Nero. He has made us to adore Moral Perfection, and to regard other attributes with veneration only when possessed by a Morally Perfect Being.\*

And God *is* that which He has so made us to love. We have but to descend into the sanctuary of our souls, and ask the oracle therein *what* is the justice, the goodness, the holiness we spontaneously adore, and we shall obtain an answer which will shadow forth our Father in Heaven better than any formulas can do, and as well as our minds at their particular stage of growth can understand. As we ourselves grow more like Him, that ideal will continue to rise higher and higher in its *positive* conception of what justice and goodness mean; but at all times it is *negatively* true. Nothing that we ever think unjust, cruel, or unholy can belong to Him who has made us despise and abhor whatever we feel to bear those characters.

The species of definition or description of the Deity (if I may so call it) which we intellectually construct in our minds, partly from some of the data given by

\* "He (Fénélon) has not stated, and, in truth, very few do state with sufficient strength and precision, the moral foundation and the moral nature of religion. He has not taught with sufficient clearness the great truth that love to God is from beginning to end the love of virtue. He did not sufficiently feel that religion is the expansion and most perfect form of the moral faculty of man."—Channing, *Remarks on the Character of Fénélon*.



intuition, and partly from the negations furnished by the logical understanding—such descriptions, I say, always seem more or less different from that idea of God which rises before us whenever we actually *pray*, and approach Him in spirit as our moral Judge. I do not mean that they contradict or oppose it. If we follow faithfully the light granted to us, it is the tendency of our religious creed to harmonize itself continually more and more in all its parts; and while our foundation is laid on the direct intuitions of God in our souls, we build into the superstructure of our temple every fact and thought hewn out of the visible universe by the labour of the understanding, till at last the building stands forth the consummation of our whole mental and moral natures. Nevertheless, while this work is incomplete, the results attained by the logical understanding are not always in exact coincidence with intuition, and the latter is itself often but imperfectly produced. I mean that, when we are engaged in a purely *intellectual* study of theology, our ideal of God is apt to be confused, or at all events less bright and pure than when we “seek His face” in directly religious exercises. It is a solemn subject, and one on which it is hard to speak with enough diffidence; but I think the experience of my readers will probably corroborate what I would advance—namely, that the God they find in prayer is a more holy Being than they can place before them in any other attitude of the soul. A vision is opened at those hours, of such awful purity,

such relentless and tremendous justice, such unbounded unutterable love, that we seek in vain to behold it afterwards except in the reflection of memory. We never *construct* a God like Him who so reveals Himself to us. In prayer Intuition is the dominant faculty, and the other powers of the mind sink into their due subordination.

In attempting to speak of the holiness of God, I shall, for these reasons, refer rather to the experience of my readers' hearts than to any logical definition of the Divine attributes. We may *say* over and over again, that God is pure and righteous and altogether holy, but these words only convey to us what may have been taught us by intuition concerning these attributes, and nothing beyond. We must, if we would *know* what such things are, go back to those blessed lessons, or (what is better far) go forward to fresh ones, and ask of Him "who giveth to every one liberally," and by whom no son craving for the bread of life hath ever been sent empty away.

Now, when we do thus obtain a transient glance into the abyss of our Creator's holiness, what is the sentiment which floods our souls? What seems to us, then, the Right tribute for sinful man to offer up for ever to the sinless Deity? Is it not Adoration? Do we not then recognise that that mingled burst of love and veneration, and an admiration for which human language has no name, is the only fit emotion of the soul when it contemplates that unutterable sanctity?

It has not been without perception of the true nature of adoration that it has been represented in the Christian creed as the employment of blessed souls throughout eternity. Of course there is error in excluding our other moral, intellectual, and affectional faculties from their proper share of growth and employment; but undoubtedly there is a principle of self-perpetuation of a very peculiar kind in adoration. The more we dwell on the idea of goodness, so much the more we love it; the more we contemplate the nature of holiness, the more power our souls acquire to revere it. Grievous have been the errors of the creeds which have represented such things as Repentance as if they were, or ought to be, perpetually progressive. These are acts of the soul, not sentiments. I shall speak on this subject more fully presently; but here it is enough to remark, that the attempt to renew with increasing fervour those passages of the moral life which are in their nature intended to be accomplished at once, is fraught with danger to the simplicity of the heart. Such things *cannot* go on for ever. No man can weep over his thousandth wilful and presumptuous transgression as he wept when first the love of God and hatred of sin broke upon his soul. But he *can* and does exult the thousandth time, far more than the first, when his spirit soars up in ADORATION of the infinite holiness of the Supreme, while ever wider his strengthening sight stretches out over the boundless horizon of purity and love. How far this may extend in the ages of

immortality before us all, what tongue may tell, what heart imagine! When we trace the progress of adoration in our souls, and note the law of its growth, it would seem as if the Seer of Patmos had indeed foreheard the cry which, day and night, in worlds above, our spirit voices shall repeat deeper and with profounder awe and love for ever and for ever—

“HOLY! HOLY! HOLY! LORD GOD ALMIGHTY!”

The duty of Adoration, to be rightly fulfilled, requires, as I have said, that we should rest it primarily upon the Moral Perfection of God. Nevertheless, this being recognised, and to the utmost of our soul's power duly adored, it is fit that all the other attributes of that Perfect Being should also receive from us the honour they deserve.

The love of the Beautiful, the entrancing delight which we take in the harmonies of the visible universe, is a sentiment which may and ought to become a Religious one, when we recognise that earth and sky are the works of that same God whose righteousness we worship. But the love of Beauty goes beyond mere admiration for the external object, for the form of the mountain, or the colouring of the forest. We feel an actual *sympathy* with the great Architect and Painter of those glorious things. Just as, among human beings, we are attracted towards the man whose tastes correspond with our own, and entertain feelings sometimes amounting to actual love for the artist who creates what we admire;



so, as regards God, it will be found that every mind deeply imbued with a sense of the beauty of nature has in its depths a vague love for the great Power which called into being this world of grace and grandeur.\*

Nor is there any sort of error in this love. God himself is manifestly pleased (if we may use such a phrase) with Beauty. It cannot be only a beneficent adaptation of our planet-home and our æsthetic tastes to one another, for which He has made all lovely things. There lies a whole world of beauty under the great southern oceans, where it is impossible to suppose that any created being who takes delight therein may ever behold it. Who but God has ever looked down since Creation's dawn into those blue depths—

“ Where, with a light and gentle motion,  
The fan-coral sweeps through the clear, deep sea,  
And the yellow and scarlet tufts of ocean  
Are bending like corn on the upland lea ?”

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\* How clearly we see this in the great atheist poet! When the sorcery of genius has evoked the vision of Nature's beauty, the unbidden Divinity is straightway found standing in the midst, and enforcing his homage :—

“ Fit throne for such a power! Magnificent!  
How glorious art thou, earth! And if thou be  
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,  
Though evil stain its work, and it should be,  
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,  
I could fall down and worship that and thee,  
*Even now my heart adareth : Wonderful !*”

*Prometheus Unbound*, act ii., sc. 3.



Who but He to whom it was equally easy to make all things beautiful or hideous, endlessly various or unchangeably monotonous, and who has *preferred* to adorn them with such wealth of loveliness? God must in some way *love* that same beauty which, in His tender kindness, He has made us also to feel and to enjoy. There is here between Creator and creature an actual sympathy, as there is between man and man. What the poet is to the reader, the musician to the auditor, the painter, sculptor, architect to him who gazes at their glorious works, that is God to the lover of nature. And He is even something more; for is it not *our Father* whose Art calls forth in us a filial sympathy in creation? Is it not He who made us, our own all-blessed God who speaks in the roar of the magnificent storm, and in the voice of the joyous birds which fill the forests with melody? Is it not He, whose chisel shaped "the human form divine," and made the face of woman loveliest of the sights of earth? Is it not He who has coloured the green earth and azure sea with their broad lines of beauty, He who has painted the rainbow and made the sunset sky blaze with His glory, and then has stooped down to finish into perfect grace the tiny shells beneath the waves, the flowrets under our feet? Is it not He who has built the holy cloisters of the woods and piled the white Alps for His temple-columns, and arched over all that grandest dome whose lamps are the shining tiers of a thousand heavens of suns? Is it not *our Father* who has done all these

things, who is this mighty Artist, ay, from whom all human art has come, taught by Him and His glorious works to Phidias, and Ictinus, and Michael-Angelo, and Milton, and Mozart? Well may we then sympathise in our humble love with our great Parent's joy in His creations. It is not only natural, it is reasonable and right, for man's heart so to do. "Even the Christian's temple has a gate called 'the Beautiful,'\* a gate by which thousands of souls may enter and worship."

But even this sympathy with the Beautiful, fit and noble as it is, is almost valueless if not duly subordinated to the still nobler sentiment of Adoration for the Good. A religion which begins and ends in the vague, though perhaps deep and tender, admiration for the Divine Author of Beauty, is no religion for a moral being. A nature still in the rank of the brutes and unendowed with moral freedom might, for all we know, be susceptible of it. It is incapable of producing Virtue; and its inadequacy as a preservative from Vice has been demonstrated by the flagrant wickedness of ages and countries devoted to the worship of the Beautiful under all the forms of art. The greatest dilettante in history is Nero! It may, indeed, be even questioned whether the refinement of luxury produced by the culture of beauty may not to thousands prove the Mokanna-veil of a Sensuality which, if beheld in

\* Hertha.

its naked hideousness, they would have disdained to follow.\*

To a *moral* being, as I have so often repeated, the moral perfection of God must be the sole ground and motive of religion ; nay, this is so exclusively the case, that every other Divine attribute must be honoured by him precisely *because it belongs to a morally Perfect God*. Just as it would be base to worship mere power in a tyrant, so it would be base to worship mere artistic genius in a depraved fellow-creature. Nor does the case alter when we ascend above humanity. A beauty-creating devil would be no more adorable than an almighty devil. Power and wisdom and the creation of beauty are all adorable in God, because He is more than almighty, all-wise, all-lovely—because He is absolutely *good*. Let us but neglect this thought, and our religion is worthless ; let us carry it with us, and instantly Art becomes Religion, and the love of beauty binds us to God by a new tie of exquisite tenderness. It would seem, indeed, that minds of high æsthetic power are

\* To women in particular, with whom the senses are commonly of less comparative power, the easiest of all modes of declension seems to be that of an excessive pursuit of the beautiful to which their natures are predisposed, and which their ordinary education fosters, to the exclusion of all intellectual exercise. The narrowness of their sphere of thought and action still further contracts what might have remained ennobling in the worship of true art ; and the result is, that we find in thousands the exalted sentiment of the love of the Beautiful dwindled down to the contemptible passion of the love of costly furniture and fantastic dress.

peculiarly liable to temptation from this side of their natures. It has been long ago observed that the tendency of such minds is to a pantheism losing sight of that personal holy *will* which remains clearly before every soul in which religion has arisen on its proper ground of morality, and God has been primarily recognised and supremely adored in His moral character. The remedy of course must lie in the direction of the mischief. There is no use trying to argue a man into belief in the personality of a God of nature. Let his attention be turned to his own transgressions against the eternal law, let him attain a living sense of the existence of his own moral will by actual conflict with his lower passions (it is by antagonism alone that self-consciousness can be developed), and then he will learn to seek in prayer the help of that Will (like his own in that it *is* a will, unlike his own in that it knows no weakness), who rules the world of spirit, to bring out of it at last a fairer Cosmos than the material universe can ever be made to show.

On the other hand, it cannot be doubted that bigots have severed most cruelly from the perfect form of religion its lovely, albeit inferior, limb of æsthetic sympathy. No natural religion—that is to say, no religion springing directly in a human heart—could ever do this; but, when the fount is very far off, and the waters have run for ages in the clayey channels of tradition, it happens sometimes that men divide altogether the God who revealed himself to their dead forefathers



from Him who makes this living world so glorious. God's concern with the earth seems to them to have been confined to the six days in which they think He created it six thousand years ago, or to the time when He worked miracles on it eighteen centuries since. To them the heavens no longer "declare the glory of God," nor is the earth filled with His goodness. The beauty of nature and the inspiration in human art are alike foreign to their religion, and have no more connexion with it than the market-place has, in their opinion, a connexion with the church. It would be "*profane*" to "mix up" religion with such things. God's own groves and hills are only fit for heathens to make places of prayer to Ammon and to Ormusd. The Lord's House must be a cathedral or a conventicle; His Holy Land only the narrow desert of Palestine. Thus some of the most softening and hallowing influences are excluded from religion, and many a heart grows dry and withered which would have blossomed into loveliest piety if permitted to receive the sweet dew of nature's beauty, and to assimilate them into its own life, blending, as the Creator intended, the love of Himself with the love of all things beautiful.

The remarks above stated, on the relation of religion to the love of Beauty, hold nearly equally valid respecting its relation to the grand corresponding passion of the human soul, the love of Truth. As in one class of mind the æsthetic part of our nature takes prominent position, so in another class no way less noble, does the



intellect assert itself. The love of Truth for its own sake, irrespective of any possible utility to be derived from it, is in fact a still stronger passion than the other when freely indulged, and Science has always counted more "martyrs" than Art could rival. Here also it is natural for him who takes delight in the exquisite order and wondrous wisdom which science traces through all the realms of nature and of human story, to look up with sentiments of admiration towards the invisible Orderer and Designer of the whole splendid scheme.

He who honours for their achievements Solon and Archimedes, Watt and Copernicus, is little likely to withhold some sentiments of reverence from the Great Lawgiver, Geometer, Mechanician, and Star-Orderer of the universe. Nor is this sentiment any way less rational than that of him who loves in God the source of Beauty. The truths which our Creator has permitted us to trace, and in which He makes us feel such intense interest and delight, are actually the products of His divine mind. Order, harmony in infinite variety, endless adaptations to beneficent purposes—these lessons which science reads on earth and sky, all shadow forth real attributes of the Creator. Each new Truth gained by man is a new Thought of God revealed to him,\* and the sympathy between his intellect and the great Intelligence from whom it is derived, is as veritable

\* Kepler, on discovering the law of the planetary distances, exclaimed, "Oh, God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee!"

and more deep-seated than that which exists between him and his brother philosophers on earth. Here again, however, the feelings which are excited by mere intellectual communion with God, are altogether imperfect if not based on the moral sympathies of man's highest nature. As Power and the creation of Beauty would deserve no reverence if exhibited in an evil being, so neither would Wisdom if possessed by one who should use it for immoral ends, even as the mythical Satan is represented to do.\* God's wisdom is adorable for this reason, that it is the wisdom of absolute goodness, and in every trace of it throughout the universe we read the designs of justice and of love.

Exclusive devotion to the pursuit of knowledge has also its peculiar danger, and a worse one than attends exclusive worship of the beautiful; inasmuch as Atheism is worse than an impersonal Pantheism. Here the tendency is to stop short in the study of that sequence of physical laws which remains unbroken through so vast a field of human research, that the attention is wholly engrossed thereby. The marvellous chain seems sometimes to the man of science to complete itself in a circle, girding in inexorable necessity the All of things. He looks not further, where a higher philosophy beholds it grasped by that mighty

\* "Devils, indeed, are in all mythologies endowed with peculiar cunning. That of the Mexicans rejoiced in the appellation of Tla-teacototl, or 'the Rational Owl.'"—See *Mexico*, by Brantz Mayer, vol. i. p. 107.

Hand in which it is but the leash whereby God guides his flock of worlds.\*

Nor is it even here desirable to meet on merely intellectual grounds the errors which have arisen from the neglect of the supremacy of our moral nature. To argue the existence of a God with a disciple of the "Positive Philosophy" is to involve him and ourselves in a maze of metaphysical subtleties, out of which our mental powers afford us no means of egress. We must move the trial into another court, and urge our suit in that of the Conscience instead of that of the Intellect. There is no man who, when made to stand—

" Before the judgment-throne  
Of his own awful soul,"

does not *there* recognise that there is a "power unknown" behind that seat of conscience. It is not in the natural laws (great as are the evidences they bring of God's wisdom and immutability to him who studies them *in connexion* with his own moral and religious consciousness), it is not singly or even primarily in these that we—who are above all other characteristics moral beings—can find our moral Lord; and the exclusive devotion of the mind to them will always tend towards atheism. Nor will this seem strange when we remember that the moral Will is the true Self of man,

\* See some curious remarks on the connexion between empiricism and atheism in Kant, *Transcendental Dialectic*, "Of the interest of Reason in the Antinomies."

the highest region of his nature, and that, therefore, there alone he may expect a clear consciousness of that Being who is Himself the supreme Will of the Universe, and with whose nature the earthly clay of man's senses and the clouds of his understanding have no analogy.\*

Finally, cruel as it has been for bigots to exclude the love of Beauty from religion, still worse has been their effort to shut out the love of Truth from that domain. It is doubtless becoming every day a more rare sacrifice ; but even now there are men who think, like Pascal, that they can best honour the God of truth by laying aside, to rust in uselessness, the wondrous instruments of reason and memory which He has given them for its discovery. Even now there are men who have "determined to know nothing else" but one historic fact—one theologic dogma. That single page of God's great book (if it *be*, indeed, as they read it, a page thereof) once perused and conned, no other must ever be opened. God may speak to them hourly in all the voices of nature and human history ; but only to those few words which tell of the story of Judæa must they ever listen. The moral mistake of such a system is enormous ; for, even admitting the monstrous assumption that virtue is the immediate product of that one seed alone, still, weak and poor must be the virtue which grows in the

\* "Thy life, as alone the finite mind can conceive it, is self-forming, self-manifesting will."—Fichte, *Vocation of Man*, b. iii.



arid soil of an uncultured mind. For the sake of religion itself no one can hesitate which to choose as the best soldier in the service: the soul which stands armed at all points with learning's glorious spoils, brave with the courage of mental freedom, and strong and agile in its well-trained powers; or the starveling soul which has chained itself to its solitary pillar of a dogma, and lies there naked to every shaft of ridicule or argument, and crippled in every cramped and stiffened limb of its long-fettered faculties.

Let it be remembered that in thus defending the ardent pursuit of knowledge, I do not do so on the grounds of the Happiness to be derived from it. Though it be in truth the most unmixed, the most enduring, and the most irreproachable of human delights, the one before which almost all other earthly joys grow stale and tedious;\* yet it is not for this cause that I would save the student's lamp from the bigot's ruthless hand. It is because the love of abstract Truth is the passion which, above all others, tends most directly to help the great end of our creation. Though our affections are needful to *warm* our hearts, and our æsthetic tastes to *refine* them, it is only through the intellect that they can be *enlarged*—that their *capacity* for virtue and religion can be increased. It is as a

\* “Et puis il n'y eut jamais homme de ceux qui sont enamourés de sçavoir qui ait en ce monde assoui son desir de la connaissance de verité et de la contemplation de ce qui est.”—Plutarque, *Œuvres Morales*, in fol. 1604, p. 293.



means to that great purpose, and always keeping pre-dominantly in view the *moral perfection* exhibited in every trace of our Creator's wisdom, that we must rightly cherish this noble desire of knowledge. Thus may we fitly train our mental powers for our Master's glorious work. Thus may the love of the TRUE, equally with, and perhaps even more firmly than, the love of the BEAUTIFUL, bind us to the throne of God, with that triple cord whose golden strand is the passion far nobler than them both, the one sole interest and desire of man's highest nature—the love of the GOOD.

## SECTION III.

## PRAYER.

THE third great branch of religious duty is Prayer. As I have already remarked, it does not proceed directly from the abstract Rightfulness of the case, as do Thanksgiving and Adoration, but takes its place as a Religious Duty more as the *religious means* of assisting the performance of both Personal and Social duties. In the *Theory of Morals* I maintained "that the law of spirit is, that light and strength are bestowed by God on man, according as the latter places himself further from or nearer to their source.\* The plant which is sickly, weak and white, growing in the darkness, acquires health and verdure when we bring it into the sunshine. 'The magnetic bar which has lost its power, regains it when we hang it in the plane of the meridian.'" Thus (whatever other prayer may be) the prayer for Spiritual good is the direct mode of obtaining assistance to our virtue, in accordance with the fixed laws of Providence. *Every* act of religious worship,

\* "The Supreme Being seems to be distant from those who have no wish to attain a knowledge respecting Him, and He seems to be very near those who feel a wish to know Him."—Ishopanishad, 1st chapter of the *Yajur Veda*.

and also every act of social duty, is indirectly the means of performing personal duty, by perfecting our natures in the culture of the various virtues of gratitude, veneration, benevolence, &c. ; but the particular act of spiritual prayer is the direct "means of grace," as bringing to our virtue an external Help, of whose value and extent it is difficult for us to form a sufficiently high estimate.

It will be seen here that I assume it to be proved that there *is* an actual answer given by God to our requests for His assistance. I assume that the strength which comes to us in prayer is not merely a subjective phenomenon, the strength acquired by the Will by its own act of exercise.\* If any one demur to this assumption, I have no answer for him but this. The fact is a fact of consciousness, which in the nature of the case must rest on the experience of each individual, and he may, at his choice, attach more or less credibility, according as his philosophy may dictate, to such experience of it as his own life may have presented. The light, and warmth, and vital strength imparted by God to the soul, must for ever remain not only imperceptible to the bystander, but even to the man himself, so blended with the subjective accretion of strength which his own (necessarily simultaneous) effort will produce, that it can hardly be analyzed or defined. We feel it, believe it, bless God for it sometimes with thanksgiving unutterable. That is all we know—all man *can* know

\* See this fallacy admirably refuted in *The Soul*, chap. iii.

on the subject, except that such objective reality of Divine Aid was *à priori* credible. "God is a spirit—omnipresent and omniactive—He must therefore be always present and always active in the *souls* of his creatures. . . . As God fills all space, so He must fill all spirit. As He influences and constrains unconscious and necessitated matter, so He inspires and helps free and conscious man. There is a natural supply for spiritual as for corporeal wants. As we have bodily senses to lay hold on and supply bodily wants, so we have spiritual faculties to lay hold on God and supply spiritual wants."\* It is not only our bodies which live by the bread He daily gives, but our spirits also which must receive sustenance from His aid. The higher our powers are, the nearer they must be to Him, the more capable of contact with Him; our bodies first, then our intellects, then our moral and religious affections, rising up purer and higher, till at last the contact becomes conscious in the awful communion of intensest prayer. All this is natural, normal. It is not a miracle that the Omnipresent is close to us—that the Omniactive moves our hearts. It is not strange that the Infinite Father, who bears us in His everlasting arms, should supply the cravings of our immortal souls while He feeds the ravens and gives the young lions their prey. It *would* be a miracle—it would be as strange as terrible were it otherwise.

The argument, then, stands thus: "He who doubts

\* *Discourses of Religion*, by Theodore Parker, p. 174.

that God hears prayer denies that we have "proof" of the fact. But what "proof" would satisfy him? If he say "none," this would imply that there is an essential absurdity in the case; but we must then call on him to point out the absurdity, since *we* do not see it. But if he admit that the thing is not in itself absurd and self-contradictory, then it seems to me he cannot ask any other proof than exactly that which abounds—viz., the unanimous testimony of spiritual persons to the efficacy of prayer. He may reply, "Yes, that is the heart acting on itself;" but he might deal exactly in the same way with the evidence of sense. *Perhaps* there is no outer world, and our internal sensations are the universe! Syllogistic proof of an outer world will never be gained, nor yet syllogistic proof that God exists, or listens to prayer."\*

Assuming the objective validity of spiritual prayer, the obligation of its use is seen to possess a religious force peculiar to itself. It would seem as if *here* God had set afresh the seal of His approval on the performance of human duty, and had crowned it by a stupendous honour. What awful mystery lies in this "hearing of prayer!" That feeble incense, even if it ascended ceaselessly from our burning hearts, how should it ever reach those infinite heavens, and bring back thence the blessing from the "Majesty above?"

Of course *all* duties are Divine commands. The righteous will of God willeth that all things right should be

\* *The Soul*, p. 120, 2nd edit.



done by every moral agent in the universe. As regards our religious duties, then, God desires that we *thank* Him as our Benefactor, and *adore* him as personified Righteousness. But there is nothing in this view of the Divine Lawgiver to warrant us in anticipating that marvellous boon which ever and anon is given to bless and consecrate, beyond all human language, the prayer for light and grace. It is in the true Fatherhood of God, in the omnipresence of His loving spirit through all the spirits He has made, that we find first the hope and then the explanation of this great mystery which lays on prayer the crown of such inexpressible sanctity and glory. To the soul which has reached that stage of spiritual life wherein such culmination of worship takes place, it is revealed that God does actually hear, accept, and bless—ay, and in a certain sense (if we may dare to symbolize His awful nature) *desire* the prayer of His child. It is His *directly revealed* will that we should thus address Him. All the rest of the moral law, and this also, He has written in the intuitions of our reason, nay, made the natural law of our true selves. But to this special duty He has, as it were, again, afresh, personally affixed the token of His approbation. It thus becomes a duty doubly incumbent on us; we have learned it in two Divine lessons. Or rather let us say, that it is a glorious privilege, which we hold by a double tenure, and which God, who gave it, has ratified and confirmed by a grant of most unspeakable honour. Is it not marvellous to think that

our hearts can ever be dead to an appeal like this? God, the Almighty Lord of all the worlds, desires the prayers of man, and man knows it, and he does *not* pray!

I know that it would seem 'fitting, in a didactic treatise like the present, to proceed at this point, after having laid down the grounds of the duty of prayer, to explain what are its proper objects and limits—what we may and what we may not ask of God, and how those blessings which we receive can be bestowed on us by Him in accordance with the laws of mind and matter. I cannot proceed far on this course.

The following remarks must suffice on this almost inapproachable theme:—

1st. We ought not to pray for anything which a sound philosophy forbids us to entertain a reasonable hope that God *will* grant. 2nd. Nor for anything which piety forbids that we should *desire* Him to bestow. Let us see what results follow from these principles.

Does philosophy warrant us to expect that God will grant any prayer for *physical* good—for abundant harvests, favourable weather, recovery from sickness, or so on? It seems to me that if we can safely form an opinion on any subject of the kind, it is precisely this: that it is *not* to be expected that God will attend to such prayers. The immutability of natural laws is demonstrated by every sound method of reasoning. It results *à priori* from the nature of God, whose

wisdom to construct His machine, and power to sustain its order, are both opposed to the hypothesis of a changeable law. It results *à posteriori* from the induction of the whole volume of physical science, in no page of which a trace of mutability has ever become visible.

The truth of this is so obvious, that no one *does* consciously ask for a change in a physical law: from the moment he recognises that there is a law in the case in question, he ceases to pray. No man now dreams of asking that the sun should rise at midnight to suit his convenience, or that the lead he throws into a crucible should come out gold. Here it is known clearly enough that a *law must be broken* (or, as it is popularly said, "a miracle wrought") for the prayer to be fulfilled. But it so happens that the laws of the two sciences of meteorology and hygienics are more obscure at our present stage of knowledge than either astronomy or chemistry. Whereas the law by which the sun rises at its proper hour is sufficiently understood, the law by which certain conditions of the atmospheric gases produce rain is only capable of statement in generalized formulæ which do not admit of specific prediction of results (a defect owing partly to the incomplete state of the science, and partly to the variety of conditions to be taken into consideration and the difficulty of their precise constatement). There is, therefore, left in the minds of the majority a space for vagueness when they contemplate such a thing as

prayer for rain. Because *they* do not see all the causes at work in the case, they forget that they must exist, and they imagine there is a sort of interregnum, affording room for their prayers to move the effect independently of the natural cause. A man does not pray for rain actually to fall from a cloudless sky; but he supposes that clouds will be gathered, and sent over his field, and that then the rain will fall "in accordance with the laws of nature." He does not see *how* clouds are gathered, else it would seem to him that to ask that the action of caloric on hydrogen gas should be altered from the natural one would be quite as "miraculous" as that rain should fall without a cloud. Of course, *if it were going to rain without his prayers*, if the atmospheric influences working, perhaps months ago, in the Pacific, were bringing about a fall of rain in England, his prayers are superfluous. He prays, therefore, on the presumption *that it will not rain unless he prays*. The prayer, consequently, is as distinctly one for what he calls a "miracle" as if he asked for the sun to roll back in the heavens instead of for the meteorologic phenomena to be thrust out of their natural course. To make my meaning more clear, let us take an example. A. B. lives at Dover, and his wheat-crop is failing from drought. He has been taught that in such cases it is lawful to pray for Divine aid, and he does so. What is his prayer? He does not simply pray *that his crop be saved*, and imagine that God may do so *without* rain. No; he knows there is a natural law that wheat



requires moisture for its growth. He prays, therefore, distinctly for rain, assuming, be it observed, that there is *not* a law regulating the fall of rain, like the growth of wheat. Now let us suppose that a cloud hangs over Calais, but the wind at Dover is from the north. Will the *wind change* at A. B.'s prayer, and send the cloud over his field? But that wind arose from certain atmospheric changes six weeks before in the Arctic Sea, and there are no causes to produce a south wind in its place. *Two* miracles are wanted now. And if we go back through the chain of causes of storms, calms, drought and moisture, we shall always find that *some* link must be broken if A. B.'s fields are to receive rain which they would *not* have received without his prayer. To pray, then, for rain is not only as foolish as to pray that a wheat-crop should thrive without moisture, but it involves the additional absurdity of *pointing out to God* how He can fulfil our wish (*i.e.*, save the crop), by an interference with His laws involving a much wider scope of consequences than the miracle of making a field of wheat grow in drought.

I have minutely examined this one case, because it may fairly stand as a sample for all prayers for physical good. If our science were complete, we should recognise that every department of the world of sense is equally ruled by fixed laws. Alchemists of old times may have prayed for the transmutation of lead to gold, because they did not believe it was against a natural law; but what should we think of Faraday putting up prayers



for the same purpose? In like manner, a sick man, swallowing a medicine of whose nature he was ignorant, might pray that it should restore his health ; but, if he knew that the liquid was a deadly dose of strychnine, would he dream that any prayers could make it beneficial? If we pass in review the whole series of such supplications known to us as offered habitually by individuals or churches, we shall find that it invariably happens that *prayer begins where science stops*, and that *as science advances prayer retreats*. As soon as we clearly discern the physical cause for a desired effect, that moment we cease to pray for the effect, but go back to the cause ; and if the cause of this cause be unknown, or imperfectly known (as in the case of the cause of the rain which causes the good harvest), we pray for that cause, till we discover that *it* also is only another, and equally immutable link in the universal chain. In future ages, when epidemics and meteorology, therapeutics and political economy, are known as we now know astronomy and chemistry, men will smile at the idea of praying against cholera, and potato-blight, and dry weather, and sudden death, and war, and famine, just as we smile at the notion of praying against the changes of the moon, or entreating that strychnine should prove wholesome.

But there rises an objection more decisive than this of its inutility, against the practice of praying for physical good. The second test of the lawfulness of a prayer proves still more unfavourable. Does piety

towards God permit us to *desire* that He will grant prayer for physical good?

Let us analyze what is involved in the notion of a change in a physical event being wrought by God in compliance with prayer.

I assume it to have been proved, in the first part of this Essay, that the primary end of creation is the Virtue of rational free agents. The secondary end of creation (which is always postponed when needful to the primary) is the Happiness of rational and irrational beings. On this system the *Laws of Matter* are of course assumed to have been expressly fitted to forward these great ends of creation. Their primary purpose must be to afford a ground and work-field for virtue; and their secondary purpose, the production of the happiness of both rational and irrational beings.

Two theories are commonly propounded respecting the *particular* results of these laws of matter. The first of these maintains that it is only the *general* results of the laws which are absolutely good, and that God has made each law for the sake of such general good results, albeit, some of the *particular* results are exceptionally evil. The reason why He permits of the evil particular results is, that the immutability of the law is needful to afford a fixed warp wherein alone human virtue can work. The second theory asserts that it is not only the general, but every particular result of each physical law which was foreseen by God from the first, and was

directly intended by Him as good when He gave that law to matter.

The first hypothesis has been framed, I venture to think, under a limited view of the Divine wisdom, and with too much leaning towards the error of supposing human happiness an equal object of God's design with human virtue. If we truly recognise the fact that suffering is necessary to trial, and trial to virtue, and that God can never hesitate to permit the suffering which shall conduce to the virtue of His creatures, there will be no *à priori* reason for supposing the apparently harsh *particular* results of physical law to be opposed to the Divine plan, unless we deem it impossible for God to have constructed those laws, and the world in which they act, in such manner as to meet all the contingencies involved in human freedom. This is obviously a most unwarrantable assumption. Machines of human invention are capable of showing the principle of compensation to an immense extent, and of adapting their action to varieties of temperature, moisture, &c., without loss of accuracy.\* To suppose that the Omniscient *could not* have made His chronometer of the universe to keep His time because of the variations which (within such narrow limits) He permits man's free will to produce, is surely anything but philosophical. The suffering of the irrational and *unmoral* creatures affords, I confess, an *à posteriori* presumption that there is in the nature of things an inherent impossibility of

\* See Oërsted's *Soul in Nature*, p. 173.

constructing laws which should be immutable, and yet whose every result should be beneficial. It is hard to think that God actually designs the pain of the wild creatures who are mutilated or slowly devoured by their enemies, and yet have no connection with man, whose freedom might be involved in the transaction. On the whole, and as a *general* law, it is quite clear that suffering is indeed, as it has been well called, only the “girdle of the brutes”—a sense given them to preserve their lives and the integrity of their bodies. If pain were unknown to the beasts, the length of their pleasures in the enjoyment of life would be curtailed enormously. Thus its *general* purpose is seen to be in full harmony with the Divine benevolence. But what of the *particular*? I answer that if we exclude those sufferings of the beasts caused by man (for the high end of whose virtue and its necessary substructure of freedom the happiness of the brutes must of course be postponed, even as their whole existence is only the *complement* of the great scheme of which that virtue is the object), then the remainder of suffering belonging to the animal creation seems, in all cases, to resolve itself into *a more or less speedy death*. Now I cannot but think that we are far too slightly acquainted with the nature of the feelings immediately preceding dissolution in men, and, *a fortiori*, in animals, to be able to decide whether slow deaths or quick deaths are least painful. Many of the convulsions and other piteous-seeming symptoms are, as we know, unaccompanied by any suffering; and of the



various degrees of it which may be endured by the creatures which die of hunger, of cold, or of mutilation, it is quite impossible for us to form a judgment, so as to warrant us in asserting that the accidental death which we behold be in reality any worse than the natural decay for which our ignorant mercy would have preserved it. There are, it must be admitted, some difficulties in the case; still, I cannot think they are sufficient to form grounds for the immense assumption that God *did not intend and could not avoid* the sufferings of the poor birds in the snow, or of the lamb devoured by the wolf. As I remarked in a former volume (*Intuitive Morals*), "through what stages life and consciousness, and self-consciousness, may be evolved by the Creator, is a mystery at present quite beyond our reach;" and the share of suffering in conducing to higher results than as yet we dream of for the brutes may chance one day to reveal to us reasons for the pangs of the linnet and the lamb, which shall fill us with fresh adoration for those tender mercies of our God which are now and ever "over all His works."

Without pressing this controversy further, however, I proceed to observe, that whichever theory concerning the physical laws be actually true, the bearing of either of them is of nearly equal weight against the fitness of prayer for physical good. On the first hypothesis it is clear that God definitely wills the *immutability* of His natural laws—wills it so strongly that He never permits them to be broken, even when their results are not



absolutely in accordance with His designs—wills it because He sees that their inviolability is a greater good than could be compensated by any advantage arising from interference with particular evil results. Here, then, to pray for change is directly to pray *against God's will to keep his laws inviolate*. On the second hypothesis the same view arises not less clearly. God is now recognised to will directly each result of each law, because that result is absolutely just and good. Here, then, also, to pray for change is directly to pray *against God's will* that such a particular event should take place. Now, to what does this amount? Of course, in each case, to a prayer that God will *change* His will, either in the matter of the inviolability of His law, or of the event in question. But why does God will anything; say, for instance, that the physical laws should be immutable, or that a certain sick man should die? Does He will such things arbitrarily, as a mere matter of *fancy*? Even man must always have some motive of choice—either the eternal Right, self-legislated by his higher self, or the gratification of some desire blindly sought by his lower nature. God's sole motive can never be other than that everlasting Right, of which His infinite and perfect will is absolutely the personification, and which with Him is never drawn aside by any lower nature's desires whatsoever. To say, then, that God wills this or that event is tantamount to saying that that event is the most just and the most good event possible in the case. He wills it simply

because it is so. Now comes His creature man, and prays, "O God, do *not* will that most just and most good event, but will the opposite one." If God were to grant such prayer, would He be equally just and equally good? What would become of His infinite and absolute attributes of justice and goodness, which for ever know, and choose, and perform the absolute right throughout the universe? Man is actually praying God to be *less* than perfect—to derogate from His own goodness—to turn aside the wheels of the tremendous justice of the heavens, because *he* has fallen in their path and must suffer a pang as they pass over him. Is *this* piety? Is this true love of God?\* Of all the thoughts which can torture a religious soul, there is not one so dreadful as that which suggests a doubt of the absolute perfection, the everlasting immutability, of God's justice and God's goodness. "No," it cries; "let my heart be ground into the dust; let the universe, if need be, crash in final ruin; but let GOD reign over all, PERFECT and righteous for evermore."

The truth is, I believe, that no one ever does pray for physical good after recognising the true relation of the Divine Will to the laws of nature. Just as the Philosophical error of believing in the efficacy of such prayers rests on imperfect knowledge of the sequence of

\* Yet prayers like these are commonly called DEVOTIONS!—"Devotions," in sooth, in which we devote no fraction of our desires to God, but beg Him to give up His will to ours!

cause and effect obtaining in *all* departments of nature, so the Religious error of *desiring* to change the Divine Will rests on an imperfect apprehension of the Moral Perfection of God. The man whose science is immature imagines that there are some departments of nature wherein, as *he* does not trace it, the rigid chain of law may not be binding. The man whose religion is immature imagines that there are departments of the Will of God determined, like his own lower nature, by motives independent of moral ones, and not necessarily involving questions of justice or goodness to be infringed by a change wrought therein by his prayers. So soon as it is recognised that God *never does anything but because it is right*, so soon every soul retaining a spark of true piety must cease to pray, and at least *endeavour* to cease to desire that God should alter these acts which are determined only by His righteousness. In a word, he ceases to try to turn God's Will (which is always right) to his desires (which must be, in so far as they are opposed to it, wrong), but, on the contrary, bends his strength to subdue all his desires to God's will, and sums up his whole Litany in one sole prayer: "Father, not my will, but Thine, be done."

I know it will be said that in all this I have much misrepresented the case of Prayer for earthly good. I know that the thousands of excellent persons who use it daily *never* do so with the consciousness that their act is such as I describe. On the contrary, they always think that they pray in "full submission to the Divine Will."

But this is mere self-deception. Of two things one must hold in every given case. Either God would do what we desire without our prayer, or He would not do so. If He *would*, prayer is a superfluity, and all its earnestness and agony of supplication must become impossible to the man who understands that he is only praying *in case what he desires will take place without this prayer*. If He would *not*, prayer is, as I have described, an attempt to persuade God to do that which He does not will. One only hypothesis remains; namely, that our prayer *has already been taken into account*; that God, foreseeing it from all eternity, has given it a place among the causes of events, and will grant to our prayers that which His physical laws accomplish, they having been arranged so to do in prevision of the prayer.\* I confess that this hypothesis possesses much plausibility; nevertheless, I venture to think it fails to offer a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. It is quite true that there is no past or present with God. The prayer we say to-day has been said, to all intents and purposes, from all eternity, so far as *He* is concerned. But it cannot be so with *us*. Our will that this or that event take place is a will *in time*. We must be actually wishing at a given moment that God's Will should be done, or should not be done, in

\* “Quand un fidèle adresse à présent à Dieu une prière digne d'être exaucée, il ne faut pas s'imaginer que cette prière ne parvienne qu'à présent à la connaissance de Dieu. Il a déjà entendu cette prière depuis l'éternité.”—Euler, *Lettres à un Princesse d'Allemagne*, vol. i. p. 357.



the case in question. As I have said before, the prayer must be either a superfluous one, or *against* God's Will. Thus, if the Philosophical objection be done away with, the Religious will remain in full force. But the philosophical objection itself is not so easily disposed of. God has, indeed, foreseen our prayer when He fixed His laws, just as He has foreseen every other thread of the great tissue through which they work their way and fulfil His behests. But how *ought* our prayer to have influenced His decrees? Have we not recognised that all God does is done because it is absolutely *the* just act, *the* good act in the case in question? To revert to our old example: if God causes A. B.'s crops to fail, must it not be because it is just and good they should do so, and because it would be less just and less good that they should prosper? How can A. B.'s prayer, though foreseen from all eternity, alter the everlasting Law of Right, or God's Will to perform that law to the uttermost?

Here, also, there is a theory to answer me, and it is one which concerns importantly the whole end and purpose of prayer: it is the doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins. A. B.'s sins (it will be said) *deserved* that his crops should fail, so that it was just and good they should do so. But A. B.'s prayer and repentance having obtained the remission of his sins, it is now just and good that his crops should prosper.\*

\* "We humbly beseech Thee, that although we for our iniquities have worthily deserved a plague of rain and waters, yet upon our true



I shall discuss this subject of the Remission of Sins at full length in the ensuing Section. It will there, I hope, be demonstrated to the reader's satisfaction, that the doctrine, *in any sense applicable to the averting of physical calamity*, is wholly untenable. The Retribution which the eternal principles of justice affix to every transgression must inevitably, sooner or later, be inflicted on the transgressor by Him to whom it belongs to execute that justice throughout the worlds He rules. The perfection of the Divine character requires that there should be no retrocession from such complete retribution, and experience demonstrates that actually the order of God's Providence on earth holds its unbroken course in the punishment even of the most sincerely repentant offender.

Thus, I believe, every hypothesis on which prayer for physical good can be supported is open to refutation, and the practice is shown to be neither philosophically nor religiously defensible.

Let us now, however, turn to the subject of prayer for *spiritual* good, and examine whether it may better stand the tests by which we have tried the lawfulness of that prayer which would change the order of natural events.

In the first place, it is to be observed that neither the philosophic nor religious objections against other prayer

repentance Thou wilt send us such weather as that we may receive the fruits of the earth," &c.—Prayer for Fair Weather, *English Liturgy*.

bear upon this in any way. There is no law to be *infringed* when God gives His grace to those who ask Him, but only a law to be *fulfilled*, just as when a man suffering from cold walks to the fireside, or when a withering plant is placed under the rain. There is no question of "miracle" in the case. The intuition of the noblest human souls has taught us, and all experience has ratified their teaching, that "every one that asks" of God light, and strength, and patience, receives them; and that to him that knocks at the "wicket gate" of the true path of right, "to him it is opened." Nor does the strictest philosophy oppose in any way this doctrine. As I endeavoured to show in a former volume *Intuitive Morals*, chap. iii.), the highest schools of metaphysics recognise distinctly that there is a world of realities behind the world of appearances which alone our senses perceive, and that the fixed chain of necessary sequence, which binds all things in the world of sense, cannot bind the supersensible world, whereof (as well as of the lower) man is an inhabitant by right of his twofold nature. In that upper realm of realities man is free, and from it he descends as an agent into the world of appearances. Nothing hinders, therefore, that in the supersensible world God should hear and answer prayer for *supersensible* blessings. God is Himself a Supersensible Being; and so also, in his highest nature, is man. Creator and creature meet then in that world where the chain of physical laws has never been extended. It becomes no longer a question, "How God,

consistently with law, could grant prayers ;” but rather, How there can be any sort of severance between the infinite and finite spirits, so as to leave intact the freedom of the creature who must be, if we may so express it, permeated by the Divine Spirit, living and moving in it at all times. All that we can see is that God has reserved in some degree such freedom for us. It is *when we ask it* that His aid is most surely given. Then descends on man that awful, unutterable benediction, that INFLUX of God’s light and grace, of which no human tongue may fitly speak, which it is not the office of our intellects to scrutinize, but of our hearts to adore.

Thus the double power of the true self, to Know the Right and to Do the Right, becomes, by God’s help, at once clear and strong. We are “*strengthened with might by God’s Spirit in the inner man.*” \* No philosophy need or can afford a better definition of the mystery.

Let us pause here for a moment to contemplate the immense, the unspeakable importance and value of this wondrous gift wherewith the love and condescension of the Almighty has endowed us. It is hard enough to conceive that there is such a thing, actually, as a direct instrument of intercourse between the soul of a creature, creeping out his poor, weak, sinful life upon this dust-spot of a world, and Him, the unnamable, uncomprehended Spirit, whose Being fills the heaven of heavens.

\* Eph. iii. 16.

Men admit, perhaps, theoretically, the objective validity of prayer—that God does actually hear and answer it—but they stop short commonly, in practice, at the consideration of its subjective utility. The first is too great and wonderful a thought to be often realized. They pray under its impression sometimes: no man really prays at all *except* in the faith that there is something more in prayer than a self-acting spiritual exercise. But few of us can keep clearly in mind at other hours the stupendous fact that we possess a means of direct personal access to God, through which it is at our own choice to ask and obtain from Him the very highest gifts for which our souls can crave. When we do believe this, practically and continuously, a new life for a man must begin. It must always, however, I suppose, remain a source of *wonder* that such things should be true. The very extent of the power of prayer, the sudden flood of light and life which it opens sometimes to the soul, is so vast a matter, that a fresh sort of scepticism springs up in contemplating it. I do not doubt that many of the errors current among Christians concerning “Election,” and “Predestination to Life,” have their source in the natural incredulity of the religious man’s mind at the immense results arising from an act apparently so poor and weak as his own prayer. Like the child which has held a powerful burning-glass in its feeble hand, and is amazed at the fire which ensues, he exclaims, “*I* have not done it: I could not do it! My act could never have brought



from heaven the flame which has changed my whole nature : God must have done it all independently of my wretched prayer, and the difference between me and those who have not felt this fire of heaven must be all His ' Election ' and ' Predestination.' ”

But these things are not so. God has made prayer the “ means ” of an immeasurable “ grace ; ” and He has laid open those means to every one of His children. Sooner or later we shall all pray, pray with spirit, strength, and “ find what comes ” of such prayer.

That any act of religious aspiration should be efficacious or acceptable, it appears that only two things are necessary—*not* unhesitating and entire faith ; for that is one of the gifts which prayer must bring rather than take—*not* by any means a belief “ keeping whole and undefiled ” a series of intellectual propositions ; for there is but one which concerns prayer at all, namely, that there is a God who may hear us—*not* absolute virtue ; for it is to help us to this that prayer is chiefly given—but these two things : sincere Earnestness, and a will struggling to obey in all things the Will and Law of God.

Prayer which is not really Earnest, as earnest as our poor wavering hearts, and wandering thoughts, and imperfect consciousnesses can make it, is not prayer at all. It is a talking to the winds, not to God. The arrow which is to shoot into heaven must fly from the bow strained to its very utmost tension. After all, if we understand rightly what we are to ask of God, there



is not very much to be said at any one given hour of prayer; and the case is not merely that one single fervent ejaculation is worth *as much* as pages mumbled over in drowsy half-attention, but that *it* only is *prayer*, and the rest is all heathenism and solemn mockery. People do not mean it so, and doubtless God forgives the sins of our stupidity no less than of our unavoidable ignorance; but in reality nothing can well be conceived more truly irreligious than the common habit of mumbling over the most solemn invocations to the Almighty, asking Him to listen to our supplications for the most stupendous of gifts, while the whole time we afford the subject precisely that fraction of our mental, moral, and affectional powers which ordinarily suffices to sing a lullaby to a child! We are all agreed on this point. Even preachers who have just read out prayers so prolix that scarcely the spiritual wing of a seraph could follow them in one continuous soar are ready enough to lash the languid life of our devotions. But if the inattention be not quite so gross as that I have described, still the whole system of prayer which I believe to be usually followed almost necessitates a minor degree of it. Such a multitude of requests are to be proffered consecutively, prayers for all sorts of blessings on everybody are so mixed up with much praise and little thanksgiving, all to be uttered at the one hour of worship, that it is quite impossible that the human mind, in its present constitution, can grasp them all. How much the partial inattention thus rendered unavoidable leads to habitual

drowsiness and carelessness, no one can doubt. It were greatly to be wished that it could be impressed on us all, that, as prayer is the act of most majestic dignity attached to our manhood, so it is the most vigorous exercise of which our souls are capable. Not till the soul acts with all its strength, strains its every faculty, does prayer begin. To lay out, then, schemes for a cultus, private or public, wherein the natural difficulty of such high exercise is doubled by varying and repeated demands, is obviously absurd. We are wearied out by being marched round and round the temple, and are actually discouraged from ascending the steep steps and pressing through the portal.

It will be said, "If nothing *less* than this vehement action of the soul be really prayer, then we cannot pray so often as we desire." I answer, unhesitatingly, nothing *less* deserves to be called by the *same name* as that most awful passage of mortal experience; but it does not follow that nothing else is *worship*.

By-and-by I shall speak of that indirect worship wherein it is to be hoped all life at last may merge for us, wherein not only we shall know that—

"Laborare est orare,"

but all feeling shall be holy feeling, all thought shall be pure, loving, resigned, adoring thought; so that at every moment of existence we shall "glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits, which are God's." But, even as regards direct worship, it is to be believed that when

we are *really* incapable of true prayer, God is not without a blessing in His hand (though, of course, a lesser one than that highest communion) for the soul which would fain offer such sacrifices as it possesses. It is often impossible, from physical weariness, or pain, or mental anxiety and grief, to feel much spiritual hunger and thirst at hours when yet a prudent regard for the sustenance of our better life has made us resolve that we will always seek to strengthen our souls with God's bread of life. If we cannot at such times raise our spirits in that strong upward flight which constitutes true prayer, it may suffice that we lift our eyes to our Father in that longing or trusting gaze which may yet be worship.\*

But one thing is clear—that whenever we attempt to approach God at all, we must do so with all the earnest-

\* How beautifully this worship of repose is described in Coleridge's *Pains of Sleep* :—

“ Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,  
It hath not been my use to pray  
With moving lips or bended knees ;  
But, silently, by slow degrees,  
My spirit I to love compose,  
In humble trust mine eyelids close,  
With reverential resignation ;  
No wish conceived, no thought expressed,  
Only a sense of supplication—  
A sense o'er all my soul impressed,  
That I am weak, yet not unblest,  
Since in me, round me, everywhere,  
Eternal strength and wisdom are.”

ness which *is* at our command ; nay, with more than we can actually *command*, with all that we can *obtain* from God, who, if we ask Him, will ever help to prepare His own sacrifice, and who does in fact aid every prayer ere He accepts it.

Secondly, the will struggling to obey in all things the law of God is the grand condition on which earnest prayer becomes (so far as we may judge) acceptable to our Maker. Prayers that God will make us better are utterly nugatory, unless we resolve while offering them to do *all* we can to become so. A single sin, however apparently trifling, however hidden in some obscure corner of our consciousness—a sin *which we do not intend to renounce*—is enough to render real prayer impracticable. Often and often, doubtless, we have all found this—found that we went on perhaps for many long days, unable to send forth any aspiration with a chance of being heard on high. But if we turned inwards, and with severe scrutiny sought out the offending act or sentiment which caused our spiritual paralysis—if, having found it, we deliberately resolved, with the whole power of our wills, “This sin shall be done *never* more,” how marvellously did that one effort thrust back the bolt which had barred to us the gate of heaven ; how instantly did we find that we could now “knock, and it should be immediately opened” to us ! As I have said, the *smallest* sin is enough : the discord of a single string among all the thousand in our nature will destroy the harmony which prayer requires between



our wills and that of God. Not till every chord is attuned to the fullest unison with that eternal right wherewith God's voice makes the universe resound, can we hear in our souls that awful and mysterious music. A course of action not wholly upright or honourable, feelings not entirely kind and loving, habits not spotlessly chaste and temperate—any of these are impassable obstacles. We must thrust them aside, or give up prayer till God's loving severity forces us to renounce them. If we know of a kind act which we might, but do not intend, to perform—if we be aware that our moral health requires the abandonment of some pleasure which yet we do not intend to abandon, here is cause enough for the loss of all spiritual power. In a very striking manner the same truth holds good with respect to our irascible passions. It is actually impossible to "offer our gift at the altar" whilst "our brother hath aught against us." Even one resentful (though perhaps not at all *vengeful*) feeling will rise up and stand an angel of wrath across our path; nor can we ever pass by till we have turned back in heart to perfect love and charity towards him who hath trespassed against us. I know this seems an exaggeration; but if there be one truth of religious experience more clear than another, I believe it is this very one. I would appeal to my reader's own consciousness, whether it be not as I have said. The lesson is no mere corollary from broader doctrines concerning prayer, and credible only on that account. Many a human soul has felt it—clearly, un-



mistakably felt it. We are injured or insulted, and natural angry feelings arise. We try to pray as usual, and though we have borne our injury without attempt at, or intention of, retaliation, yet our words are all driven back on us; we cannot pray. By-and-by, perhaps, we try a little to check and modify our sentiment of anger; we say to ourselves that we will forgive the offender—act towards him as if nothing had happened. But this does not go to the root of the matter: we still feel a thorough *aversion* to our enemy; we wish secretly that we might never see him again; and as to grasping his hand, if that be necessary, why, we will do it, but we would infinitely rather be convinced it was not right or required of us. Again, in this mood we try to pray. It may not be. Unaccountable as it then may seem to us, whole weeks and months may go by, all our other duties be performed as usual, the affair itself fade in comparative obscurity among our passions, but still true prayer is denied us, even when we seek it anxiously. At last some good influence coming from God, perhaps through the softening effects of time, perhaps through some act of our enemy, perhaps through more immediate intuition of duty, opens our eyes to the nature of the feelings we have so long indulged, and true human love and kindness flow into our souls once more. If the offence has really been a great one, we pity the offender with God-like pity, and desire for his repentance and restoration. If it has been merely some half-meant and trifling trespass which we have magnified into such

mortal affront, we are too much ashamed of our senseless exaggeration of its importance to attach any more blame to the trespasser. Now again we seek to pray, and we do pray—our first prayer perhaps a blessing on the head of him who has “despitefully used us.” At last the fire has kindled, and God says to us once more, “Ye shall speak, and I will answer.”\*

It would seem that this fact indicates the existence of a law of spirit explanatory of a large number of religious phenomena. The peculiar connexion between human charity and Divine communion points out necessarily the mild, forgiving hearts which overflow with pure natural affection and loving-kindness to be the recipients of the largest share of God’s grace. Thus, vast intellectual power, giving a man apparently great capacity for all high gifts, and even noble moral strength, displaying itself in stern self-control and the scrupulous discharge of external social duties, all these frequently fail to bring to their possessor the spiritual privileges shared by humbler but more tender souls. It is not the marble-palace mind of the philosopher which God will visit so often as the lowly heart which lies sheltered from the storms of passion, and all trailed over by the fragrant blossoms of sweet human affections.†

\* “Our rabbins deliver to us:—they who receive scorn, but scorn no man—who bear reproaches, and return them not, who show love to men, of them the Scriptures saith, they shall love him, and be as the sun going forth in his might.”—Schabbath, *Tract of Mishna*, fol. 883.

† Thus may be explained also several well-recognised phenomena in the relative religious and moral condition of the sexes. Women are

But it will perhaps be urged :—"This entire harmony of the will of man with that of God is the *result* of prayer—it is what prayer is intended to *obtain*, therefore it cannot be the necessary *preparation* for it." It is very difficult to find language which shall discriminate the mysterious inter-action of the parts of our nature which concern this problem. The true will of man is always irrevocably righteous, and by its nature self-legislative of the whole law. Sin is the inaction of this will, whereby it permits the blind instincts of the lower nature to lead us to feel or act contrary to the law.\*

commonly more religious than men, because they are more open to spiritual influences. Real *virtue* in a woman (not mere subservience to those social restrictions which cause much of the apparent inequality of male and female morality) is, I imagine, very rare without *religion*. Having reached some degree of virtue, there is little to prevent her becoming religious. Men, on the contrary, have often a great deal of virtue with very little religion ; their stronger irascible and sensual passions continually thwarting spiritual influences.

\* See *Theory of Intuitive Morals*, chap. iii. The Kantian doctrine of freedom therein expounded has always excited animosity, but the reason why it has done so would appear to be merely a mutual misapprehension. The most vehement opponents of Kant would, I presume, be willing generally to admit that there is at all times in us *something* which remains true to the right—something which is more than a *knowledge* of it, something which *wills* that the right be done. *This*, as Butler proved, has the natural *supremacy* over the other parts of our nature ; we therefore denominate it sometimes the *higher* nature. Further, this nature is united in our consciousness indissolubly with our own identity. We therefore say, with Paul, "With the mind I MYSELF serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin : yet NOT I, but sin which

Now, of course, at the moment of prayer this will may be in one or other of the various states of activity dwelleth in me." This *higher* self we call, then, the *true* self of man. And as I have just said, it is properly a *Will*, that by which a man is a person, and not a thing. All this, I suppose, will be generally conceded. And we also are perfectly ready to admit in full that the manifold desires of the intellect, affections, and senses present themselves in opposition to the higher self in the form of wishes and determinations, which, in common phraseology, we also call *wills*. The higher self is a *righteous* will, desiring right for right's own sake: the lower desires are *blind* wills, not seeking wrong for wrong's sake, but seeking their natural gratifications irrespective of moral restrictions. Now, let the opponent of the Kantian terminology decide what course a writer on moral philosophy is to pursue when his subject requires him to speak of the righteous will. It is perfectly distinguished (as is admitted on all hands) from the blind wills, and these last cannot, with equal propriety, be called wills, because they are not equally identified with the *self*—the rational *person*. Why, then, may he not speak of it always as "the true will," and announce, whenever needful, that "the true will of man is by nature and irrevocably righteous?" It is true that he has chosen a *popular* word, which, therefore, must always be liable to be misinterpreted according to the laxity of all our colloquial phraseology. But may he, on the other hand, coin a new word in its stead, or borrow a Greek one—say the "*Ψυχὴ λόγον ἔχον*" of Aristotle? A very kind critic of the first part of this Essay has remarked (*Non-conformist*, April 30th, 1856) that "the author has restricted his auditory to the student class, by using the distinction of *homo noumenon* and *homo phenomenon*, which the 'general reader' will by no means endure." It is a fact that people resent as an impertinence any attempt of the metaphysician to affix a special nomenclature to the parts of the *mind*, while they freely concede to the anatomist the right to do so to the parts of the *body*. It is hard that the indolence of readers should forbid the metaphysician to use scientific terms, and that he should then be taunted with the imperfections of the popular phrases he is compelled to adopt.



or inaction. Viewing the series of duties laid out before us, it may be ready and resolved to coerce the lower nature into the observance of *some* of them, while with regard to others, the powerful desires of its antagonist are ready to outweigh the feeble resistance it is prepared to make. The pre-requisite of prayer I believe to be this—that the will should in all points of duty be in full *activity*. It need not necessarily have actually *vanquished* the opposing desire, but it must be in vigorous *combat* with it. In this already commenced and earnest *contest*, it calls to God to add to its natural strength by a fresh inflowing of Divine Spirit, and the prayer possesses all the conditions which ensure success. But if there be no contest, no attempt on the part of our will to assert its *own* strength, then it is utterly idle to ask for that of God. It would be against all the laws of His government of souls that He should give it to us. So true is all this, that if we are so happy at any time as to know no duty which we are not fully prepared to perform, prayer instinctively turns to the request for fresh light to see better our duties in the future, or more imperfections to repent in the present.

*This*, then, even the perfect attuning of our wills to the Will of God, is “DEVOTION.” It is the *giving* to God all our desires, regrets, aspirations, labours. It is the resolution to obey God’s Law in the future; the resignation to all God’s past or present chastisements; the absolute, full, and joyous concord of our whole souls with the entire scheme of His Providence for our-



selves and for all men, in this life and through eternity. This is PRAYER—Prayer at its culmination and zenith, the highest glory and the highest joy of a created soul.

There now remain some other points to consider respecting prayer. It has been seen that to pray for physical good is at once unphilosophical and irreligious, and that our requests must be solely for spiritual gifts. Are those gifts to be asked for ourselves alone, or for others also?

The answer to this question is by no means obvious. The negative opposes a very high intuition; the affirmative is nearly destitute of any philosophical explanation. That God will “give of His Spirit *to him that asks it*,” thereby entirely respecting the freedom of the human will, which may or may not thus ask for added moral power—this is to be understood. The law of spirit, whereby the soul’s own “drawing to God” is made the condition of “God’s drawing to the soul”—this is comprehensible enough. But that *one* man’s holy will can bring strength from heaven for *another*, that A.’s prayer will draw God’s spirit to B.—that is a very different thing. Whatever help God could, consistently with the preservation of B.’s freedom, give to him in consequence of A.’s prayer, would he not have given it to him without it? Does not He do all that can be done for the virtue of every soul which He has made?

I confess I see no direct escape from this argument; yet there are some considerations which may help us to

meet it. It is manifest, in the first place, that in the visible world God does allow us to conduce most importantly to each other's virtue. Our actions, words, and even looks, have not only a real, but vast, *spiritual power* over those in bodily company with us. There is nothing incredible, then, in the idea that God should make B.'s spiritual concerns influencible by A. Among God's instruments for B.'s welfare, A. is one already—say as a preacher or friend. Can he then benefit him also in the supersensible world through prayer? If we suppose this to be done by inclining God's will to help him, the doctrine is obviously absurd. God wills his virtue already far more than A. can do. But is there no other way? Is there no possibility that prayer may be a real agent in that spirit-world of which both the Infinite and the two finite souls are dwellers, and that in some way (necessarily, because of the realm of action, unknown to us) that earnest and ardent *will* of man throbbing in harmony with that of God for the virtue of his brother, may bring to that brother's spirit some Power from on high? We do not know that it is so; we cannot even imagine a rationale for the matter which suffices tolerably, as in the case of personal prayer; but we do *not* know any decided reason why it should be otherwise.

The argument, therefore, I conceive, stands thus:—

1. Prayer for the spiritual good of others is not *philosophically* incredible. The laws of the supersensible world are not known to us like those of the world of

phenomena ; nay, we have reason to believe that those laws must afford free action for those supersensible wills of which that world is the birthplace. In praying, then, for any spiritual event, we are not praying against known laws (as in the case of physical good), but, as we think, in accordance with laws expressly admitting the action of our prayers.

2. Neither are such prayers *religiously* objectionable. The boon for which we pray—namely, our brother's moral good—is, beyond all doubt, God's direct and primary will. In praying for it, we run no risk of opposing His will, as when we ask for physical boons which His justice or His goodness may make Him forbid.

3. The philosophical objection to intercessory spiritual prayer being thus nugatory, and the religious argument lying altogether in its favour, there remains to consider what may be urged *for* it. I believe that this will be found to be as much as could possibly apply to the case. There is an intuition very common, very deep, and obviously belonging to the very purest class of our spiritual instincts. This intuition urges us not unfrequently to *try* the power of prayer to reclaim some erring beloved one, to bring some resentful heart to forgiveness of its wrongs, to awaken some sleeping soul to the sense of its sin. I believe that when the instinct to ask such things is strong, it brings with it a strange presage of the success which will attend the prayer. Ought we, then, to disregard such an impulse (an im-

pulse which we know to be at all events in harmony with God's Will, even if it should be actually powerless) because we cannot explain how it can act in the unknown world whither we send forth the strong prayer to its mysterious work? Surely, we need not do our souls such hurt as would be caused by the unnatural compression of such pure feelings. We may, in all confidence of its innocence, in all piety towards God, yield to our heart's voice. And *if*—if, as I firmly believe, *experience* ratifies the wisdom as well as piety of the act; if the good we have implored does come to the soul of our brother; then, in all philosophical strictness, the validity of intercessory spiritual prayer must be held established. It has no known law against it. It has in its favour intuition and experience.

And what if we should go yet one step further? What if our prayers should *follow* behind the veil of death the souls for whom we had asked God's blessing here—the souls bound to our own by ties of love so strong that they stretch from world to world, and hold us yet in the bond which has only grown more solemn and more holy? Methinks good reason must be shown why we are *not* to follow an instinct so natural before we are forbidden to do so.

The Protestant Churches usually exclude from their offices all Prayer for the Dead, on the ground that the condition of souls for all eternity is determined irre-



vocably from the moment of dissolution.\* Prayer for a soul in their stationary heaven is superfluous; and

\* An Anglican clergyman has favoured me with the following note :—

“Very early, I believe, at least, in the second century, prayers were offered privately and openly for the dead. I do not think that for a long time this extended to any but those classed as saints, the prayer being for ‘their perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in everlasting glory (God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.’—Heb. xi. 40). These prayers being mostly grounded on the idea that there was but little separation between the good alive and the good departed, and that the duty and privilege of mutual prayer for each other’s welfare was still the part of Christians. The same feeling led also very early to the celebration of the Holy Communion at burials, whereby the friends of the departed testified their belief that the communion of the saints in Christ extended beyond the grave. All this was long before the doctrine of purgatory was broached. . . . In the mediæval services of the Roman Church, there were the commendation of the soul between the death and burial, also mass for the dead, &c. Modified forms of these were retained in Edward VI.’s first Prayer Book, 1549. Thus, in the Burial of the Dead, ‘I commend thy soul to God,’ &c. ‘We commend into Thy hands the soul of this Thy servant, beseeching that when the judgment shall come,’ &c., ‘this our brother and we may be found acceptable. Grant unto this Thy servant, that the sins which he committed in this world be not imputed unto him; and that when that dreadful day of the general resurrection shall come, make him to rise also with the just and righteous, and receive this body again to glory, then made pure and incorruptible,’ &c. Also in the service for the Holy Communion at a burial: ‘We beseech Thee . . . that both we and this our brother, receiving again our bodies and ising again . . . may obtain eternal joy.’ All this, of course, when the doctrine of purgatory was repudiated. In the prayer ‘for the whole estate of Christ’s Church,’ of the same date, is this passage: ‘We commend unto Thy mercy all other Thy servants which are departed



prayer for a soul doomed to sink for ever deeper and deeper down the gulfs of hell, without possibility of re-ascension, is necessarily absurd. The denial, therefore, of the validity of prayer for the dead in the Protestant Churches is a corollary from their doctrines concerning a future state, and must stand or fall with those doctrines.

The Romish Church admits of prayer for the dead, but renders it painful and degrading by making it expressly a mode of saving souls out of purgatory. The mourner has first to believe that his lost parent, wife, or child, is suffering torments, *which torments it will be for his welfare to escape*; and then he may begin to supplicate the awful Judge who has condemned this loved soul to such pangs to reprieve it, and permit

hence from us with the sign of faith, and now do rest in the sleep of peace. Grant unto them Thy mercy, and everlasting peace,' &c. By the year 1552, the opinion against prayers for the dead had gained ground, and accordingly all reference to the departed was omitted at the end of the prayer 'for the whole estate of Christ's Church;' and the expression 'militant here upon earth' was added to the title to restrict it still more, and everything that could be judged to be a prayer for the dead was excluded from the Burial Service. At the final revision of the Prayer Book, in 1662, the *thanks* for the departed was added to the prayer for the Church militant. This exclusion of the doctrine from her services is all, I think, that the Reformed Church has done to discourage it. Doubtless the Reformers preached against it; but, unless in the Homilies, I know not where she can have condemned it. And this, I believe, it is which has left it open for some at all times to pray in private for their departed friends—in fact, to fall back upon the primitive custom."

His justice to be bought off with prayers and penances.\*

\* The authority for such expiation is in the famous passage, 2 Maccab. xii. 43. This is no bad instance of the difficulties attendant on the basing of morals on a traditional authority. What unlearned or what ordinarily learned man can decide the controversy between the great Churches of Christendom, whether the Books of Maccabees are or are not apocryphal? Yet on this fact turns the question of the personal duty of prayer for the dead. If Rome be right, and the books inspired, then the act is expressly declared by God to be "good and holy" (v. 45). If the Protestants be right, and the books apocryphal, then the practice is a "fond thing vainly imagined"—useless and superstitious! Of course, no sound criticism warrants the exegesis of the doctrine from the texts in the New Testament, 2 Tim. i. 18, and Matt. xii. 32 (the assertion in the latter, that there are some sins *not* pardoned in the world to come, involving, as the Romanists think, the admission that there are others which *are* so).

The Jews offer many prayers on the day of solemn expiation for those souls which may be in their year of purgatory—or, as they call it, in "Abraham's bosom," or the Upper Gehenna. They believe that all Jews will be released from the Lower Gehenna through Abraham's intercession (*Gemara Arabin*, f. 19). Islam admits of two purgatories—Adhabalcabor, the "penalty of the sepulchre," where Monkir and Nekir torment the dead bodies; and El Araf, where the souls remain during "Barzak," or the interval between death and the resurrection. The Parsees not only pray now for the dead, but believe that the righteous will all pray and weep over the sufferings of the wicked during the final three days of their purgatory, before passing through the rivers of molten metal which shall flow at the resurrection, and prepare all created souls, including Ahrimanes himself, for everlasting purity and joy in Gorôtman (*Zend-Avesta*, *Boundehesch*, trans. Anquetil du Perron, b. ii. p. 413). Sabæanîsm taught that the wicked would be pardoned after a purgation of 4000 years. That of the ancient Egyptians, for whose termination they embalmed their dead, was to last 3000. Ages of wearisome labour were supposed to expiate the sins of

The faith which teaches us that all suffering is good as well as just, and that *all* souls are “in the Hand of God,” for their everlasting weal—such a faith, in admitting of prayer for the dead, must manifestly do so for a different object than that of freeing them from purifying (and therefore *merciful*) sufferings; nor can it involve the terrible evil of darkening the character of God to our hearts, while it brings comfort to the wound of our human affections. God is not to us the dreadful Judge tormenting with unbenefiting pangs the loved one we have lost. He is the Father to whose care we have committed him, the Mother who has carried him forth folded in Her infinite Breast. What if the new home to which that Parent has brought him have for him some lessons severer than he learned below? what if that next stage of being must be a school-world harder than this to him who failed to profit by God’s teaching here?—in any case is there in the fate of our brother aught to grieve or terrify us? Does it not, on the contrary, serve to draw us nearer to the Lord of Life and Death, that we can trust Him so surely with that treasure of our hearts? And when we come to pray to Him for the lost one He has borne away from our sight, need there be any agonizing supplications that He will grant a respite, a remission of *torture*?

the wicked Peruvians. “He who has gone to the place of misery,” say the Buddhist authorities, “after he has suffered enough for his miserable deeds or sins, it appears that he can become free.”—*Buddhist Tract* appended to *Mahawanse*, p. 11.

The thought is abhorrent. We *commend* to the Father of the Living and the Dead the dear spirit we have loved; we ask that as He helped his progress here, so He will help it onward for ever in that glorious path of virtue, piety, and joy, which we too shall travel—

“ Aloft, aloft, still shall we climb and climb,  
From terrace to broad terrace evermore,”

following on through all the worlds, nearer and for ever nearer to our blessed God. Thus may the departed be bound to us, indebted to us still. Death need not, and ought not, to sever the bond uniting those immortal souls which never cease to exist, or think, or love, and, inhabiting always some mansion of the same Father, meet continually, albeit hidden from each other, in the same acts of prayer and adoration. The desolation which comes to us at the thought that we can *never do anything more* for our loved mother, brother, friend, is brightened at once by the belief that whatever our prayers could do in life, they can surely do still; and that, safe and blest as our dear ones are in God's good keeping, it is not forbidden to us to contribute towards their highest welfare in that very act of prayer wherein our severed spirits yet may meet, and wherein our own wounded hearts find their purest consolation.\*

\* Perhaps the reason why the natural instinct in favour of prayer for those we love has not oftener borne down the hard, dogmatic teaching which would forbid us to pray for the dead, may be found in the fact that, as it is usually the knowledge of some special *want* which



I have now slightly indicated the abstract grounds for the *direct* Duty of Worship in its threefold forms—Thanksgiving, Adoration, and Prayer. These duties are all, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate, incumbent on every rational creature of God simply in that capacity, and quite independently of his position as a social being—a member of a family, a church, or a state. Have they, however, further claims on us in these respects? Is there such a thing as a Duty of Public Worship as well as a Duty of Private Worship? The universal intuition of our race has long ago solved this question. Man's *social* character is so preponderating a part of his nature, that it claims of right to take a place in all his actions and sentiments. Children of one Father, subjects of one Lord, it would be a monstrous thing should we meet in every sensual, intellectual, and æsthetic pursuit and gratification, refuse to meet in our approaches to that same Father and Lord. The sons and daughters who should never desire to join around a loving parent, but ask always for separate interviews with him, and while living in full and friendly intercourse with each other on all other matters, reserve that whole share of their affections, duties, and anxieties from each other's eyes—such sons and daughters would act in a manner unnatural and deserving of all reprobation. I think this is the true view of the duty of Social Worship—

incites prayer, our ignorance of the whole condition of the departed leaves us without this special stimulus. We can only vaguely commend the spirit to God.



that it is a *natural* thing, to which we are led by most pure and holy instincts, for the violation of which we find no excuse. Nay, on the contrary, the beneficial results of public worship have been found so great, that the duty has been frequently induced from those results alone, and placed altogether on the footing of one (and the chief one) of the means of grace.

The design of this little treatise excluding the consideration of that branch of ethics which concerns men as members of States (politics), it will not be necessary to touch on the very difficult questions connected with the public performance of worship ; questions, however, whose difficulty results chiefly from assumptions totally at variance with a theology simply deduced from the axioms of reason. Were the idea exploded that the belief in a certain series of logical propositions is the sole condition of Divine acceptance, then the union of human beings in prayer and thanksgiving to their common Father would no longer be trammelled by the fetters of opposing sects, and the hearts which now throb with the same hallowed aspirations, or swell with the same sense of gratitude, would no longer be compelled to turn away sorrowfully or scornfully from each other's temples. As things stand now, each man must join himself to the society of worshippers whose *intellectual* creed most nearly approaches his own, because, even if he disclaim the popular error respecting the all-importance of such creeds, he can hardly do it save by gaining a faith so radically different, that the very

topics of his prayers and his thanksgivings will lie entirely in another channel. Now, although a similar creed has a tendency to produce similar spiritual conditions, yet it by no means follows that it can do so with such equality as always to give to fellow-believers fellow-feeling on the deeper matters of religion wherein the stage of *moral* progress is far more effective than that of mental advance. It were greatly to be desired that congregations should be able to gather themselves in accordance with their spiritual sympathies, and thus really meet in the spontaneous emotions and aspirations of worship. Our churches are now like schools in which the classes are arranged according to the colour of the scholars' clothes, instead of according to their acquirements and capacities; and the larger the sect, the more it must lower the tone of its cultus to meet the abilities of that majority who cannot, with any veracity, express the more fervent and exalted religious emotions. Thus, to whatever sect a pious man belong, the chances will always be against his finding his co-sectarians actually his co-religionists, and his sympathies of feeling will always be leading him away from his sympathies of thought—the ascetic Anglican into the Papal fold, the fervent Evangelical into the earnest sects of the Baptists or Methodists. When these “conversions” take place, are they the result of *intellectual* processes of conviction? Probably not once in a thousand times.

These observations may serve to explain the apparent

anomaly that, though social worship is the natural instinct of a religious soul, yet many religious souls do not seek it. They *would* seek it, could they hope to find sympathy of feeling in their fellow-worshippers combined with such uniformity of views as would permit of their junction. But the combination of these two desiderata is almost unattainable, and a few experiments have proved that, instead of *following* their spiritual instincts in such social worship, they must do violence to them at every moment. Nothing is more senseless and superstitious than the blame attached to persons under such circumstances for not attending public divine service.

It now remains to be asked whether ethics have any claim to decide the *place* or *time* when worship, public or private, ought to be offered. The slightest consideration of the principles on which moral science is grounded must suffice to answer this question in the negative. Intuitive morals deduce, *à priori*, that Worship is Right, just as they deduce that to promote our fellow-creatures' welfare is right. But experience alone can teach *when* worship may best be paid, just as it alone can teach *how* we can best produce our neighbour's happiness. (See *Theory*, p. 116.) When we have found by experience at what intervals, at what hours, and places, and postures, we are each of us best able to perform this solemn duty, then the obedience to all those circumstances becomes to us *the right way* to fulfil the duty, just as, when we have ascertained by

what means at our disposal we can best help our brother, the adoption of them becomes to us the right way to fulfil that duty we owe to him. No one imagines that if he know his neighbour to want food, he fulfils the duty of benevolence by giving him clothes; neither, if he know that he cannot effectually concentrate his thoughts on religious matters at certain hours for certain periods of time, in certain places and in certain attitudes, can he at all fulfil the duty of worship by going through forms of devotion under those nullifying conditions. This principle, I suppose, will be theoretically acknowledged by most persons who do not insist on the right of a tradition or a Church to ordain the manner and time of our approaches to God.\* It is to be desired, however, that it should be more brought into practice.

There is a beautiful meaning in the old myth of Bethel. That spot wherein a man's soul has ascended the angel's ladder of Prayer, is sacred to him evermore,

\* The extent to which this intolerable thralldom is attempted to be pushed is sometimes astounding to a Freethinker. J. H. Newman somewhere recommends to all Anglicans, "In your private devotions use the prayers of the Church:" as much as if he were to advise, 'When you write to your mother, copy the *Complete Letter-writer*!' There is a story in Huc's *China* of an affectionate son who, after years of absence, having an opportunity for sending a letter to his mother, simply desired one of his pupils to copy out for him the epistle established by custom as proper on such occasions! "What love could he have retained for her?" say we; "or what idea could he have gained of the use of a letter?"



be it beneath the starry sky, or beside the peaceful bed where God “giveth His beloved sleep,” by the bank of the quiet river, or under the glittering shadows of the woods, in the gloom of the solemn cathedral nave at eventide, or in the floods of the glad sunlight which bathed through some long summer Sabbath a rich garden’s stillness—in that spot, wheresoever it be, an altar is builded by the busy hand of his memory; and again and again, in life’s journeyings, he may offer up there the sacrifices of a grateful or a contrite spirit. God will make it blessed to him thus to keep cherished in remembrance the holy joys His love has once vouchsafed.\*

Nor has Time less power than Place to bring good influences to our souls. It is one of the most beautiful instances of the identity of human nature’s religious sentiment acting under every varied circumstance of age, and clime, and creed, that men have continually consecrated the same hours of the day to the worship of God. From the spontaneous sense of their appropriateness, the Morning and Evening Prayer have found their place in every ritual and in every heart.† Nothing can

\* This seems to have been early felt by the Bramin pietists:—“Let the person who desires to worship the Deity in his mind choose a spot by the banks of a river, or in a field, or near a grove, or in a cave, or near a waterfall—at any rate in a secret spot, where he can remain undisturbed.”—*Vrihudarunyuku Upanishad*.

† The Jews have a tradition that Abraham ordained the morning prayer, Isaac that of midday, and Jacob that of the evening. Maimonides says that Esdras first regularly appointed prayer at the hours of



be more natural than that the children of the Father in Heaven should thus offer to Him the greeting of their first waking thoughts, and ask of Him His blessing ere they rest in His wide arms of love. Nothing can be more fit than that the workers in God's great vineyard should thus commence each division of life's task with a prayer for help and guidance, and close it by a review of their imperfect labour, by contrition and thanksgiving.

These things follow so simply from the relations we bear to our Creator and Lord, that I think morality may fairly ask us to show, if we forsake them, some cause why such natural and holy habits should not approve themselves to us. And further, the morning and evening prayers are not only natural to us, but manifestly exceedingly useful in aiding our virtue and piety. A large amount of sin and error in the world results from the unprepared way in which we continually rush into duties and temptations, without any previous attempt to look those duties and temptations in the face, or form the deliberate resolution of meeting them aright. Roads of life which we shall walk in all our days, professions, marriages, pursuits of all sorts are undertaken in the most headlong manner as regards their moral aspects, even when worldly prudence has

the morning and evening sacrifices. He is supposed to have composed the eighteen beautiful prayers in the *Mischna*, to which was afterwards added a nineteenth (full of curses on heretics), probably the work of Gamaliel.

balanced with accuracy all their pecuniary and social advantages. Much less are regarded the smaller details of daily life, the business or the pleasure which the morning sees lying before us in the coming hours, and on whose good or evil performance or enjoyment the evening must look back to rejoice or to repent. If we desire heartily

“ To Feel, to Think, to Do,  
Only the holy Right—  
To yield no step in the awful race,  
No blow in the fearful fight ”—

must we not look all these things, as I have said, *straight in the face*? Must we not arm ourselves beforehand for the combat whensoever it threatens, and bind our iron mail of resolution most closely where we know it oftenest fails, and grasp with the strong uplifted hand of prayer that “Ithuriel spear” which God will give to each loyal and valiant Will in His great host of souls?

And this must be done definitely, distinctly—not idly dreaming, as some seem to do, that there are duties too small to talk about to God, as well as blessings too small to thank Him for. *He* requires the duty and gives the blessing; and that is enough to raise both of them into place in *man's* poor worship. Vagueness in prayer, as in all other religious matters, is feeble and null. Such resolves and petitions as this—“O Lord, be pleased to help me to perform my duties of the day,” has not half the power of this: “I

ought to do to-day the particular impending duties *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*, and to resist the particular impending temptations *e*, *f*, *g*, and *h*. I *will* do what I ought. Father of Spirits! aid me to use the powers Thou hast given; and if I fail, make me ere night repent."\* Prayers of this sort track the whole line for our plough to work, and it will be strange if the furrow of the day be not straighter than one which began with only a vague glance at the distant guide-post.

If the "Golden Verses" were really the work of Pythagoras, we might trace back to the dawn of Greek philosophy the discovery of the gain to the economy of human virtue to be obtained by the practice of

\* The Parsee morning prayers were full of the spirit of virtuous resolution. See *Zend-Avesta*, vol. ii. p. 9. At daybreak—"Augmentez la pureté de mon cœur ô Roi!" (Ormud): "Que je fasse des actions saintes et très-pures"—Je prie avec pureté de pensée, avec pureté de parole, avec pureté d'action; ô Dieu, Juge excellent, grand, je me repens de mes péchés. Je crois sans hésiter à Dieu et à sa loi. Mon âme sera céleste, l'enfer sera comblé à la résurrection." (While fastening the girdle)—"Dieu est Un; la loi de Zoroastre est vraie; Zoroastre est le vrai prophète; Je suis résolu de faire le bien." (Three times aloud)—"Venez à mon secours, ô Ormud!" (*Jescht Sadé.*)

The Hindoo Code also ordains that a man should "waken in the last watch of the night, and reflect on virtue;" and that, having risen and purified himself, he repeat in the morning twilight the beautiful Gayâtri—"I adore the majesty of that Divine Sun, the Godhead, who illuminates all, who gives all delights, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards His holy seat."—*Inst. Menu*, iv. 92, 93.

nightly self-scrutiny.\* In any case, men did not wait long to find that he who seeks to "know himself" must study day by day the details of his moral health; and that he who desires to lay up "treasures in heaven," must allow no waste of his soul's wealth to pass unheeded.† And for Religious as well as Moral use, nightly prayer has its peculiar power. Sleep has in it so much of the helpless, trustful dependance of childhood—it bears so strong a resemblance to its solemn antitype, God's messenger, Death—that the mind which feels not somewhat of tenderness and somewhat of sanctity in slumber must be insensible indeed. When we lie down to our rest, we disrobe ourselves of all the proud prerogatives of our rationality, our thought and feeling, and free action in the world of sense; we give them all back into God's keeping, trusting that He will guard us and sustain our animal life while we lie powerless; that He will make our own hearts beat for us while we are incapable of motion—will think of us while we cannot think of Him: and that when His morning sun rises on the just and unjust, He will give back to us the splendid regalia of our humanity, our crown of reason, our sceptre of freedom, and send us

\* "Suffer not gentle sleep to close thine eyes  
Ere thou hast thrice reviewed the labours of the day.  
What hast thou learned? what done? what duty neglected?  
For the evil thou hast done, repent; for the good, rejoice."

*Golden Verses.*

† "When a man goeth to bed, he ought first to take unto himself the kingdom of heaven."—*Sohar. Genes.*, fol. 103.



forth once more "heirs of the earth and skies." We all do this practically every night. Is it not senseless to have no consciousness of an act so affecting? Surely we might make the gentle boon of sleep altogether a holy thing, a blessing to be received always as if a mother's soft hand were closing our eyes, and our last dreamy thoughts nestled in the infinite pity of her heart. It was a beautiful thought of that old Moslem who told us to prepare for sleep as for prayer, and to yield to forgetfulness with the supplication, "O, my God, unto Thee do I commit my soul, unto Thee do I look up with longing and fear [reverence]. With Thyself only can I find refuge from Thee."\*

There is another hour beside that of morning and night which has commended itself to the feelings of humanity, less from obvious fitness than the other two, but more from the immediate hallowing influence of Nature. That the sunset hour should be consecrated alike through the wide plains of Islam and the realms of Roman Christendom;† that the East should answer by one great

\* *Solwân*, by Ibn Zaffer, c. 1.

† The evening twilight prayer, called *Reih Ras*, is appointed in the *Tunkha Nameh* for all Sikhs, and the second repetition of the *Gayâtri* to the Hindoos, in the *Inst. Menu*, iv. 93. Huc makes this curious remark: "There exists at Lha-Ssa a very touching custom, and *which we felt a sort of jealousy at finding among infidels*. In the evening, and just as the day is verging on its decline, all the Thibetians stay business, and meet together, men, women, and children, according to their sex and age, in the principal parts of the town, and in the public squares. As soon as the groups are formed every one kneels down, and



prayer the muezzin's proclamation of God's inviolable Unity, and that the West should bow in reverence as the vesper-bell peals for the adoration of the Man-God's mother\*—is there not something wonderful in this chain of worship, which, link after link, rolls out over all the lands after the setting sun till the round world is girded by its zone of prayer? There must be a true inspiration to guide such sympathy in creeds so various. The Lord of nature and of the human heart must Himself have harmonized the evening's sacred summons to our ears, to make us all thus understand it aright. And verily He hath done so, and blessed that Sabbath-hour of the day, and hallowed it! The red sun's slow decline makes the earth one grand and gorgeous cathedral, gleaming from west to east with the purple and golden lights of heaven's vast blazoned oriel. Each vale and lake becomes a censer, sending up its clouds of dew laden with the perfume of the closing flowers. The sweet choir of the birds sing out of their clear hearts

they begin slowly, and in under-tones, to chant prayers. The religious concerts produced by these numerous assemblages create throughout the town an immense solemn harmony which operates forcibly on the soul. The first time we witnessed this spectacle we could not help drawing a comparison between this pagan town, where we all prayed together, and the cities of Europe, where people would blush to make the sign of the cross in public."—Huc's *Tartary*, p. 194.

\* "Vespers is the only popular service [in the Romish Church at present]; and that, in connection with benediction, seems to be put forward by English Ultramontanes as the congregational service of the Roman Church of the future."—*Christian Remembrancer*, No. 70.

their pure, childlike hymns ere they flutter to their rest, and leave a pause, calm and soft and solemn, through all the evening air. The hush of the night-wind passes away over the sleeping woods like a solitary chord swept slowly upon a far-off organ. Then the world is still. One by one, the lamps of the holy stars are lighted high up through all the shadowy arches of the sky. Nature's majestic fane waits but for the kneeling worshipper before the altar of the Lord of All.

Nor is there aught less sacred in the dim closing of the autumnal eve, when the gloom sinks down lower and lower overhead, and every sound is still, and round us lies only the dull scene of withered ground, and turbid pool, and trees half shrouded in their mouldering sere leaves and looming vaguely in the gathering shade. No longer now we stand in the glittering cathedral of the Christian world, but in nature's Karnak or Stonehenge, weird and sublime in its dim grandeur as those old Druid temples where, in the twilight of the ages, knelt the fathers of our race. Surely their great faith is even now in its noblest part our own. Surely in scenes like these it springs again within their children's souls; that high and holy faith that beyond all earth's decay and desolation reigns a Living Lord, and that when our winter-life here hath passed away there shall arise for us an everlasting summer-time of holiness and joy, in the love of that Mightiest One in whom now and for ever we have our being, and to whose

world-wide Arm we cling even as the mistletoe clasps its parent oak.\*

It is surely an unwise and evil thing to slight these worship-calls of nature, to check and crush our own purest instincts. To many of us, unhappily, the following of them is nearly always impossible, to others often difficult. But when it is actually compatible with the other duties and necessary business of life, why should we not as eagerly avail ourselves of the aid to devotion which nature offers as we should do of the inspiring words of some great saintly human soul? The Hindoo deems he sins if he turns from his five sacraments, the Romanist from his seven, the Protestant from his two. Christian, Moslem, Guebre, Brahminist, think they offend if, while the sacred words of Bible, Koran, Zend-Avesta, or Veda are read, they withdraw from the sound. But God's own wondrous sacrament, wherein we may all feed our souls on the mysteries of His

\* Hesus, "the Greatest and Best," the Supreme God of the Druids, was honoured by them under the emblem of an oak. The mistletoe was used to typify the relation held to Him by man, who is derived from God and exists in Him, yet is of a nature altogether inferior. The Druids taught that human life is a progress from "Abred," the state of evil, to "Gwynvyd," the state of knowledge and felicity. Cæsar mentions the extreme fervour of their faith in immortality. It is worthy of remark, as proving the *originality* of that faith as a natural growth in the human soul, that the three most powerful religious systems of the ancient world, and which seem to have been most purely *indigenous* to their respective countries—namely, Brahminism, the Egyptian worship, and Druidism—were precisely the creeds which set forth most distinctly and emphatically the doctrine of a future state.

glorious works, and commune in holiest feast of love with His Spirit—God's own Scripture, the writing, ay, the autograph itself, of His Almighty Hand traced all over this World-Bible—who heeds how he neglects these? who fears to excommunicate his soul by turning away from such God-ordained means of Grace?\*

The rule of our conduct in these matters must, I think, be this: whensoever and wheresoever the desire to pray to God, or return Him thanks, or offer adoration to Him, comes spontaneously to our hearts, let us, if possible, obey the impulse there and then, and let us place ourselves again and again under the same hallowing influences. Let us in no case slight, or thrust aside, any such feelings, from habits of routine. The

\* "For if God had given instruction by means of books, he who knew letters would have learned what was written, but the illiterate man would have gone away without receiving any benefit; and the wealthy man would have purchased the Bible, but the poor man could not have been able to obtain it. Again, he who knew the language that was expressed by the letters might have known what was therein contained; but the Scythian, and the barbarian, and the Indian, and the Egyptian, and all those who were excluded from that language, would have gone away without receiving any instruction. This, however, cannot be said with respect to the heavens; but the Scythian, and the barbarian, and the Indian, and the Egyptian, and every man that walks upon the earth, shall hear this voice. And of the things that are seen there is one uniform perception, and there is no difference, as is the case with respect to languages. Upon this volume the unlearned as well as the wise man shall be alike able to look, the poor man as well as the rich; and into whatsoever land any one may chance to come, there, looking upwards towards the heavens, he will receive a sufficient lesson from the view of them."—St. Chrysostom, *Homil.* ix.



principle of keeping religion in its own time and place (as if all time and all place were not its rightful domain!) is, I suppose, rarely admitted by any one who is religious at all; but still the practice of setting apart regular hours and churches for private and public worship has a tendency, which ought to be guarded against, to *limit* the performance of such acts to those appointed moments and places. It is hard for any human being to understand the feelings of others on these topics, and presumptuous to counsel where we cannot understand. Yet this I would fain be allowed to say:—Temples built with hands are doubtless very dear and sacred to those who can find in them continually the blessed sympathies of social worship. The solitary chamber, where we can “pray to our Father which seeth in secret,” is to many a heart dearer and more sacred still. But a great loss is sustained when the church and the chamber monopolize all our better hours, and “Nature’s domes of worship, earth and air,” never behold us looking upward through the blue expanse of day, or the starry heights of night, towards Him—

“ Whose temple is all space ;  
Whose altar, earth, sea, skies.”

It is easy for all of us, except the dwellers in cities, to do this sometimes alone, and receive the numberless gentle influences by which God draws our hearts to Himself through His beautiful creation. Would to Heaven that it were also possible for us to do it some-

times with our brothers ! Is it a dream that the time is not very far away when men will feel that the sectarian differences which must long divide their ordinary worship need not and ought not to do so *always* ? What if some few simple words of thanks and adoration, some short prayer for God's Spirit of Love, could be agreed on by the severed folds of Christendom, and that once, say only once, in a year, in the soft summertime, we could all meet in that fane of the free air which no sect can wall in for itself, and, in each parish through our lands, make some quiet spot the Temple of all—*all*, from the Romanist even to the Theist ? Would not that little glade or rocky nook be dearer for the rest of the year than proudest church or narrowest chapel ?

There remains yet a subject which, though necessarily beyond the limits of a deductive science of morals, yet must appeal for ages (I hope for ever) to the conscience of civilized mankind. The institution of the Sabbath cannot, of course, be considered here in any other light than that of one commending itself to us as the intuition of some unknown great souls of old, sustained and ratified by something more than the popular credence in its supernatural authority—by a very general sense of its fitness, and by some experience of its moral and religious utility. I am not inclined to overrate the force of any of these arguments in favour of the observance of the Sabbath. Those same great

minds which introduced it to the world instituted a variety of other rites, sacrificial and purificatory, other holidays, lunar and solar, which have died the natural death which awaits the forms of each old *cultus* when the new shoot of faith has grown out of it and put forth its own leaves after its kind. There is no *à priori* reason why we should keep the day on which we now know the Creator of this age-evolved cosmos did *not* rest, any more than the Isthmian festival which recorded the apotheosis of Ino and Melicerta as Leucothoë and Palæmon. How narrowly the Sabbath escaped the usual fate of the rites of an outgrown creed, may be seen in the disregard of it shown immediately after the promulgation of Christianity.\* But

\* It has been so fully and so often demonstrated of late, that the Jewish Sabbath can never be saddled on the first day of the Christian week, and that the Sabbatical institution is untenable as a Christian ordinance, biblical, apostolic, primitive, or reformed, that it would be superfluous to discuss here the folly of those sects which persist in endeavouring to uphold it on traditional grounds which have been utterly taken from their feet, instead of on grounds of feeling, and utility, which it is probable will grow stronger every year with the religious progress of the race. It will be sufficient for me to cite here two passages from the works of the two greatest Fathers of the Church, which will amply corroborate my assertion in the text, that the Sabbath was on the point of dying out as an *authoritative* institution, when it revived as one adapted to the genuine sentiments and wants of human nature :—

“For what purpose, then, I ask, did He add a reason respecting the Sabbath, and did no such thing as regards murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading (τῶν προηγούμενων) ones. It was not one of those which are accurately defined of our conscience,

that it has *risen again*; that the institution of a prehistoric age should have asserted its vitality through nearly four millenniums, and should at this very hour be

but a kind of partial and temporary one, and for this reason it was *abolished* afterwards (*κατελύθη μετὰ ταῦτα*). But those which are necessary and uphold our life are the following:—Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal," &c.—St. Chrysostom, *Homil.* xii.

"Of all the ten commandments, only that of the Sabbath is enjoined to be observed figuratively, which figure we have received to be understood *not* to be still celebrated by the rest of the body."—St. Augustine, *Ep.* lv. c. xxii.

Would it not appear as if the circumstance that the nine other commandments tally with the necessary moral law, had occasioned this one arbitrary command, which chanced to be mixed up with them, to assume an importance in no wise properly belonging to it? Yet it would be hard to prove that the Decalogue in the twentieth of Exodus was meant by the compiler of the Mosaic books to be a universal moral code for the whole human race. It starts expressly with the exordium, "I am the Lord thy God, *which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*" How can it be proved that the "thou" to whom the following precepts are addressed means any one *not* of the race "brought out of the land of Egypt?" With the special code of a nation the Eternal Law must of course be involved, but the universal code of humanity could not have for preamble the address to one nation only. Moreover, in Exod. xxxi. 16, 17, it is said, "Wherefore the *children of Israel* shall keep the Sabbath . . . It is a sign *between me and the children of Israel* for ever." And in Ezek. xx. 12, "Also I gave them my Sabbaths, *to be a sign between me and them.*" Paley proves clearly enough that, though referred back to the Christian Creation, the Sabbath was *first* instituted in the wilderness, and the institution addressed especially to the Israelites, Christ recapitulating only the Eternal Law. The whole story of the tables of stone is very extraordinary. Meursius (quoted by Sir G. Wilkinson) says that in Egypt "the holy mysteries



in stronger life over the whole civilized world than ever it was in ages of formalism and superstition—this is surely some evidence that there is a true fitness to humanity in that “Sabbath which was made for man;” a true inspiration in the heart of its founder.

Undoubtedly there is something beautiful in the idea of the whole human race thus pausing on one oft-recurring day from the pursuits of secular existence, and voluntarily and unanimously recalling that higher destiny which belongs to them as moral and religious beings; living out that one day in their nobler rank. The animal life, which is the necessary basis of the moral; the labours which support that animal life, and at the same time conduce towards the progress of the moral—these, for one day in seven, may fall into the background, and the real end and meaning of our

were read to the initiated out of a book called *Περσῶνα*, because it consisted of two stones fitly cemented together.” It does not appear whether these were ever carried in their well-known arks, containing the two figures of cherubim—like Thmei (Truth) and Rè (Justice), and which Macrobius says (*Saturn. i.*) “were carried forward according to Divine inspiration whithersoever the Deity urged them.” The Decalogue of the Buddhists is as follows:—1. Do not kill. 2. Do not steal. 3. Do not commit adultery. 4. Do not lie. 5. Do not slander. 6. Do not call ill names. 7. Do not speak words which are to no purpose but harm. 8. Do not covet the property of others. 9. Do not envy. 10. Do not err in the true faith, or think it false.” Buddhism enjoins a Sabbath at each of the lunar quarters. Dio Cassius says, “The circumstance of the seven days being set apart to the seven planets, so called, took its origin from the Egyptians, but is found also over all mankind, having begun, so to speak, not long ago.”

existence come forward from the shade, in which they lie too often, in our consciousness. On the Sunday we cease to be ploughmen, sempstresses, shoemakers, and bricklayers: we become Men and Women. It is common for us to smile at the transformation of the poor artisan, attired in the suit he so simply designates as his "Sunday best." We jest, too, at the importance assumed by the clergyman on this his day of dignity and office. But, in truth, these little tokens are the natural outshowings of Sunday's real work. It is quite right and consistent that, on the day when we cease to be labourers and tradesmen to become men and women, we should cast aside the dress of each special order, and assume that which belongs to all classes alike. It is very fit that, on the day when mankind remits all secular pursuits, the lawyer, doctor, farmer, soldier, sailor, and merchant, brothers of our great human family, should be outshone by the one who has devoted himself to the ministry of religion. Sunday is the cleanly day among the soiled working ones, the priest-day among the six laymen-days of the week.

It was a part of the utilitarian philosophy of the age of Addison that he should approve of the Sunday *because* it encouraged cleanliness and decency. It may be a part of our more spiritual views to recognise in these outward tokens the appropriate emblems of the Sabbath's true meaning.

Whatever may be said, however, in favour of the Sabbath as a natural institution for man, capable of

conducting importantly to his highest religious and moral interests, and having, consequently, a strong claim on the observance of every one who feels that natural fitness and believes in that highest usefulness, it must be admitted, on the other hand, that the enforcing of obedience to a law so arbitrary is a wrong which no master or state can be justified in attempting; and that the fanatical extent to which the Sabbatical restrictions have been carried has rendered the whole institution liable to the question whether it *at present* produces more harm than good, more immorality than virtue, more disgust at religion than increase of piety.\*

But this need not, this will not, always be so! The Sunday must become at last the day on which man best serves God by best aiding His grand design in creation. True Men and Women, and no longer Peasants, Citi-

\* I have heard pious Christian magistrates frequently state that a far larger number of crimes are committed on Sundays than on any other day in the week—nay, sometimes, than in the rest of the week together. If this be so (as I believe statistics corroborate) regarding *legal crimes*, what must it be regarding other forms of vice, profligacy, and private drunkenness? This latter practice (so notoriously prevalent during the strict Scotch Sabbaths) seems to have commenced its connection with the day even in classic times. Plutarch tries to derive the word from "*Sabbai*," a name given to bacchanals, and observes that the Jews on that day "mostly exhort one another to drink and be drunken" (*Symp.* iv. 6). What thousands of unhappy women of the lower ranks, servants and workwomen, trace their degradation to some Sunday lapse! And lesser vices than these—ill-temper, quarrelling, moroseness—is there any day in the week in which they appear so pertinaciously as during the weary hours of a Puritanical Sabbath?

zens, Gentlefolk, we shall develop in our happy Sabbaths all that in us belongs to our noble rank. Even our *sensual* natures may then seek their innocent enjoyments in flowers and music, as well as in the one sordid pleasure of the "Sunday dinner," which alone Fana-ticism now exempts from her embargo. Far more shall our *intellectual* natures revel in the free libraries, museums, scientific lectures, open to us on all sides. Our *æsthetic tastes* shall be cultured, and with them our minds refined and elevated, by picture-galleries and Crystal Palaces, and all the stately gardens and grand old woods, which their owners shall rejoice, on God's good day, to share with His less wealthy sons and daughters. Our *affections* shall hold their festival in family gatherings, and in a redoubling of all tender and gentle cares; so that it shall come to pass that moroseness and spleen shall cease to disturb the day of rest, and an impatient word or unkind act seem doubly wrong when each household is keeping its sweet weekly *agape*. And lastly, and above all, shall our *moral and religious* natures grow and develop themselves, and fill us with joy unspeakable, upon that blessed day. We will have churches still; ay, more churches than ever; for every one will come to them then, and worship, in all its threefold forms, shall rise up over all the lands like clouds over the sea. And sermons? Yes, we will have sermons still, the fresh, free utterances of living souls, inspiring, rather than inculcating, the Absolute Religion of love to God and love to man. And the



holy will in each of us shall grow strong in God's House of Prayer; and if there be a kind or loving act to be performed, a vice to be forsworn, a pardon to be asked, a justice to be done, a reconciliation to be effected, we shall seize that blessed time to do it. Thus shall we hallow the Sunday of the future, thus make it no longer a mockery to call it "the Lord's Day," and hold on it the festival of him who taught us that the Sabbath was made for MAN, and not man for the Sabbath.

## SECTION IV.

### REPENTANCE.

THE various relations held by man to God divide themselves very distinctly to our consciousness into those which concern us simply as His Creatures, and those which concern us as Sinners. In the first class of relations we are called on to love our Father, to be grateful to our Benefactor, to adore our Moral Ideal, to obey our Lord, to learn from our Teacher, to sympathize in the beauty of our Parent's works. In these relations all seems clear and inexpressibly happy. On the other side, when we attempt to scan the position in which we stand as Sinners, the whole scene is altered, and, instead of love and joy, "there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment;" that is, till we have found how these two relations may harmonize and have, by Repentance, blended into one sentiment of humble love the discordant elements of our condition. On the right comprehension of these relations, on the attaching of sufficient weight to *both* classes of them, depends, in a great measure, the healthfulness of all our religious life. He who forgets how near and dear is his natural tie to his Father in heaven will take views of the alienation produced by

sin so dark and unnatural, that he will either sink into despair, or grasp at the most monstrous schemes suggested for his salvation. On the other hand, he who forgets how completely his sins have altered the footing of creaturehood will be tempted to assume a position before God so false and presumptuous as to be fatal to any real religious progress whatever.\* Nothing is more difficult than practically to hit the just medium in these matters; our temperaments inclining us to one view or the other, and the instructions we receive in youth but too frequently deterring us from venturing to place our instinctive, childlike trust in the inexhaustible goodness of God † In the ensuing pages I shall

\* The myths of a "Fall" and Golden Age of Innocence show the antiquity and universality of the recognition of the grand distinction between these classes of relations between man and God. The *antecedency* of the first to the second is also pointed out by its supposed chronological priority. Man has always felt that he is *first* God's beloved son, and only secondarily a rebel.

† The practical difficulties of this subject have been also increased by the false ideas respecting the *natural history of the soul* which have been perpetuated by the pedantry of divines. It is always assumed by the Evangelical school that the inner life of all men has been one of unvaried sin till transformed suddenly or gradually by conversion. If there be any exceptions admitted, they are supposed to be rare cases of early piety, wherein the conversion took place in childhood. Now it would rather seem that it is only a small minority of persons whose lives can be thus described, who live up to full manhood and consciousness in unvarying wilful transgression, and then begin to ask that question (so dear to their dogmatic instructors), "What shall I do to be saved?" Repentance seems more common, as well as more beautiful, in childhood than in later life. Nine out of ten of those who

endeavour to define, as well as may be, *that Religious Duty of Man which arises out of the modification introduced by his sins into his relation to God*; namely, the Duty of Repentance.

And I may here remark that (strange though it be) it is precisely this Duty of Repentance which has the highest part to play in our religious life, whose performance, more than all others, brings us into the innermost sanctuary of the temple. Paradoxical as it may seem, we have all a vague sense of this: that our prayers of penitence more closely concern our souls, are more personal, more intimate, more awful by far, than our Thanksgivings or acts of Adoration, or even prayers for light and help. We repeat these other prayers and praises in public, or speak of God's benefits to any sympathizing friend. But our Repentance is profaned by almost any exposure save that needed by restitution. How is this anomaly to be accounted for? I believe we may find the explanation in the profound words of McLeod Campbell: "*It is on the side of a sense of sin that the sinful creature must first come into contact with infinite Holiness.*" All the great preachers of the past, and all the preachers who may touch men's hearts in time to come, must work

ever become religious in this world have surely repented over and over again, and tried the whole penitential systems of their respective sects, before they arrive at any decided course of virtue—repented, not merely of special sins or lapses, as "converted" persons are admitted to do, but of whole courses of irreligion, breaking all continuity in their spiritual history.



through this one channel to the depths of our nature. If we are ever to know that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," the first word of the prophet who opens it to us must be "Repent." Let us strive to give some true ideas of this great mystery.

When we become thoroughly sensible how vastly sin has modified our position towards God, we become, at the same time, conscious that this modification must itself be modified before we can approach Him. If we are to address Him, it must not be as SINNING creatures, but as creatures who HAVE SINNED and REPENT. Some sort of Atonement (in the true meaning of the word), some Reunion with God by a return to righteousness, is recognised as the preliminary step to any act of acceptable homage. Righteousness and unrighteousness can have no communion. God being immutably Righteous, we must pass back into the realm of the eternal Right ere we can meet Him. In other words, it is only when the righteous will in man awakes and resumes its sovereignty that he can come in contact with the great Will of the universe.

Thus far all is clear, and there is no difference in the doctrines of Christian, Moslem, or Parsee, any more than there can be a doubt that it is a primary religious duty of the sinner thus to repent. But when this *moral* change has taken place, when the man actually returns to the path of obedience, is the *religious* act of repentance complete? Is Repentance merely commensurate with Reformation? and can we justly consider ourselves

*at one* with God from the moment in which we resolve to obey His law for the future?

I suppose it will be granted on all hands that, to complete reformation into repentance, it is needful that our moral change should assume its natural religious aspect; namely, that it should be accompanied by *contrition*, or grief at having offended our good and holy God, and express itself in *prayer*, that prayer which is the infant's lifting of the hands that it may be taken again to its mother's heart. These feelings and acts are only natural results of the relation of a repenting creature to God, and no doubt can well exist as to their necessity for meeting that relation.

But now, again, this Reformation completed into religious Repentance by contrition and prayer—is *this* enough? Is man reconciled to God, and may he consider himself in his right position with Him, when he has thus repented?

Here divide for ever sacerdotal and intuitional theology! While intuition tells us that we *are* at one with our God, and while our hearts repose in peace and joy, which reason refuses to treat as visionary, and faith forbids us to suppose bestowed otherwise than in unclouded love, the churches proclaim that we are in utter, gross, fatal delusion. We are *not* reconciled to God, nor He to us. Our sins must be "*pardoned*" before God can love us or hear our prayers, nay, before our acts of social or personal virtue cease "to have the nature of sin." And this "pardon" God can only

grant, and man can only receive, on conditions the most appalling and the most perplexing !

I shall not here attempt to touch these wondrous "schemes of salvation"—the atonement of the Cross, remission through faith, or systems of sacramental penance and absolution.\* The concern of the philosophic moralist is simply with the questions, "Does God pardon human offences against His law?" "In what sense does He do so?" Let us in the first place ascertain, if possible, the precise meaning of this word "pardon."

"Pardon" has two significations :—1st. When a man

\* A simple account of these as existing in all the religions of the world would form a most serviceable basis for what might be called a scientific religious anthropology. Neither the Taurobolia nor the Egyptian sacrifice of the accursed red ox were so remarkable and significative as the Mexican ceremonies lately brought to light (Helps's *Spanish Conquest*, vol. ii.). In the month corresponding to Lent the priests of the supreme god called the people to repentance by the sound of a shrill flute, intended to represent the voice of conscience. After ten days' public lamentation and prayer for forgiveness of sins, the image of the god (with a golden ear to represent his readiness to hear supplications) was brought forth, and a beautiful youth, who had for a year received every honour and instruction, was solemnly sacrificed. The bleeding heart of the victim was then *eaten* by the nobles. There was another *sacrament*, less terrible, in Peru :—"The Mamaconas of the Sun, who resembled Nuns of the Sun, made a small loaf of maize flour, tinged and kneaded with the blood taken from a white sheep that day sacrificed. Then they commanded the visitors from all the provinces to enter, and, having placed them in order, the priests of the ascertained lineage of Lluquiyupanqui gave to every one a morsel" (Acosta, *Hist. Nat.*, lib. v. c. 23).

offends any one of his fellow-creatures, and believes that the offended person *resents* it, he may ask him to pardon the offence by *ceasing to feel any resentment* for it, and restoring to him the share of his good-will or affection possessed before his transgression. 2nd. When a man commits an offence, and expects that he will be *punished* for it, he may ask the person whom he expects to inflict the penalty to pardon the offence by *remitting the punishment*. Let us see how either of these meanings of the word can apply to the case of God and man.\*

For any possibility to arise of God's forgiving sin in the sense of *ceasing to feel resentment* against the sinner, it is, of course, necessary that He should first be capable of *feeling that resentment*.

Does any sound theology warrant us in believing that God feels resentment?

The most obvious view of the case is, that such a thing can never be predicted of the Supremely Good One; that we are all of us, "the oldest and wickedest of us, in His sight but little children," whom He punishes only for our good, as a mother corrects her wayward infants, and without one shade dimming the everlasting light of His infinite love. We feel at once that such is the highest ideal of a human parent, and,

\* Trench distinguishes the first of these acts as "forgiveness;" the second, as "pardon" (*Lectures to Ladies*, p. 226). The distinction would be convenient, but does not appear to be usually recognised. See the quotations in Johnson's *Dict.*, art. "Pardon."



*à fortiori*, of a Divine Creator, to whom none of the impatience which detracts from the perfection of our love can ever be possible. According to the beautiful words of Ramsay, "A Being that loves essentially all His creatures—a Being that had no other design in creating them but to make them happy for ever and ever in the knowledge and love of His boundless perfections—a Being that knows, wills, and employs continually all the means necessary to lead all His intelligent creatures, without exception, to their ultimate and supreme [virtue and] happiness—can never become indifferent about them, cease to interest Himself in them, and abandon them to everlasting misery. *He can never be disgusted with their imperfections*; He can never take any pleasure in their sufferings: all His punishments, therefore, must be remedies, and all his severities salutary cures. He can never cease to pity and succour but when His remedies become useless and the patients incurable, which we shall show to be impossible. . . . It is, therefore, a poor, weak reasoning in some to prove the necessity of a revelation by this frivolous argument—that without one we could never be assured, after sin, that God is appeasable. This poor, insignificant notion degrades and humanizes the Deity, as if He could be really incensed, angry, or altered by our vices."\* "Anger," saith the Kaliph Ali, "even when just, is disgraceful." Of all the dishonourable things which anthropomorphous creeds have

\* Chevalier Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles*, b. ii.

taught men to think of God, next to cruelty, must be placed the "wrath" and "fury" and "vengeance" which make of the serene Deity of Heaven a prototype of the raging despots of earth.

Dismissing, however, with due reprobation, those gross and heathenish notions which would thus represent God as feeling against the sinner a resentment analogous to the *evil* passions of humanity, we find there is still a very deep problem to be solved before we can decide that there is *nothing* altered in the loving relation of Creator to creature by the sin of the latter. To affirm this would be tantamount to affirming that a faithful, obedient, and adoring child of God gains from Him nothing more of love than a rebel and blasphemer. Let it be granted that God *does* love and pity the wretch who revolts against His blessed laws and chooses misery instead of joy; that He pities him as a mother pities her refractory child, and does all to lead him back into that way of peace for which He made him, and whither He foresees he shall sooner or later return. But does God love no more than this the heart which gives itself wholly to Him, which seeks Him hourly, and consecrates its all of existence to His will? I believe that for the answer to this question we must fall back on the doctrine of the proper Eternity of God. As I have so often repeated, He has made *all* intelligencies for everlasting virtue and piety, and He *foresees* that blessed state for all: nay, to Him the worst of sinners is *now* (in a sense) the seraph that he

shall be in the millenniums of future immortality. That love which a Holy God could give to the most pure and faithful soul, God *keeps* for every man: it is, as it were, there waiting for him in the Infinite Heart of his Creator. And as there is no present or future to God, there is no need for *change* in His awful sentiments (if we may use such a word) to accompany the change in the repentant creature's soul. It is to God all one—all an eternal and immutable now of absolute love.

But to the creature who lives in time, and undergoes vast changes in his unceasing progress, there must needs be this difference—that he cannot feel or know the relation of an obedient soul to its loving Lord *till he become obedient*, and each successive degree in the warmth of the Divine love must be discovered by his own progressing spirit travelling nearer to its rays. It is all in ourselves that the change must be wrought; but not the less does that change involve the whole nature of our relation to God. If we desire that most blessed love which God gives to an obedient soul, there is no use whatever in trying to persuade ourselves we possess it while we remain disobedient. To *us*, children of time, it is a *future* thing: *we* cannot feel or know ourselves to possess it now. It lies hidden for us in the vastest deep of Deity. God's *pitying love for us as sinners*; His will to bring us back into His fold—that is all we properly possess now, all we can know or feel. But let us turn to our Father in true repentance, and

the case is changed. That act by which the holy will within us asserts its law, and resolves to obey the right and love Him who is righteous, opens the portals of heaven to our gaze, and we may see and feel thenceforth ever more and more of that ineffable glory and ecstatic joy which awaits us in the love which God gives to "those that love Him."

If these views be true, the Forgiveness of sins, in the sense of a cessation of Divine Resentment, is on this wise: God has no resentment, therefore there can be no cessation of it; neither is God mutable, therefore there can be no change in any of His eternal sentiments. Nevertheless, God does love in a peculiar manner His obedient children, and this love (though always existing in Him previsional of their future deserts) they can only experience when obedient. The return to obedience, then, actually gains for them something from God; namely, the *sense*, which before they had not, of His peculiar love. They are "forgiven" (if we choose to retain a word consecrated by such natural simplicity of metaphor) when they are *allowed to feel* God's love as He gives it to His obedient children. All the feelings which have been imaged in so many millions of hearts by the words "reconciliation," "atonement," and "pardon," have a meaning, and a most profound one, though error must have crept in wherever any mutability was attributed to the immutable God. It is all in *us* that God's forgiveness is wrought from beginning to end; but it is not less a real transaction on that account.



The second meaning of the term "forgiveness" implies the *remission* of the punishment due to the offence. Can God, consistently with justice, goodness, and immutability, *remit* punishment? In my former work (*Theory of Intuitive Morals*, p 56), I endeavoured to demonstrate that God executes punishment on all sin in His double capacity of Sovereign Judge of the universe, and of Father of Spirits. As Judge, He executes the eternal Law by inflicting equivalent *retribution* on every offender against that law; as Father, He inflicts on all His children the *correction* which their moral welfare demands. The justice which works Retribution and the goodness which works Correction are in absolute harmony in inflicting the punishment which results in the same great end; namely, the fulfilment of the eternal Right, and the Virtue of rational souls in which that Right is impersonated. If God were less just, He would be less good: if He were less good, He would be also less just.

Now, I ask, on *these* grounds, what room is there for the *remission* of the punishment of sin? Shall we ask the Judge of the universe to forego the demands of the everlasting Law, and to inflict on us less *retribution* than we have been proved to deserve? Shall we ask the Father of our spirits to withhold the *correction* which He has seen is necessary to purge and heal our sick and sinful souls, and restore them to virtue?

Here, as in so many other cases, nothing but imperfect comprehension of the nature of the boon they sought could ever have induced men to proffer the

petitions whose acceptance would be alike dishonouring to God and disastrous to man. At a low stage of the moral life, before Virtue is recognised as far more desirable than Happiness, it is natural that we should desire to escape from punishments whose place in the great justice of the world we do not understand, and whose salutary effects on our souls we neither know nor appreciate. The child-man cries to his Father to take away the medicine which that Father knows is necessary for him in all its bitterness. Further on, we arrive at the stage of *miracle* when we imagine that eternal justice may, in some incomprehensible way, be compounded with by other sufferings than those of the sinner, and that, by an equally marvellous alchemy, our moral restoration may be effected by the "imputation" of a righteousness not our own. When these ideas are discarded, and the soul stands, loaded with all its sins, face to face with its Judge and Father, there would be nothing for it but despair, were it obliged still to retain that hideous dogma on which the whole popular system of fallacies respecting the forgiveness of sins finds its ultimate support—the doctrine of the eternity of future punishment. Once let the monstrous assumption be admitted that the crimes of a finite being (finite in number, and graduated in guilt) actually deserve infinite Retribution—once admit this, I say, and there is necessarily an end of all that resignation to God's punishments which befits alike the free moral intelligence who admits and adores the justice of his doom,

and the loving child of God, who blesses the hand which holds to his lips the medicine which shall heal his soul. The thought of our own *everlasting* perdition, of our eternal banishment from God and goodness, is a thought which the soul cannot, and *ought* not, to be able to face. That Virtue which is threatened to be taken away from a man for ever is the share committed to him in the great end of the universe—it is the one thing he is to desire now and for ever. To tell him to renounce it, and submit resignedly to final reprobation, is not merely to call on him for a sacrifice beyond his natural powers (as it has been usually represented), but to ask him to content himself with that wherewith he *ought not* to be contented. No amount of religion or virtue could help a man to *renounce* religion and virtue for all eternity. Thus, then, if our sins *did* deserve infinite punishment, man would be placed in the awful dilemma between the impossibility of resigning himself to such retribution, and the fresh crime of revolting against God's just retribution on his sins. But the difficulty vanishes when we see that this whole Castle of Despair, which has been frowning over the world for ages, is founded on no rock of intuition, deep as man's nature and wide as his race, but on such crumbling base as the uncertain meaning of a few uncertain words in a book of most uncertain authority! On these, and these alone, confessedly rests a doctrine which stultifies all human sense of justice and of goodness, which renders the whole meaning and end of creation utterly incom-

prehensible,\* and throws into the relation of creature to Creator an element of inextinguishable disunion. But rejecting once for all this hideous tenet of the existence of a world of reprobation, how simple instantly becomes the duty of sinful man to his Divine Judge! We have sinned, and we know that God will punish us proportionately to our sin; but *could we wish that it should be otherwise?* Do we not love justice in the abstract, as the sacred principle whose manifestation we long to trace in every page of human history? Do we not adore it personified in the blessed God, whose glory would fade away out of our sight could we believe Him ever to forego that holy law of everlasting justice? So far from wishing that God should “forgive” us, in the sense of *remitting* the punishment due to our sins, we should rather cry, even from the depths of our crushed hearts, “Even so let us suffer, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

Thus, even as regards Retribution, the religious man may *willingly* resign himself to the punishment which will be meted to him by that Justice which he adores. Still more easy and simple it ought to be for him to submit himself to that Correction which, in the same

\* If we suppose that God created man for any good end whatever—virtue, piety, or happiness—it is attributing to the All-Wise actual fatuity to assert that man will not reach that end. God must have foreseen the result of His creation of every man, woman, and child. Did He foresee it to be good or bad?



suffering, will heal his sin and help him onward on the path towards his anxiously desired end of virtue and religion. There ought here to be but little difficulty. If we desire Virtue above Happiness (as we must do if we truly desire virtue at all), then such loss of happiness as God causes expressly to promote our virtue ought to be accepted by us thankfully, as the best service which can be done to us. There is no more thought now of praying for the remission of a punishment, which punishment would entail our everlasting exclusion from virtue. It is a *medicine*, not a *poison*, which is contained in our Father's cup; and each of His true sons will say, "That which He hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

For all these reasons, I conceive that to pray for the Forgiveness of sins, in the sense of the Remission of their due punishment, is at once unphilosophical and irreligious. It is unphilosophical, as a petition to the immutably just and good God to forego justice, and to substitute an injurious mercy for that goodness which would promote our highest welfare. It is irreligious, as the expression of a *desire* that the absolute perfection of the Divine Justice should be infringed upon for our sakes, and that the means should not be taken which will lead us to God and goodness.

Does repentance, however (it will be asked), make no difference in the *outward* condition of man, as well as it does, so wondrously, in the *inward*, when it admits us to the help of the Divine Spirit and the sense of the

Divine love? Like Manlius of old, we have seen that the Father of the world will *embrace* His offending son; but will He also likewise *condemn* him to the full penalty of his offence?

At this point we fall back at once on those physical laws in whose chain we have seen there is no room for any direct agency of prayer. The sequence of cause and effect which sin has commenced cannot be stopped by Repentance. The penitent drunkard's constitution will not be restored: the awakened sluggard's fields will not bear the harvests he neglected to sow.\* The

\* That these doctrines of modern philosophy are also those of the most ancient Judaism, has been lately maintained by a very liberal and learned Jew, Dr. Philippsohn, in his *Lectures on the Development of the Religious Idea*. He says (p. 46, trans.), "As Judge, God suffers the natural consequences to follow upon sin, and thus leaves it not uncondemned. But sin is not only a material act; it is also a condition of the soul in relation to God. It has interrupted and checked the soul of man in its approach to its Maker. It is God's mercy that calls the penitent, that forgives transgression, removes the obstacles in his path, and brings the sinner's soul back to Himself. Such is the doctrine of Mosaism." That such is the *true* doctrine there is no doubt; but how far the Jewish or the Christian Maurice are critically justified in asserting that such ideas really belong to a Book which, though assumed to be Divinely adapted for that purpose, has failed for 3000 years to teach them, *till* they arose (apparently logically enough) out of the metaphysical philosophy and free theology of our own times—this is a question which demands great learning and marvellous honesty. It is clear enough that there is much "new wine" in the world just now. Is it not strange to find it so pertinaciously served to us in the "old bottles?" Did any one know they held it a hundred years ago?

*fresh* accumulation of ill-desert is indeed arrested ; no new debts to the Divine Justice are incurred ; and this, of course, has its important influence. Also the renewed vigour acquired by the righteous will may lead a man in various ways out of the sphere of his former evil life. He who abandons himself to vice has all nature against him ; for her laws have been regulated by God to check iniquity, and to foster temperance, chastity, industry, and the benevolent affections. He who devotes himself to Virtue throws himself at once on the side of Omnipotence, and has all nature in his favour. But still the punishments he has already merited, and which the just God, through His physical laws in this world, or through His unknown arrangements of the next, has prepared for him, those punishments he *must* suffer. *A priori* it is clear that, according to God's immutable justice, it *ought* to be so : *à posteriori* it is so manifest that such is actually the course of Providence, that the creeds which have adopted the doctrine of the Remission of the punishment of sin are obliged constantly to refer it to the punishments of that unseen world of whose condition we are practically ignorant, because it is patent that no such remission takes place here.\*

\* It is a remarkable chapter in human history, that of the belief in the possibility of obtaining Remission of the punishment of sin, and it is curious to notice with what contempt each adherent of the doctrine is inclined to regard the same fundamental idea when presented under another garb from that which is familiar to him. Heathens of the higher class of minds looked with horror at the doctrine of a remission

Very deep and very beautiful are the ideas of Repentance which result from the acceptance of these views of the Divine forgiveness of sin. No sooner is the fearful weight of the doctrine of infinite punishment

to be gained by vicarious atonement. "You believe," says Cicero (*De Natur. Deor.*, lib. iii.), "that the Decii, in devoting themselves to death, appeased the gods. How great, then, was the iniquity of the gods, who could not be appeased but at the price of such noble blood!" Christians, on the other hand, habitually treat as highly derogatory to God the idea that He could remit sins *without* atonement. Nor is it till this atonement has reached that point which to the natural moral intuition of man appears the ultimate condition of *injustice* (namely, the infliction of the punishment on a perfectly sinless substitute for the sinner) that the orthodox mind proclaims itself satisfied with the scheme proposed for the reconciliation of the Divine Justice with its own impunity from deserved retribution. Where the remission is sought by any *lesser* injustice or sacrifice the same judgment is always passed. Even the terrific *self-immolations* of the Hindoo are deemed to prove nothing but an evil nature in the poor devotee, while the belief in the immolation of *another* for the same atonement is the sole saving virtue of the Christian. "The doctrine of works of supererogation," says Cooke Taylor (*Hist. Mohamed*, p. 274), "and the corollary that atonement may be made for crime by vicarious penance, exist in Hindustan at the present hour, and the writings of Origen show us that opinions *so gratifying to our corrupt nature* were extensively spread over the East in the early ages of Christianity."

Truly it is a blessed thing to turn from all such wretched results of ignorance of the entire harmony of God's Justice and Goodness, and say with Channing, "I dare not ask Christ to offer an infinite satisfaction for my sins, to appease the wrath of God, to reconcile the universal Father to His own offspring, to open to me those arms of Divine mercy which have encircled and borne me from the first moment of my being. The essential and unbounded goodness of my Creator is the foundation of my hope, and a broader and a surer the universe cannot give me."



removed, than the heart instantly springs up like a fresh fountain into the sunshine of peace and love. The crouching slave shrinks no more from the lash with the pitiful cry, "Spare us, good Lord! Deal not with us according to our sins, neither reward us according to our iniquities." The degradation, which lay in the sin itself, is not further deepened by the cowardice which was inevitable while that sin's impending punishment was supposed to be infinite. The one noble sentiment which remains for the fallen is open to him now, and by it he rises again in mournful, yet in manly dignity, before his Father's judgment-seat:—"Punish me, for I have deserved punishment. Purify me through suffering, for I long to be pure. That eternal and all-sacred law which I have broken demands retribution on my head. Turn not aside for me the justice for which I adore Thee! My heart is full of sin and pollution till I am sick of my wickedness. Heal Thou me, O my Father, by any medicine, however bitter, Thou knowest to be best."

In these two solemn thoughts—*expiation*, or the free acceptance of deserved Retribution; and *purification*, or the grateful submission to merciful Correction—lie the essential supports of a Repentance such as befits a being who is both a moral free agent, capable of judging himself and submitting intelligently to his judgment, and a child of God, knowing and desiring above all things the blessed end for which his Father chastises him. The soul is humbled indeed by thoughts like these;

but it is far from being degraded. It is saddened, but with its sorrow blends a pure and holy joy. “*Fear* hath torment;” but love, and trust, and resignation, bring peace even to the conscience tortured by remorse.

Repentance thus understood, as springing simply from the relation of sinful man to God, differs in many shades from the representations commonly made of the act. I shall enumerate a few of these differences.

1st. As I have said, it is wholly *fearless*, and, instead of shrinking from punishment, freely submits to it as Retribution and thankfully accepts it as Correction.\*

2nd. It is full of faith in God’s readiness to restore the soul. It prays with the confidence of a child who knows that its father only waits for the prayer to bless him. No hesitation on this point is possible; for God is known to have created the soul expressly for virtue and piety, and to will that end immutably, now and for ever. Confession to a priest, penance, absolution, belief in a certain theological scheme of pardon, hope through an atonement or a human or Divine mediator—all these are seen to be entirely foreign to the simple act by which the Prodigal rises and goes to that loving Father, who meets him even while “yet he is a great way off,” and looks for no sacrifice save that of the

\* “S’il arrive que je commette des fautes pour lesquelles il faille livrer mon corps et mon âme je les livre. . . . S’il me reste quelque péché dont je n’ai pas eu soin de me purifier, je me soumetts avec joie aux maux, à la punition.”—*Zend-Avesta, Patets.*

“contrite heart” ere he seals the kiss of peace upon his weeping eyes.\*

3rd. True Repentance is directly and simply Repentance *for sin*. It is not sorrow that we have incurred the risk of *punishment*, which (for all that it is preached so often) is nothing but a base and hound-like fear. It is not regret that we have contributed to necessitate the sacrifice of a noble and beloved substitute, which, though (in the supposed case) a right sentiment, has nothing whatever directly to do with religion, or the soul’s grief for having broken God’s laws. True Repentance is not diverted from its proper task by any imagery of fear or pity : it has enough to do to contemplate the plain and dreadful fact that *we have disobeyed the eternal law of our blessed God*. It is *for this* we are to sorrow ; and if our grief be not more acute and more spontaneous for this cause than for any other, I can only say we delude ourselves in fancying we Repent ; we are not sorry *for our sin*, whatever else we may be sorry for.

Lastly. The Repentance of a believer in God’s absolute goodness ought to be a far deeper and more awful one than that of another man. He has recog-

\* “Thou desirest not sacrifice. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”—*Psalms* li.

“He who purifies himself in the river of a subdued spirit . . . will be liberated ; but liberation cannot be attained by any outward observance.”—*Punchu Tuntru*, by Vishnu Shurma.

nised what sublime and tremendous thing is the everlasting Moral Law of the universe. For this all-holy Law—for the virtue which lies in obedience to it—he believes that the worlds are cradles and Immortality man's day of work. No words can tell how great, how stupendous to him, is the thought of this law; *yet he has broken it!* He, the worm of earth, the child of yesterday, has disobeyed the law which binds all the clusters of the heavens, which stretches over the eternities of the past and the future! But the repentant Atheist might feel all this. There is a sting far sharper in the wounded spirit of the Theist. *He* has broken no mere *abstraction* of a law. However solemn and sacred its obligation even as such would be, over *him* it has tenfold that right: it is God's law.

It is a miserable thing to offend any one we love and respect. Perhaps it does not often happen to us in mature life to feel this pang; but the son whose selfishness has darkened a mother's age, the wife who has betrayed a loving and honoured husband, doubtless know well the nature of that grief which, in its childish form, used to seem enough to burst our infant hearts. Such is the misery of self-reproach under such circumstances, that, sooner than face it, men are commonly base enough to seek to palliate their ingratitude by maligning the character or undervaluing the benefits of the person whom they have offended. Where this is impossible, or where the voice of conscience makes itself heard too plainly to permit of recourse to such



vile expedients, the sentiment of repentance towards our beloved but injured friend is probably one of the keenest emotions to be produced by man's social relations with his kind. But what are, or ought to be, such regrets compared with our repentance towards that God whom we may *entirely* honour, *entirely* love, to whom we owe *everything*? It is the very magnitude, the enormity of our perversity and ingratitude, which prevents us from feeling them as we ought to do. We cannot believe that yesterday's easy and yet unpunished sin—the lie, the anger, the unkindness, the selfishness, were actually offences against the Lord of heaven and earth; disobedience to commands enforced by every most sacred right and every most tender claim.

At each advancing stage of the religious life the guilt committed at that stage is necessarily enhanced in all ways. Each fresh ray of light which has dawned on us renders us more inexcusable for neglecting to obey that which we see more and more clearly to be right. Low creeds and low stages of religion possess excuses for sins almost amounting, in some cases, to complete exculpation; but he who has truly learned the faith that "God is good" need seek no palliation evermore for his offences in the plea of want of broadest sunlight.

Still more does advancing religious life heighten the guilt of sin by heaping up fresh mountains of mercies, over which the offender must needs trample on his path to crime. Every lesson God has taught us, every joy

of communion He has granted, every sin He has swept away from the cloudless heaven of His love, stands up in judgment against us. There is no measuring the weight which attaches itself to the wilful and deliberate disobedience of a soul which has "tasted of the heavenly gift."\* And though a true faith teaches us that it is *not* "impossible" for such a one to renew all its spiritual life once more by repentance—but, on the contrary, that sooner or later, in this world or the next, it will assuredly do so—yet that very knowledge of God's infinite goodness and long-suffering adds but the last deepest stain to its ingratitude and crime.

And again: it is not merely definite repentances for definite sins which the enlightened conscience feels or ought to feel most deeply. It is not the occasional falls or stumbles on our path of duty (shameful though they be) that we most bitterly lament. No; it is, that the whole path has been on too low a plane of being; that we have been plodding along the shore amused with pebbles, when we should have scaled the cliff. In those awful moments of the spiritual life when we gain the clearest glimpses into the cavernous depths of our own souls, it is, I am persuaded, nearly always this *general* sense of sinfulness which appals us, and not the special offences which we can dare to look at one by one and lay penitently at God's feet. And it is right it should be so. When death, in taking our human friend or parent, has opened our eyes to the reality of

\* Heb. vi. 4.

our relations towards those whom we have lost, what is it nearly always in the past which stings us with such intolerable pain? Not definite acts of perfidy, falsehood, unkindness or disobedience, half so much as the *general* failing of our love, and confidence, and tenderness. As we think how we mistrusted their affection, or served them complainingly, or obeyed them sullenly; how we constantly undervalued their characters, or lost the opportunity of intercourse, or remained thankless for their benefits—we feel as if we had swerved from our friendship or our filial duty more vilely than by twenty overt acts of offence. It were better to have spoken harsh words than to have distrusted our friend. It were better to have disobeyed our parent than to have served him with clouded brow and grudging spirit.

And is not this the experience of us all as regards our Friend and Father in Heaven? He has said to us in tones of unutterable love, "Give me thine heart." And it is precisely our hearts we have *not* given Him, while we have offered Him slave-service and lip-service instead.

It were well if we could recognise, once for all, that this *general* swerving of the heart and low level of moral and spiritual life constitutes the just ground for our deepest penitence. Not seeing that it is so, those who have recognised the great truth, that it is on the side of a sense of sin that the finite creature must approach nearest to Infinite Holiness, and who therefore

rightly cherish the sense of penitence as the deepest spring of the religious life—these persons constantly fall into the error of striving to nourish such penitence by magnifying the enormity of trivial neglects and follies. But the mind receives only injury from such morbid morals. The “thousand talents” we all owe to God will never be made up by overscrupulous grief about little debts of mites and farthings. “Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and soul, and strength.” Let us give *this*, and the mites and farthings will all be paid to the uttermost. Our great sin is, that we do not pay *it*, not that we do not pay *them*.

There is a strong tendency in our age towards a reaction from the terrific dread wherewith sin was regarded by the religious minds of earlier times. It appears that, with the fear of the Bottomless Pit continually harassing and distorting the natural growth of the moral life, men did often allow their relation to God *as sinners* to swallow up the whole of religion. Not only the beautiful ties which unite us to Him as the Author of this lovely world and the Lord of Truth were forgotten altogether, but His whole Fatherhood was merged in His Judgeship, and that Goodness which claims our love was altogether hidden behind the Justice which demands our reverence. There was error in this, of course, as in all half-sided views; and the very eagerness with which so many preachers urged that religion was *not* a gloomy thing showed clearly enough that (such as they felt it) it did not naturally



manifest itself as a principle of life and joy. Yet, dark and imperfect as were such views of our condition, I cannot but think they were better and truer than any picture of it which *omits* those deep shades cast by actual wilful sin on the life of him who has committed it.

Paint the *lights* with all thy brightest hues, O theologian! thou wilt never make God's love or man's destiny so radiant as they truly are. But, at thy peril, leave not out the *shadows*, else the whole picture will be false, and the lights themselves will lose half their glory. It is a wicked world: there is no use making flimsy veils to cover its ugly features. It is as delusive to ignore human vice as it is fanatical to ignore human virtue. Love and truth are indeed (like health and competence) the *rules* of mortal life, and cruelty and falsehood (like sickness and want) no more than *exceptions*. But they are exceptions so common and so great that they must needs be given a large space in every just view of man's existence. Our own individual sins—the sins we have committed from childhood till to-day—are *realities*, most heavy and awful realities. The very brightness which our happier faith permits us to see, in the heavenly destiny of our race and in the cloudless sunshine of God's countenance, ought to make the black shadows of our sins stand forth tenfold more sharply than under a gloomier sky. Sin ought to be far *more* dreadful to us than it is to others, never in the remotest degree less so.

If such repentance as this be really ours, most eager will be our efforts to return once and for ever into the path of duty. This it is which alone can prove any mere *feeling* of contrition worthy of God's regard; nor should whole floods of passionate tears be permitted to cheat us into the belief that we repent, unless with them is borne away every desire to repeat our sin, unless in the place of unholy wishes we find springing up the most vigorous resolutions for future virtue.\*

\* Perhaps it would be more true to say that mere feelings of contrition are actually mischievous, and involve us only in fresh webs of sin, unless they lead immediately to actual reformation. How admirable are these remarks on the subject :—"The effect of getting up the feeling of piety, and stopping with that, is like the effect of reading novels and nothing else. Thereby the feelings of benevolence, of piety, of hope, of joy, are excited, but lead to no acts; the character becomes enervated, the mind feeble, the conscience inert, the will impotent. All the great feelings naturally lead to commensurate deeds: to excite the feeling and leave undone the deed is painful in the extreme. I do not say novels are not good reading; they are so just so far as they stimulate the intellect, the conscience, the affections, to healthful action, and set the man to work; but just so far as they make you content with your feeling, and constrain the feeling to be nothing but feeling, they are pernicious. Such reading is mental dissipation. To excite the devotional feelings, to produce a great love of God, and not permit that to become work, is likewise dissipation all the more pernicious, dissipation of the conscience and of the soul. Profligacy of the religious sentiment, voluptuousness in religion, is the most dangerous of luxuries."—Theodore Parker, *Sermons*, p. 320.

"Edification," says Kant, "must be understood to mean the *ethical purchase* that devotion takes upon the actual amendment and building up of our moral characters. Many there are, however, who deem themselves much edified by a discourse, psalmody, or book, when absolutely

Repentance is the "*turning back*" in deed and word and thought as well as in mere feeling. Every one knows this. How is it to be done?

In the first place, of course, the wrong must be renounced—undone, if it be possible at any cost to undo it. It is a base thing to be so wedded to our past faults that we cannot find strength to repudiate them, to say, by our free act of reparation, "I renounce the injustice, the unkindness, the slander of yesterday." Those noble words, "I did wrong: forgive me," whose heart is it that does not really honour the manliness which speaks them? Take the extremest case: a parent. What child is there that would not revere with tenfold sincerity a father or mother whom he saw thus show obedience to the principles they inculcated by an effort whose magnitude he would be the first to comprehend?

There must be no reserving of our reputation when we repair a sin. The only reputation which we can claim is that of one who *has done wrong and repents it*. This, then, we must assume as completely as possible, leaving to God all consequences. Of course Personal

nothing has been builded up, ay, where not even a finger has been stirred to help on the work. Possibly they think that the ethic dome will, like the walls of Thebes, rise to the harmonious concert of sighs and yearning wishes."—Schiller's *Letters and Essays*, p. 217.

"That strength by which an enemy cannot be overcome, that knowledge of religion which does not produce religious actions, and those riches which are never enjoyed, are totally worthless."—*Punchu Tuntru*, by Vishnu Shurma.

and Religious offences and faults wherein our neighbour has no concern cannot require reparation towards him; but if he has *known* them, even here we should surely hasten to undo any injury such knowledge may have done him.

But supposing all possible reparation made for past sin, the great problem remains, How shall we guard against future transgression? Many methods have been proposed for this, the *paideutics* of Ethics. One in particular, often connected with repentance, bears so importantly on the whole subject of practical morals that I must afford it full examination. This done, and its error, as I hope, demonstrated, it will be fitting to point out what appears a far better and more legitimate method of self-culture.

*Asceticism*, or Self-Denial over and above the demands of God's law, has been recommended and adopted as a means for subjugating the flesh to the spirit by every known traditional religion, with the exception of Parseeism. Is it, or is it not, a true mode of achieving this great object? The presumption that it can prove so must rest on one or other of two grounds: first, that the *self-sacrifice* essential to virtue can be better practised beyond the pale of the Moral Law than in the mere fulfilment of its behests; or, secondly, that the *suffering* which is the medicine of sin can be supplied by ourselves as well as by God, and that there are occasions when He does not supply it, even though it be wanted.



The first hypothesis may be thus defended:—"The aim recognised is to fulfil our moral obligations entirely and perfectly. To gain the ease and readiness of obedience to conscience necessary to do this it appears desirable to *practise* beforehand the self-command demanded. This practice, this *moral gymnastic*, we seek in the denial to ourselves of innocent pleasures or the infliction on ourselves of unnecessary pains. We throw on the opponents of Asceticism the onus of showing our method to be false."

Nay (returns the true moralist), but on the Ascetic lies the onus of showing that his assumption has any basis, and that it *is* desirable to practise moral gymnastics. If this is to be done, it can only be by proving that obedience to all the demands of the law does not give his virtue sufficient field. The labourer who works all day to the full stretch of his muscles wants no gymnastics; neither has the soldier in full career of battle any need of drill. But let any one consider what it means to obey *all* the commands of the law; to fulfil *all* his own actual duties; to be *as* loving, reverent, faithful, submissive to God as he ought to be; to be absolutely true, chaste, temperate, and contented; to do *everything* which his power of mind, body, or estate permit for the benefit of his neighbour. Does any one think that *these* tasks will be insufficient to give his strength enough exercise? At all events, till he fulfil them perfectly, I know not what reason he can have to go about seeking fresh labours. On this

side, then, Asceticism is seen to rest on an assumption untenable the moment we recognise the stupendous magnitude of the actual demands of the eternal law.

The second hypothesis is, that the Suffering which is admitted to be the medicine of sin can be applied by ourselves as well as by God. This also rests on a monstrous assumption; viz., that there are occasions when God's children require such medicine, and yet He, who must know the want so much better than they, and desire their health so much more, withholds or neglects to supply that needful suffering. No one who has any true sense of the fatherly care of our Creator can for a moment entertain such an idea. And that *self-inflicted* suffering would in any case form a substitute for that which God sends us, is another position which cannot be admitted. Of this I shall say more presently. It has now been shown that there is an improbability on the face of it that supererogatory Self-Denial can ever be a needful mode of self-culture.

Further, there is much to be said in proof that this practice is not only needless, but morally *wrong*. Nearly every imaginable form of it involves the waste on fictitious duties, of powers all claimed by real ones. As the *Zend-Avesta* says of Fasting, it is the exhaustion of bodily gifts which are all intrusted to us for good, and of whose waste we must give account. The self-infliction of *pain* must nearly always be injurious to our bodies; these bodies which God has so wondrously

fitted for each of us "to serve the purposes of the soul."\* The refusal of the natural *pleasures* of life—food, exercise, sleep—are all refusals, simultaneously, of means of *health*, to which our kind Maker has attached those pleasures. A certain amount of each is what is best for our health, and consequently the *right* point of Temperance. If it be only demanded that we stop our enjoyments at *that* point, then there is no *supererogatory* self-denial in the case; its pompous pretension is a mere iteration of the simple law. If it be asked that we stop *short* of that most healthful point of food, sleep, and exercise, then (unless it can be shown that we are doing some actual good thereby) we must come under the condemnation of "wasting our powers." I suppose it will here be urged, that as it is right to sacrifice health to Social duty (*e.g.*, to attend the sick), it must *à fortiori* be right to sacrifice it to Personal duty (*e.g.*, to conquer our base propensities). The question then resolves itself into this: *Do* we conquer those propensities by *supererogatory* denials of lawful enjoyment? Of course the Ascetic and the Intuitionist will here join issue as to fact; but, from the arguments just urged as to the *improbability* that such a mode of self-culture can be needful, I think an immense weight of positive evidence must be produced by the Ascetic to prove that his practices have been found successful. That *temperance* should not be as *good* an exercise as abstinence—I mean as *great* a one—few that have tried it will deny.

\* Marcus Aurelius, *Medit.*, b. i.

Thus, instead of the Ascetic gaining greater strength by *greater* efforts, he will often win the *lesser* by an easier though more pretentious task.

But a more decisive objection to supererogatory Self-Denials is the Religious one. They are altogether out of keeping with our proper attitude towards God, and cannot fail to modify it injuriously. In whatever way we would regard our Creator, asceticism seems equally misplaced. We are His Pupils. Are we to learn other lessons than those He teaches? We are His Workmen. Are we to waste our powers on our own devices? We are His Patients. Are we to try to be our own physicians also? Above all, we are his Children, punished by Him, whensoever we need it, with all the severity of infinite love. Shall we treat His chastisements as too light or too rare, and tell Him that we know better than He does what discipline we need?

One or other course must be right, and the opposite balefully wrong. Either we are to leave the discipline of our souls to the Divine Physician and Parent, or we are to take its direction into our own hands, leaving only to Him (what we cannot prevent His retaining) the power of adding still further *sufferings*, while we reject His *joys*.

In the first case the course of life is clear enough. Our concern will be solely with the performance of our duties as established by the eternal necessary law. Every vicious pleasure being forbidden, and every



virtuous act and sentiment commanded, beyond these we assume that we have no other part to perform than that of grateful acceptance of all innocent pleasures and willing submission to all inevitable pains. It is our Maker's care that is to plant alike the thorns and flowers in our path. We have but "to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." To reject His flowers will be no less unfilial than to repine at His thorns. We can accept them all in childlike love and grateful submission. Every pleasure then will be holy, as God's dear gift and token of tenderness. We can thank Him for every one, and instead of feeling that we might please Him more by refusing, look up continually with the joyful knowledge that

"To enjoy is to obey."

It may be but the smallest toy of innocent delight, but it is our Father who has prepared it for us, and we can take our gratification in it under His loving eye. And every pain is no less hallowed. When we have found that by no lawful means we can escape it, then we are quite sure from whom it comes. Till we have tried those means, of course we cannot know that God intends us to suffer it, as He has prepared *them* also, and made it part of human work to discover and employ them; but where help fails, then the inevitable suffering is proved to be the medicine of our sin; the trial sent to aid our virtue. Though man may be its medium, he cannot be its origin. Still less is it our

own fantastic choice. It is all God's doing, and *therefore* (after condemning all voluntary humiliations), the prophet cries, "Hear the rod, and *Him who hath appointed it.*"\* If in this simple course of obedience we fail and stumble, we know well what it is that we have done. We have broken the eternal Law of the universe—the law of which God Himself is the impersonation. Our sin is a *reality*—a most solemn and tremendous reality. There is no room for anything like *playing at* duty. Our repentance, too, must then be real. It must not be a *turning inwards on* self, but a turning *away* from self to God. Nothing makes conscience so clear, and at the same time so free from all morbidness and sickly self-introspection, as to stand thus face to face with a Being as pure and holy as we are stained and guilty. And at the same time, the punishment is then only felt to bear its true character when it is seen to come from *another* Will than our own—a Will whose judgment is infallible, and whose right to inflict the just retribution beyond all question. Self-inflicted punishment is an anomaly.† As Kant says, "it incloses

\* Micah vi. 9.

† It is true that in a certain sense all just punishment may be said to be self-inflicted. In committing the crime, the criminal does an act which can only be *righted* by his punishment; and his own moral will, which ever legislates the right, demands that that righting punishment be inflicted on him. Punishment is "the other half of crime," by a necessary, immutable union. He who commits a crime, by the very act *implicates* his own punishment, gives to it a consent which, in human concerns, justifies the State of which he is an equal

a contradiction, punishment demanding the sentence of another." \*

On the other hand, if we are to conduct our own moral therapeutics and discipline, we stand in a totally different light, both as regards our pleasures and pains. The rejection of a pleasure being assumed to be a better method of self-culture than the acceptance of it, *every* natural pleasure becomes, at the least, questionable. Innocent it may be before the moral law; it may be pure and temperate, interfering with no required mental or bodily exercise, preventing no act of kindness to our fellows whatsoever. But if its enjoyment be believed to be *not the best thing we can do for our soul's welfare*, then it ceases to be innocent subjectively. We must take it in an immoral spirit, believing that we should do better to reject it. No more simple and thankful looking to the Donor is then possible. We dare not thank God for a pleasure which we think we ought not to enjoy. The thought of Him must then be put away, and with it all that rendered the gratification good and holy.† From thinking He does not bless

member (or, perhaps, head) in inflicting it in despite of any subsequent refusal of submission. The refusal can only come from his lower nature. There is something in the vilest of criminals which not only consents to, but demands, the just retribution of crime. But this is a very different thing from being his own judge and executioner. (See an article in *Oxford Essays*, 1855, on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.)

\* Kant, *Ascetic of Ethics*.

† A Moslem who drinks wine at all is commonly a drunkard? Why?

our pleasures, there is but one step to feeling we rob them from Him. What religious alienations and what moral disorders have arisen from this very error it is impossible to calculate. Most injurious may be the consequences of persisting in any one enjoyment belonging to human nature after the acceptance of ascetic principles. And as that nature imperatively craves and extorts some indulgences (against which, be it remembered, the Creator has never armed us), the avoidance of such a course of alienation is all but impossible. Another and equal danger is, that when we fail in executing any of our self-devised austerities, the whole action of the soul, being introspective, becomes altogether morbid. There is no escape from ourselves in the healthy contrition which turns simply to that Father whose Law we have broken. It is our *own* arbitrary rule from which we have swerved, and we only feel a sickening sense of self-contempt, so bitter and unwholesome that the chances are, we throw up altogether the reins of our appetites in disgust and despair.

There is reason to believe that the larger part of *Protestant* asceticism is a deduction from the fundamental false postulate that the normal condition of "fallen humanity" is disease. Starting with this fallacy, it follows inevitably that self-culture must be a system

"Because to him who thinketh it sin to him it is sin." He takes a *lawful* as if it were an *unlawful* gratification, and in doing so relinquishes all the restraints of conscience and piety.



not of *hygienics*, but of *therapeutics*. Man must not hope anything from a DIET which will nourish his *health*; he must seek a MEDICINE which will cure *disease*. The result of this mistake is patent. Like those unhappy hypochondriacs so numerous among the indolent and idle, the ascetic is for ever doctoring himself with some quack remedy, from which he anticipates preternatural restoration. He cannot administer to himself the *true* medicine of suffering, for the Great Physician alone knows how to prepare *that* aright, and His hand alone can offer it to his lips at the moment when it will benefit him. But in the stead of this, the patient tries his own bitter drug, believing, as the clown does, that its efficacy must be in the ratio of its nauseousness. The blessed sunlight of innocent joy, the health-giving exercise of beneficence, he will not use. He heats himself with the fervours of an excited imagination, and shuts himself up in his soul's chamber to breathe again and again his own sickly self-reflections. Standing continually with his finger on the pulse of his own religious or moral emotions, and noting and exaggerating every symptom of natural weakness, he works himself finally into the state of a confirmed valetudinarian.

But all this is gross, miserable delusion. Human souls are *not* all diseased, let the churches say what they will. The true Self of man has but one disease, and that is LETHARGY. When the righteous Will sleeps, and the lower nature gravitates unchecked to all its blind desires, then, indeed, the soul hath deadly

trance. But when the Will is awake and struggling, when the man desires, and *desires above all earthly things* (for that is the test of wakefulness), to obey God's law, then it is fanaticism to call his state disease. He may be weak, miserably, shamefully weak, weak as an infant, when he ought to have gained long ago the strength of manhood. This is the case of the great majority of us; but it is a very different thing from the dread slumber of the soul. It differs in *degree*, indeed, but not in *kind*, from that Virtue which is our healthful state. We cannot be Holy any more than we can be Infinite. *Some* weakness must for ever belong to the finite will of every created being. It is, then, the *strengthening* of those weak wills we must seek in all our moral struggles, not the healing of a *disease*, which has but one type—a type which has disappeared from the moment the true struggle has commenced, and consequently before any ascetic remedy would be adopted. Now, strength is attainable by diet, not medicine. He, therefore, who desires to gain it will ask only this, What is the “food convenient for him,” the habit of life most fitted to promote his moral health, the “daily bread” appointed for him by his God? To these questions he will, indeed, study anxiously to find the answer. He will “seek till he find them,” the modes of living which will best enable him to meet all his duties; how and when he can best worship God; how and when he can enlarge and cultivate his mind, conquer his bad feelings, and cherish good ones; what

food, and sleep, and exercise, best serve to keep his limbs and brain and animal spirits fit for their work; what services he can possibly do to his fellow-creatures, and how most effectually can he render them. In a larger way he will seek out what is the best and noblest work of life to which his powers of mind, body, or estate permit him to devote himself, and how he ought to accommodate the claims of all other duties with this chosen task. Suppose a man to seek out diligently the true reply to these questions, and to act thereon consistently, taking each answer, as it will be, in fact, the application of the Eternal Law to his own particular case—will not that man's moral *strength* be likely to grow and flourish in more and more perfect health? In such a life of absolute *self-sacrifice*, can there be want of any supererogatory *self-denial*?

Let it not be imagined that in thus condemning Asceticism, the Intuitionist can in any way be understood to advocate that narrow measurement and balancing of pleasure and duty which would scrutinize, in every petty case, lest we should ever relinquish an inch more of gratification than the law absolutely required. Such a state of things, such greediness for happiness and grudging abnegation of it, is the remotest in the world from the true "hunger and thirst after righteousness." As I have often insisted, it is only when we seek the *very best* line of conduct that the lamp of conscience shines down the one sole "strait and narrow way" of right. Not by any sordid stipulations between

happiness and virtue can we fulfil the law which bids us be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect; but if we *do* honestly seek and follow, so far as human frailty permits, whatsoever things God's law sets before us as best, noblest, purest, and most divine, *then* we are in our right course; and if it please our kind and loving God to shower His mercies on our heads like sunbeams, we may look up to the Sun with unhooded eyes, and say, with no qualm of wounded conscience, "Father, we take with grateful hearts what Thy love has seen fit to bestow."

How are we *practically* thus to obey the highest law?

The best way to overthrow *intellectual* error, of any sort, is by no means the common one of meeting it on its own ground and fighting on the same level. Nine times in ten a false doctrine is a deduction from some mistake higher up in our philosophy, some fallacious "major" assumed by ignorance, some fundamental false postulate accepted by heedlessness. To meet these aright we must go backward to the origin of the error. We must rise to higher stand-points, whence, with wider vision, we shall perceive the whole source and current of the mistake. Not only in special arguments, but in all our search for truth, this principle holds good. Let us but obtain for ourselves, or give to another, large and sound doctrines concerning the duties and destinies of man and the character and designs of God, and instantly, before we have time to attack them, whole



hosts of spectral delusions vanish of themselves. It is not that *we* have exorcised them one by one, but that *they* cannot live in that daylight into which we have passed. They are not compatible with our present faith; and in proportion to the logical completeness of our mental systems is the certainty and rapidity of their disappearance. Precisely similar is the rule by which *moral* conquests are regulated. To *rise above* our errors is the surest and most perfect method of overthrowing them. To pass into the sunlight of pure aspirations, and warm religious affections, is to leave behind us all the goblin shapes of sin's "valley of the shadow of death." Of course we are bound, at all cost, to conquer our bad propensities. If we cannot do it by the higher way, we must lose no moment in fighting them hand to hand and foot to foot. Yet I believe that, in nearly every case, *both* methods are open to us, and the highest the easiest attainable. Are we inclined, for instance, to the vices of resentment, intemperance, indolence? we may go on, day after day, on their very level, struggling fervently, perhaps, to forgive each particular injury, to deny ourselves each sinful indulgence, to force ourselves to one distasteful employment after another; or, on the other plan, we may strive to transmute the base metal of our selfish affections into such pure gold of divine benevolence as shall be incapable of *feeling* the injuries which hurt us so deeply: we may substitute exalted and holy pleasures for the vile ones of intemperance; we may adopt aims so

noble, that all our indolence will vanish in the spontaneous eagerness of our pursuit. By the first method we gain, indeed, at last, the strength which comes by exertion, and of course it must have a *part* in all virtue's labours. But by the second we fulfil two purposes at the same time. The vice is subdued and the antithetic virtue substituted at once in its room.\*

Surely if we were to think often of the sublime grandeur of our true position, it would not be hard thus to rise above the pitiful temptations under which we now sink so often. Moral Freedom, our God-like birthright, what words may tell the solemnity of that power which we hold to keep or to break the law which sways throughout all space and time, the law which has its throne in the will of Deity! Prayer, the key of God's presence-chamber, how can we ever measure the nature of that sonship's privilege, by which we enter, even whensoever we will, into the sight, the *communion* of the Lord of all! Immortal virtue, the destiny which awaits every soul amongst us, what vision can our creeping souls frame here and now, of the heaven-wide glory of the endless years, each one of which shall bring us nearer and nearer still to God!

\* Be more intent on the accomplishment of some great good, worthy and adequate to fill your affections, than over anxious to shun the smaller errors. . . . Ardour for right inspires greatness and elevation of soul. Simple fearfulness of wrong contracts the vision and paralyzes the will."—*Christian Aspects*, J. J. Tayler, p. 266.

Surely if we think often of these things, if on these mountain tops of thought, like the Guebre, we daily ascend and worship, we shall conquer at last, we shall learn to look down on our little trials as a man regards the tasks and disappointments of a child.\* Solemn and high thoughts are not *all*, but they are much. There is no home so homely, but if we can but bring God therein it becomes a Fane. When we think of His purity, all our unholy desires flee rebuked into their dens; when we remember His love, light and joy stream into the darkest prison-house of the soul. But *can* we realize these attributes while we are indulging in sin? Not so. It is the "pure in heart" *only* who see God's purity; only the loving soul wherein God's love can be reflected. Here is an endless interworking of cause and effect. The fulfilment of duty permits us to rise to the contemplation of holy truths, and this contemplation helps the fulfilment of duty. Works nourish faith, and faith generates works.

The ethical discipline, then, proper to a true system of practical morals, is this: Rejecting all supererogatory and fanciful self-mortifications, we should strain ever towards a higher and higher obedience to God's eternal law. We should know no grudging, no niggardliness of pleasures to be sacrificed or pains to be suffered, but

\* "Let every Brahman with fixed attention consider all nature, both visible and invisible, as existing in the Divine Spirit; for when he contemplates the boundless universe existing in the Divine Spirit, he cannot give his heart to iniquity."—*Institutes of Menu*, b. xii. 118.

always have the question on our lips, "How much *can* I do?" never "How little *need* I do?"

Thus Virtue, springing up in genuine love and reverence for duty, will, in the first place, be **CHEERFUL**, alert, full of readiness to answer every call. The alacrity with which duty is obeyed is of infinite importance. Not only is it true in Social matters that "*bis dat qui cito dat*," but also that "the procrastination of a good action is a sin." \* The present alone is ours, in which God has given us the power to do the justice or the kindness. He says to each of us :—

"Tu n'as qu'un jour pour être juste,  
J'ai l'éternité devant moi." †

In that one day *we* must do whatsoever we may of right and good, promptly and thankfully. Not to us belongs the future. It is no sort of excuse that we have not done to-day's duty because we purpose to perform it to-morrow. Who has guaranteed us a to-morrow; nay, or another hour of life, strength, sight, leisure, wealth, or whatsoever else we needed to accomplish this duty? And to Personal Virtue the whole spirit of quick obedience to conscience is of incalculable value. That "girding of the loins," that "feeling the reins in the mouth," which can only come when we cast off vigorously our slip-shod habits of procrastination, and force

\* *Zend Avesta*.

† Lamartine, *Jocelyn*.



ourselves to do at the moment whatever at the moment appears a duty ; that is the health and hardihood of the soul. There is scarcely a better motto for life's guidance than the brave old exhortation, " Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, *do it with all thy might !*"

And Virtue will be HUMBLE ; looking up ever beyond present attainment, standing abashed before its own ideal of the dignity rightly belonging to a moral being, it will gain a lowliness deeper still when it kneels in daily adoration before that Divine Perfection towards which it will struggle onward through the mire and clay, through the storm and cloud for ever.

And further, it will be SIMPLE, free from that corroding self-consciousness which ever tarnishes the virtue of the ascetic. " The eye which often turns inward is never long or steadfastly fixed on any more elevated object.\* But he who looks always upward adoringly to God's perfection, always forward eagerly along the path of duty, will gain a healthiness of soul such as distinctly marks the practical philanthropist from the solitary devotee. He will be saved from the sickly recoil of the spirit, which is always falling back on its own weakness, always trying self-invented remedies for its diseases, and employing itself in noting the symptoms of their action. Have we not all felt how fresh and bracing has proved the open atmosphere of real moral work when we have been mercifully forced

\* Sir J. Stephen's *Essays in Eccles. Biog.*, vol. i. p. 316.

to try it, and driven out of the close chambers of our own thoughts and self-scrutinies? When it happens to us to slip in our pilgrim road, we shall not stand ever afterwards examining and lamenting over the spot, but rise up with burning cheek and heart, more eager than before to press onward and redeem our lapse.\* As old Confucius taught, "If thou chancest to fall, be not discouraged. Remember that thou mayest rise again, and that it is in thy power to break the bands which join thee to thine iniquity, and to subdue the obstacles which hinder thee from walking in the paths of virtue."†

*Cheerful, Alert, Humble, Simple*, such is the true life of Virtue.

Is there yet any space for the discipline of Hope or Fear. I shall not repeat here what I have said in the first part of this Essay, concerning the philosophic fallacy and moral heresy of making the happiness of heaven or torment of hell the motives of virtue. But there is a sense in which hope and fear may and ought to influence us. Had we no hope that our self-conquests

\* St. Pacian advises differently:—"To weep, namely, in sight of the church . . . to fall prostrate; to refuse luxury if one invite to the bath; to hold the poor man by the hand; *to fall down before the priests*; to ask the entreaties of the interceding church."—*Parænesis*, S. Pacian.

Such penitence as this, methinks, would hardly have commended itself to the intuitions of Marcus Antoninus.

† *Lun-yu*, 3rd Canonical Book, iv.

would become more complete and secure as we practised them, did we never expect to be more pure, pious, loving than we are, it must be owned that virtue would be a hard task-mistress, and that Personal Duty would be a most forlorn labour. We may, on the contrary, "bless God and take courage" when we recognise that law of progress which makes each effort facilitate the following steps in an ever-increasing ratio. That this progress is not to be brought to a termination at death, but proceed for an actually endless duration, till it be carried into heights of perfection beyond our present comprehension, this is surely a Hope which may well invigorate our fainting spirits, and give to virtue itself the only added grandeur of which it is susceptible, namely, durability. And Fear, too, is not without place. There are some awful truths revealed to us by experience concerning the laws which punish sin. The hardening of heart, the loss of faith in truth, in purity, in Divine or human goodness—the clouding over of all vision of God, who seems to recede away, and, as it were, evaporate in a mere impersonal Power—the dumbness of soul which cannot even pray for delivery from the nightmare horrors of the gulf into which it is sinking—these things are FEARS; ay, fears, which make him who knows them cling by God's feet even in agony of supplication. Who knows how profound, how vast that gulf of despair may be? Who knows when we may emerge? When we have fallen therein, we shall see no star of hope above.

The grave may not give us back the faith we have forfeited.

God keep us from that *real* hell! Any grief, any shame, any suffering, only save us from *that*!

We call these anticipations *hopes*: these awful terrors *fears*; but are they not properly so, else could they not be admitted to weigh in the choice of virtue. They are nothing beyond *the choice itself*, but only the assurance of its endless durability. It is the Right itself we are contemplating and choosing in its relation to our own souls and to eternity. It is the Wrong in its own natural development, and not in any adventitious results, which we behold and shun.



## SECTION V.

## FAITH.

THE Duty of Faith is perhaps the one of all others which in modern times has been most frequently misunderstood. I shall not now pause to expose the vulgar fallacy of confounding faith with that intellectual process, that "conjunction of ideas," which constitutes belief in an historical fact. The application of the terms belonging to *moral* distinctions to an act so purely *mental*, reveals an obtuseness to the nature of morality itself, which suffices to place the speaker beyond the pale of argument. Happily, so strong a reaction is taking place even in the bosom of the Protestant churches against this absurd error, that it may be hoped it will ere long be exploded. The kernel of truth, of which it appears to be the utterly worthless shell,\* is doubtless this:—That the acceptance with heart and head of the doctrine of the "GOODNESS OF GOD" (set forth in the teaching and life of Christ, *or in any other way*) is the SALVATION of the soul. And why? Because not till we believe in such goodness is it possible for us to fulfil the fundamental canon of religious duty, and *love* Him with heart, soul, and strength. No real religion begins till such love

\* *National Review*, No. 1.

buds within us, nor can we love God at all till we recognise the lovely attributes in Him. Heathenisms in general, and the more debased forms of Christianity, displayed these so little, and natural religion has for ages been so imperfectly developed on the side of true piety, that it is no marvel that men should have from first to last centred the question of faith in God's goodness on the point of belief in the Divine Truth of him who spake the parable of the Prodigal, and made love "the first and great commandment." Whatever other errors came to be blended with this thought, however much the martyrdom which crowned that Prophet of God's love was misconstrued into an atoning sacrifice, to *propitiate the wrath* of that very God whose boundless forgiveness it had been Christ's whole mission to proclaim—still, all these paradoxical delusions must have found the support which has given them life so long, in the one truth which underlies them—*Man is saved by faith in that Divine Goodness which Jesus taught*. Of course, at that stage of the philosophical progress of humanity, in which we are enabled to examine and establish for ourselves the grounds of the great truths discovered by the intuitions of the past inspired souls, who "forerun the ages" in their spiritual might, we cease to use the *names* of our teachers in the same sense in which their earlier disciples used them. Purifying the creed of Nazareth from all accretions of error, we might indeed still ask of a man, "Does he believe in Christ?" as a question equivalent

to "Does he believe in that goodness of God which Christ preached?" In a similar way we might ask a man, "Does he believe in Euclid?" meaning, "Does he believe in the propositions of geometry?" Such a multitude of mistakes, however, have congregated about the person and office of Jesus, that it is infinitely wiser once for all to abandon the attempt of putting the new wine of modern thought into the "bottles" of old formulæ, and pay to the holy Prophet of Galilee that tribute he himself would have chosen: the reverence which refuses to use his name to add confusion to the religious difficulties of mankind.\* Christ meant himself

\* "Do not think that you can by any logical alchemy distil astral spirits from old churches. What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible, that in God's name leave uncredited—at your peril do not try believing that. No subtlest hocus-pocus of 'reason' versus 'understanding' will do that."—Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*, p. 78.

I have no doubt that the great reason why men cling so pertinaciously to the personal authority of the founders of their religions, and in general to the whole idea of a traditional revelation, is this, that it seems to afford a securer basis for their faith in the realities of a spiritual world, the existence of a God, and the immortality of the soul. The sensational philosophy appeals with greatest force to minds in which the higher powers are comparatively dormant, and whose real creed finds utterance in their favourite apophthegm, "Seeing is believing." To such persons the belief that God has been *beheld* by elders and prophets, *heard* by patriarchs and apostles, and finally *touched* in the person of the Incarnate Logos, is full of assurance. The story of a single external miracle, narrated no one knows by whom, or when or where, copied and recopied through a thousand hands, is of more value as evidence than any internal conviction their own souls

to be the *open* door to the Father's sheepfold. For how many ages have men knelt before the *closed* one,

possess. As Oersted says, they have "the true infidelity, the tendency to reject all those immediate truths which do not proceed from the impressions of the senses, and to found the entire faith on these and on the decisions of the logical understanding." Perhaps none of us are wholly free from this error. The belief that an intercourse closer than the present once subsisted between God and man is full of charm, and as hard to banish as the hope that some *material* sight or sound may hereafter "show us the Father" otherwise than "in spirit." Two very important considerations may, however, be urged in proof that this tendency to cling to a traditional revelation as the support of faith is a weakness of our immature condition which higher progress will entirely remove. Both intellectually and morally, the advancing path of the individual and of the race diverges from traditionalism. The childish readiness to trust in testimony dwindles with every fresh experience of the imperfections of human memory, and of the inaccuracy of human language even where the honesty of the witness may chance to be established to our satisfaction, and his education and intelligence render him capable of translating his impressions into the most suitable words. The mythical theory, in revealing to us a law of mind so fatal to the testimony of witnesses excited by strong feelings and not submitted to cross-examination—this alone has thrown on history a cloud which can never henceforth be removed. We shall always understand in future that when any event is presented to us we only behold it through the mist of the historian's mind. The experience of every observant person will supply instances wherein friends of whose good faith he can entertain no doubt, nay, even his own memory, have grievously deceived and misled him. Thus our confidence in the veracity of history (in such *accurate* veracity as is indispensable to form a basis for a religion) is continually diminishing, even putting aside the special difficulties starting up afresh at every step in physical science concerning the miraculous facts recorded. The value of Testimony *as such* tends to shrink ever more and more.



and permitted him to hide that Father from their love?\*

Faith, then, simply the "faith which worketh by love" (from which love springs, and in which it lives), is this—a LIVING TRUST IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD. Analysing this trust, we discover that it contains several elements. Three of these may be considered as theoretic and intellectual chiefly: the fourth alone is practical, and decides the application of the rest.

First, such Trust supposes a theoretic belief in the eternal and immutable nature of goodness itself, then in the existence of God, then in the impersonation of that goodness in the Divine character.

It would seem, at first sight, that these fundamental articles of religion require not to be insisted on to any

On the other hand, the moral progress of man tends no less decidedly to *raise* the value of his inward Intuitions. The uncertainty and hesitation which a novice in virtue feels concerning the reality of righteousness, make room for firmest confidence in the soul which has proved its loyalty in self-conflict. And the belief in an all-righteous God is, as I have so often insisted, only this faith in Righteousness at a certain height—the height wherein the Will, fully exerted, becomes conscious of the Holy Will above it. The more we *know*, the less we shall *believe* in a traditional miraculous revelation. The *better* we are, the less we shall *need* to believe in one.

\* *Vide* the extraordinary facts collected in Didron's *Christian Iconography*, showing how the mediæval artists (our best witnesses of the real feelings of Christendom) subordinated the Father entirely to the Son; and even when they depicted Him, gave Him a dishonourable position, and a garb ridiculous, hateful, or cruel.—DIDRON, p. 185, *et seq.*

professed believer in God. I conceive, on the contrary, that there are but few who can truly be said to believe them at all, and that their acceptance will create an era in the life of every soul which actually receives them. In the first place, that idea of *goodness* itself—how little do we grasp it! We love it, indeed, but so blindly, so doubtfully, that not one in ten of us knows what it is that we love, or holds any faith in its unchanging reality. It is an immense step for any man to make, to arrive at the conclusion: “There are certain actions and sentiments *I* love and revere, and must always love and revere. They are *what I call* “good.”

“ Die Tugend sie ist kein leerer Schall,  
Der Mensch kann sie üben im Leben.” \*

From this point there is but one step more to the grand resolution of morality: “I will do and feel those actions and sentiments I recognise as good. Once our consciousness of moral verities becomes clear, the daylight enters, and we can lie dreaming no more.

*The existence of God* is a dogma of weight precisely proportionate to the strength with which we grasp it. Whenever it happens to us to come against some distinct proof (or what we feel to be a proof) of the actual Being of a God—say that we perceive in the geometry of an insect’s cell the wisdom of

“ The great Geometer who made the Bee ”—

say that we behold in the unnumbered suns of heaven

\* Schiller. *Die Worte des Glaubens*.

the architecture of omnipotence—say that we feel in the silent depths of our hearts the breathless awe of recognising an answered prayer—it is the same wondrous thought, ever new, ever unfathomable, like the thought of death: “there is *indeed* a God!” Doubtless to thousands the mere assent to the dogma of a Deity never through life becomes thus tangible. It is not only that they have not what I shall presently show to be the practical element in all true faith, a *permanent* and living sense of Divine realities, but that they have *never* once actually grasped even the intellectual theory itself.

Lastly, there is the belief in the *impersonation of immutable goodness in the Divine character*. And this tenet, so far from being universally recognised, is implicitly contradicted by the intellectual creed of the greater part of the Churches of the world. It is true that the most pompous epithets of moral eulogium are applied to God in their formularies, but these are rendered utterly nugatory by descriptions of His dealings, the very reverse of those to which such epithets are legitimately applied.

What can a mere *word*, such as “good” or “merciful,” avail against full-length pictures of evil and cruelty? We all know what is the consequence to our minds when a term of respect is *officially* applied to a person whose conduct belies it. We do not alter our opinion of the *person*, but we cease to attach weight to the *title*. “His Sacred Majesty” inspires

us with no reverence for Charles II. We do not expect the Emperor of China to be heavenly-minded, though styling himself "Celestial." On the contrary, such terms as "Majesty," "Grace," "Holiness," "Serene Highness," and the like, have lost all power by their frequent misapplication, and we unconsciously treat them as of no account. Precisely in like manner do the epithets applied to God lose meaning, whenever the soul has been so far misled as to accept mainly the representation given of Him by the churches, instead of that offered by its own intuitions. The very word "good" itself is unconsciously understood in quite a different sense when applied to God. Not in a greater, nobler, wider sense, Heaven knows! but in one so narrow, and yet so vague, that it would often be hard to say if it convey any impression whatever. If we hear of the "majesty" of some private person's character, we conclude that we shall find in him dignity of demeanour and grandeur of soul. If we hear of the "King's Majesty," nothing hinders us picturing as much meanness and vice as kings have commonly displayed. Thus, when we are told that a *man* is pre-eminently "good, kind, merciful," we understand that he has *that* character our hearts spontaneously love. But when we are told that *God* is all this, how dead, how meaningless, do the words fall on our ear! What feelings, indeed, *can* they call forth when we are told that the "goodness" does not exclude the creation of millions for eternal woe, nor the "mercifulness" the



complacent contemplation of Hell?\*

To find, then, that the Divine character personifies *our idea* of goodness, *that* goodness we love in a good man, is a discovery past all price in value to the soul. It is, in fact, the point at which a genuine religion of love must begin.

The Practical element in faith is that permanent and living *sense* of these three theoretic truths which raises the conviction of the mind into the trust of the heart. This is the factor which alone can give actual value to the former figures, and it has been far too little recognised as the point of highest importance. Men are for ever preaching, Believe this, Believe that. Churches require their members to repeat perpetually their creeds, proving that theology is the only science "in which we require to be *reminded* what we believe."† But this everlasting presentation of a dead creed leads to no result, any more than all the evidences and demonstrations with which it is girded. It remains still only a dead block, a beam of dry timber, though never so well squared and polished. There is no need to marvel it puts forth no leaves nor fruit: the *sap* is absent.

That it is our duty to cultivate this vital part of

\* What did Dante mean by inscribing over the gate of hell, "*Fecemi la divina potestate ed il primo Amore?*" A "love" which consigns its victims to "*l'eterno dolore*" is not precisely what *we mean* by "love."

† Blanco White's *Life*, vol. iii.

faith—nay, that the especial moral work laid on us in the matter is the cultivation thereof, and not merely the acceptance of theoretic truths, there can be no doubt in the mind of any one who accepts the great axiom of religious duty. If we are to love God with heart, soul, and strength, we must needs acquire not only a belief in His existence and goodness, but so vivid a consciousness of His presence as may permit our hearts to bestow on Him those strong sentiments and lively emotions which they are altogether unable to send into the remote and vague regions of a merely intellectually admitted Deity. God must be believed, and God must be *felt* to be “not far from any one of us,” “about our path, and about our bed, and spying out all our ways,” if religion is ever to be to us the first of affections. If we are to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, if we are to make life one long act of worship, it is clear that nothing short of the sight of the shekinah of His perpetual presence can transform the world into a temple wherein our worship of adoring thoughts, loving sentiments, and holy actions can possibly be paid.

Herein lies the turning-point of the controversy between those who desire thus to consecrate life, and those who affirm that such consecration is impossible and undesirable. Before proceeding to show (as I shall endeavour to do in the next section) that we *can* and *ought* to give to God the hearts which He has made, it is needful first to prove that we can and ought to

possess a faith in Him which can render such life-worship possible. I shall describe this controversy of secularism and religion as well as I am able, and endeavour, by proving the legitimacy of faith, to lay a foundation on which I may next demonstrate the duty of self-consecration.

It has become very common of late to maintain, that the limitations of human nature, at this stage of existence, are such that it is quite chimerical to represent piety as the rightful *dominant* sentiment of man upon earth. We may have, it is said, some reverence, some gratitude, some love towards God even now; but the interests and affections of this world *must* occupy the foreground of our attention, and it is merely an enthusiasm which would call on us to seek "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" while still in this low stage of being. Doubtless such views as these are the result of reaction from that overstrained idea of religion put forth by some pietists, namely, that piety ought to be not merely the first, but the *only* sentiment of humanity, and that all other interests and affections should not simply be *subordinated* to it, but exist merely at its command and for its sake.

The first error understates humanity too far; and the second does so also, though it might rather, at first sight, be thought to overstate it. As Butler so well demonstrated, the moral nature of man distinctly announces itself as the rightful *master*, the dominant principle *de jure* in our compound nature. The fitness

of the "supremacy of conscience" is one of the clearest facts of our internal consciousness. Those moral sentiments, with which the religious are indissolubly united, cannot, by any violence, be self-pictured as occupying their proper place when thrust from the throne of our souls and jostled amid the crowd of our passions, interests, and desires. But, on the other side, though the head be *superior* to the hand or foot, those limbs have their own fit place and beauty in the human form. To argue that all our natural affections, our animal gratifications, our thirst for knowledge, our delight in the beautiful, are to be suffered to exist only *for religion's sake*, this is surely a great mistake. To say that we are bound to desire knowledge only because God wills that we enlarge our souls, and that we are bound to love our dearest friends only for God's sake, is equivalent to saying that the Divine law is not only to *rule* our lower natures, but to *kill* them; that we are not to rise *upon* the pedestal of our humanity, but to be suspended in air by cutting it away from under our feet.

Happily such suicidal acts as these are not wholly within the scope of human freedom; nevertheless the effort to perform them is itself injurious. Let us understand clearly that no feeling or desire which in the remotest degree *interferes* with religion and morality is to be permitted to ourselves, and that every feeling and desire which they command is to be entertained with all our strength. But beyond these



lie whole tracts of our nature which may most righteously be cultivated. We *must* indeed desire knowledge because it is right to enlarge our souls ; but we *may* also love it for its own glorious sake and sinless delights, without thinking ourselves any way deficient if, at any time, we cannot say we have taken up our book *solely* to enlarge our souls in obedience to God. We *must* feel benevolence towards our fellow-creatures because it is our duty to do so ; but we *may* also cherish some of them for their own attractions, without thinking ourselves less religious because we do not embrace our friend or child *only* for God's sake and by His command. In the case of human love, where the object is really virtuous, there is indeed a fresh absurdity involved in the doctrine that we are to love the creature only for the sake of the Creator, because the reason *why* we love God Himself is primarily His moral perfection, and each degree of virtue which we recognise in a human being has its own independent right (morally considered) to our reverence and regard.

There is, of course, very little danger to be apprehended on this side from the false statement of the claims of religion. For one who will dream of absorbing all humanity in piety, there will be thousands who will fall into the greater error of sinking religion to the level of the lower sentiments.

To return, then, to the opposite doctrine, which asserts that the love of God must needs occupy an

obscure position in the life of man while on earth. When we demand on what grounds may be thus contradicted our instinctive ascription of supremacy to the religious and moral parts of our nature, we are answered, that it is because we *cannot*, unless in an abnormal condition of mind, feel the same interest for the invisible as for the visible world; that we *must* care more for houses and lands, and wives and children, and shops and railways, and wars and stocks, than for the relation of our souls to an unseen, unfelt, unheard existence. Now this view of human nature, if good for anything, ought to be pushed some steps further. It assumes (if I understand it rightly) that what we feel through the bodily senses must be more real and more dear to us than anything else. But if this be so, how comes it that men ever care for such invisible, intangible things as fame, or esteem, or love? Is it the *sight* of a printed paper, or the *sound* of an expression of respect, or the *touch* of a warm hand, which make men strive either for the "bubble reputation" or for the dearest and purest of all earth's joys? Let any man try to analyze his own desire to be beloved, and ask himself *what he wants* from his friend. He will find that it is something which, indeed, his senses *reveal* to him at moments, but which is in no way the *object* of those senses. Human love is nearly entirely a matter of faith. We may see and feel certain parcels of matter, and call the sum of them "William," or "James," and we may see certain motions of a face which convey to

us the feeling *we* experience when we smile, and hear words which express, by a most subtle process, *our* affections; but are we (rational inductive philosophers) to jump at the conclusion that that phenomenon before us named William is *really* like ourselves; that the smile on its face and the sounds it utters really signify a love like our own? And, if it be granted that that phenomenon loves us, are we to care for that invisible love otherwise than as it may induce the phenomenon in question to give us something to eat or to wear, or to sing to us pleasantly, or gratify our senses in some way or other? What can it matter to me what are the hypothetical feelings of a hypothetical soul, except so far as they can become tangible, or visible, or audible? What can I care for the love of the phenomenon "William," who gives me nothing but love? The phenomenon "James" does not love me, but gives me a dinner once a year. His death ought, in all philosophy, to afflict me; while that of William should not touch me at all.

Who can really reason like this? Who is there that does not acknowledge, by his whole life's labour and longing, and by the endless, unheeded *sacrifices* of his sensual gratifications, that there are things in which he feels a deeper INTEREST than in aught the material world can produce?

Human love is, in very truth, no more a thing of sense than Divine love. We perceive, indeed, an object before us; but intuitions, various and mysterious, can

alone inspire us with the conviction that that object possesses that unseen *soul* which alone we can love, and can help us, from the few poor fragmentary hints of looks and words, to realize the moral qualities which we fearlessly attribute to our friend. We *believe* in the invisible soul, and in its qualities, and instantly there springs forth one of the strongest sentiments of our hearts, a love which not only does not want any material gift, but is ready to sacrifice those it possesses for this object's pleasure. Again, a few more mysterious signs, and intuition tells us we are beloved in turn by that soul, and instantly a throb of joy runs through our being. And wherefore? Is it because we shall *get anything* to see, or feel, or hear, or taste, or smell? Who thinks so?

Our affections being thus altogether dependent on intuitions, and disinterested as regards the senses, it is manifestly idle for any man who loves his *friend* to urge the immateriality of God as the reason why he cannot love *Him*. It is the unseen, unfelt, unheard, immaterial *thing* which he loves in his friend; not his face, or hand, or voice, except as that thing's exponents. He must shift his ground, then, as regards religion, and say that his reason for not loving God equally with his friend is, because he is not equally sure that God exists, or has the moral qualities he loves in his friend. The argument, then, reduces itself to this—that, if we can have equal faith in God as in our friend, we are logically called upon to feel the same interest in His



love as we should do in that of a human being who was equally lovable and venerable.

It is needless to repeat what has been said so often concerning the doubts to which are exposed all external existences. It seems to me, however, that a clear comprehension of these would often be of great service in removing the cruder and shallower forms of religious scepticism. Deprived of the hand of the five senses to which he clung so confidently, man finds that he *must* walk alone; that his own consciousness is all that he can fall back upon in the last resort; and that the existence of a material universe around him, of a love-receiving and love-returning soul in his wife, mother, friend, and of an infinite, all-adorable God above him, are all truths which *may* indeed be doubted, but which he *will*, if he be wise, believe, and cling to, and act upon, and live and die in the great trust of their reality. Nevertheless, it is both unjust and useless to pretend that doubt does not attach itself most readily and tenaciously to that truth of the three just named which, from the nature of the case, derives no verification from the bodily senses. We do not, primarily, believe in our friend's soul because we have seen or heard it; but yet our eyes and ears bring continually corroborative testimony (not demonstrative, but still corroborative) to its existence. This support we cannot obtain for our consciousness of the Being who is purely spiritual; and the result is patent, that when we are much occupied by material interests our faith grows weak, and when we are

engrossed by them it sinks into abeyance. Now I do not believe that any one actually wishes to kill his own consciousness of God. He may wish to disbelieve in the unjust and cruel potentate whom false creeds have pictured on the throne of the universe, and he may have had his natural consciousness so warped and entangled with these errors that he strives to cast off true and false religion together. But no man can desire to persuade himself that there is not an absolutely Good and Powerful Being guarding him and all the world, and bringing him with the strength of Omnipotence to his everlasting welfare. Even a very wicked man, I believe, would be glad to find faith in this God. He might shudder at the thought of the infinitely pure eyes which behold the loathsome iniquity of his heart. He might tremble (with the cowardice inseparable from a weak will) at the anticipation of the tremendous Justice which must work the retribution of his crimes, and at the unchanging and (to him) awful Goodness which is resolved to correct them. But still, if he can but understand that those eyes which behold his sin, that rod which will strike him, are those of God, of the Being who fulfils all his soul's dreams of goodness, he will sooner rush to Him, and fling himself wholly into His arms, than seek again to hide from that Loving One in the wild waste of Atheism.

What we want to remove is the *wish* to disbelieve our religious consciousness. We want to be first

assured that it is really a consciousness of a God, not of a devil, or of an imperfect being whom we could not really love or reverence, and who would only serve to hamper our moral development or fill us with hideous fears. Well says Maurice, that it is "by preaching that 'the kingdom of *heaven* is at hand,' and not the kingdom of *hell*, that we are to work upon the hearts of men and turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

But if this be gained when we are persuaded that, if we can only believe in God, we shall find Him truly God, is scepticism at an end? Alas! it is not and cannot be so. Human faith is an imperfect thing, like all other things human. The consciousness of God, taking its root and life in the very deepest foundations of our nature, is susceptible, almost indefinitely, of being crushed down and smothered by the superficial passions and interests of life. He who, in his hours of prayer and adoration, has felt most sure of the realities of the spiritual world must often lament how, in the intervals and amid the crowd of jostling cares and pleasures, these great realities fade in dim perspective, insomuch that, unless he continually renew his vision of them, they seem likely to disappear altogether from his horizon. Nor is it only thus regularly in the ratio of our attention to them, but in a thousand ways which He alone who knows the secrets of hearts can explain, the tides of human faith ebb and flow, sometimes slowly and evenly, sometimes with earthquake violence and rapidity,

leaving us at one moment dry and bare, and the next rolling up the mighty flood to a mark higher than it had ever reached before.

These alternations of strength and weakness, clearness and obscurity, are doubtless parts of the vast machinery prepared by God for the growth, through trial, of our moral life. Our duty, as regards them, is very evident. There is no question here of human testimony which our obligations to truth may compel us to sift and balance, and which it is a sin *not* to question when it would affect our religion. Still less is there of opposition between a moral evidence in our hearts *against* a creed, and a critical one *in its favour* which as yet we know not how to overthrow; a contest wherein we should be called upon to decide that God must be just and good, no matter how many human witnesses avouched miracles testifying to the contrary. The simple faith in an absolutely Righteous God comes to us with claims the reverse of all these. It appeals solely to all that is highest, purest, bravest, holiest in our inmost souls. It offers itself as that which is to subdue every vice, however dear; to demand every virtue, however difficult. We feel that we must be better men *with* this faith, worse men *without* it; that the more we have of it, the purer, the nobler, and more self-sacrificing we shall become.

Faith in the true God is nothing but Faith in goodness at its crystallizing point. When that Faith reaches its right degree, the abstract becomes



personified—man believes in God. There is no real antithesis between faith and works; for when the will is true to good works it generates faith, even as faith reacts in added strength upon the will. There is here no unnatural task, for the will to force *belief* in facts concerning which moral insight can reveal nothing. Its work is not to torture evidence, to suppress one band of witnesses and bribe another. It is required only to exert itself in its one clear, natural way—to rouse itself to that full self-consciousness it obtains by antagonism against the lower desires. *In* that consciousness it will find and feel the great Holy Will of the Universe which works above itself.\*

When we become aware that the realities of the spiritual world are slipping from our grasp, we ought instantly to rouse all our strength thus to renew our consciousness of them. Nor need this effort be unaided. We may clasp back those realities with the lifted hands of prayer. God *will* give them to us, though not always, perhaps, at once. There are many mysteries in this part of our nature, and any intellectual doubt complicating our difficulties may leave them

\* "I understand thee now, sublime Spirit! I have found the organ whereby to apprehend this reality. It is FAITH, that voluntary acquiescence in the view which is naturally presented to us, because only through this view we can fulfil our vocation: this it is which first lends a sanction to knowledge, and raises to certainty and conviction that which without it might be mere delusion. It is not knowledge, but it is a resolution of the will to admit the validity of knowledge."—Fichte, *Vocation of Man*, p. 119.

long unsettled. But grim old Giant Despair is slain from the moment when we learn that an Infinite God must be infinitely good. We may be imprisoned for some sad days in Doubting Castle, or its cold shade may fall across our pilgrim path, but it has no longer a Master Fear to bolt us into its dungeons. We can force our way forth with the strong will to do it, for there is "sunshine," cloudless sunshine for us beyond its walls.\* Despair lives no more when that light strikes upon him. "If there be a God, He is absolutely good. If there be a world beyond the grave, it is the good God's world"—these are convictions which, once settled in the soul, leave Atheism but a little space to work in. Sooner or later it must die of inanition. By degrees we shall all "grow in faith," feel less and less those dim veils of mist rising from the uncultured places of the heart and obscuring our vision of the heavenly heights. God will then be to us as *real* a Being, His presence will be as much a *fact*, as the friend is real whose hand we press, and whose presence fills our hearts with a joy which no doubt ever dares to mar. It is so sometimes to us even now. What a thought it is, what hope to brighten life, that it will be so always

\* "For he" (Giant Despair) "sometimes in sunshiny weather fell into fits, and lost for a time the use of his hand" (*Pilgrim's Progress*, 31st edit., p. 146). What a beautiful thought is this! Even the grim despair of fanaticism must have its "fits," when God's soft, blessed sunlight pours (the symbol of His love) upon the heads of the just and unjust.

at last ! To live in the actual *sense* of God's ever-present love ! How little need would there be of a paradise beyond !\*

To him who asserts that man is incapable, in this stage of existence, of making religion the primary concern of his life, let the answers now given suffice. If it *be* beyond man's nature here to love God above all, it is beyond it no less to love his brother better than his own ease or pleasure, nay, to care for him in any way save as he chances to contribute to his sensual pleasures. But if our human nature revolts from such degradation, if we do actually "love our brother whom we have seen," then may we with irrefutable logic "love our God whom we have not seen." And if we love our brother better than ourselves, then also may we "love the Lord our God above all, and with all our heart, and soul, and strength."

Faith, then, is reasonable. And faith is *right*. If it be asked, How can it be a *duty* to cherish a more vivid consciousness than we spontaneously feel of a certain external Presence ? the answer is ready. It is a duty to

\* Very early was it recognised that a pure faith was in itself happiness. The Orphic Hymn of Initiation says, "Suffer not thy former prejudices to debar thee from the happy life which the knowledge of these sublime truths will procure unto thee. Go on in the right way, and contemplate the Sole Governor of the world. He is One, of Himself alone ; and to that One all things owe their being. He operates through all, was never seen of mortal eyes, but does Himself see every one."—Warburton's *Divine Legation*, i. 232 (quotation from Clemens Alex. and Eusebius).

ourselves and to God. It is a duty to ourselves, because it is equivalent in all ways to the enforcing on ourselves the perpetual sense of moral obligation; it is the same thing as calling up the law itself continually before us; and more even than this, for it is the law personified, and possessing all the added influences of that Divine personification. It is a duty to God, because His benefits and perfections claim of us a homage which the whole worship of life cannot adequately pay, and which we are therefore bound to offer with all the diligence we can command.

The method of performing this great duty is doubtless one of the problems which has presented itself most frequently to religious minds. I have already touched on some features of it, and will but venture to offer a few suggestions which seem most suitable to the case. The actual *consciousness* of the existence of a Holy Will above us is assuredly most frequently produced by the strong exertion of our own righteous Will, brought into vivid life by antagonism with the lower desires. Thus every possible act of duty, social, personal, or religious, possesses a power of increasing our consciousness of God, and that power rises in the same ratio with the virtue which the performance of the duty develops.\*

\* Luther held that no act could be virtuous, except performed in faith. "To do right with the spirit bent downwards upon the duty seemed to him impossible; for the only *possible* right act in man was the turning of the heart to God, and from that flowed, by His decree,



Many special acts of duty have also their peculiar influence. Deeds of forgiveness and loving-kindness to our fellow-creatures prepare our hearts most remarkably for the higher spiritual exercises wherein absolute communion may be attained. Continual practice of truth and purity raises the soul into regions of thought and feeling wherein it perceives God's presence on all sides. Thanksgiving, if ever fully performed, would actually recall God to us in every blessing (that is to say, in every *moment*) of our lives.

In Obedience, then, general and special, to the laws of God, lies our hope of increasing and intensifying our faith. There is no use shrinking from scepticism,

all that there was right in any other" (*National Rev.*, i., p. 180). This is evidently the doctrine of the XI., XII., and XIII. Articles of the Church of England. Theoretically, this dogma excludes the true freedom of the Will (which Luther actually did); the only tenable philosophy of freedom requiring the admission of a righteous Will in every rational being, which Will is necessarily self-legislative of *every* duty, and able to compel the obedience of the lower nature. The stand-points of theology and philosophy are here too far divided for any Colossus to stretch his feet across and stand on both. Practically, Luther's dogma tends to detract vastly from the growth of the very faith whose value it thus pushes to absurdity. As I have said in the text, it is by the practice of *duty* that *faith* is nourished. To tell a man that he can perform no duty till he has conscious faith in God would in thousands of cases be to prevent him from either performing the duty or gaining the faith.

It is strange to find this whole controversy debated in the far-off days of the Vedas and the Bhagvat-Gita. The *Vedanta Saru* concludes in favour of Faith alone—"Knowledge realizing all things as Brahma" (Ward, ii. 179).

and trying to keep the whole subject at a distance. Let us meet our most fearful doubts bravely, with all the weapons our intellectual armoury can afford; but let us also bring to bear on the battle those mighty powers of our nature which alone can really achieve the final defeat of scepticism. Let us call forth the righteous Will, fighting blow for blow with every base, selfish, vain, or sensual desire, till its high-strung and quivering nerves recognise beyond mistake the unseen Hand which is laid in guidance and in blessing on the champion's head. Let us use the all-powerful instrument of prayer, and ask of God that He give to us such influx of His Spirit of Truth as shall for ever quell such hesitating fear, and place before us in faith His own ever-present Deity.\*

God is near us. He is above us, around us, within us; guiding every small and every great event of our lives, and continually speaking to our hearts through conscience. We all *believe* this, or rather we *admit* it: we do *not* deny it. And we are also ready to admit that, if we actually realized this truth of God's presence, we should become holy and happy to a degree of which our present blind existence can give but little semblance. Is it not strange to think this—that, on the raising our cold *admission* of a truth to a living *faith* in it, depends

\* “Assuredly the Divine clemency suffereth not those who piously and humbly seek the truth to wander in the darkness of ignorance, to fall into the pits of false opinion and perish in them. For there is no worse death than ignorance of truth.”—JOHANNES SCOTUS.

our virtue and our ineffable joy, and yet that we do not perform an act apparently so simple, nay, make so little attempt to perform it? Whenever we do chance to grasp a clear sense of spiritual realities we obtain a strength which lasts us for days and even years. Oh that God may help us to hold it more continually! that He may open our closed eyes to see that Sun which is beaming over our heads and pouring floods of holy light upon our earthly way! He *will* help us, if we but do our own part, and "draw to Him as He will draw to us." Hour by hour we may do something to increase our faith. We may perform every common daily duty, our labour of head or hand, our cares for those around us, our self-restraints of impatience, or anger, or sensuality—all and each as God's direct task, which His eye is overlooking all the while, watching both the act itself and the spirit with which we do it. We may make every trifling pain, vexation, and humiliation, "the meanest thong of all that whips us, welcome," and bless it as God's justice, God's kindness. We may receive every ordinary pleasure, food, walks, studies, and the caresses of our beloved ones, all as God's dear gifts, tokens of tenderness like the violets a mother strews on her child's cradle. We may look on the whole earth as God's world, made beautiful by His artist hand; on science as the unveiling of His wisdom; on history as the tale of His providence. All the happy living things which roam over the fields, or people the air and the waters, are God's brute creatures, cared for by Him

who loves *us* too. Our brother men, and those dear babes who seem to have come so short a way to us from heaven—these are GOD's sons, GOD's children. We cannot bless one of them with the smallest kindness, we cannot feel love, or admiration, or sympathy for one of them, but we are blessing and loving a child of GOD.

Alas! how easy it *ought* to be to see in all things, serve in all things, love, and worship, and adore in all things our ever-present Lord! It is a question to ask our hearts why, if it be so simple a matter, we have never attained to that Faith which we acknowledge would give us such power of virtue. Do we *really* wish that God *should* be always present? Are there no words, no feelings, no thoughts, which we desire to indulge, and which we are conscious we never could indulge if we beheld those pure eyes gazing down day and night upon us? How far is the weakness of our *Faith* the result of the weakness of our *Will*?



## SECTION VI

## SELF-CONSECRATION.

IN the last section I endeavoured to prove that it is not an *unreasonable* thing for a man, even in this stage of being, to make the love of God his primary interest, and that it is *right* for him to nourish that faith in God's perpetual presence which is the necessary preliminary to such (not unreasonable) elevation of Divine Love to the chief place in his affections. In these concluding pages I shall attempt to prove that it is actually incumbent on every man thus "to seek *first* the kingdom of God ;" and I shall strive to describe the true character of a life in which all duties, social, personal, and religious, are completed by such SELF-CONSECRATION, wherein, while using every power and every affection of his humanity, a man takes also his part in that glorious heritage which belongs to the whole of his existence, mortal and immortal, and here and now, beyond and above all earthly things, seeks, and serves, and loves the Lord his God "with all his heart, and soul, and strength."

The proof that it is the duty of man to give to the love of God the *highest* place in his heart need not occupy a large field of argument, assuming the reader

to have conceded the previous demonstrations, or, indeed, to have admitted at all the canon of religious duty. If we are bound to love God, the only question to be settled is, whether any other person or thing can have claims on us for an equal or superior degree of love. And this being rejected as absurd, it follows that the love of God ought to be not only *a* great, but *the* greatest of human sentiments. Even as the benefits of God are above all mortals' benefits, even as God's moral perfection is above all mortal virtue, so in strictest logic ought our love for Him to exceed all other love.

But it must not be supposed that the mode in which this love of God is raised to its rightful pre-eminence can ever be (as often imagined) by *lowering* our human affections, till piety is left standing highest simply because there is not another high one left to rival it. This is among the direst of fanaticisms. We *never* love our fellow-creatures too much. We love them *selfishly*, craving to engross their whole hearts to ourselves—love them *sensually*, seeking from them unlawful gratifications—love them *immorally*, making their smiles the goal of our virtue—love them *idolatrously*, keeping down our moral ideal to the level of their defects : but never do we truly LOVE them too much. The Selfishness, the Sensuality, the Immorality, the Idolatry, are not Love, but the parasite-plants which dwarf and wither love, and which must be cleared away from it to restore its vigour and beauty. Of pure, true, tender, unselfish love there is never too much in any human

heart. Nay, there is no possibility that any creature in the universe will ever feel too strongly that holy sentiment which swells in its uttermost fulness even the Infinite Heart of God. Millenniums hence, among the stars, so far from having outgrown love as if it were a part of the weakness of mortality, we shall find it risen in our souls to a majestic power, an ineffable beauty, of which we can form no vision now. It is *more* love for our fellows that we want, not one shadow of a shade the less.

But what then of the love of God? How are we to make that the *chief* of all? Oh, slow of heart that we are! how long it takes us to find that love is no coin of earth, to be divided among so many and no more; to be given in such and such shares, each great share diminishing the remainder! Nay, but cannot that fire of heaven light a thousand hearts, and burn the brighter for all that it kindles? There must always be an ingredient of evil, a selfward narrowing spirit, in every love which tends towards the absorption and extinguishing of other pure affections. It is not Love, it is Selfishness, which asks our friend to love others less that he may love us more. The more we truly love one man, the more we are *able* to love another. And, above all, and in a double sense, the more we love our fellow-creatures, the more we are *able* and the more we are *permitted* to love God. As I have already shown, there is no one way by which we can so well prepare our hearts for Divine communion as by human affections,

nor are there any souls so often visited by God's Spirit as those which "dwell in love" with His creatures.

To fulfil, then, the great canon of Religious Duty it is not needful to sever or to loosen even the very tenderest of social ties. We are not called on to overthrow the sweet homes of our earthly affections, that so over the desolate ruins may be erected the solitary trophy of God's victory. Rather must we build upon their *summits* the heaven-soaring dome of piety, binding and overhallowing the whole.

Truly it is a pitiful notion, that which takes for granted the impossibility of our ever loving God, actually and affirmatively, any better than we commonly do, and on the strength of this assumption teaches us that, if we desire to make His love paramount in our hearts, there is no resource open to us but forthwith to cut down every other love, so that at least it may stand alone. Surely there are two better lessons than this to be drawn from a true study of our nature. By learning to love man better shall we not learn how to love God better? By learning to know God better shall we not at least kindle in these ice-cold hearts some degree of *positive* warmth towards Him, some sentiment whose sole importance in our souls shall not be (like that of a dwindled shrub in a desert) derived only from the solitude in which it stands? The notion that the supremacy of Divine Love is to be secured by the diminution, or even destruction, of human affections has tended to make the whole idea of self-consecration



one not only of self-sacrifice (that is, of the sacrifice of the unlawful desires of the *lower* self), but of universal sacrifice—the oblation of all that is in itself *good* in ourselves and those belonging to us, no less than of all that is evil. From this root of error have arisen the world-wide miseries of solitary asceticism—the delusions of the Fakir, the Dervish, the Stylite, the Hermit, and the Trappist, and the less obvious, but hardly less injurious, mistakes of the Protestant devotee, who tasks himself to chill the sweet affections in whose growth his spiritual life itself can alone find health and vigour.

All such ideas of sacrifice as these necessarily involve the attribution to God of a character the most remote from His own. The egotism of the man who desires to narrow his friend's whole heart and mind to himself, the rapacious jealousy of a despot—these are the images of Deity inevitably erected in the mind which seeks to please God by the oblation of the natural affections and social ties of humanity. It cannot be too often repeated, the laws of our nature are *God's* laws. *He* has given us the noble light of intellect, and made all its rays converge into one pencil of light, pointing for ever to His Goodness and His Wisdom. *He* has given us the blessed power of love, and made it the ladder on whose angel-peopled steps we may climb up towards Himself, where He stands on its heavenly summit. To say that *He* requires us to quench that light that we may see Him more clearly, to break every

round of that ladder that we may ascend to Him more securely—is not this the extreme of all folly?

Self-consecration must be a different thing from this, if it be an act acceptable to the Creator of man's mind and heart. We can no more please Him by spoiling His work, and counteracting the ends for which He made it, than we can please a mechanician by shattering his machine, a musician by untuning his instrument. To make our offering fit for God's altar we must make it "*perfect after its kind*;" strong, fair, and spotless. It is a thoroughly *human* life God requires us to lead; not the life of some Angel of our fancy, but of the Man or Woman God has designed each of us to be. Every limb of our God-made bodies, every faculty of our God-made minds, every affection of our God-made hearts, is to be used, developed, strengthened, purified, and then *hallowed*—hallowed in the use, not in the destruction.

Assuming it as established that we ought to make God's love paramount in our hearts, how are we to accomplish it?

It will be unnecessary to do more than briefly indicate the mode in which the performance of all *other* duties assist in the preparation for, and fulfilment of, this one.

Social duties assist it, as I have just asserted, by fitting our hearts, through human love, for the love Divine.

Personal duties assist it, by that purification and enlargement of our souls which, by rendering them more perfect, enables them continually to approach nearer to a perfect God.\*

Religious duties—such as direct worship and the cultivation of faith—assist it immediately, by developing the sentiments in which it takes rise.

Finally, supposing all these to be fulfilled to the bounds of our powers, there yet remains the grand act of the soul, whereby it consciously and freely accepts its high destiny, and resolves to exert the whole energy of its will to fulfil it; namely, “to approximate itself to God for ever.” In that eternal approach to God and goodness, man sees before him, converging into one radiant focus of virtue and happiness, alike the behests of the holy law, the design of God in creation, and the aspirations of his own highest nature. The scope embraced by the resolution to dedicate existence to this glorious end involves a scheme of life I cannot attempt to indicate save in faintest outline. Not to the mere theorist, but to the happy soul which dwells therein, can it belong to paint in its hues of heaven that “Beulah” of the far-travelled pilgrim, whom Death’s River itself scarce divides from the near City of God.

This at least is clear: Religion would be the living heart of such a life. Not only would religious duties be performed and religious affections cultivated, but they

\* “Piety is preserved by temperance, and destroyed by sensual indulgence.”—*Proverb of the Kaliph Ali.*

would become in genuine truth the central cares, the primary joys, of existence. Everything would be given up unreservedly and unhesitatingly, to further the great aim of union with God. The man would lay out the plan of his external life so as to the utmost of his abilities to aid the progress of the inner. Among the professions open to him, he would choose the one leading him farthest from worldliness and nearest to God. In making his friendships and connections, he would look to moral and religious qualifications before all other; and this he would do, not by violent compulsion of his own affections (a violence which in such relations is false and immoral), but by the spontaneous sympathies which religious and moral affinities would produce in his heart. In minor matters, his pursuits and pleasures, and the hours appropriated to them, would be regulated with the same view to the reservation of all his best delights.

Secondly, the man's whole possessions, time, talents, worldly wealth, would be held by him as things whereby he could do God's work in the world. The relief of His creatures' sufferings, the contribution to their happiness, and, above all, the assistance to their piety and virtue—these would be his real heartfelt aims; and, while fulfilling the duties nearest to his hand, he would be ever stretching out after fresh means of usefulness. In a word, his *all* of existence would be truly a gift to God. Made a Free Agent by the most marvellous act Omnipotence itself could perform, he is able thus



to make himself a free gift; to take, as it were, his whole life, mortal and immortal, and, without reservation of one unhallowed thought or feeling, dedicate it for ever to be a life in God and for God.

Where have we now arrived? Is it not at that doctrine of SACRIFICE which has pervaded all the religions of the earth? Is it not here where Religion and Morality culminate and unite—where Worship has led man's intuition in all ages, even to that mystery of self-oblation\* which has found its types from the earliest holocaust of the mythic patriarchs to yesterday's Christian Eucharist? How deep the foundations of the idea of sacrifice must lie in human nature is proved by the enormity of the horrors to which its misdirected impulse has led. Let the Aztec's gory altars, the Phœnician's fiery shrines, the Hindoo's crushing cars, attest the might of the sentiment which has demanded such manifestation.†

\* The meaning of a sacrifice is said to differ from that of an oblation in that the oblation is merely *given*; the sacrifice must be either transformed in some way or destroyed. It is by a transformation from sin to righteousness that the true sacrifice of the soul to God is accomplished.

† The forms, too, of the immolation; the primary and ever-recurring tendency towards the choice of a *human* victim (of which, to the last, the animal seems only a substitute); the entire cremation of the body in the sacred purifying fire, or (still more emphatic symbol!) the extraction of the palpitating heart and its presentation to the god; the *freedom* with which the animal led by a *loose* cord was induced to approach the altar, and wait unshackled for its death-stroke; the special approval of "blood drawn from the offerer's own body," in the

By whatever path, religious or moral, we advance, it appears that the doctrine of Sacrifice necessarily at a certain stage presents itself. Morality shows it as the consummation of human virtue, wherein the finite righteous Will of man freely sinks itself in the infinite righteous Will of God. Religion leads us to it through all her lessons: through *gratitude* she urges us to give back all to Him who has bestowed all on us; through *adoration*, to assimilate our souls to the Perfect Spirit of God; and, lastly, through devout *prayer*, to present

frightful sacrifices to Devi, licensed in the Calica Purana—all these types point assuredly to the great idea which underlies all their hideous aberrations, the *rightfulness that man should be given to God*. True, this grand thought was doubtless blended with, and often overlaid by, notions gross and base as the depths of barbaric, and even cannibal anthropomorphism. Doubtless it was often to appease an infuriate deity, or to feed a ravenous one, that the pagan altars streamed with human gore, and the flesh of hecatombs of victims infected the air. Still, had these ideas been the *primary* ones, it is impossible that such forms would have been invented for the sacrifice as those just described, nor would human victims have been chosen by nations who (like the Druids) attributed no evil passions to their god, and never sunk to the rare degradation of cannibalism. The real difficulty in admitting this high meaning in sacrifice is the fact that the rite appears so *early* in all the religious developments of the race, whereas we should have expected it rather to mark a very advanced stage of progress. The phenomenon seems to be analogous to those half-abortive manifestations of pure Monotheism discernible almost before the dawn of Polytheism in the Vedas, Orphic Hymns, &c. These facts have given colour to the anti-historic notion of a pure primeval religion among the patriarchs of the whole human race. They should only show that through thickest darkness God permitted His light to shine on such souls as sought it earnestly.

the offering of an absolutely contented Will. In Sacrifice, the sacrifice of *some* vicious desire, must all virtue and religion commence. In Sacrifice, the entire and final sacrifice of soul and body, must all virtue and religion culminate. When the true self of man stands out in the sunlight of full consciousness, and, assuming the sacred priesthood of a free intelligence, immolates on the altar of God his own lower nature—"the flesh, with its affections and lusts"—then the great mystery of religion is accomplished. There is nothing further needed; no more atonement possible, since union itself has taken place. Only this action must be sustained throughout eternity, and magnified by each access of being in our ever-growing souls.

It is, of course, in actual prayer that this deed of sacrifice is, as it were, concreted and embodied.\* The Christian, when he commemorates the most perfect of such sacrifices ever made by man—the virtuous life and martyr-death of Christ—at the same time that he "presents his own soul and body, the reasonable, holy, and

\* "In these acts [of devotion] the mind must be free from injurious thoughts, full of compassion towards the poor, the blind, and even enemies, happy both in pain and pleasure. Addressing himself to the Deity, the worshipper must say, 'Like myself there is not another sinner on earth, and like Thyself there is no Saviour. O God, seeing that this is the case, I wait Thy will.' He must next *present a bloody sacrifice, by slaying all his passions*, as anger, covetousness, intoxication, and envy. He must add, 'All my works, good or evil, in the fire of Thy favour I present to Thee as a burnt-offering.'"—Extract from the *Veda*, Ward, ii, 98.

acceptable sacrifice," stands the connecting link between the bloody symbol of the slaughtered lamb and the spiritual idea of self-immolation.\* With such material type, or without it, the Jew and the Moslem, the Parsee, Buddhist, Brahmin, Druid, Greek—all have felt the same truth. Self-oblation is man's highest worship; "Thy will be done" the central clause of the world's great prayer.

But it is not in the one act alone such sacrifice is

\* "There are, in truth, only two real sacrifices in the world's history: the sacrifice of the historical Christ, offered through a life of holiest action and a death of purest love; and the sacrifice of the Church, that is to say, of faithful humanity in the succession of generations offering up itself in childlike thankfulness through life and death, and expressing this as the Christian vow in the act of common adoration" (Bunsen's *Hippolytus*, vol. iv. p. 91). "And the state of Christianity implieth nothing else but an entire absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ showed in the mysterious sacrifice of Himself upon the cross. We must not consider our blessed Lord as suffering in our stead, but as our representative. He suffered and was a sacrifice to make our sufferings and sacrifices fit to be received by God. All the doctrines, sacraments, and institutions of the Gospel are only so many explications of this great mystery" (William Law, *Serious Call*, chap. xvii). I do not believe this is the *ordinary* acceptance of the meaning of the Eucharist; at least it seems (so far as it is possible to understand the explanations offered to us on the subject) to be subordinated usually to the mystic "eating of the flesh of the Son of man." The following, however, is one of the latest expositions of the Sacramental theory:—"Life is [to the communicant] a continual sacrifice of that which dies and rises again, a reiterated life-long oblation of the renewed man, and partakes, as the means of its sustentation in this elevated condition, of peculiar effluxes of the Divine Nature, by feeding on a sacrifice" (Freeman's *Principles of Divine Service*, p. 199).



accomplished. When the high inspiration of communion has passed away into the recesses of memory, when the tumultuous joy ceases to throb in the heart, and man is compelled to turn his gaze back from heaven to earth, and descend from the "Delectable Mountains" whence Paradise seemed so near, to tread, with downcast eyes and narrowed vision, the path of that *duty* he has chosen, it is *then* that the sacrifice becomes a reality; then, when he no longer merely bows on the steps of God's altar, but when his heart lies on its marble surface bare and bleeding. Who envies not Curtius leaping down the Forum's gulf while yet the sunlight glittered on his crest and the shout of Rome redeemed rung through the echoing abyss? Who shudders not at his destiny when he lies mangled in the silent depths of the terror-haunted pit, waiting in his living grave the slow release of death?

We often forget these things when we think of Self-sacrifice. We forget that all the real trial lies before us, even when that grand resolve has stung our souls. There is the actual self-denial or suffering, commonly greater than we anticipated; and there is, further, the natural decline and reaction from the fervid feelings in whose white heat the resolution was stricken out. The order of Providence seems to demand that we should thus choose the narrow way in the noontide of spiritual light, and be called to tread it when our sun lies hid beneath the horizon of immediate consciousness. It was not when God's angel-thoughts were around him,

and he took freely his cup of agony from his Father's hand, that the Christ achieved his everlasting crown. It was when the death-darkness mounted slowly up the cross, till heart and brain grew dim, and God's face was hid, and the cry burst from his soul, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

And in other and lesser martyrdoms than that of Calvary it is equally true that the sacrifice lies in the slow completion of the self-abnegation, and not in the first oblation. When the exile for conscience' sake stands on the heaving deck, still beholding his loved ones waving their last farewell, and feeling their tears yet warm upon his cheek, his sacrifice is but prepared. When the long years of mind and heart solitude have stolen the vigour from his brain, and filled with sickly longings the void in his affections—when the weary life is drawing to a lonely close—*then*, if his soul be kneeling still, laying *willingly* still its great gift on the altar, then is his sacrifice truly made to God.\* And thus, too, must be fulfilled all sacrifices—freely, cheerfully, *to the end*; for it is *in the perseverance* that lies the sacrifice. And herein, too, may lie its joy and glory! Each moment that the soul resists the temptation to regret, and renews in spirit its vow of sacrifice as freely as at first, it actually accomplishes its act of virtue: it is marching forward in its path, and not merely, as it

\* "They are not Suttees who perish in the flames,

O Nânuk : Suttees are those who die of a broken heart."

*Ummer Das.*, in the *Adee Grunt'h* (Sacred Book of the Sikhs).

sometimes seems, standing still on the barren rock whither a wave of resolution has borne it.

And now to conclude.

Perfect self-consecration to God would be a life of absolute virtue, absolute religion. It is not in a finite creature's power to accomplish this perfectly; but it is so to *resolve* on doing it to the utmost of each day and hour's growing power. It remains only for each human heart to decide whether it will exert the grandest prerogative of its freedom, and give itself thus to God.

I believe that a vast preponderance of the evil of the world results from the *incompleteness* of men's choice of virtue, far more than from their deliberate selection of the path of vice. Among minds not grossly depraved—not entangled in any special webs of passion or deception—it cannot, I think, be questioned that the ordinary condition of the Will is one of partial virtuous energy, accompanied by a more or less decided intention of becoming eventually altogether moral and religious. Here, however, the virtue stops. We say with St. Augustine, “Make me holy, *but not yet.*” Reservations lie latent in the mind concerning some unhallowed sentiments or habits in the present, some possibly impending temptations in the future; and thus do we cheat ourselves of inward and outward joys together. We give up many an indulgence for conscience' sake, but stop short at that point of entire

faithfulness wherein conscience could reward us. It is said that a man may walk unhurt through a furnace-chamber wherein, if he place one limb alone, it will be scorched to torture. Thus do we feel double pain in the sacrifices which are but partial, and in which our whole heart never enters, and whereby, therefore, it is never warmed. If we would but give ourselves wholly to God—give up, for the present and the future, every act, and, above all, every thought and every feeling, to be all purified to the uttermost, and rendered the best, noblest, holiest we can conceive—then would sacrifice bear with it a peace rendering itself, I truly believe, far *easier* than before.

There is nothing *unnatural* in such idea of entire self-sacrifice. When we are asked to make it for God's sake we treat it as if it were an achievement of almost superhuman magnitude. But does not that human affection which it is almost profane to bring into competition with the love of God, does not the commonest conjugal attachment, lead thousands of men and women every year to forsake father and mother, home and country, wealth, ambition, friends—in a word, to make enormous sacrifices for a simple affection, too often undignified by any moral grandeur, and ever incapable of affording joys comparable to those of religious devotion? Nay, human love often makes sacrifices which can never be demanded by religion. It can give up its *own* joys, the presence and even the love of its object, for his sake. But the farther we journey on the path of



Divine sacrifice, the nearer we every day draw to Him for whom we make it: we are sure that He sees every pang, and that He will give us more and more of the sense of His love for every effort we make to deserve it.

So natural is the readiness of all love-sacrifice, that in youth, before selfish prudence and worldly wisdom have done their evil work in our hearts, there are few of us who have not pictured in our day-dreams, as the fondest of our aspirations, some scenes in which our affections should at length find scope in acts of sublime self-devotion. We do not merely think, "In such circumstances I would die for my friend," but actually, "I wish that such circumstances would arise that I *might* die so blessedly." Myths of sacrifice spring up spontaneously as wild-flowers in every human heart, ere selfish interests have trodden them into the world's hard highway. And even at its hardest and worst, when all abstract declarations of love, Divine or human, fail to find echo or bring forth any response of feeling, the wondrous tale of that Sacrifice which has become the central one of human story, and received the radiance of the ideal—that tale, I say, will call out torrents from the rock, and waken into raptures of admiration souls which seem dead to every sentiment of generosity. Herein, in this one ideal of a love which sacrifices life for the salvation of the ungrateful and rebellious, lies the might of the Christian Churches, the golden sceptre of the whole line of spirit-kings, from

Paul to Wesley. The purely *human* sympathy with the self-devotion pictured on Calvary has opened millions of hearts to sentiments leading to all the highest in our nature. And shall we talk, then, of the doctrine of self-sacrifice to God as if it were a super-human thing, an idea having nothing in common with our poor narrow hearts?

Sacrifice is simply *love in action*—the universal and spontaneous language of the sentiment in its intensity. Let us but love God aright, and the willingness to offer ourselves, “soul and body”—the reasonable, holy, and acceptable “sacrifice”—must, according to the laws of our nature, arise in our hearts. Poorly, imperfectly, that offering is made; but ever more and more it will continue to complete itself. And, at last, as the righteous Will of man gains the final victory, as it unites itself in entire acquiescence with the all-righteous Will of God, Sacrifice will at once be perfected and abolished, immersed in one infinite ocean of joy and love.

“God loves us all.” We use such words till we forget their meaning. If we understood what they signify, self-consecration would seem the simplest of all things. But, in the endless oscillations of our thoughts between the low conception of a merely human God and the vague notion of the Pantheist’s “World Spirit,” we ever pass over the central truth that in Him the personal love of humanity, and the universal, equal, boundless love of Deity, are one and the same. I have

already spoken of the power which even *our* hearts possess of loving indefinitely numerous living souls, each of which has its own individuality, and draws from us an individual affection never resembling any other. It is as if there were a separate side of our nature, a facet of the diamond, for each friend with whom we enter into communion—a side which that man or woman alone in the universe can illumine. The *selfish* part of affection, indeed, is not divisible infinitely, but, like other base things, suffers diminution according to the sharers; but pure Love is rich as spirit is rich. It is a lamp in a room hung round with mirrors, wherein it is interminably reflected, and every one of which serves to lighten more and more that bright chamber of a loving soul. The love of God must be like this, only wide even as His boundless creation, effulgent as the light.

“The sun himself had seemed  
A speck of darkness there,  
Amid that Light of Light!”

Men think sometimes, “God is infinite, therefore He cannot love as we do.” But it is precisely because He is infinite that therefore every perfection of love—boundlessness of extent and intensity of degree—must of necessity belong to His love. It is attributing *limits* to His nature to suppose He cannot *love* infinitely, in our meaning of that holiest sentiment. It is attributing limits to His nature to suppose He cannot thus love

infinitely every soul throughout the millions of the worlds.

*We* can only love what is lovely *now*; but God's eternal nature loves the future saint in the sinner of to-day. He sees the special spiritual beauty, whose germ He has planted in each soul, blooming in His paradise millenniums hence, and to Him the murderer of earth is even now the philanthropist of heaven. It is not only all man's present and past weakness, meanness, sin, which lie unveiled before His awful eye. There is also in every one a spring of love, and purity, and goodness, whose growing course He sees swelling into the wide flood of resistless virtue, even as beneath His gaze the hidden fount of the Nile and the flowing seas of its full tide lie mapped as one great stream.

Whatever we can imagine of love, *that*, and far more than that, God gives to each of us; gives it as fully and absolutely as if no other spirit but His and our own existed in a desert universe together. *We* may love Him more because His mercy spreads over all the myriad millions of our brothers. *He* does not love us less because His infinite heart embraces every creature He has made.

Such is our God—such our relation to Him. Is it not the most natural thing in the world that we should give to Him our grateful, joyful, adoring hearts, our existence in time and eternity? What else do we *want* but love like His in which to live, and for whose sake to labour and suffer, to live or die, as to Him seems



best? We are poor, feeble creatures, full of longing desires. But, after all, is not this the want which lies at the very depth of our cravings?

The poorest love is a happy thing. The smallest self-denial for affection's sake is a pure pleasure. What would it be to love absolutely a Being absolutely lovely—to be able to give our whole existence, every thought, every act, every desire, to that adored One—to know that He accepts it all, and loves us in return as God alone can love? Sometimes, even in this life, that love of God breaks on the soul. The man kneels and offers up the full heart's vow of a life of love, Divine and human. He gazes around, and his tears make the halo of a glorified world. If he could not weep, his poor human heart would burst with its unfathomable joy; for his spirit has blended with God, and it has been revealed to him what God is.

This happiness grows for ever. The larger our natures become, the wider our scope of thought, the stronger our will, the more fervent our affections, so much the deeper must be the rapture of such God-granted prayer. Each sacrifice *resolved on* opens wider the gate: each sacrifice *accomplished* is a step towards the paradise within. Soon it will be no transitory glimpse—no rapture of a day—to be followed by clouds and coldness. Let us but labour, and pray, and wait, and the intervals of human frailty shall grow shorter and less dark, the days of our delight in God longer and brighter, till at last life shall be nought but His love;

our eyes shall never grow dim, His smile never turn away.

O merciful Father, shall such things ever be? Are they waiting for us now in Thine infinite heart? Hast thou made us for Thy dear love? and are we still the sinful beings who kneel before Thee now?

THE END.

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How Long?

"How long, Lord? wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever?  
Return, O Lord, how long?" lxxxix Psalms.

How long, O Lord, in weariness & sorrow,  
Must Thy poor people tread the pilgrim road,  
Mourning to-day & fearing for to-morrow, —  
Finding no place of rest, no sure abode? —

Sighing o'er faded flowers & cisterns broken;  
Gazing on setting suns, that rise no more;  
Listening to sad farewells, & last-words spoken  
By ~~lovely~~ ones leaving us on Jordan's shore!

How long, through snares of error & temptation,  
Shall noblest spirits stumble on their way?  
How long, through darkening storms of tribulation,  
Must we press forward to eternal day?

How long shall passing faults & trifles pierce  
Hearts that have known affection's holy tie?  
When shall the slanderer's tale be hushed for ever,  
And brethren see in all things eye to eye?

How long shall last-the night of woe & sadness,  
The midnight-hour of gloomy doubt & fears!  
When shall it dawn, that promised morn of  
gladness.  
When Thine own hand shall wipe away  
our tears.

How long, O Lord? our hearts are sad & weary,  
Our voices join the whole creation's groan;



With eager gaze we watch for Thine appearing,  
When wilt Thou come again <sup>O Lord</sup> & claim Thine own?

Return! return! come in Thy power & glory,  
With all Thy risen saints & angel throng.  
Bring to a close Time's strange, mysterious story.  
How long dost Thou delay - O Lord how long?

---

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,  
However dark it be!  
Lead me by Thine own hand,  
Choose out the path for me.

"Smooth let it be or rough,  
It will be still the best.  
Winding or straight, it leads  
Right onward to Thy rest.

"I dare not choose my lot:  
I would not, if I might;  
Choose Thou for me, my God,  
So shall I walk aright.

"The kingdom that I seek  
Is Thine; so let the way  
That leads to it be Thine  
Else I must surely stray.

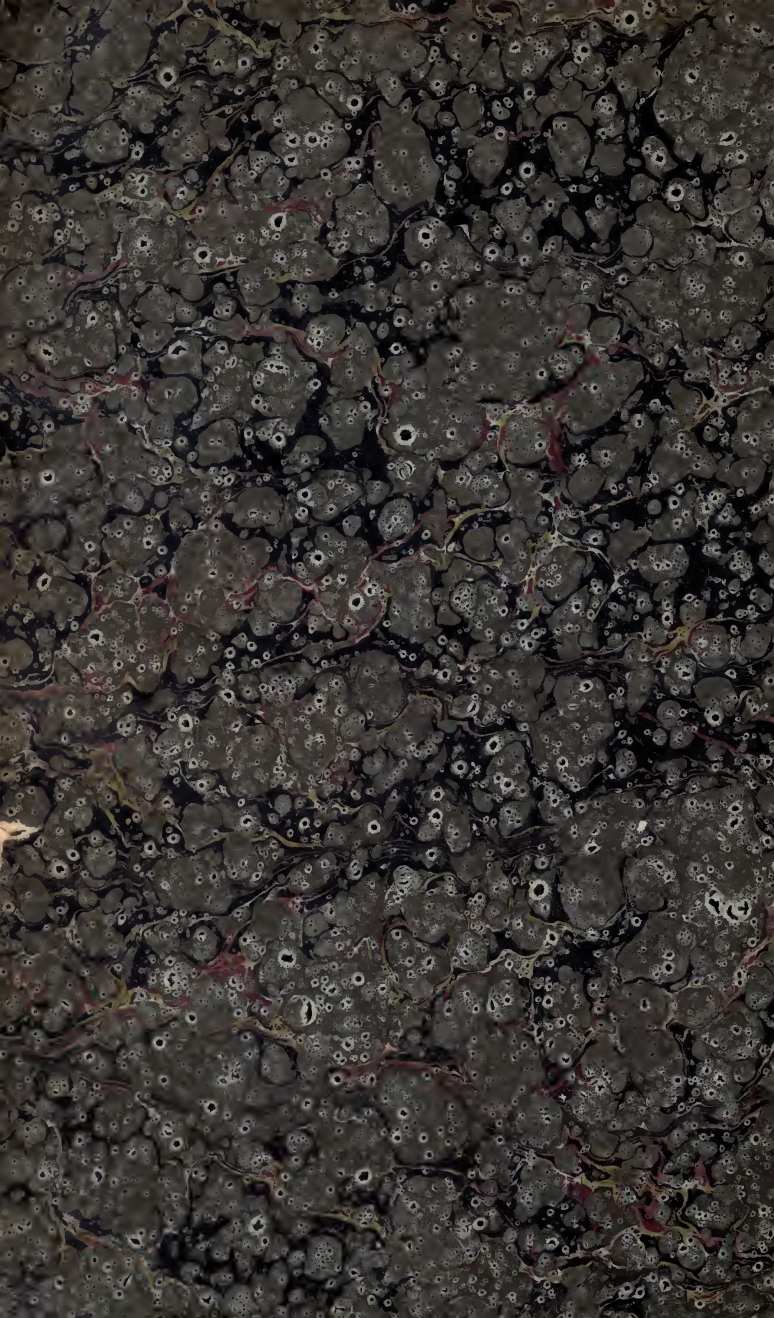
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Take Thou my cups, & it  
With joy or sorrow fill,  
As best to Thee may seem;  
Choose Thou my good & ill.

"  
Choose Thou for me my friends  
My sickness or my health;  
Choose Thou my cares for me,  
My poverty or wealth.

"  
Nest mine, not mine the choice,  
In things or great or small;  
Be Thou my guide, my strength,  
My wisdom & my all.

Bonar.



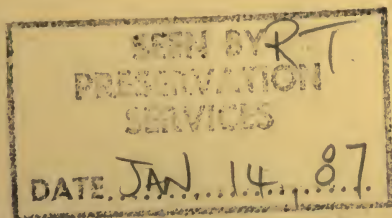


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