

THEISM AS A SCIENCE
OF
NATURAL THEOLOGY AND NATURAL RELIGION



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BY THE

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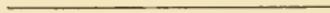
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P R E F A C E .



By way of Preface to the following Lectures on *Theism as a Science*, it may be interesting to state how they came to be written.

The Principal of a Christian College, eminent for his learning and piety, told me that, after reading my little book, *Theism, or the Religion of Common Sense*, he thought it “scrappy” and not sufficiently systematised; he also observed that Theism as Natural Religion deserved a better treatment, that a text-book, unfolding its principles in an orderly manner, might prove useful in colleges and schools.

In consequence of his suggestion the following

Lectures were written, and I hope they will not only be read but ruthlessly criticised, so that any errors may be corrected and omissions supplied.

I have added, as an Appendix, a very thoughtful letter addressed to me on some of the points raised in these Lectures.

CHARLES VOYSEY.

ST. VALERY, HAMPSTEAD,

September, 1895.

THEISM, AS A SCIENCE.



LECTURE I.

THEISM, or Natural Theology, is the Science of God. It has three aspects. In the first place, it is a statement of what may be known concerning God, or surely believed on good reasonable grounds. But, in the very instant of positing that, Theism comes into collision with Atheism, which denies the very existence of a God, and with Agnosticism, which denies that anything can be known concerning God. The third aspect of Theism is that it comes into open conflict with many doctrines derived from so-called Revelation, and destroys the very foundation of Revelation altogether. If Theism or Natural Theology be proved to be reasonable and true, it renders Revelation superfluous ; and where it is not superfluous, it is shown to be misleading and false. No treatise of Theism would, in my opinion, be complete, unless it be more than a mere statement of its

positive beliefs. It must also meet Atheism and Agnosticism and refute them. It must also prove both its independence of so-called Revelation and its superiority to it.

Our first step in this treatise must be to recall the resources on which we entirely depend for any knowledge at all. I use the term "we" simply to denote average sensible men and women; for it is only to such that any argument can be addressed. We have three faculties of our common human nature which are universally regarded as higher in function and in importance than our bodily faculties. Reason, Conscience and Love are the names ordinarily given to these three higher faculties of our nature. Every one knows what is meant by them. Of Reason, or the thinking faculty, nothing need be said, because there is little or no ambiguity about the term; but of Conscience, or the sense of duty, it is needful to say something by way of caution and definition. Conscience must not be confounded with a code or codes of morals. These codes have their origin in reason and experience, and differ somewhat under different skies and in different ages. Conscience does not change. It is the same always and everywhere—the feeling that we ought to do what we think to be right and not to do what we think to be wrong. It is the sense of duty, the sense which we express by the words "I ought" and "I ought not." Love, alas! is also a word very often misused, even degraded

and profaned. But in this argument "Love" will be used to denote the desire to bestow real welfare. It is much more than that, which we cannot put into words ; but less than that, true love cannot be. Reason, the thinking faculty, Conscience and Love constitute our chief sources of all knowledge whatever ; and, therefore, are in still greater requisition when we are searching for knowledge of things invisible, spiritual and divine. Each faculty has its sphere of special application, but all work in harmony in such a quest as the pursuit of the knowledge of God.

To these faculties some would add what they call "the religious instinct," the sense of awe, the universal tendency to create gods, to personify and deify the powers of Nature, and to fear or court the favour of departed ancestors. I purposely leave out this "religious instinct" from my category of resources, because it is too imaginative, and has been proved by history to be the source of the wildest and most pernicious superstition. It has more often created devils than gods. My contention is that average sensible men and women have within themselves the sources of an adequate, though limited, knowledge of God ; and that those sources are the mind, the conscience and the pure affections. This is the ground on which it is claimed that Theism or Natural Theology is based on facts which no one feels inclined to dispute. This is why Theism is called "Theology," or a

science of God. This is why it is called "Natural" Theology, or a science based exclusively upon natural facts, and in strict harmony with them.

Having our tools ready and bright, let us begin by answering the challenge of Atheism—"Theism is only a pretended science, for it rests on the pure assumption that there is a God." Now, we must either give substantial proof that there is a God, or cease to prate about a science concerning that which has no existence at all, or the existence of which is a pure assumption.

When Robinson Crusoe, believing himself to be on a desert island and its only human inhabitant, saw the prints of another human foot (not his own) on the sands, it was an absolute proof that another man had been on the spot. Human beings are so constituted that they are compelled to admit the force of evidence like that. The evidence for the existence of God is precisely similar in kind, though immeasurably stronger in both quantity and degree. The whole world of phenomena known to us is one vast and varied collection of proofs that there is a living God behind the phenomena, and without whose will they could not be. Proofs of what? and proofs to whom? Proofs of the existence of a superhuman Being who knows and wills. Proofs to those beings who have experience in themselves of knowledge and will. Such an One, apart from all moral attributes, purely on the ground of His manifested knowledge

and purpose, we call God. We are forced to recognise the vastly superior power, deeper wisdom, and higher skill than any power, wisdom or skill of human beings. We are forced to see that there is only one such superhuman Being ruling and ordering the complex forces of nature ; that He has no rival, that He sits alone and supreme as Lord and Governor of the universe. But, inasmuch as some persons find it difficult to realise this fact regarding the world as a whole, like that legendary man who "could not see the forest for the trees," it will be useful, if not absolutely necessary, to give the proof of the existence of God from one simple and common object within reach of ordinary observation, just as Robinson Crusoe saw the proof of another man having visited the island in the footprints on the sand. If we can divest our minds of all foregone conclusions it will be all the better.

Here are two beings standing, as it were, face to face. Here is a man. There is a tree. We know that the man is a being possessed of reason, mind, or intelligence. He looks at and thinks about a tree in order to learn what the tree can teach him. He first notices what the tree has in common with himself. It is an organised body. It is alive. It lives, like himself, only when within reach of atmospheric air. It sprang from a seed. It depends largely on sunshine. It grows. It bears fruit, *i.e.*, seed. It is reproductive. It is also sure, like himself, to die.

Having taken stock of the likenesses, he then notices the unlikenesses. He can move from place to place ; the tree is fastened to one spot. He derives his nourishment from animals and vegetables. The tree is nourished by the earth and water direct from the soil, and still more by the atmospheric air. The man's breathing differs also from the breathing of the tree—at all events during sunlight. He breathes-in oxygen and breathes-out carbon. The tree does the reverse.

For immediate purposes, the tree differs from the man in uses. He has numberless functions to fulfil, not one of which could be fulfilled by the tree. The few obvious functions of the tree cannot be fulfilled at all by the man. The tree may serve for shade and for the nestling of birds, it may serve to bear fruit for food, or, when cut down, for timber or fuel, or, when sunk for myriads of years, to form coal. The man has no such purpose to serve, nor ever will have. Well, by this time the man sees that he is not a tree, nor the tree a man ; and yet both of them are there, side by side, without their will. Neither of them were consulted before birth whether they would like to be born at all ; much less whether one should be a man and the other only a tree. Neither could the tree nor the man make themselves, or make the origins from which they sprang ; or cause themselves to differ or to resemble each other in any

particular. The man conscious of powers and wisdom vastly greater than those of the tree, knows that, were his powers and wisdom to be multiplied a thousand times, he could never make a tree himself, or give life to anything which had not life ; still less would he be able to endow men and trees and a multitude of other creatures with power to propagate their own species. Moreover, just as the tree is rooted in the ground, and lives by nourishment drawn from the soil and water and the air, so is the marvel of its existence rooted in many sciences. Not only mathematics, dynamics, geology, chemistry, botany and biology, but even astronomy also, enter into the calculation of how the tree came to be there at all, and why it is exactly what it is and not something else. The widest knowledge in man is not nearly equal to the variety and the depth of the problems which the tree involves.

What, then, is the inevitable conclusion of the man after this examination of the tree ? It is proved to him that both he and the tree are not mere accidents and sports of Nature, but products, designedly made for different purposes, designedly made in some things to resemble each other, designedly made in other things to differ. Whoever it be that produced these two products, or either of them, was One who knows and wills. It was some intelligent Being who really knows the difference between a man and a tree ; who had a purpose or purposes in causing

each to live, and who knew how to carry out His intention. You may call such a Being by any name you please (we call Him God, and we say Him instead of It to denote the fact that He is living and knowing and willing now as ever, that He is not an unconscious *thing*). I say, call Him what you like. But no one in his senses will dare to deny the existence of such a Being; nor can any Agnostic, thereafter, say that God is absolutely, wholly, unknowable; for He is now known to have power and purposes, and therefore to be an intelligent Being—One who knows and understands what He is doing and for what ends. If people who call themselves Atheists or Agnostics, and who object to this idea of a personal God, would just try to realise what is exclusively meant by the Theist when he calls God “personal,” they would see that all grosser anthropomorphism is banished from the term, and all that is left is the idea of a God who knows, who is perfectly aware of the difference between a man and a tree, and, therefore, between one man and another; a God who knows antecedents and knows consequents, who manifests purposes and fulfils many before our eyes, though many more are too far-reaching for our sight or thought. We are compelled moreover to conclude that mind or intelligence does exist and work, apart from and independently of a human brain. Henceforth, it will be absurd to think that brains are essential to intelligence or to its activity. To

a living man the brain is essential, but not to a Living God. The foregoing proofs of the intelligence of God compel us to say, further, that an unconscious God, an ignorant God, a God without a mind and without a plan—all these are contradictions in terms, and have no right to disport themselves as philosophical. And therefore the denial of them, the admission of their absurdity, stultifies the position of those who go on repeating that nothing concerning God can be known. I say, that, given only a man and a tree, we must, if we wish to be considered sensible men and women, admit that they are both products of a Conscious Being who had a purpose in producing them; in other words, they are products of an intelligent will. If the tree will not suffice to explain to a man the origin of the forest of God's works in the universe, and that which is meant by intelligent purpose manifested throughout all phenomena, nothing ever will. The fault will lie in the man, in the obscuration of his faculties, in a kind of mental blindness for which there is certainly no cure in logic, but which will one day be cured by blessed influences far transcending our poor finite reasoning and words. "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still," is a proverb expressing the difficulty which some minds feel in accepting a conclusion correctly drawn from premisses which they admit to be true. I cannot therefore expect to convince everybody in the

world by my logic. All I expect to do, and hope to succeed in doing, is to silence opponents, and to make it impossible for an objector to give any reasonable refutation of my demonstration.

Whatever object in Nature clearly manifests to to the human mind a purpose for its existence, or purpose in its organisation, proves the pre-existence of an Intelligent Being who has caused it to be what it is and to do what He intended it to do.

An important objection to what is called the Argument from Design has been kindly put for my consideration in the following words:—

“There is a difficulty raised by some with reference to the Design Argument. It is stated with reasoning which I cannot see my way out of, though at the same time I cannot accept it, that every sign of design is in itself so much proof of want of power in God; that design implies dealing (with a certain amount of wisdom and power greater than our own) with difficulties which already existed and which were out of His power to alter in themselves. In fact, that He had to deal with the eternal and uncaused matter and force already in existence, and that the fact of adapting means to ends proves God to be Second and not First.”

By way of answer to this objection, let us first recall what I have set forth as the Argument from Design. It is simply this: If any object shows purpose in its construction, or purpose in its uses, it necessarily proves the pre-existence and the

activity of an intelligent will. I do not see how the objection, which I have just read, at all touches the Design Argument as stated by myself. That argument would hold good whether the intelligent will, *i.e.*, God, worked upon material already existing independently of Himself, or worked upon material which He had created for the purpose. In either case His purpose and adequate power to fulfil it would be proved.

But the objection demands consideration from another point of view. The objection is made not to disparage the Argument from Design so much as to reduce God from His conceived position as First and sole Cause of all things, and to place matter and force before Him as First Cause and as indeed supreme. Now, I have made no assumption at all as to which was First—God, or the matter and force—or whether they are co-eternal. But our objector assumes that matter and force were First and God was Second. That assumption is, in my opinion, unscientific. It is purely speculative, and may be right or wrong. It is nothing but a guess. Yet I think a little reflection will show that it is more likely to be wrong than right. For matter and force are of no use without mind to order and control them. Matter and force could never give birth to that mind which is essential to their proper and purposive action, and without which there could be no intelligent product. God is either caused or uncaused; if caused out of

uncaused matter and force, then matter and force would be that intelligent will which works with a purpose and produces products. That intelligent will would be the real God, and no other would be required. But if God be *uncaused*, then He is not the product, but the antecedent, of matter and force. It is therefore more thinkable that a stupendous mind like that of God should have created both matter and force, to subserve His purposes, than that matter and force should have been eternal and uncaused, waiting through the cycles of a past eternity for the birth of a God who should begin to control them and reduce the chaos to order.

When the objector says, "every sign of design is in itself so much proof of want of power in God," he does not quite finish his own sentence. He ought to have said, "want of power in God to do what I think He ought to do." That is the real *crux*, the true cause of the objection. The signs of design do not please him, because the product, thus far, does not correspond with his notion of what God ought to have done. But possibly in God's eyes everything is just as it should be ; everything is working for the best by the best possible means ; and possibly God knows more about it than the objector.

LECTURE II.

IN the first Lecture on Theism as a Science, we asserted that Theism is rightly called a Science because it is based exclusively on facts, on natural facts which are beyond all dispute. Our first step was to prove the existence of God by observation of any common object in Nature, such as a tree, interpreted by human intelligence. And this was necessarily accompanied by the discovery of some of God's attributes, viz., knowledge, power, and will. Were these all that could be known concerning God, they would be sufficient to silence, if not to convince, the Atheist who denies God's existence, and the Agnostic who says we can know nothing about Him. But the human mind is capable of still further investigation, and human nature at its best demands it. We have other faculties besides Reason, which will not be satisfied by the mere discovery of a God who knows and wills, but which ask, with reiterated and passionate eagerness, Is this God good or evil? Does He care or does He

not care that men should be righteous? What are His final purposes with individuals and with the race? Is He a God whom moral beings, like us, are bound to recognise and to obey? Is He a God whom aspiring men can trust, love, and adore? Here, again, unless we base all our arguments on fact, we cannot pretend to be scientific. We make no assumptions, we will not ignore testimony that is adverse, we will not call evil good or good evil for any reason in the world, not even to vindicate the moral character of God. For truth is to the soul of man what air is to his body. It is essential to life. The soul cannot subsist on falsehood or on shams. We are so constituted that we feel the imperative duty, as well as the necessity, of believing and embracing only that which seems to us to be true. We simply wrong ourselves when we make-believe we believe that which is not capable of reasonable proof. I have dwelt on this point with apparently too great emphasis, because Faith and Reason have been set in a false opposition both by atheists and by orthodox believers. Faith is always reasonable, grounded on sufficient evidence. If not, it is not true faith but credulity. And so Reason begets true faith or trust in God. If the reasoning be defective, or deal with false premisses, it does not beget faith but doubt and distrust—or, what is worse still, misplaced trust. Hence it will be seen how necessary it is, in such an enquiry as we are pursuing, to cleave stedfastly to indisputable facts.

Now, it is a very important fact of human nature that we are not content with discovering only knowledge, power, and will in God, unless we can discover also that He is good and that His purposes are likewise good. It is conceivable that knowledge and will may be possessed by a superhuman Being utterly indifferent to right and wrong, or even by one who is utterly malignant; or we might conceive of a Being possessing these attributes who was partial and capricious, having benignant purposes towards some of His creatures and malignant purposes towards all the rest. Human beings have invented such gods as these, and we wish we could say that all civilised mankind have outgrown a belief in them. The fact that they have been and are still believed in will have to be reckoned with in its proper place.

Now, how can we certainly tell whether God be good or evil? Are there any facts within reach that can give us the right clue to such a transcendent issue? Owing to the differences in our moral codes, owing to the different ideal of supreme goodness in the minds of different men, it is notorious that what some men call good, others will call evil, and *vice versa*. Monstrous as it may sound, it is absolute truth to say that such diversities of moral opinion are flourishing and conflicting this very day, and in our own civilised communities. I know some persons who think it wrong that any one should ever suffer any

pain, be the subject of any grief whatever, and that any one should die. They call pain and death "evils"; *i.e.*, moral evils in the Being who caused them. They regard life and pleasure as unmixed "good"; *i.e.*, as evidence of goodness in the Being who caused them. Their sole standard of all good is the happiness or pleasure which anything may afford. Hence satisfaction of desires is accounted the highest "good." Disappointment of desire is only "evil." Others we find taking quite the opposite view, thinking and feeling sure that pain and grief and disappointment and death itself are all means of producing the highest kind of good, a kind infinitely higher than what the other folk call life and pleasure. And therefore they believe that it is not wrong but right in the Being who caused the pain and sorrow and death that these things should occur. The standard of good is so different between these two classes of thinkers that the Pessimists can hardly be brought to understand what their opponents say.

Now, if you grasp this fact and give it due heed, you will see how it must affect the answer to the question, Is God good or evil? All will depend on what is meant by "good" and "evil" in the mind of the questioner. If physical pain, *e.g.*, be regarded as evil, and if any physical pain be traceable—as it certainly must be—to the will of God, the inevitable conclusion is that God is not good. And that is the spoken or unspoken thought this very day of

millions of Christians and Agnostic Pessimists. I find them everywhere and even on the borderlands of our own Theism, would-be Theists, but prevented by seeing God as malignant, because He is the author of suffering and death. It is necessary, therefore, that before we can see the goodness of God we must have a different—I should say a higher—standard of goodness than that of the people who think it wrong in God to inflict physical pain. A child of two or three years old cannot be expected to regard its mother as good and loving when she takes away its doll, or gives it nasty medicine, or chastises it. The mother must bear its impatience and its unjust reproaches until the child is old enough to know that the deprivation of pleasure and the infliction of pain were acts of loving goodness which nothing short of a true mother's love demanded. The enquiry into the moral character of God is therefore an intensely moral question, involving our own estimate of a certain standard in morals. What we shall think concerning God will depend on what we are. He will be in our eyes "good" or "evil" according to our previous estimate of good and evil in the events and conditions of human life. Moreover, such an enquiry as this cannot be rightly entered upon without due regard to the limitations of our mental faculties and to the necessarily defective knowledge which they enable us to attain. It would be wholly unreasonable and even childish to

suppose that we can solve every moral problem in the universe ; that we, having come so recently into existence, should be able to fathom the depths of the Divine purposes which fill the ocean of Eternity ; that we, who cannot even tell what shall be on the morrow, should be able to pierce the veil of an interminable future. Some at least of God's purposes must be hidden from us ; and the utmost we can hope to feel in regard to them is a confidence arising from the conviction within ourselves that if *we* had adequate power and adequate wisdom, everything would turn out for the best in the best of all possible worlds. There is no mistake about that. This is a fact of human nature at its highest, and ought to be sufficient ground for hope, provided we can trace a definite good purpose in some of those arrangements and conditions which lie within reach of our observation. That is to say, it is reasonable to infer the unknown from what is known. Even among men this is accepted as reason for trust. Character is inferred from one or more manifestations of conduct, and although the frailty and uncertainty of human character and conduct are proverbial, yet our lives are, for the most part, influenced by that trust or distrust of each other which is begotten by trustworthy or untrustworthy conduct. In like manner, scientific truths rest upon the inference of certainty and constancy drawn from observation of the trustworthiness of natural laws.

To God we do not attribute vacillation or caprice, we ascribe to Him an unchangeable nature and disposition, so that if any of His known actions are discovered to be good, and if a good purpose be revealed in some of His plans, it is only reasonable to expect that He will be good in everything else, everywhere, and to all eternity, provided nothing is absolutely proved to the contrary.

The only difficulty which appears to me to have any weight is that of discerning and demonstrating a purpose of good in things and arrangements that are commonly called evil—such as pain, death, and sin. The beneficence and bounty of God are already admitted to be so widespread and so plentiful that life itself is considered to be a pleasure and a privilege which no sane person would willingly part with. “All that a man hath will he give for his life,” has been a proverb for thousands of years. The creation of faculties on purpose to confer or to increase pleasure—such as the sense of beauty, the delight in healthy activity, and in the indulgence of our lawful appetites—is sufficient to prove the good-will of the Creator towards His creatures. It is only when the exceptions to the rule confront us, when pain, grief, and sin destroy our comfort and poison our pleasure, that any moral explanation is required. And this, I say again, can only be satisfactorily reached by scientific methods, by recourse to facts and to facts alone.

Let us now take as wide a survey as we can of the universe, or of such part of it as we can speak of with certainty.

The most important fact about the universe is that it is certainly two-fold. One aspect is material, the other is non-material, *e.g.*, there is the visible material brain in man, and there is also the invisible, non-material thought or mind, with which it is closely associated. Let us call this the spiritual part, for convenience' sake. The universe itself is manifestly material, even the impalpable, invisible, ether revealing to us its material nature by its measurable movements in space under the influence of light and electricity. But every part of this material universe depends for what it is on spiritual activity which has no material attributes, and which we call mind or thought, because it is cognate to our own spiritual part, to our own thought or mind. In fact, we only see the spiritual there in the material universe and acting upon it, because we have it in ourselves, but, of course, in a very low degree as compared with its extent and activity in the universe at large. Now, the material part of the universe has one distinctive feature which must be well noted, for if we disregard it, we shall miss the key to the moral problems we need to solve. The material part is always changing, more or less rapidly assuming certain forms, manifesting organic life and inorganic combinations, fulfilling certain purposes, and then declining, decaying, and—to

use a mundane expression—dying. If God be regarded as the Creator and as the Preserver of the universe, He is no less surely its Destroyer. He may not lose an atom of the substance, He may preserve every atom for new combinations, for a new heaven and a new earth, but the day comes when the old universe disappears and He practically destroys every vestige of that long-lasting wonder of use and glory, and forthwith begins to create all things new. And this destruction of the old and construction of the new is continually going on with varying degrees of rapidity in every part of the material universe. It was a magnificent forecast of the Hebrew Psalmist who said: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thine hand. They shall perish; but Thou remainest. Yea, they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.”

Looking at the universe in another aspect we find the presence everywhere of spiritual forces which the constitution of the human mind compels us to regard as differing from, and superior to, the material. We notice within ourselves the permanence of our own consciousness throughout all the changes of our body. It is computed that every atom of our body is replaced by fresh material every seven years, and yet the mind and

memory retain their identity, and nothing is so precious, so vital, to us as the preservation of self-consciousness, personality, individuality, or whatever you like to call it. To lose that sense of identity would be practical annihilation. Moreover, we are all convinced that our spiritual part is immeasurably superior to our bodies, that it has the right to rule the whole man. And when we carry this thought of contrast between the spiritual and the material beyond ourselves into the vast and myriad worlds around us, we know that there is no sun or star or Milky Way comparable for one moment in value and in importance to the soul of an intelligent, upright and loving man. It is only in the light of this distinction, this contrast between the spiritual and the material, that we can possibly pursue the profound investigation we have undertaken. We cannot even attempt to find out whether God be good or evil until, by proper recognition of the contrast between things spiritual and things material, we have made it possible to understand the meaning of the terms good and evil. The more we know of the facts of our own complex nature, the better able shall we be to find the knowledge of God.

LECTURE III.

So far we have come to the conclusion that there is a God, viz., a superhuman Being ruling the world, and having power, intelligence, and will ; and, in our last Lecture, we raised the simple question, Is this God good, or evil, or indifferent ? It was shown that the answer to this question would depend on the meaning given to those terms "good" and "evil" in the mind of the questioner. The general beneficence or bounty of God was not in question ; but the difficulty of proving His goodness lies in the obtrusive presence of those things and conditions which are commonly called "evils." These are Pain, Death, and Sin. Inasmuch as Pain is most frequently felt to be a moral objection to the government of God, I will take this first, though to my mind it does not seem so formidable an objection as the existence of Sin. For the purposes of our enquiry we ought to have in our minds, if not a formal definition, at least a clear perception of the essential element in all forms of pain. Pain,

as we know, comes from countless varying sources and takes as many forms. But every pain, in any shape, and coming from any source whatever, is something which the sufferer does not like, something which arouses opposition, something which he desires and perhaps tries to get rid of or to reduce to its lowest power of annoyance. In this portion of our work we must deal exclusively with human pain, leaving for separate examination, but not forgetting, the pains endured by the rest of the animal world.

The question then arises: Is God evil because He subjects us to things and conditions which we do not like? This can be immediately and adequately answered in the following words:— If God subjects us to pain in any form for the sake of our own true welfare—to confer upon us benefits which are worth having at the price of suffering, and to confer such benefits as we could not possibly enjoy without the preliminary suffering—then God is not evil, but He is good. You may urge here that this answer rests upon a hypothesis, and so it does; but inasmuch as this treatise on Theism is intended to be scientific, we proceed at once to prove that a great many pains suffered by mankind are not only directly and indirectly productive of our highest welfare, but are the only means known to us at present whereby that welfare can be attained. Whether God could have secured for us that welfare by any other means may be an

interesting enquiry by itself ; but it must not be allowed for one moment to obscure the definite issue now raised, which is this : Are any of our pains the means by which we attain true welfare ?

Regarding ourselves at first as mere animals, then welfare must surely involve life and safety. Both of these are secured to us by pain. The new-born babe owes its continuance of life to the pain of hunger which makes it cry out. Unless that sign were made, unless pain caused it, the mother would not know when her babe was hungry, and might not be in a hurry to supply its wants. She, too, must feel pain when her infant cries, in order to induce her to render immediate relief ; and if she suckles her child, it gives her great pain to withhold the nourishment, so that the very earliest conditions of human life depend upon pain. Much more goes on in the nursery which would illustrate the needful operation and the beneficial consequences of pain.

Pain is also one great source of animal safety. Pain warns us of a thousand dangers to which we should fall victims without any hope of escape. If fire did not burn, or sharp instruments did not hurt, or noisome gases did not choke, we should never learn to protect ourselves or to avoid countless sources of destruction. Intense tropical heat, or intense cold, if we did not feel them as pains, would quickly make an end of us. Further illustration is needless.

Still regarding ourselves from the animal point of view, we find that pain, and nothing but pain, is the origin of all the safety and comfort of civilized life. The discomforts endured by our primæval ancestors—of which, indeed, we know nothing by experience, and only a little by reading—goaded them to invent and to learn arts by which the pains of subsistence could be lessened. They learned by pain to provide themselves with fire, food, clothing, shelter, weapons, and protection from wild beasts. Pain was at the root of every single development of greater safety and comfort. And if you skip over the hundreds of centuries which have intervened, tell me to what else we owe every possible improvement we make to-day, unless it be to pain. Some discomfort, some uneasiness, some foe to health, to rest or to enjoyment, is always at the root of every discovery and appliance which render life more safe or more enjoyable. It is a fact that where savages find maintenance of life perfectly easy, they make no advance and no effort towards civilization. There is little or nothing to impel them to improve their condition. Pain has been our slow but sure educator in those laws of Nature which regulate health and strength; and although we be always slow to learn, yet the lessons get learnt at last, and the infractions of these laws and the consequent pain and disease have been our sole teachers.

Now I ask you to look at mankind in a higher

aspect, say, as intelligent beings. Pain has been the means of raising and quickening our intelligence. It has made us searching and enquiring, eager for knowledge, because knowledge was found to be necessary for the avoidance or mitigation of pain. It is pain which is the mother not only of all inventions, but of all the sciences. If any science was acquired which led to man's welfare, it quickly begat another science more or less cognate ; while the pseudo-sciences, such as Alchemy and Astrology—both of which arose out of pain—passed subsequently into the true sciences of Chemistry and Astronomy.

I make a slight digression here to remind you that Astrology as well as Alchemy arose out of pain. Alchemy, of course, came from the pain and dread of poverty, through men seeking to acquire riches without the trouble of working for them. But Astrology was pursued in order to avoid the evil influences which certain stars and planets were believed to possess, and which a knowledge of their tricks might enable men to avert. Wherein we discern that not only physical pain but imaginary pain also, the mere dread of pain, leads to science. We might almost with exactness declare that all the activities of both body and mind have been developed and augmented out of the desire to avoid or to remedy pain. If therefore there be anything to be thankful for in the so-called blessings of civilization—and we must admit that

there are many such things—we cannot deny that their invention and their development are traceable chiefly, if not entirely, to pain and to the natural instinct of trying to avoid or to remedy it.

Let us take another step. The development of the sense of duty is largely traceable to pain. It is so easy nowadays to respect each others' rights that we forget how that principle first arose and how it became established. When one man hurt another, causing him pain either in mind, body, or estate, the injured party learnt then and there by his pain that the other man had no right to injure him. Then he argued, "If I have rights as against him, he has rights as against me; therefore I have no right to do to him as I would wish him not to do to me." And it is worthy of notice that all the existing religions of the world have this maxim among their first principles of morality. This lesson concerning rights, although so ancient, is not yet learned as it ought to be; but it is being learned slowly and surely by the pain caused through every existing and tolerated wrong. I have seen negroes in Jamaica utterly unconscious of any wrong in stealing ground-produce from their neighbours; but no sooner did they possess a little plantation of their own and somebody stole from it—thus hurting and giving them the pain of being robbed—than they began to be scrupulous about stealing from their neighbours. This is a kind of parable; but it is especially appropriate in these

days when some so-called rights are being discovered to be wrongs, and when some of those who would right these wrongs do not apply the canon of righteousness to remedy them. Any way, the grievous pains of the poor in our own times will lead sooner or later to the greater development and to the ultimate predominance of the sense of duty.

When we come still higher up in the scale of human qualities, we find that pain has done more for us here than in any other sphere. It is remarkable that those virtues, which we all admire most, are called by names which would have no meaning but for the pains and sorrows of men. Patience, fortitude, courage, endurance and perseverance can only live where pain has to be endured, disappointment of desire and inevitable difficulties have to be overcome. Remembering that all forms of pain are strictly things and conditions that we do not like; if they were all removed, the virtues which their presence creates would die out. Without pain there would be no patience, no fortitude, no courage, no endurance.

Aye! and above and beyond all these manly qualities there stands the loveliest daughter of pain—sympathy. Where would sympathy have been seen or heard of in a world in which there was neither pain nor grief? Why, the very word, your golden, heavenly word “sympathy,” has no meaning without pain and sorrow. Sympathy

could never have come to a painless, tearless, griefless world. The cost of human suffering is a cheap one to pay for this priceless honour and glory. And we need that suffering still, for the lesson of sympathy is not yet fully learned.

And yet again there is another and deeply important aspect in which pain must be regarded. How comes human nature to be capable of feeling pain at all? How, in short, was man made sensitive to pain? Simply by the self-same process and machinery by which he derives any pleasure at all. The same nervous system by which it is possible for him to be tortured is also the only avenue to a single pleasure. The more sensitive he is to pain, the more keenly he enjoys all that is pleasurable. We might have been secured absolute immunity from pain, but only by being cut off likewise from all possible enjoyment. Moreover, pain is a necessary alternative to pleasure. Every pleasure, continued long enough, palls upon us and becomes an unspeakable bore, or at least loses all quality of pleasure. Every pleasure is heightened by alternations with pain. Every pain, *e.g.*, which some of us are now feeling from the severe cold, will only heighten our pleasure when the thaw comes. In the lower sphere of animal desires, it is a notorious fact that the longer desire remains unsatisfied, the keener is our relish for gratification when it comes. And all unsatisfied desire is painful. Some pleasures are absolutely created by conditions

of pain through disease; and the poor sufferers have physical delight in breathing more freely, or in moving an arm or leg, while we healthy ones are never conscious of such enjoyments at all.

And in the higher sphere of the spiritual life pain adds infinite zest to our delight and trust in God. Many owe to pain any awakening of the soul to God at all. Pain has not only made man improve himself and his own conditions, has not only made men more kind and dutiful to each other, not only has given birth to the loveliest virtues of nobility and sympathy, but has brought us home to God as to "our Refuge and Strength and our very present help in time of trouble." And in the face of these facts, which defy contradiction, our own rational answer to the question before us is that God is not evil, but God is good *because* He does subject us to things and conditions which we do not like.

I do not say that you cannot bring any damaging charge against pain, or point to any moral mischief which it has done. I ignore nothing of that kind, but I believe the mischiefs of pain are only temporary and quite easily curable. But I do say that in the face of the evidence of the history of the world and the marvellous lovely development of human character which only pain could achieve, the few exceptions and anomalies do not weigh a feather against the proof of the faithful goodness of God in bringing us into a world of pain and

sorrow, in order to confer upon us the best and truest welfare. But as yet we have hardly begun our proofs of His goodness. Those who wish to know more of it would do well to go, not into the halls of luxury or into the gardens of ease and plenty, but into the lazarettos and the ghettos of the world, to look into the homes of real want, into the wards of hospitals, and into the secrets of the broken-hearted. These are the temples of the the Divine Glory, the resting-place of the true Shechinah, the open doors into the mysteries of the Eternal Love.

LECTURE IV.

IN our last Lecture it was proved that a vast amount of the pain endured by human beings was the means by which the best and truest welfare of mankind had been acquired. It is freely admitted that there are many forms of suffering and many special instances of it which, in our present state of ignorance, cannot, with equal certainty, be shown to be conducive to welfare. At the same time, until the final issue of them is disclosed, it cannot be proved that such pains are not equally beneficial with those pains which have been manifestly proved to be so. It is important to remember that our failure to see a good purpose in any part of God's work does not and cannot vitiate the good purpose of those sufferings which we have clearly seen to be beneficial. On the contrary, it is more reasonable to infer that all the dealings of God are equally good, when some of them have been proved to be so, than to infer that He is bad from those evils which we cannot explain, or for which we are at present unable to see a good purpose. And this

conclusion is immensely strengthened by reference to some facts of our human nature, which I will now set before you.

Man is a moral being, *i.e.*, he is conscious of the difference existing between moral good and moral evil. His codes of right and wrong may be defective and partially erroneous—this does not affect the argument—he knows that there is a right and a wrong, and that the right ought to be followed and the wrong ought to be avoided by every responsible being. Moreover, as a moral being, he knows, almost without being taught, that motives determine the moral quality of every action; that it is wrong to do a good action from a bad motive; and that sometimes, though very seldom, it is right to do a bad action with a good motive—*e.g.*, to tell a lie to frustrate the purpose of a criminal, or to mislead a murderous lunatic. Sometimes the life of a person dangerously ill can only be saved by deceiving him. It is, without question, an essential element in morality to act with a good purpose, *viz.*, the purpose of promoting true welfare. Now, it is natural and inevitable to ascribe this moral sense in man to God who is his Maker. For one of the most obvious facts of human nature is that the conscience, or sense of duty, recognizes God as the source of its imperious authority. It is part of our very nature to feel when we do right (*i.e.*, what we believe to be right) that we are obeying God; and likewise when we do wrong (thinking it

to be wrong) we are disobeying and displeasing God. I cannot answer for what others may think ; but this fact of my nature is a certain proof to me that the Author of my conscience must Himself be good. For the opposite conclusion is so absurd. It is manifestly unreasonable. How could an evil god take steps to make me feel that I ought to be good ? Yet endeavours have been made in this century to ascribe the origin of conscience in man to any other source but God, to trace it to mere selfishness or utilitarian principles, even to the desire for human praise. When I come to deal more particularly with the Conscience in these Lectures, I will endeavour to expose the fallacy of such arguments ; but for the present I am content with insisting on the fact that, even if the origin of conscience were to be traced to low, selfish principles, now that it has reached its present development it does bear testimony to the goodness of the Divine authority which it recognizes. Howsoever its origin may be explained you cannot explain away its connection in the human mind with the authority of God. And in that very recognition it bears testimony to the certainty that God is righteous. When appealed to, the Conscience demands that the course of the world should, before all things, be righteous, should be good in the process and good in the final issue. Therefore it is that some men in their impatience either blame God or disbelieve in Him altogether,

because they cannot discern the goodness of the process, or predict with certainty the goodness of the issue. And what is this, but a fresh and vigorous testimony to the force and supremacy of the Conscience in man? It will not tolerate a God who is not "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His thoughts." Whenever, therefore, we are confronted with any instance of pain in which, owing to our defective knowledge, we are unable to see any good purpose, we must fall back first on our invincible confidence in our sense of right, on our own certainty that right and only right ought to be done; and, in the second place, we must look straight and steadily at the fact that we do not and cannot yet see the end to which that special suffering may lead. It is not reasonable, it is not just, to argue a bad purpose from any process which is unfinished or only just begun. And if the purpose be good, and if a wisdom higher than our own have adopted the process as the best available, we are not competent to find fault with it on any grounds of justice or reason. Why, even if we had nothing but these insoluble problems of evil before us, even if we had not one of the innumerable proofs of the moral value of suffering which beset us on every hand; we should still have no right to question the goodness of God until we saw the issue of the process and until we could discover some better means to reach it, because our consciences are sufficient to prove that He who made them ought to

be good both in His purposes and in His methods. Thus the very Conscience which suggests and demands an enquiry into God's moral character brings to it the only reasonable answer, in spite of all difficulties and anomalies. We know what we, under the influence of conscience, would certainly do if we had the power and the wits to do it. We should devise nothing but what was good, and we should always choose the best means of bringing it about. And I ask, Who has made us to feel like this? The only answer is, God; and if God's thoughts and ways are not at least as good as ours at their best, then He has managed to create and endow beings who are better than Himself, and therefore into whose hands He ought promptly to surrender the control and welfare of the world.

But there is another aspect of pain which I have not touched. Man, as I have just been saying, is a moral being, and can only be one in proportion to his freedom of will—a very limited freedom, if you like; but, such as it is, it is the essential condition of any degree of morality at all. Now, in looking abroad on the pains of the world, we find by far the greatest part arises through the misuse of our freedom, through our action in direct disobedience to moral law. The greatest and worst of human sufferings have been caused by selfishness, by excessive or unlawful indulgence of appetite, by ambition, by covetousness, and by direct cruelty. There is no ferocious beast of prey comparable to

the human beast when he is swayed by selfishness and bad passions. (Man can be the most cruel of all creatures on the face of the earth.) And the plain truth must be stated that the most horrible tortures which have ever been devised were invented by Popes, Cardinals, Bishops and Priests to punish heretics and to maintain the absolute power of the Christian Church. There is no record in the wide world so awful, so unspeakable in its genius for cruelty, as the record of the tortures inflicted by the Church in the name of Christ. And to all these physical horrors must be added the even deeper cruelty of torturing the minds of men, women and children by ghastly fears; of aggravating infinitely the horrors of death by threats of eternal damnation in the flames of hell-fire. Do I forget that all these awful wrongs were perpetrated beneath the eye and without the interference of the Almighty God? I never could see, in all the moral problems of Nature, anything so ghastly or difficult of solution as this. This is the worst form in which a charge against God's goodness and compassion could be brought. To allow a whole "civilised" world to be subject to the most painful of terrors; to permit the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands to torture unspeakable; to allow men to imagine that it was His will they should perpetrate these horrible cruelties and not to move a finger to disclose the vicious falseness of their creed and the devilishness of their boasted Chris-

tianity—all this seems to me by far the most terrible indictment against God which the world has ever heard. I know of no greater service to mankind than to vindicate the perfect goodness of God in His faithful silence and non-interference, and I know of no greater honour than to be able to do it—an honour which I cannot even hope to deserve, though I will try my best.

When the mandate went forth that man was to be a moral being and, endowed with a limited freedom of will, was to learn for himself the difference between things good and things evil step by step; was to learn by experiment, not by success only but also by failure; he was then and there foredoomed to undergo an ordeal of suffering such as only a God could foresee. That which has passed already we know too well; what is passing now before our eyes we also know; what is to come we do not know, except that it could never be worse than it was under the tyranny of the Church.

One lesson at least ought to be learnt from this horrible aspect of the Christian Church, which is this:—All false beliefs, all idolatries, lead sooner or later to crimes. The connection between the two is written down in lines of bloodshed and cruelty which cannot be wiped out. It is of infinite importance that men should not hold falsehood, or worship idols; it is of infinite importance what they think and believe concerning God, be-

cause that belief, so far as it has any hold upon them at all, has an enormous influence upon their conduct to each other. The perversion of religion to purposes of ambition and worldly interests is worse than having no religion at all. This at least we must learn from the history of the Church in the dark ages.

The only way in which the goodness of God can be vindicated in the presence of these awful facts is to discover a benign and holy purpose in giving to men that measure of freedom which God knew they would be sure to misuse. The whole question turns upon that purpose ; for if we can discover a good purpose, it will go a long way towards the vindication of the process ; but if we cannot discover a good purpose, the process is more than ever incapable of vindication. Now all philosophers and students of ethics have agreed that without some freedom of choice there can be no virtue. One could spend hours in illustration, but it is quite needless. But what is the immediate effect of any freedom ? It is the action which is determined by the strongest motives ; and, until men have been trained by experience, the lower motives prevail, and men act upon the impulses of their animal nature, and behave at first like beasts and fiends. Sooner or later these actions are seen to produce no true welfare at all, but misery and woe ; and by that misery and woe men are taught to see that they had been making a wrong use of their freedom.

By slow degrees men learn to see the awful difference between following their lower impulses and resisting or controlling them ; by slow degrees they come to feel, as well as to think, that the actions which cause so much pain and grief are morally evil, and that actions which cause true welfare are morally good, and so a change is made—still very gradually—in their own affections and desires ; they begin at last to hate and loathe the evil, and to love and follow that which is good. But this is the very and only change which can raise men, which can lift them out of the condition of brute beasts and enable them to pursue the true welfare of themselves and of each other. No such change could be possible unless forced upon them by actual experience of good and evil with their respective consequences ; and no such experience would be possible unless they had a given amount of freedom. So the freedom which God gave and the little gleam of moral light which came with it are manifestly designed to raise men from the lower state to the higher, from the brutal into the human.

Whatever God may know that we do not know, we cannot discern any other method possible by which God could evolve moral beings at all, or make any degree of real goodness possible. There is a value in the perfect machine, which is simply made to go right ; and I do not deny God's power to have made us mere machines incapable of

swerving from His laws ; but then such machines would have had not the least moral value, not having any moral quality, neither good nor bad, but outside the pale of virtue because absolutely irresponsible. But the goodness in man which God has been developing by this fearful process is a goodness which has an infinitely higher quality than mere correctness of action. It is a spontaneous preference for goodness in the presence of a choice between good and evil, both of which have become known to us, and could only be known, by the terrible ordeal through which we have passed. The study of goodness leads us to infer that God's goodness must be also of the highest kind ; a perfect freedom of choice between good purposes and bad purposes, between good processes and bad processes, and that having this choice He always prefers and adopts the best. Anyway, we have firm hold now of the fact that true virtue, real goodness in man, could only become possible under the conditions in which we live, and that these conditions have involved and still involve a vast amount of pain and misery caused alone by men's selfishness and cruelty, and must continue to be caused until the painful consequences at last compel men to renounce the wickedness and to curb the unlawful desires which breed nothing but misery.

The awful picture of tyranny and cruelty held up for our abhorrence in the history of the

Christian Church teaches at least this lesson : That God does not and never will swerve from His high and holy purpose when once it is chosen. Whatever pain and misery it may cause for a time, the process must go on ; it must not be arrested or interfered with ; it must work its way out to the final issue—which, judging even only from what we now see, is sure to surpass all our highest dreams of human welfare. We cannot believe that He witnesses the awful cruelties of man to man without the deepest sympathy ; but if He knows that some day the whole world of men, women and children, victims of cruelty and perpetrators of cruelty alike, will one day bless Him for every pang and for every shame they have had to endure, His eternal righteousness and love will be satisfied. His very faithfulness demands that neither sin nor sorrow should vanish out of the earth till the eternal welfare of mankind which they are intended to procure has been finally gained.

LECTURE V.

IN the last Lecture the moral aspect of man's nature was but slightly touched upon. And before we go further I think it will be well to meditate more closely upon the Conscience. We have to bear in mind that the principle on which Theistic Belief is based is that God cannot be inferior to the best of His creatures, or to the best that they can conceive.

Let us enquire what is the proper function of the Conscience. In the first place, it seems to be a faculty distinct from the ordinary reflective powers of the mind which we sum up under the term Reason. I do not now enquire how Conscience is in the first instance generated, or whether or not it be some phrenological organ more or less conspicuous as a bump on the human head. It is neither my province nor within my grasp to settle such questions as to its origin or physical construction; I have only to deal with it as it seems to most men to act a part in our complex nature and to influence our conduct. In affirming, then, the distinctness of Conscience from the Reason or pure Intellect, I only speak of it as it appears to my

thought. Conscience does not and cannot teach me what is right and what is wrong. Only my Reason can tell me that ; but as soon as I perceive what is right my Conscience commands me to do it ; as soon as I perceive what is wrong, my Conscience forthwith commands me not to do it. Many have been the strifes in the world owing to the confusion between Conscience and the moral codes. Our knowledge being defective, our reasoning sometimes fallible, our conclusions as to right and wrong must be sometimes false, and yet the Conscience only sanctions what seems to be right, and forbids only what seems to be wrong. It follows, as a matter of course, that people will sometimes do wrong conscientiously, *i.e.*, not knowing it to be wrong, but believing it to be right. "The time will come when he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service," is a good illustration of this perversion of mind. Many persons will thereupon jump to the conclusion that Conscience is not to be trusted, and that it must be over-ruled by superior authority external to itself ; whereas the fault lies not with the Conscience but with the Reason which is imperfectly enlightened. The Conscience has nothing whatever to do with drawing the conclusions of the Reason ; its only function is to endorse with all the weight of its sanction whatever the Reason has pronounced to be right. Conscience, even in its apparently worst perversions, is not perverted at all, is still loyal to the best that is put

before it. It cannot help us to make up our minds in the least degree ; it waits quietly till this process is completed by the Reason, and then steps in with its powerful mandate to demand that the best alternative should be adopted and pursued. It has always seemed to me a great mistake to blame the Conscience for those moral errors which have been perpetrated in its name. Conscience is ever loyal to duty as duty, never sanctions any wrong as wrong, is a perpetual witness in the soul of man for all righteousness ; and it differs in different men (and in each man at different times) only in strength and intensity, in its power to control the life ; it does not differ in being morally inferior and superior. If my Conscience sanctions what another man's Conscience would condemn, this only shows that there is a moral difference of opinion in our respective minds, not that his Conscience is more loyal to what is right than my Conscience, nor mine more loyal than his.

Looseness of language is largely responsible for many popular errors. We often speak of one man as conscientious, and another as unconscientious, when the real difference we wish to describe is the difference of their moral opinions. We ought never to use these terms, "conscientious" and "unconscientious," except to distinguish between the man who obeys his Conscience and the other who disobeys it. We take too much for granted that our estimate of what is right and

wrong is shared by everyone else alike; and then come to the false conclusion that those who do not do what we believe to be right are acting against their Consciences. Whole races of men have been stigmatised as wanting in conscientiousness because they are remarkably untruthful; others because they are habitual thieves; others because they love to shed innocent blood, and their land groans with murder; others because they are frivolous, fickle, and vain; others because polygamy is their law; others because they practise polyandry. In all these cases, you find Conscience quite as much at work as in ourselves, commanding what is believed to be right, forbidding what is believed to be wrong. Some men lie, and steal, and murder, &c., through their want of clear and vigorous perception that lying, stealing, and murder are wrong. Their education has been deficient, and the inherited tendency to these habits has not been resisted; they are ever ready with reasons to justify their conduct or to make very light of it. Otherwise it would have been impossible for whole populations to connive at these outrages, and to shield the guilty from the penalties of the law. But these same people, taught from their youth up to regard some act of religious observance as the highest of all duties, and the neglect of it the most wicked of crimes, are very, very conscientious in the discharge of that "duty" and manifest the functions of Conscience in that particular to a striking degree.

If ever the question is raised : “ Why does the Conscience bid you do this ? ” the sole answer always is : “ Because it is right. ” Never in any case is it “ Because it is wrong. ” The Conscience is, I grant, not equally strong in all men. In some natures it has more, in others less, power to influence the conduct. But this is only like all other human faculties. The Reason, the imagination, the affections, the hopes and the fears vary considerably in strength and degree in different men ; and so also the Conscience varies ; in some it is the lord of the whole life ; in others it is hustled into a corner and seldom suffered to raise its voice. But it is sufficiently universal to be argued from as the common property of human nature ; and in reasoning about Him who is the source and fountain of all things, the Conscience is as much entitled to be considered as the Intellect. Moreover, if we would argue fairly, we must take the average quality of the Conscience rather than the more rare instances of those who hardly exhibit any Conscience at all. In a treatise on the Intellect of man, it would be manifestly unfair to take only the undeveloped state of it as it appears in a child, or the diseased condition of it as it appears in an idiot. So in speaking of the Conscience of man we ought to take it in its more complete and perfectly healthy development in the noblest moral examples, rather than in its earlier and undeveloped state. We are searching for indications of a Divine Being

among the products in the universe; we have found, so far, that man is the noblest of them known to us, by reason of his Intellect alone; but we find that he has something else, which, in his own estimation, he reckons nobler still than Intellect—viz., Conscience, or the faculty which urges him to do what is right and avoid what is wrong; and this faculty is, in its normal exercise, the greatest blessing, but one, of all the blessings which man possesses.

In the first place, it marks afresh our superiority to the physical world. While everything around us is by the laws and constitution of its nature designed for selfishness, to win its way, if it can, in the struggle for existence; while even the body of man with all its functions has precisely the same nature, and might lawfully (were it not for the Reason and Conscience) study its own comfort and well-being alone, and might, without the smallest scruple, enrich and adorn itself by and through the ruin of others; while the unbridled indulgence of our physical instincts would lead us to the most profound animalism and bestiality, without any perception of their baseness, the Conscience is the chief faculty of our nature which rescues us from the degradation and actually alters the whole natural course and tendency of our lives. That we should, to some extent, lead animal lives is not merely inevitable, but necessary and good; and therefore we find the Conscience, when duly

enlightened by Reason, sanctioning a certain degree of animalism for the very purpose of carrying out a benevolent design ; but the checks and limits which the Conscience puts upon our self-indulgence are of a nature to cause us at times positive pain and annoyance. We cannot obey the Conscience in everything without trampling on our physical nature and sometimes not without permanent injury to our health and brain. Self-denial and mortification of the flesh (and I use these terms in the very widest sense and not merely in the sense of asceticism) are absolutely necessary to the perfect supremacy of the Conscience when enlightened by Reason. If my Reason tells me that such and such a thing is wrong, [*i.e.*, will inflict injury on others], *that* does not necessarily prevent my wishing to do it. I cannot help *wishing* to do it if the gratification be very great, and do it I should to a certainty, but for that wonderful monitor within who says, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God !" The collision is so complete between the higher voice and the impelling instinct, that one can only feel that the two are radically different in kind and must have had a different source. This struggle between a strong desire and a higher law within the same breast, if it gives any witness, bears testimony to the exalted nature of man, and drives him in thought to the threshold of that Heavenly Home where he was born and cradled. To have the

power of doing intentionally what one shrinks from doing, and to deny oneself the pleasure which is so fascinating and which one longs to do, is to prove the immense superiority of our inner selves over the visible universe.

Here I must pause to notice an objection which has been urged, that whenever we obey Conscience we only do so to gain a greater pleasure than we relinquish. It is said that we are still selfish after all, and dread remorse more than the present self-denial. Now, I cannot of course speak for others, but for myself I deny this with my whole soul. I am perfectly certain that it is neither fear of greater pain nor hope for greater joy that makes me endeavour to obey my Conscience. On some occasions I have had nothing at all but pain for doing what I thought to be right, and I did it too, grudgingly, half regretting my own self-denial, and at the time wishing that I had not been so conscientious. It is unfair to mankind to put such a construction upon their submission to that imperious call of Conscience. To us who are believers in God, perhaps the hope of being perfectly conformed to His holy will, in some far off future, may be an attraction entering into more than half our moral struggles; but nothing can be more false than to say it is always so, or to deny the possibility of a man doing what his Conscience demands from the most disinterested motives. For does not Conscience itself sit in judgment with

Reason upon motives as well as conduct? Does it not condemn as unworthy all motives of action the core and kernel of which is selfishness? No doubt, in our imperfect state, our motives are not always pure and perfectly disinterested; but the soul of man has, at all events, risen up to that height in which it deliberately distinguishes pure from impure motives, distinguishes between selfishness and unselfishness; and while it gives its solemn approval to the nobler, it condemns and denounces the baser. There is all the difference between seeking to be true to one's higher nature and seeking greater happiness. It is true we cannot avoid the happiness, but we disqualify ourselves for its attainment the moment we fix upon it a longing eye. What determines our choice is the strength of our conviction that a thing is right, not the possibility of our being the happier for it afterwards; for we often do right with the certainty of our suffering for it. The efforts made by some to depreciate the force and value of Conscience are unworthy of men who profess to be students of facts and phenomena; for if there had been no cases of genuine disinterested doing of duty for duty's sake, we should never have been able to discover the difference between that and seeking our own happiness. Man has detected the superiority of the one motive over the other, only after having witnessed the higher motive in others, or having experienced it in himself. Had

it never been done, men would never have imagined that it could be done.

And this brings me to notice that the Conscience enlightened by Reason always urges us to *do good* to our fellow-men rather than to give them pleasure. An unenlightened benevolence, such as the animal instinct of an indulgent parent, which leads to the spoiling of a child, is a mere impulse to give pleasure, and is on that ground actually condemned by the enlightened Conscience because that pleasure not only does not tend to the child's real and lasting good, but tends even to his present and future degradation. In its higher state the Conscience bids us aim exclusively at the cultivation of all virtue in ourselves and in others. It teaches us always to subordinate pleasure to goodness, and often deliberately to forego and withhold pleasure that goodness may ensue. Truth and righteousness would be preferred, not only before wealth and comfort here below, but even before an eternity of mere enjoyment without personal holiness. Thus, on every side, it seems that the superiority of our inner nature becomes an antagonism to the outward and visible. "The flesh warreth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other." The contrast and hostility between them we all feel; but which of the two do we reckon the higher, the nobler, the truer part of man? Surely, the Conscience, the Conscience which makes us mortify our flesh with its affections

and lusts, which often and often mars our pleasure and embitters our contact with each other, upbraids us with reproaches and stings us with remorse. That voice which hushes our cry for pleasure, which will not endure a single selfish plea, but demands unquestioning obedience, and bids us fall down in the very dust before the Majesty of Duty—that voice, I say, we all in our secret hearts revere, whether or not we obey it as we should. At least, we pay to it the homage of our inmost souls, and feel how great and grand it is to be its slave. We have here, then, something in man which we cannot find in the physical universe, where pleasure is the aim of every living thing. Every single being in every class of animal life, including the body of man, is constituted to seek its own pleasure first; but in man we find a principle entirely at war with the universal instinct, a power that forces us to break the natural law of mortal life and to seek for that which is supremely higher than mere animal safety and enjoyment. For the sake of goodness, men have learnt not merely to suffer pain and loss themselves, but to undergo the still worse pain of inflicting suffering upon others. We would deliberately hurt their bodies and mortify their desires, if by so doing we could raise them into the exalted condition of goodness.

Now to me, I confess this fact is a far greater revelation of what God is than the intellect of man. For ignoring altogether the fact that men have

almost universally regarded the Conscience as the vice-gerent of God, the mere possession of a power which claims the mastery over our whole natures, which disturbs our animal repose, and which demands the deliberate surrender of pleasure for the sake of truth, righteousness, and every form of duty, brings us face to face with a Power, which, whatever it be, is absolutely transcendent over nature, and reveals to our mind the existence of another world altogether, in and around us, in which the laws and forces of the visible universe have only a subordinate place. Were we to grant that our intellect is only an animal organism, we should still be at our wits' end to account for the Conscience on purely physical grounds ; and we could never get over the anomaly and absurdity of the universe evolving and evolving itself cycle after cycle till it produced an element at variance with its own laws, a power and a force which deliberately set them at defiance, and a conscious being who calmly rejected for the sake of virtue the most enticing pleasures placed in its path. If we could get over the intellectual difficulty of Atheism, we could never get over the difficulty which is presented by the Conscience. I do not deny that there is antagonism in the physical universe. The struggle for existence abounds everywhere ; it is in accordance with its own principle of "Everyone for himself" ; but this antagonism is wholly different from that which exists between two distinct por-

tions of one and the same being ; greater still is the difference when we observe that the higher law often condemns as morally wrong what Nature herself tempts us to do.

The corollary to all this argument is as simple as it is reasonable and true. The God who implanted the Conscience in man is One who desires our goodness, and therefore must Himself be good—"righteous in all His ways and holy in all His thoughts." I cannot pursue the enquiry further at present : it is enough that the human Conscience is not merely superior but antagonistic to the selfish principle in nature to prove that if we would search for indications of the Deity, we must make *man* the chief field of our enquiry.

LECTURE VI.

IT will be desirable, before we go further, to recapitulate what I hope has been proved in our search after the knowledge of God. There is an intelligent Being who has purposes, and fulfils them, to account for the phenomena of Nature. That Being is also good, having good purposes and taking the only steps to carry them out which we can discover to be possible. Moreover, we have seen that He is good in having ordained for us conditions which are painful, which we do not like, and even in permitting us a certain amount of freedom which He foresaw that we should misuse to the temporary detriment of ourselves and of each other. In fact, the worst cruelties of man to man are proved to be an inevitable part of that process which produces ultimate higher welfare—a welfare otherwise unattainable. Now the whole of this conclusion rests on the facts of human nature.

It is a fact that we are intelligent beings capable of understanding and exercising purpose, and of choosing means for its fulfilment. We are also

moral beings, *i.e.*, possessed of Conscience, or sense of duty, whereby we naturally resent anything that seems unrighteous in the course of Nature. As moral beings we expect and demand that the course of Nature should be right; in other words, Conscience owns obligation to, and recognises the authority of, only a God who is good. I wish to emphasize this essential feature of Theism, which might otherwise be overlooked among the many arguments brought forward to vindicate the goodness of God in certain particulars. All these subsidiary arguments are profoundly interesting, it is true; but they derive their sole force from the primary fact that we have Reason and Conscience as parts of our common human nature. For without these faculties we could not discern the Divine purpose nor the divine goodness; and supposing, for a moment, that all our reasonings on the goodness of the course of Nature had broken down and were incapable of demonstration, we should still have our Reason and Conscience left to us to prove that our Maker is both wise and good, although we were still unable to see the wisdom and goodness of His purposes and methods. The basis of all our knowledge of God is to be found in the higher faculties of human nature. It is here, therefore, that I take my stand as a defender of Theism on scientific grounds. Although I have said perhaps more than any one else in illustration of the goodness of God's purposes even in things

painful and evil, I am conscious that my induction is only partial and not complete—in the very nature of things it could not be complete; but, in that case, it cannot by itself be made the sole basis of a claim to any knowledge of God. Once more I repeat, all knowledge of God comes to us through what He has caused us to be. So far we have dealt only with two of the three faculties which distinguish us as human beings. The present Lecture will bring us to the consideration of the faculty of Love.

The proposition to be proved is that Love in man greatly extends and elevates our knowledge of God. If we once get into our minds a clear perception of what true Love is, what is the kind of love which all good men acknowledge and admire as the purest and best, we shall then have raised a standard below which our conceptions of God cannot fall. We shall invest Him, our Maker, with the highest quality of which we have any experience. We do not, of course, imply that even then our knowledge of God will be complete or adequate, but that, so far as it goes, it will be true knowledge and not merely a guess in the dark. Our best and noblest thought of Him can never even approach the reality; but, such as it is, poor even at its best, it will be enough, and more than enough, to develop our Natural Theology into Natural Religion of the highest type yet known among men.

But this shows the supreme importance of

having in our minds a true conception of what the purest and noblest Love really is. I pass over the baser meanings in which the sacred word Love is too often profaned by being used to denote unlawful passion. But there are many instances in which the word Love is applied to quite innocent and beautiful relations, but from which is entirely absent that which constitutes the highest and purest Love. To take a very common instance, that of over-indulgent parents who, in the eyes of wiser persons, spoil their children. They do love their children after a sort ; they admire them and are amused by them, and they do not like to see them unhappy or to hear them cry. A shrewd neighbour says by way of remonstrance—"You should not let your children have their own way so much. You are too kind to them." But, overhearing that, I should have said—"No, you are *not* too kind to them, but, in your ignorance of true love, you are actually not kind enough to them. Your weak and unwise indulgence is a sort of cruelty, not true parental love at all. In fact, you are laying up a store of sorrow and shame for your children in years to come."

And some children think and say they love their parents, only because of the so-called good things obtained from them, or because they are indulgent and let them have their own way. Such love is a misnomer. It is not love to their parents, but really selfish regard for themselves, only called by another name.

Then there are the lovers, dear young creatures, whom it is always a pleasure to meet by the wayside, who think and say that they love each other, because they enjoy each other's company and are fond of endearments and all the sweet innocent tokens of mutual admiration. Yet all this may consist without any real love at all. The tie that binds them is often nothing but selfishness and love of pleasure. And perhaps such lovers marry; and instead of love, there is a sort of understanding like a contract of give and take—a *quid pro quo*, a background of bargain—"I will love you as long as you love me, and only so long."

The test of true love generally begins with sorrow or pain of some kind. An old proverb says, "When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window." When that occurs, it shows that love was never there to fly out, but only the billing and cooing of silly birds, the poorest simulation of love. When poverty or sickness or trouble comes, then it will be seen whether there be any true love there at all, for only a true love will stay. In true love there is not a grain of selfishness.

Many mistake admiration for love; and, alas! the women too often encourage this mistake by being content with admiration only, and indignant when it is withheld. And many, many more, both men and women, will only give what they call their love for an equivalent, demanding and exacting

some return for it in sympathy or praise or help, and ceasing to "love," as they call it, when these returns are not forthcoming. There is no true love in any of these types of human character and relation. It is merely selfishness finely dressed and taking a roundabout journey—that is all.

How then shall we define true love? It is an emotion, a strong emotion, impelling us to confer the best possible good upon the object of our love, to be occupied only with that. It is absolutely unselfish and opposed to all selfishness. It seeks no reward but the success of its endeavour to do good. It shuns no pain, no sacrifice, in that endeavour; and all the pain, all the sacrifice involved, only increases the rapture of its indulgence. Love does not merely bring happiness to the loving soul as a consequence of its endeavours. It is happiness in itself. It is happiness to feel the mere impulse. It is greater happiness still to gratify it by effort. Let us note more especially its perfect disinterestedness. The love of a mother for her babe is a recognised type of that perfectly unselfish love. This, in the purely animal sphere, is shared likewise by all creatures towards their tender offspring. But in the higher human sphere, the love of parents for their children, when it is pure, is always disinterested. The children's true welfare is pursued with faithful steadfastness and at the cost of personal sacrifices such as are known only to true fathers and mothers. They do not look for a

quid pro quo, for any return except the success of their loving endeavours to promote their children's well-being. The highest praise ever given by one man to another is to say, "He was a father to me," or of a woman, "She was like a mother." True fatherly and motherly love is the highest form in which love can be manifested to us, and this has often been shown by men and women who have never had any children of their own. This is why we have felt that the name of Father is the best and highest Name which has ever been given to God. Love is thus more than conscientiousness, although it includes conscientiousness at every step. It is conscientiousness glorified by a delight and eagerness in performance. Love leaps up to do gladly what mere sense of duty would drive us to perform in a half-hearted way. Love turns all drudgery into a delight, and immensely adds, to its list of duties, the conferring of benefits far beyond the maximum demanded by a moral code. Love, too, quickens our anxiety to find out what is best to be done, will not let us leave it to chance or reckless speed whether, or how, relief or benefit should be conferred. Love thus expands the Conscience and quickens the Reason, and even on this ground only it would rightfully claim the supremacy over the whole man.

Furthermore, we see how love, and love only, can supply the motive power to the knowledge and sense of duty already residing in the Reason and Con-

science. It is the great distress of a good man that he knows pretty well what is right, and that he feels that he ought to do it; but one thing is lacking—the fire and heat to set the moral machinery in motion. We lack the impulse, we lack the fire and enthusiasm which will enable us to overcome the hard, cold *inertia* of our own selfishness. But “Love conquers all things,” as we used to write in our copybooks at school, and having learnt it then, we quickly forgot it; and so the love which God gave us to warm us into active duty has been allowed to grow cold and wither and die, leaving us only our self-regard and self-interest to keep us from the grosser vices and to preserve our respectability. There is not a man living in so-called civilisation, of any creed under heaven or of no creed at all, who does not know and who will not admit that if love swayed the hearts of all, this earth would become a heaven, nearly all its woes would disappear, and sorrow and sighing would flee away. We know this to a certainty. We know that love would enable every one to do his fullest duty and ever so much more, and yet that every fulfilment of it and every so-called sacrifice in the doing of it would be a supreme pleasure.

I do not, of course, wish to disparage either Reason or Conscience. They are indispensable to human welfare, and Love itself would be blind and stupid and make terrible mistakes if either Reason or Conscience were to be crippled or withdrawn.

But I do say with truth, and with a certainty of carrying conviction to every heart that knows what true love is, that it is the best and noblest of all the faculties which God has given us, and is therefore, on the principles of Theism, that one product in the universe which best reveals to us what God is. If He has made us loving or capable of love, He must be loving too, at least as loving as the most loving among men. As we have sung in our hymn this morning :—

“ For the love Thou sendest shows us
 How that stronger love must glow ;
 By its very depth revealing
 Other depths of deeper feeling.
 God alone can know.

“ Teaching us of love unuttered,
 Ever springing, ever new ;
 Whose unfathomed depth and beauty
 Cheer our sorrows, gild our duty,
 Perfect, constant, true.”

And if you still ply me with demands for proof, I repeat that the character of God is to be discovered in the intense goodness of His purposes and in the goodness of His methods. And there is no other sphere than that of human love in which that goodness of purpose and goodness of method are so brilliantly displayed. For all will own that Love itself is an impulse to do only good and the highest discoverable good to our fellow-men. All will own likewise that Love in itself and in its action is the highest pleasure of

which we are capable; that it is a great delight to be loving and to do anything for love. In this way, God, desiring us to do our duty, is seen to be trying to make it easy for us to do, not merely easy, but attractive, so that we need not to be driven to it, or scolded into doing it, or threatened into doing it; but may do it spontaneously—rejoicing over it the more, the more pain it may cost us.

I would ask the Pessimist here, What on earth could you devise that could be so good as this, or so good in its method? You may growl and say, "It does not answer. Men and women will be selfish till the crack of doom." But I tell you that whenever it has been tried it is the grandest success. Love never fails. If there be failure anywhere, it is in ourselves who have neglected to stir up the gift of God which is within us, and have yielded ourselves with a fatal ease to self-indulgence and self-interest instead. And if you rail at God because human love is not strong enough for the place, does not rule and reign over us as it might and as it ought, then I say look at the whole course of God's evolution of the world. It is slow but sure. He does not rake up the seeds He has just planted to see how they are growing, but gives them all ample time to develop their latent forces so as to make certain the result at which He aims. Just as surely as God grows an oak from an acorn, so does He grow human

love by slow development out of the apparently cold and hard heart of man. And nowhere, not even in our unloving heart, hath He left Himself without witness. For when the heart is as cold and selfish as any stone, the Conscience cries out that it ought not to be cold and selfish, but warm and loving. Our very sense of duty tells us we owe more to our brother man than merely his rights; that we owe him our sympathy and affection and kind words, kind excuses and kind looks when we can give him no more. The influence of Love is striking indeed in our relations with the so-called wicked and perverse. It is here that the power of Love is seen in its triumph. Love seeks the amendment and the reclamation of sinners; concerns itself not at all with reprisals and restitutions, but only with the sinner's personal reformation. Love tries only to make men better for their own sake and not for the benefits which a loving heart may receive from them. Our love for sinners—for those who have actually injured us—explains to us God's own loving attitude to those who are rebels against His authority and hinderers of His good work on earth. Yes, and God has sent Love upon earth to heal our strifes and divisions, to reconcile foes, to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children, to enable us to bear long with injustice and perversity, to make kind excuses, and to forgive freely, if need be, seventy times seven times a day. God's

gracious gift of love gives the lie direct to that most cruel of all texts, "I came not to bring peace upon earth, but a sword. I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and a man's foes shall be those of his own household. Whoso loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoso loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Whoever spoke these wicked words on earth was certainly not a teacher sent by that God who gave to mankind the unspeakable gift of love. All we need to heal our strifes is to love one another more till we are able to speak our honest thought, and to hear opinions which we do not agree with, without quarrelling.

I think I have proved that He who made us is a righteous and loving God. Many an inference, beside, of joyful hope may be drawn from this established fact. On another occasion I shall endeavour to draw those inferences. In my next Lecture I shall deal with the revelation of God's Love in the phenomena of Death. At present I shall be content if Theism be admitted to be a true Natural Theology, scientifically verified, based only on facts.

May God grant that our hearts may so burn with true Love to each other that we may see and adore and perfectly trust in the Infinite and Eternal Love from whence all goodness flows!

LECTURE VII.

WE have now to consider the Love of God in relation to the phenomena of Death. At first sight it seems that, in completely separating those who love one another, Death is more inconsistent with Love than any other pain or trouble to which we are exposed. Love, even in its highest and purest form, is wounded and crushed by the loss of love on either side and also by the total interruption of intercourse. Permanence of the emotion and the continuance of intercourse are essential to the happiness of true love. Death is therefore opposed to love, and inconsistent with it so far as it breaks finally and completely all earthly intercourse between those who love one another. Such "parting is pitiful pain" and cannot be anything else. Yet God kills and separates; and so far as this mortal life is concerned, there is no remedy, no redress. How then can He be a loving God? It is to this supreme and solemn enquiry that we must betake ourselves.

Let us begin with a few general observations on

what is called the "sacredness of human life." We are so constituted that our own life is very dear to us ; we feel constantly the desire to protect and to prolong it ; and even when, through deep anguish or morbid depression, we wish it were over, our Reason and Conscience forbid us to put an end to our life and urge us to bear anything rather than destroy it by our own hand. But the lives of others are more precious to us than our own. To the honour and glory of man it belongs to risk life and to face death bravely and calmly in the defence of those we love—aye, and even in the discharge of the well-known duty of defending our Queen and country. The ships that go down at sea, the life-boat, the fire-engine, and the coal mine are surrounded with noble memories of those who have cheerfully given their lives to rescue men and women who were utter strangers to them. The sacredness of life, then, is by no means regarded, even by us mortals, as supreme. Other things are more sacred still ; and even here, in this house of God, you and I can feel the old flame of that still more sacred Love which tramples on the love of life when our beloved are in danger. At this very hour I would kill a man with the most deliberate purpose, if by no other means I could prevent his perpetrating a murder or an outrage on my wife and children. If I could not kill him first, he should only reach them by trampling over my dead body. And I cannot imagine any future period of

existence when I should cease to feel as I do now. We observe further that many men and women have preferred death to dishonour, have died in unspeakable torture rather than tell a lie or profess to believe what their hearts denied. So there are things more sacred, more precious to us, than life itself.

But now let us more closely examine Death as it affects us in the natural human relations. I take the case of a mother at the bedside of her sick child. Her one great passionate longing is to keep alive and sound the body of her child and to ward off the horrible event of a final separation. This is the natural and inevitable condition of physical existence in these relations. The mother cannot help loving the child's body and wishing to preserve it and to keep it near to her as long as she lives. We see the same desire intensely strong between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and deeply attached friends. It needs no justification, it is an imperious instinct; but if we began to look for reasons for it, there are plenty of them and all well-grounded. All lives ought to be precious and all lives are precious to those who love them. The body is the sole means by which a loving intercourse can become possible or be maintained. Cut off the agency of the body, and the intercourse ceases. And with that of course vanishes all the service, all the delight which loving service can confer on both the giver and receiver. To us the

death of our beloved must seem cruel. Seldom, indeed, is it anything but grievous at the time, and for long after. Yet many and many are the divine consolations which reach us as we pass on our solitary way through the vale of tears. And many of those who have trodden that path have lived to thank our Father "for the bitter pangs of separation by death."

Now, it is clear beyond all question that man and his Maker stand here on very different ground. Without a word of further preface, I say, it is clear and certain that God does not love our bodies as we love the bodies of our dear ones. It is essential to human physical love that it should be permanent; that the body should remain with us; that we should keep it so long as we ourselves live and love it. But God is ruthlessly killing these bodies, old and young, strong and weak, useful and useless, with apparent indifference or wanton caprice every moment we draw breath. These bodies are mere *things* wanted by Him only for a short term, to serve, we are sure, some good purpose; but only so long as He wants them and as they may serve His grander purposes which we do not see. If God be said to love any material thing in the universe, it is a misuse of terms; for He cannot love it, as a mother loves her babe, when He can deliberately part with it and destroy it, casting it away like a faded flower or a withered leaf. Let me warn you here that I am not imputing any wanton caprice or

cruelty to God in inflicting death at any time in any place or in any manner which He may choose : I am only affirming that God does not love the body of any one in the same sense that it is loved by a mother or father or husband or wife or brother or sister or cherished friend. Because, if God did so love it, He would not part with it, much less destroy it.

Where then are we to look for any solution of this great mystery of Death in its antagonism against Love ? You will remember that at the beginning of these Lectures I warned you that you could never find any solution of the deep problems of life unless you kept continually before your minds the distinction between the material and the spiritual. All the material is visibly and certainly transient ; nothing continues in one stay ; forms and combinations dissolve and disappear one after another, so that the elements which composed them may pass into other forms and into new combinations. It is even so with the human body ; it changes from the germ into the babe, from the babe into the youth, then into the man, and grows older and older till it begins to decay and at last to die. It is calculated that all the atoms which compose a human body are replaced by new atoms every seven years, so that an old person of eighty-four years has had twelve different bodies. Still the identity of person and memory remains and shows signs of permanence which are entirely absent from the

body. Now remember that *we* are not the bodies in which we live and move and love and have intercourse one with another. We are non-material, super-material beings which, for distinction's sake, we call spirits or souls. We trace ourselves therefore to Spirit and not to matter ; to God Himself and not to the blood of our parents, who only begat our bodies. We are the offspring of Him in whom dwells perfect intelligence, righteousness and Love ; we are the offspring of God, for we too possess intelligence, goodness and love which are not material at all, but are spiritual in their very essence and can only have come from Spirit. But we have already seen that the possession of these spiritual faculties definitely and certainly proves the good purpose of our Maker in conferring them ; and that is the same thing as saying that God is good and loving. Yes, but what is that He loves ? It is the spirit, the soul, the man, the woman, the child, that He truly loves—not the bodies or houses in which those spirits dwell—but the precious and immortal tenants who occupy and use them for a brief space according to His will.

For here I must draw a distinction between the mere bounty and kindness of God and the Love of God. By and by I hope to show that it is out of bounty and kindness that God has sent Death into the world, in spite of all our tears and lamentations ; but I must distinguish between His mere kindness

and His Love; between the objects of the one and the objects of the other. The one set of objects to whom He is only kind are transient. The other set of objects which He loves are permanent, and can never be separated from Him by death of the body or by anything else. Just as the mother would never part from her babe if she could help it, or unless it would be very soon restored to her, so, if God's Love is only as great as hers, He will never part from His dear children, not even from one of the myriad souls which He has begotten. And this truth was known and recorded by a Hebrew Prophet thousands of years ago, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I never forget thee." As I have said repeatedly, we are souls, not bodies. We are spirits born out of the Love of God, and destined to live in His Love to all eternity, or else God does not love so much as the poor, frail, mortal mother. It may be that every other body in the universe has a soul too, every bird, beast, reptile, insect, and every fish in the sea: nay, more, every tree and herb of the field, every weed and every flower. This may be only a beautiful dream; but I allude to it so as not to mislead you, in speaking of man as a spirit born and begotten of God, to think that man is the only object of the everlasting Love of God. Whatever He loves will never perish, we may be quite sure. But all these

outward things and forms do perish ; that is the fact ; and therefore, though He may be kind to them and lavish upon them infinitely varied beauty and happiness, He does not *love* them.

Now, let us turn to the thought that God displays His kindness even in ordaining Death. One obviously kind and generous purpose in Death is to provide for a perpetual succession of living creatures who can thus enjoy their short span of the pleasures of life. The world is, so to speak, as full as it can hold of living creatures, and if any more are to come the living must make room for the unborn. They must die that others may live. Only a hard selfishness could object to this. I have had my turn in this beautiful and delightful world of human life. Why should I begrudge to others after me the pleasure which I have enjoyed? Is it grateful, is it decent, to murmur when the messenger comes to tell me that my time is up and that my work is done, that another life is waiting for me to move on, and that I must now leave my place to be filled by him? If this were all, it ought to be enough to stop a good-hearted man from complaining that Death is a Divine institution.

But this is not all. If it were not for Death, the very pleasures of life would be destroyed. Try, if you can, to imagine a world of men and women who never died, never lost their present conditions, but were doomed to live on here, on this isolated planet, without the smallest hope of release. How

the mere thought of such a dreary future would poison every pleasure of the present hour! How our hearts would sink at the awful outlook of the impossibility of our spirits ever escaping from the bondage of the flesh: all hope of progress and wider experience absolutely shut out, and the weary myriads of humanity facing one another in endless monotony till every pleasure was gone and every emotion worn out by dismal repetition! And the most awful consequence of the banishment of Death would be that this lovely life of ours would be bereft of its children. Not a babe to be seen in all the wide world, not a sound of childish laughter would ever be heard; all the divine lessons which we now learn from the young would be impossible; all the sweetest part of our nature which we derive only and solely from the possession of children, or from guardian contact with them, would never be developed at all. Love in its sweetest, highest and most beautiful form would never appear to teach us the best and highest we can think and know of God. As Longfellow sings for us:—

“ Come to me, O ye children !
 For I hear you at your play,
 And the questions which have vexed me
 Have vanished quite away.

“ Ye open the Eastern windows
 That look towards the sun,
 Where thoughts are singing swallows
 And the brooks of morning run.

“ In your hearts are the birds and the sunshine,
 In your thoughts the brooklets flow ;
 But in mine is the wind of Autumn,
 And the first fall of the snow.

“ Ah ! what would the world be to us
 If the children were no more ?
 We should dread the desert behind us
 Worse than the dark before.

* * * *

“ Come to me, O ye children !
 And whisper in my ear,
 What the birds and the winds are singing
 In your sunny atmosphere.

“ For what are all our contrivings,
 And the wisdom of our books,
 When compared with your caresses,
 And the gladness of your looks ?

“ Ye are better than all the ballads
 That ever were sung or said ;
 For ye are living poems,
 And all the rest are dead ! ”

If God were to abolish Death, He would therein and thereby at one stroke plunge us into the depths of darkness and turn our planet into a hell. If I could not look forward to dying some day, I should be of all men the most miserable.

I could go on to speak of the vast benefits which mankind has reaped wholly and solely by the scythe of Death. When we think of all the labour and strength and skill which have been created only by the endeavour to postpone Death and to mitigate the pains and weakness of disease and decay which lead up to it ; when we recall the

noble and beautiful virtues of patience and fortitude, of tenderest pity and compassion, of faithful service rendered by our doctors and nurses ; when we think of the loving charity with which the broken hearts of the widow and the fatherless have been bound up ; when we see the souls of men and women rising out of the ashes of their despair into faith and hope, crying out like Job, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord!"—when all such enormous leaps have been taken in man's nature, and all due to the ordaining of Death as the inevitable sequence of life, it is not reasonable, it is not just, to find fault with God for this His method of raising us above the low level of mere animalism. And all these, you will observe, are purely mundane reasons for the institution of Death.

I have said yet not a word about that "inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away" into which Death ushers us. Having proved that God is not only just but loving, we are forced to infer that He loves us, that it was only out of Love that we were born, and only for Love's sake that our bodies must die, and we, set free from the bondage of corruption, shall wing our flight into those realms of joy and glory which His loving heart is surely preparing for us. It is this which really explains everything, which teaches us not to dread Death at all, but to greet it as God's sweet messenger sent to call us to a brighter home. "In thy light,"

says the Psalmist, "shall we see light." In the light of God's Love we see light beyond all the darkness of the tomb. In that we can absolutely rest with a confidence sure and steadfast ; and the mere flash of it across our darkened souls ought to set up within us an entirely new way of regarding ourselves, our mortal bodies, our life here, and the certain blessed Death in which it must end.

I have said nothing, though I have plenty to say, of the visible tangible mercies which Death so often brings even to the weeping survivors. It always seems to come as a shock, to be untimely to those whose feelings are for the time harrowed by it. But sooner or later the mourners come to be reconciled to their sorrow. Sooner or later they begin to see how timely and suitable and lovingly ordered was that very death which had overwhelmed them with grief. The tokens of the love of the living God are not far to find if we have but trustful hearts and eyes to look for them. As a rule those who have suffered most not only complain the least, but are loud and eloquent in their praises of Him to whom they owe all their joy and all their blessed sorrow ; out of whose very love they were born into the world below, and out of whose love they will pass through the gates of Death into the eternal Life of the world to come.

" Let us in life and death
 Boldly Thy truth declare,
 And publish with our latest breath
 Thy love and guardian care."

LECTURE VIII.

OUR subject this morning will be again that which occupied us in the last Lecture, viz., The Love of God in relation to the phenomena of Death. I will not repeat any of the foregoing arguments. The special work which I have marked out for myself now is to deal with the fact that a life after death is only an inference or corollary drawn from the already established proofs of the love of God towards us ; that there is absolutely no scientific demonstration of a future life yet discernible ; that it is a hope but nothing more ; a hope only strong and active because it is reasonable ; a hope made all but certain by seeing what the alternative would be if there were no life for us after death. I will state the objection to this part of the Theistic theology in the strongest terms I can select. An objector may say : “ Your entire system of Theistic belief rests, after all, upon a mere assumption, upon a belief or expectation for which the facts of Nature to which you appeal afford not the slightest ground. You yourself would admit that if there be no life for us after the death of our bodies, the

alleged love of God towards us would fall to the ground ; and, however wise or good His plans and purposes might be, He could not truly love us, as we understand love in its highest form, if He could willingly part with us or cast *us* away as He casts away our *bodies*. Thus, in the ultimate resort, your whole system of Theism rests on hypothesis or assumption and not on proved fact. For, if your hypothesis of a future life be false, the noblest element which you attribute to God disappears ; and, so far as love is concerned, man would then be better than his Maker. And the moment you touch that point, the moment you disprove a future life (if it be disprovable) in that moment you have destroyed the entire principle on which Theism rests. You are confronted by a fact which upsets your fundamental proposition that God must be at least as good as the best that man can be or can imagine.”

Now, this objection is, I grant, extremely difficult to meet, except for one fact. The objection itself is based on hypothesis—that is to say : The objector is arguing on the assumption that there is no future life for us. If there be no evidence amounting to positive demonstration, such as science would recognise—such alone as I could myself accept—that there is a life for us after death, so likewise there is no such evidence that we cease to live when our bodies die. At present both these conflicting theories are assumptions and nothing more. So

that even if Theism were to be discredited, owing to its dependence on the one hypothesis, it could not be overthrown by the other, so long as that also remains an hypothesis unproved. The aspect of the objection is now so altered that it seems much less formidable. For when two varying hypotheses are in the field, recourse must be had to the balance of probabilities. Which of the two has the greater claim on our reasonable acceptance? Which of the two hypotheses is more in accord with facts already known and indisputable? Theism has already given absolute proof that the Intelligent Maker of man is wise and good and loving in having imparted to us a certain measure of intelligence, goodness and love with the obvious purposes of producing both goodness and happiness—happiness indeed through goodness—for each individual and for the whole of mankind as a race. Theism has thus proved as a fact that the attainment of high and noble character, of the best and loveliest dispositions and motives, is the purpose for which we have been so endowed. But the fact is no less clear and certain that this purpose is not entirely fulfilled by any man's life here on earth. The best of us all are the least satisfied with that small measure of goodness we have reached, as compared with our ideal of what it ought to be and with what human nature is capable of attaining, if only time and conditions be duly allowed. Only by granting such time can the good purpose of our higher

faculties be accomplished. Theism has established all this as an immovable rock from which the human mind cannot be shaken. Surely this affords a very high degree of probability for the hope of a life to come.

Moreover, the experience of souls ought to count among the facts from which to draw reasonable inferences ; and no experience of souls is more striking or more well-substantiated than the tie of devout affection between them and their God ; the intense and supreme love of the soul for its most righteous and loving Father in whom all its trust reposes and to whom all its most fervent aspirations ascend. Whatever happens to the body, the souls of these His dear children so cling in faith and love to God that they are positively sure of never fading away out of His presence, never letting go of His hand. It is in the highest degree improbable that God would create and encourage such passionate affection towards Himself, knowing all the while that with the stroke of the scythe of Death all this loving intercourse would absolutely come to an end for evermore. And if, further, we see what grand endeavours and noble sacrifices have been made during this life for the one sole purpose of being good and growing better, and with the one chief hope of becoming at last so pure and holy and loving as perfectly to satisfy the requisitions of a perfectly Holy and Loving God—then I think we may fairly say that nothing is so improbable as

that a good God would disappoint those high and disinterested hopes, and requite those conscientious sacrifices by ruthless, heartless extinction. Were that possible, it would be a servile flattery and a conscious falsehood to say that God was good.

To take even lower ground, it seems highly improbable that God takes no cognizance of the true and beautiful love which sometimes exists between us in our several relations, and that He separates finally and for ever at death the souls which truly loved each other on earth. At night-fall, or before a journey, or when long and painful earthly separations have to be borne, we could hardly bring ourselves to say "farewell," or even "good night," were it not for the strong hope within us that the parting is only for a time; and before many hours, or days, or months, or years are passed we shall be re-united to those we love. It is just that hope which saves us from a torment too great to bear. So with the bitter pains of separation by death it is sometimes the only consolation left that in some new, some utterly unimagined, life beyond the grave we earnestly hope and even expect to meet again in wonder, love, and praise. The very failure of our best endeavours here, the cruel disappointments of our life and love, the unfinished work, the unsolved problems, the unrighted wrongs of this lower life, all tend to strengthen, if not to frame, the very foundations of that hope for a life to come, and to bring it to the

verge of a certain conviction. The more we need God here on earth to help us to be good, the more certainly we trust that in another world He will fulfil and over-pass our highest desires, and, "when we awake up after His likeness, we shall be satisfied therewith."

Set over against these probabilities what you please ; they will not weigh a feather against what I have urged. All you can do is to reiterate that physical science is absolutely silent upon the question and must in the very nature of things be so, because it deals only with material forces and phenomena. The hypothesis of our life being absolutely closed by the death of our bodies cannot be breathed without doing violence to the Reason, Conscience and Heart of man. It stultifies all that God has revealed to us of His good purposes ; it represents Him as doing outrageous wrong to His creature man ; and, worst of all, denies to Him a single spark of fatherly love for His children. It makes our creation "a blunder infinite and inexcusable." If believed in seriously, in these days of greater light and keener insight, it would make religion impossible, and in a large number of cases would absolutely destroy the strongest motives for morality. Any regard for character and personal cultivation of secret virtue would be impossible to all but the rarest few, even if one man could be found to live so heroically knowing that the grave would bury his noblest aspirations.

But now I must remind you of the fundamental facts upon which the higher assumption of a future life really rests. These are the facts of our own consciousness, which are the result of the very nature which has been given to us. Our Reason, Conscience and Love, all together, compel us to feel that if only we had the power and knew the best means to adopt, even we poor mortal men would carry out the good purposes of human life and faculty to their fullest achievement. We could not stop short till those ends were attained. We could not admit of failure or loss in one single instance. Righteousness and Love—even only as far, or as little, as we know them—demand such a sequel and will be content with no other and no less. So that our hypothesis is not merely a guess in the dark, but based upon the surest facts of all that is highest and best within us. God must be at least as good and loving as ourselves, else there is no God at all. Of course, I do not say anything so ignorant and wild as that God is thereby tied down to our conceptions of what is good, or to our imagined methods of doing it: but whereinsoever these conceptions of ours differ from the thoughts of God Himself, ours will be invariably lower and worse than the thoughts and ways of God. If God disappoints any of our expectations, it is only to give us something in its place infinitely better still. And a wide outlook upon the history of His dealings with our race and with many

individuals absolutely confirms this statement and proves that His purposes and plans are always far better for us than our own. Men have always been right in their expectation of "a good time coming," but nearly always wrong in their prediction of the details of what that good should be. The results, too, have always shown that God's fulfilment of man's hopes turns out better than their highest expectations. There is ample ground, then, for hoping and feeling sure that Death is only the door opening to a higher life. It has been revealed to us by the unquestioned facts of our human nature.

Yet, I admit that it has not been hitherto demonstrated with mathematical certainty. Men have wondered why this certainty has been withheld and only a strong hope left to us instead. They have tried in vain to make it more sure, and in that endeavour have resorted to the most feeble and even ridiculous methods and arguments—such as necromancy and alleged miracles of the resurrection of the body, which are not of the smallest value, but rather hindrances to our right conception of any life to come. My belief is that God has hidden that life from us by an impenetrable barrier, because any true revelation of it to us before death would be impossible; because we have no experience and no faculty which would enable us to understand or to appreciate it. But even were it possible, surely the revelation of what is to follow death would do an unspeakable amount of harm.

The mere hope and desire for it have already done some mischief in the world among people who did not sufficiently feel the supreme importance of doing their duty here on earth diligently and disinterestedly. For such as these, a revelation of the life after death would be an unmixed evil. Indeed I do not see how the moral government of the world could be carried on as well as it is, nor how the highest and purest motives for virtue could be sustained, when once a vision of the coming glory were vouchsafed to us. It is enough that God has taught us the supreme delight of trying to please Him without hope of reward, and the delight of living a life of Love to one another. In these high felicities we may be permitted to catch a glimpse of what our bliss will be when our obedience is perfect and our Love at last without a surviving spark of selfishness. But beyond that, we are far better off with only a hope than we could be if we had any certain knowledge or demonstration of the life to come.

It belongs then especially to Theism as a Science of Natural Theology to furnish the surest and most reasonable grounds for faith and hope, for absolute trust in a Righteous and Loving God, and for a sure and certain hope of an uninterrupted life of communion with Him—both trust and hope based on the solid grounds of fact in our own constitution as human and spiritual beings, and on arguments legitimately and logically drawn from them. The

alternatives are nowhere. They shrivel up into fragments of diseased and withered thought, the product only of disordered minds. Let us comfort and cheer ourselves in the words of the poet :—

“ Thou knowest all the future ; gleams of gladness
By stormy winds too quickly overcast ;
Hours of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be crossed at last.
Oh ! What could hope and confidence afford
To tread that path but this—Thou knowest, Lord ? ”

LECTURE IX.

IF these Lectures on Theism bore no other fruit, they seem to me to have a special value in calling forth the objections of thoughtful men who are no less anxious than ourselves to arrive at the truth. If we meet these objections in the right spirit and by fair argument, the result will be that any errors into which we may have fallen will have a chance of being corrected; and, on the other hand, our own position will be materially strengthened if we can meet and refute the objections. I am sure of your hearty sympathy with me in such endeavours, although of necessity the close reasoning and minute examination of terms used must be to a certain degree hard and dry. Both my hearers and myself must exercise patience in the task. A clever lawyer writes to me thus :—

“I have been reading your Lectures with much interest. As you know, I am with you almost entirely, but the difficulties to my mind are chiefly the following :—

1. Does proof of intelligent or beneficent design necessarily imply the existence of anything which can be called personality in the Deity ?

2. The difficulty of reconciling the existence of persecution with any benevolent system."

Our attention must be directed now exclusively to the first of these two difficulties. And upon that difficulty my friend still further enlarges in the following words :—

"I quite follow all the arguments in favour of the various attributes of the Deity because these are all capable of being expressed in language comprehensible by us, and are merely more or less transcendental improvements upon similar attributes which we recognise from day to day in our fellow-creatures. The difficulty to my mind is to associate them with immaterial Deity. Most minds can, I feel, only realise that which partakes of a more or less material character. The expression 'God is a Spirit' only means to most men something which is actually material but is only less material than a body. Directly they associate with the concept of this Spirit anything in the nature of human attributes, however glorified or spiritualised, I feel that they in effect materialise their Deity, and in introducing the personal element they materialise him and in effect erect a sort of idol. I doubt whether we can endow a God with these attributes without really abandoning the concept, 'God is a Spirit.'"

Now, I do not know whether, in hearing this statement of the difficulty, you have felt as I do. But my first impression is that my friend is taking a long journey to create a difficulty which does not *naturally* exist, although I own that almost everything has been done in Christendom to create it *artificially*. That is to say, Christian Religion has been systematically taught in connection with anthropomorphic and materialistic conceptions, so as to render it all but impossible for a mind just set

free from orthodox ideas to conceive of a Spiritual God at all. Hence, no doubt, what my friend says, is not only true, but finds its explanation. Most men do associate the concept of Deity with more or less materialistic ideas. But I will remind him that this error has not been universal in the world ; for some of the Hebrew Psalmists and Prophets attained to the purest possible spiritual concept of God perfectly free from anthropomorphic ideas of "a local habitation and a name." Without being conscious of it, I think my friend has grown up with the Christian ideas clinging to him, although he may never have really believed the Christian Creeds. He seems imperceptibly to have caught the prevailing spirit. Certainly it has been the privilege of Theists to become emancipated from all these anthropomorphic notions and to be able to think of God as true Spirit distinct from material things. I do not mean to say that we can explain or define "Spirit," but we gather much of what it is by the recognition that *we* are spirits and not the bodies in which we dwell. We Theists have grown so accustomed to this thought, that we can only think of God as Spirit too—as the Spiritual Source and Father of our true selves. It is true, and we do not forget, that for purposes of human life and manifestation and communication with one another we are tied and bound to a material body and brain without which we cannot, humanly speaking, live and act. But it needs no mental effort to recognise

the existence and activity of spirit quite apart from the agency of a physical brain, because the evidences of an omnipresent intelligence confront us every moment of our lives, and teach us, as the very alphabet of theology, that God is not limited in space or subject to the fetters and trammels of our mortal existence and human conditions. Moreover, the true Theist has always been, and is proud to confess himself, a pure Agnostic in regard to the mode of the existence of the Divine Being and His relation to the world. We not only profess to know nothing of such transcendent themes, but we think the enquiry both futile and worthless. It is no concern of ours how God exists, how pure Spirit can live and act under conditions entirely different from our own. It would be the depth of folly and wasted time to bestow thought upon questions which are so far beyond reach of our faculties. What really does concern us to know is well within the reach of our thought and experience, and we are wisely content to be true Agnostics in reference to everything that lies beyond.

But our friend betrays the fact that that terrible term "personality" has been a stumbling-block in his way. The term "personal" as applied to God is a most dangerous one to use unless guarded by the most exact definition. Thousands of persons use it in quite a wrong and misleading sense. Here, again, I am reminded of the mischief

wrought by the Christian Creeds in reference to this very term. Personality almost always implies anthropomorphism of a gross materialistic type. In arguing with my friend, then, our first business is to throw that word "personality" into the wastepaper basket, as of no value at all but, on the contrary, grossly misleading. The only thing which concerns us to discover is whether God is a knowing God, or ignorant and unconscious of you and me. I feel sometimes as if I could never cease lamenting over the great Matthew Arnold for doing his very worst to destroy every vestige of a foundation for trust in and communion with God. He held up for scorn the concept of "a God who thinks and knows and loves." He thus cut at the very roots of all religion and, in an indirect manner, thereby did much to uproot the foundations of all morality. But, in my opinion, his position was deeply false, was absolutely untenable, and had the immediate effect of extinguishing the last gleam of light still shining on our relations with God. He thought, no doubt, that he could render no greater service to Christ—and so he did—by his total eclipse of a God who knows. I preached three Sermons in refutation of his views as set forth in *Literature and Dogma* when the work appeared in 1873; and I take it as a high compliment that I was the only one of his critics to whom he did not vouchsafe a reply. But the falsehood of his teaching is doomed to perish. The mind of

man—not to speak of his conscience and love—the mind of man is forced by its very constitution to admit that wherever purpose is manifested there must be knowledge. If once you admit that in any part of the universe there is design—benevolent or otherwise, it matters not—there is a direct revelation to us of knowledge in the mind of the operator. And until you have eliminated the last vestige of purpose in the processes of nature, you will have a Ruler of Nature who knows what He is doing and who certainly knows the difference between a man and a tree. No wonder then that the Atheistic tendency of the age has shown itself most of all in the endeavour to root out all notion of purpose or intelligence in the operations of Nature. True science has, of course, been too strong for this Atheistic tendency, and the intelligent purposes of God have been made ever more clear and wonderful with every fresh addition to our knowledge. The late Professor Tyndall, discoursing on crystalline and molecular forces and showing some of their marvellous beauty, said:—

“I have seen these things hundreds of times, but I never look at them without wonder, and, if you allow me a moment’s diversion, I would say that I have stood in the spring-time and looked upon the sprouting foliage, the grass, and the flowers, and the general joy of opening life. And, in my ignorance of it all, I have asked myself whether there is no power, being, or thing in the universe whose knowledge of that of which I am so ignorant is greater than mine. I have asked myself, Can it be possible that man’s knowledge is the greatest knowledge, that man’s life is the highest life?”

One is almost ashamed to have to appeal to the marvellous arrangements of the cosmos as revealed by astronomy, or, again, by such familiar objects as the bee and the clover, in order to bring reluctant minds to own that wherever there is manifested purpose there is manifested knowledge in the purposer. If people can be found to believe that it is all blind chance, the product of blind, ignorant and unconscious forces, they must not complain if they meet with good-natured ridicule, such as we are now accustomed to throw at the old orthodox notion that the earth was not a sphere but a plane, round which the sun daily revolved. And the ridicule is justified because the opinion which is, in this case, ridiculous, is unsupported by a single grain of evidence, while it is contradicted by a mass of evidence which it would take a lifetime to register.

If you want to get rid of the concept of Deity, do so in a fair and intelligent way; do not deny the intelligence, but posit the intelligence in the subjects of it themselves. Say, if you like, that the suns, stars, planets and satellites move themselves according to their own sweet will; say, if you like, that the bee designed and made itself, and the clover did the same, and that, while the clover was thinking only of its children, the bee was thinking only of its food. But wherever you posit the purpose, you must posit the knowledge requisite to form and to carry it out. You cannot have the one without the other. It is too absurd to attribute

such exquisite adaptations as we see in Nature to an unintelligent and blind unconscious force. Purpose involves *à priori* knowledge. Science, I think, teaches us surely that all things which are revealed to us by astronomy, or by the life of bees and flowers, are products of a mind which had been at work upon them during vast ages before. Science does not say that the bee made itself or could make itself, even if it wished to control or modify its constitution and powers; neither does science say that the clover laid its own plans for the fulfilment of its maternal wishes by the agency of the bee. Science tells us this instead—that it took ages and ages of development by slow degrees to produce at last the desired co-operation; and that not one single individual, bee or flower, had any choice, or exercised any volition, with a view to accomplish it; each was caused to be what it was, absolutely without its consent or will. It was all the work of a mind distinct from the materials wherewith it wrought. And THAT MIND KNOWS. It is an abuse of language to say that He did not or does not know what He has done and is doing. But because He knows, He is then our King and our God. Once prove to me that He knows, and I will make you a present of all your abstruse terms, your “personalities” and “spiritualities.” He is to me the Living God, if only He be conscious of me and of the rest of His works.

But if this be all we really need to form our

concept of Deity, then I submit that it is purely spiritual, that it is absolutely a non-material concept; and, while it forces us to think and speak of God as "He" or "Him," and not as "It," the concept is untainted by the smallest admixture of materialistic language or idea. If any one chooses on that ground to call God a "person," in order to distinguish Him from a mere "thing," I would not object; but all would depend on the preservation of the absolute purity of the spiritual idea of God being One who knows.

My friend said in his letter what I do not think he would repeat after hearing or reading this Lecture:—

"Assuming design and benevolence, I cannot see any greater difficulty in looking upon these as abstract qualities operating throughout space and eternity, without anything in the nature of personal embodiment, than in creating a spiritual entity to form a vehicle for them in their application to the cosmos."

"Design and benevolence," let me remind our friend, have no existence at all as "abstract qualities." It is permissible to us to make use of abstract terms for convenience and brevity in discussion, but we ought never to forget that abstract terms are nothing more; they have no real existence; that design has no existence apart from a designer, nor benevolence apart from a benevolent will. If the presence of these qualities be admitted anywhere in the cosmos, then and there they prove the real existence of an intelligent and benevolent Being.

It is not accurate to suggest that we have to create or invent a spiritual entity to account for the presence of design or benevolence in the cosmos, because these carry with them invariably and inevitably the irresistible proofs of the Being who exercises them. While the sun is burning our heads and blinding our eyes, we do not need to invent or create a solar entity to account for the phenomena. The phenomena and the knowledge of their cause are simultaneous, spontaneous, and independent of any enquiry as to their relation. It is just so with every revelation of purpose in the works of God around and within us. When we see the purpose, we see instantly also the mind of the operator, from whom the purpose comes. The phenomenon and our knowledge of its cause are simultaneous.

Our subject this morning, no doubt, has been somewhat dry, but it is of the deepest and highest importance to us. It is the very rock on which all our faith and hope are built—to be very sure that God is here and always, and that He knows; that He knows everything which He has produced; knows everything as it really is, and not merely as it seems to us. In that knowledge of the past, present and future, which God alone possesses, standeth our eternal life; it is the rock on which all our trust is based, and which inspires every breath of hope for the time to come. Yet more than all else, it brings us face to face—not with abstract

qualities or concepts of Deity more or less tainted with materialism—but face to face with the Living God Who knows us one and all, through and through; Who by simple right of His majesty claims our fealty; Who by His goodness claims our constant loyal obedience and reverent recognition of His rights over us; and Who, by his matchless Love, claims from us these poor, cold hearts of ours which He has left us free to give or to withhold, only that we may be as willing to go to Him with the sweet sacrifice as He is willing to receive and to accept it. YES! THE LIVING GOD WHO KNOWS! To see Him once really and clearly is to be a new creature, born again into a true spiritual world, is to pass even from death unto life, out of darkness into His marvellous light.

LECTURE X.

It will be our duty to-day to take up for consideration the second of the two objections or difficulties brought forward by the lawyer whose thoughts we were examining in Lecture IX. I will state it in his own words :—

“2. The difficulty of reconciling the existence of persecution with any benevolent system. As to this, I feel little or no difficulty in accepting your arguments that pain is a most benevolent institution productive of great good, the greatest good, to the sufferer, but when that pain is produced by active intervention of *human* agency in the shape of persecution, I see a great difficulty. The pain may be productive of great good to the *persecuted*, but how about the *persecutor*? Where does the benevolent scheme produce good to the *persecutor* in allowing him to indulge those evil propensities which are to be the means of chastening and perfecting the *persecuted*? It is notorious that the *persecutor* becomes worse by the indulgence of these evil propensities. There may be a solution of this difficulty, but at present it is to me a complete paradox.”

And so it must remain, insoluble, so long as we confine our attention to the immediate facts and details. Our standpoint is too low to take in all the breadth and meaning of the phenomena. We must stand further off till we see the relation

which the facts bear towards each other, and till we are able to discern the part they play in the great moral scheme of the universe. An American friend of mine once pertinently asked: "What is the idea in the mind of a fly crawling over an oil painting? The rugged surface and varieties of colour must seem to the fly a hopeless enigma. It needs a more distant view and an intelligent observer to detect its meaning or to appreciate its truth and beauty."

Already in this course of Lectures I have touched, but only briefly, on the great question of moral evil. Yet even then, I think, I said quite enough to explain and fully account for even the worst moral evil, viz., human cruelty. Let us go over the ground once more in the simplest manner possible, and we shall discern without difficulty the necessity for those terrible evils by which mankind are slowly but surely brought to learn their folly and to seek after wisdom.

When we say that God is good, we mean, of course, that His goodness does not consist in a mechanical impossibility to do evil, but it consists in a willing deliberate choice of and preference for goodness. Otherwise He would be neither moral nor immoral, but only unmoral. Goodness and righteousness would be terms misapplied to any Being, Divine or human, who was mechanically incapable of doing wrong. Real goodness always implies choice of a better when a worse is possible.

With the deepest reverence, then, we declare our belief that God is good, if good at all, only from deliberate choice of good purposes and good methods of carrying them out.

Our next step is to see, as has been already proved, that we learn from our own constitution and conditions that God's purpose or aim with us is to make us, or cause us to grow, good in the same way as He is good—viz., good from deliberate choice and not from a mechanical inability to do wrong. In order to make such goodness possible at all for us, it was necessary that we should have a limited amount of freedom; that we should be placed in conditions where good and evil are alike possible, where the eternal distinction between the two can be discerned and continually recognised, where the most bitter experiences can teach us the malignant nature of all kinds of sin, and where blissful experiences can teach us the benignity and priceless value of all forms of obedience to the moral law. Furthermore, we are to learn not only to do right and to avoid evil—that is much, but it is not all or the most important part of our discipline—we have to learn to love what is right and to hate what is evil; to have our whole will enlisted on the side of goodness and against every form and degree of sin, so that we may prefer to do right even though we suffer for it, and will not be induced to do wrong, however enticing the bribe. And the history of our race bears me out

in declaring this to be God's purpose with us here on earth. We know that man has risen, perhaps only a few degrees, but certainly has risen in the tendency to grow better, to love goodness more, and to hate sin more. Man has largely increased his mere knowledge of the difference between good and evil, has raised higher the standard of right by which he thinks all men's hearts and lives ought to be ruled; and while thus advancing in ethical knowledge, he has acquired a stronger leaning towards the side of goodness, and a stronger aversion to what is base and brutal. At the same time it must not be forgotten that the progress has been very slow, that the process seems only to be begun here on earth, and nearly all remains to be completed for the individual in some life to come. It needs more than a prophetic eye, it needs the eye of God Himself to picture the far-off issue both for the human race on earth and for the individual after death. Nevertheless, we have faculties which enable us to forecast with certainty that even here below our moral conditions will be one day immeasurably higher and purer than they are now, and that God's faithfulness to His good purposes and His matchless love for His children—already disclosed to us—will assuredly work without ceasing for the attainment of our perfection and our bliss. If all this be well understood and kept in view, it is surely sufficient to account for the worst evils we have witnessed, and to justify

the great and holy God in permitting them and allowing them to form part of His plans.

Persecution, it is true, is the worst kind of evil known to us. No cruelty was ever so great as that perpetrated by the rulers of the Christian Church upon those who rebelled against her authority or endeavoured to let a little more light shine on the darkness of Christian errors and impieties. But in the great scheme of moral development, as we see it, more or less aberration cannot count. If we are free at all, we must be free to do the worst we may wish to do, or else the needful lesson by experience will never be learnt. Just as a child learns to stand alone and to walk, mainly through the painful experiences of tumbling and stumbling, so the moral infant learns the difference between good and evil by the pleasant and bitter experiences which each kind of conduct and character entails. The most mournful fact of all, to my mind, is that the worst crimes of the world have been committed under the false impression that they were moral obligations, and that God in heaven was pleased by the tortures inflicted upon His holiest saints. That was ghastly, indeed, and yet there was a necessity even for that, which we can more or less dimly discern. The persecutors needed to be taught that it was "the lie in their right hand" which led them to those fiendish monstrosities. To our eyes they did not seem to learn the lesson ;

they went on with greater zeal in their pursuit of heretics, and exhausted human ingenuity in inventing instruments of torture. To us they seem to have grown worse by every fresh indulgence of the craving for what seemed to them divinely-licensed cruelty. But what do we know about their real condition? How can we possibly declare that none of them had any misgivings as to the rightness of their ferocity? How can we even guess at what was going on in their hearts, or when or where God opened their eyes to see the enormity of their mistake? It ought to be enough for us to remember that, with all their freedom to torture the bodies, they could not touch or corrupt the souls of their victims; that God Himself had resources, and visibly used them, to mitigate the horrors which were endured and to sustain the spirit in its integrity and its hope under excruciating agony. But not only the persecutors, but the rest of the world had to be taught that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God"; and, for aught we know, there was no better way for mankind to learn to turn with loathing and horror from the principles of the Holy Inquisition than by witnessing the depths of devilish cruelty to which it sank.

I do not pretend to solve such a moral paradox standing by itself and on its own merits. I can only approximate to a solution by standing further off and seeing the deep, the indispensable necessity

for the whole scheme of moral discipline to work itself out according to the inexorable laws which God Himself had imposed. The only light which shines upon such problems is the fact that if any goodness was to be at all, it must be gained only by unrestrained liberty to do evil, and purchased at the price of transcendent wrongs. Miracles, moral or physical, are out of all question in God's world; and nothing less than a miracle would have prevented those Popes, and Bishops, and Priests, from working their wicked will against those who had been sent to enlighten and bless mankind by their protest against the tyranny of the Church. What is in the heart, according to the laws which God has imposed on human nature, must and will come out into action unless checked by the natural activity of the controlling forces, Reason, Conscience and Love. Where there is profound ignorance, the law is that dire mistakes will be made: when the Conscience is perverted by a false religion, the law is that the most awful crimes will be perpetrated, and under the sanction of the holiest of names; if natural human Love be stifled and crushed, if marriage be forbidden to the priesthood, and all natural intercourse between man and woman be denounced as impurity and sin, the law is that out of such hearts all pity will die, and devilish hatred of heretics will take its place, devilish jealousy for the supreme claims of the Church. Such laws as these cannot be broken, cannot be evaded by any moral miracle;

and it is a mark of God's loving and faithful mercy that His laws shall everywhere else act with dread certainty and without a shadow of turning. If the same dread certainty dogs the steps of a Holy Inquisition or any other less atrocious form of persecution, we must admire the wisdom and the faithfulness which will not interfere to frustrate the consequences. And besides all this we have not yet seen the full consequences. We do not know certainly that the final issue for both persecutors and persecuted will not be good and glorious.

Viewed on a grand scale, it is a beneficent law that error, superstition and idolatry should beget bigotry, persecution and cruelty. If we are to learn and to grow better by experience, we may not justly complain that that experience is painful and bitter. The very lesson to be learned from this particular class of evils is not learned yet. In these days of higher civilisation, the methods of cruelty have been modified, it is true; but the spirit of cruelty has not been wholly expelled. It has been boasted, in my own hearing, by Roman Catholics, that if ever they regained their lost powers, the Church would be morally compelled to stamp out heresy by crushing and burning heretics. I am told that Cardinal Newman said the same thing. And all priestcraft, in every other Church or sect, is animated by the same spirit. The lesson to be learned from the Dark Ages is very far from being learned yet.

A word or two more has to be said about the persecutors. It is a curious and striking law that the best of our qualities when corrupted and perverted produce the worst vices. As the Latins used to say, *corruptio optimi est pessima*. The worst form of corruption is that of what is best. Thus was the corruption of the religious instinct and of brotherly love the worst and blackest of all. We must give those old Inquisitors credit for loyalty to their Church which they looked upon as a Divine institution; therefore they believed that loyalty to the Church was also loyalty to God; and we must give them credit also for a regard for their fellow-men, whose souls they wanted to save from everlasting hell. Both these convictions were utter delusions. They were incarnate lies. No argument can ever make them to be anything else. But so long as they were honest convictions, undetected delusions, some degree of excuse might be urged for the conduct to which they led, and for the excess of zeal which carried the deluded headlong into the wickedest of crimes.

And I would say, in passing, that we cannot look steadfastly at all this without having forced upon us the deep necessity for controversy on religious and theological subjects. We must see what dire mischief results from thinking that "it does not matter what we believe, so long as our lives are right." This begs the whole question. It *does* matter enormously what we believe, because sooner

or later it affects the rightness of our life. Sooner or later, whatever falsehood we cling to, will bear the bitter fruits of wickedness. And I, for one, am deeply convinced that the pursuit of truth and the correction and elimination of error should be a life-long endeavour, most of all for those who have once "tasted and seen how gracious the Lord is," and who have in any degree derived benefit and comfort from the words and thoughts of those whose controversy has brought any light upon things Divine. Too often these blessings are taken with as little regard to the obligations conferred as we take the blessings of sunshine and air.

Let us not forget the chief but most mournful lesson to be learnt from the cruelties of persecution, viz., the extreme peril of error, especially of error in Theology and Religion. Error may not, as the Church teaches, incur everlasting torments in hell; but it will nevertheless do unspeakable injury and the worst of all evils; it will turn men into devils here, and, wherever its evil influences are left unrestrained, it makes a hell upon earth in the souls of all who are enslaved by it.

Let us all fervently pray, "Lead me, O Lord, in Thy truth and teach me. For Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day long."

LECTURE XI.

HITHERTO, in this course of Lectures, you will notice that I have dealt almost exclusively with Theism as a Science of Theology, as distinguished from Religion. Even then it was impossible not to say much which belongs to the religious aspect of Theism, because every word descriptive and explanatory of its principles and beliefs would naturally produce corresponding emotions of reverence, of trust, and of love towards God, and also of joy and hope in the contemplation of our common destiny. But I am supremely anxious to show the excellence of Theism as a Religion even more than as a Theology, because the best and truest Theology ever heard of is comparatively of little use unless it has become also a Religion. If the heart be not touched, or the life be not influenced by it, it is of no use carrying it only in the head.

Once more, then, let us ask, What is Religion? It is a state of feeling towards God resulting from certain convictions about Him. Our feeling towards Him may be a right feeling or a wrong one. Thus

it becomes possible to have either a true Religion or a false Religion. If your convictions about Him lead you to be afraid of Him, lead you to shun the awful gaze of the Holy One upon your inmost thoughts, lead you to seek the protecting arms and the gracious intercession of a more merciful and loving Saviour; if your convictions of God's nature and dealings are such as to prevent your placing in Him unbounded trust, and so to raise a barrier of conscious dread—then your Religion is false, and it is false because your Theology is false. On the other hand, if your convictions lead you to look upon God first as a faithful Creator, then as a kind and true Friend, then as a loving and tender Father; if they lead you to build all your hopes of final goodness and happiness for yourself, for all whom you love and for all mankind, upon His Eternal righteousness and love; if, still more, your convictions lead you to be perfectly reconciled to all His discipline of the world by sin and sorrow, to know and feel that His Will is always the best: if thus you have grown to trust Him with all your hopes and fears, and to love Him with all your heart and mind and soul and strength; and if, last but not least, this love is a perpetual impulse causing you to try to do right and to avoid every sin; if your love to God make you long and strive to be more and more what you know God wishes you to be—then your religion is a true Religion, and it is true because your convictions about God are true.

Thus we arrive at once at the conclusion that Theology, though intimately connected with Religion, is distinct from it; that Theology may be only opinions, and opinions are not necessarily convictions; that unless we are convinced in our hearts that such and such a Theology is true, it will not have any religious effect upon our conduct and character.

And here I state with the utmost confidence that Theism, when it touches the heart, becomes the purest and best Religion which was ever known, simply because Theism presents to us the purest, highest, and most fascinating picture of God and His dealings; yes, and is ready to part with it as soon as ever a higher and truer picture can be presented. Theism gives us that picture of God which most readily and naturally commends itself to human nature in all its phases and stages of progress. To the most exalted saint it is still the noblest conception of God; and to the poorest, most degraded sinner, it is just the one last word that can be spoken to save and redeem him from destruction and despair. To be told even in the depths of shame and sin that God loves him still; that he is God's dear child from the beginning, and will be God's dear child to the most distant end; that God has begotten him out of love, and out of love will never lose him—still less cast him away—all this is, in the truest, highest sense, Salvation. This sense of an eternal friendliness, of a love

incapable of resentment, of a love which will spare no pains, which will never grow weary till the blissful purpose of love be accomplished, is new life from the dead, a new uprising of latent powers for goodness, a touch of heavenly fire that melts the hardest heart, the new birth of a true repentance and a godly sorrow for sinfulness as well as for sins remembered ; it is the vibration of the mute strings of the soul touched by the Divine Hand.

It is often forgotten—though not by me, for I have often reminded you of it—that the preaching of the Gospel by Salvation armies, by Revivalists, by Evangelicals of all sorts, owes all its success to the touching of sinful hearts by the assurance of a Divine love that has come to seek and to save that which was lost. By a roundabout method, by legend and fiction that will not bear the slightest serious historical or moral examination, nevertheless this end is reached, and, in a sense, the end justifies the means ; at all events where nothing truer or better is known. But Theism can do all this and ever so much more without the delusions, without the legends, without the circuitous method, and best of all without the scandalous imputations against the Father's unpurchased and unpurchaseable love. The preachers of the Gospel *say* "God is love," but they *mean* "Christ is love," for they go on to say that "out of Christ" God is only a consuming and revengeful fire. We too say "God is Love" ; but we mean exactly what we say and

do not mean anything else. We believe that God is infinitely more loving than any Christ; that "in Christ" God is hidden and defaced, but "out of Christ" He is to be seen in all His glorious fatherly love face to face with His own child. They say "God is Love" only because it is written in a book or repeated by supernaturally endowed clergy; we say "God is Love," because it is written down by the very finger of God on every human heart which He has made tender and kind and loving. This word and work of His needs no translation, nor any special order of priests to explain or to verify. It shines out upon us in our commonest of lives whenever we open our eyes. And, of course, on the lips of Theism the Gospel of the love of God means the most perfect severity of justice toward sin. The Christian idea is that the just punishment of sin is not borne by the sinner but by somebody else—viz., by the Saviour. The Theistic idea is that no one can escape any part of God's just severity, because it is all needed to save the sinner's soul. To let off the sinner any part of the just penalty, or to lay it upon another, would be to rob the poor soul of the means of its salvation. It would thwart the good purpose of a loving God.

Moreover, Theism has no perplexing problems for the mind, offers no rival for our affections in the place of God. It is impossible for Christians to preach their Gospel without at least two Gods. And human nature could not be what it is if men

did not love best the God who came and died for them ; and to love but little, if at all, the God who did not come and die himself but sent another in his place. Theism does not thus perplex the mind or distract the heart. "To us there is but one God even our Father," whose Love, we may be sure, would not shrink from any suffering or sacrifice which was actually needed for our salvation ; one and the same God who has caused all things to be as they are, who has begotten us, as His dear children, out of the fulness of His love, and in Whom we and all other souls are eternally safe. To Him alone we owe our repentance, our new birth unto righteousness, our salvation from the love of sin ; and to Him alone, therefore, we owe all our heart's love and our life's best service.

And when all this has laid hold of us as deep-felt conviction, religion is natural and perfectly easy to understand. In the first place it removes all difficulty whatever from the so-called problem of prayer. Here is our Father, at our right hand, nay, closer and nearer to us than any other being in the whole universe, the only Being in the universe with whom it is possible to come into direct contact ; and we, His children, are close beside Him too—face to face with Him in the depths of our soul—and we need no longer any theories of prayer before we will speak to Him and listen to His "still small voice." Our communion with

Him will be as spontaneous as the words flow between loving lips on earth, only more so, for we can tell to Him what we hardly dare breathe to ourselves. In the language of an old Hebrew Theist, we can say out of the richest experience, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet. I will be glad and rejoice in the Lord." "In the multitude of the sorrows which I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul." "When Thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." And you have your Divine Father and Friend to speak to, howsoever and whensoever you like. No man shall ever dare to tell you what you ought to say to Him. It is yours by right of childhood to say whatever you please; to make even childish petitions to Him if you can make no better; to show Him of your very folly if you are not wise enough to trust Him; it is yours by right to put into words every thought, anxiety, or fear that oppresses you. He will rebuke and correct you, be very sure, if He sees fit, when and how He will. But your fellow-man has no right to say a word. The religion of Theism means all that is best and purest in the intercourse of loving friends and in the relation of children to true and wise and loving parents—only it is unspeakably more than this. For if you love God, your hearts will never be absent from Him; you will live with Him and let every thought lie open to Him from morning till night, all the day long.

And if we begin our religious life by prayer, it will grow more and more into praise. The longer we enjoy the privilege of communion with God, the less anxious we shall be about our bodies and our earthly fortunes, the more we shall trust ourselves to God for everything, the more we shall respect His higher wisdom and the less shall we suggest to Him how He shall help and protect us. The only thing we shall care about is that we may be ready to do and to suffer all His righteous will. We shall grow more and more grateful to Him for all His mercies past, more absorbed in worship of Him and His love, till our hearts overflow with thankfulness and adoration.

Nevertheless, in the religious life one anxiety will never be absent. We are reminded every hour and moment of our lives how vast is our responsibility in regard to our conduct and character. The daily cry of our souls is: "Make in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." This is the centre of all our highest hopes and our deepest fears. This is the tie which binds us most firmly to our Father's hand, and will not let us break away from His protecting and strengthening grace. We need not only perpetual watchfulness and the strenuous exertions of our own spiritual and moral faculties, but we need also that special help which comes only by prayer and leaning upon God. The stronger we grow and the higher we rise, the more and not less we shall feel our

dependence on Him from Whom all goodness flows.

And this it is which gives Religion its highest, its *unique* moral value, not only to the individual soul which is under its influence, but to the world at large. All mankind are sooner or later the better for the secret prayers and strivings after holiness of every truly religious soul. That conscientiousness which is the very life of trustworthiness is best maintained by those who are ever praying to God to be kept faithful in whatever duties they may have to perform. And, indeed, it requires a great deal of prayer not merely to secure a faithful discharge of duties to be done, but to keep sweet and pure the motives from which all duty should be performed. Even if our conduct be blameless, we are still making no progress in real goodness of character, unless our motives are absolutely of the highest, or being more refined from day to day. Therefore it is that the Conscience, when coupled with deep and true Religion, *i.e.*, constant communion with God, urges upon us, as the first condition of all true service, the necessity of a loving heart. The oldest commandments on earth are still ever new, ever young—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." If we would serve God as He wishes us to serve Him, it must be out of love. We must wish to obey Him because we love Him. And the same is exactly true of our service to each other. If our

service is to be the best and highest, it must be a willing service out of love for those whom we serve. We must be just, truthful, kind, and merciful to them only because we love them, and not for any selfish end. True Religion is of little worth if it does not deepen and intensify our native goodwill and warm our hearts to our brother man. If we thus make our Religion a perpetual source of spiritual culture, of the culture of our highest faculties, we not only grow nearer and nearer to the likeness of God our Father, but we become more and more a blessing and a help to our fellow-men.

Deeply do I sympathise with the spirit which animates some in these days with the hope of a Social Reformation such as would put an end to a vast amount of the needless suffering which springs out of present conditions. I admire that man (and it is with difficulty that I refrain from mentioning one such by name) who, whatever be his mistakes or wild theories of reform, feels in his heart that if he would serve God truly, he must serve and help his brothers and sisters. For the talk about love to God while the heart is indifferent to the sins and sorrows of mankind is the bitterest mockery and the hollowest of shams. Let not the necessity for some improvement ever be lost sight of. It will take years of the most patient research, possibly generations of abortive experiments, before the right methods of reform can be discovered. But all the while until then, every individual who really

loves God will make it his daily endeavour—the chief part of his life's work—to act towards every one else with whom he comes in contact, as if he loved him ; he will pray God to make him love all men without regard to their good or bad conduct towards himself, and in every event to return good for evil and to forgive freely every injury and offence. I do not need to be reminded how hard a lesson this is to learn. I only say that Religion is here our best teacher, and that God our Father will never be satisfied with us till we have learned it.

I have not spoken to-day of Religion as the source of the highest joy, and the best, if not the only, consoler of all sorrow. I have been more concerned with the duties and responsibilities which Religion imposes and which Religion best enables us to fulfil.

Yet one more word should be spoken in regard to Theism as a means of true progress in the knowledge and love of God. By all its principles and beliefs Theism impresses upon us the fact that our highest knowledge and thought of God is not yet perfect, is only true as far as it goes, is necessarily defective, if not absolutely tainted with undetected error. Hence the indispensable necessity for continuing our research after the truth of God—as the Hebrew prophet termed it “following on to know the Lord” ; not being content with our little gleam of light, but longing and striving to get more light ;

to understand more of God's dealings and purposes with His creatures and with His own children; to prune our thoughts of Him so that we may get rid of all the crudities, the childishness and the meaner parts which hang like withered leaves so defacingly upon our tree of knowledge. We must make ruthless war upon all detected errors, superstitions and falsehoods, and yet all the time we must be very watchful and prayerful lest we, too, are carrying "a lie in our right hand" without knowing it. Therefore the true Theist will not only practise controversy and criticism upon other beliefs, but will court and entreat criticism of his own most cherished beliefs and principles. *That* he feels to be his best chance of correcting any error that may lurk unknown to him, and certainly it will be the best means of rooting more firmly the truths which he believes and upholds. He is no true Theist who undervalues the priceless benefits of a searching, scorching criticism, even when made by an unfriendly hand.

The world owes all its progress in everything, including Theology and Religion, to controversy, to the collision of hostile opinions; for as the flint dashing against the steel brings forth fire, so does the conflict of honest opinion bring forth the light of truth. We have only to look carefully that in our deepest hearts we are not disputing from the low motives of vain-glory and the triumph of our own opinions, but simply and sincerely out of

love for the truth, love for mankind, and love for God Himself, who is the God of truth.

If any one will but criticise these *Lectures on Theism* in this spirit, he will render good service not only to us Theists, but to the Christians also, and to the God of truth whom we serve and trust and love.

APPENDIX.



DEAR MR. VOYSEY,

I have been seeking for an explanation of the enigma which is presented to us in attempting to reconcile the hard facts of the history of religious persecution with your theory of perfect benevolence—which one feels to be the only doctrine that can hope to find acceptance by modern civilisation. Is it possible that the solution is to be found in the doctrine of evolution as applied to religion? Much of your Lectures seems to me to point to this conclusion. Mankind are apt to forget that the process of evolution has been going on from time immemorial in matters of religion, as in all other domains pertaining to both physics and metaphysics. Persecution may, like other phenomena which are at first sight inexplicable, be found to be consistent with your theory, and quite comprehensible, if regarded as a mere step or incident in this process of evolution. In physical evolution, even where artificial selection is brought into operation, we find breaks and checks. The subsequent and more perfect type may, and frequently does, “throw back,” as breeders call it, to an antecedent and more imperfect type, and I think that the same phenomenon unquestionably occurs in every phase of metaphysical evolution. In the latter much more is necessarily left to natural selection than is the case with physical evolution of either men or animals. We need not therefore be surprised if we find greater, and

apparently more inexplicable, difficulties in tracing an unbroken sequence of development, than in the corresponding process as applied to physics. In neither case can we expect that the process will show uniform and unbroken advance if we look at the details, but if we take a broad view of the subject as a whole, we shall almost certainly find in each case that the various stages are like the waves which in the aggregate make up the flow of the advancing tide. This does not necessarily advance with each wave, but, on the contrary, some of the waves seem to the eye of the observer to show an actual retreat. Nevertheless, when we regard them patiently as parts of a whole, we find that the tide does advance perceptibly and steadily to high-water mark. Now an individual instance of persecution by itself is a step backwards, and the great wave of persecution which swept over the greater part of the known world during the days of the Inquisition seems at first sight a very formidable difficulty in the way of accepting any theory of persistent religious evolution. If, however, we reflect upon the immense period during which the great process of development and the modification of the religious ideas of mankind has been going on, and which covered certainly many thousands of years, with almost equal certainty many tens of thousands, and in all probability some hundreds of thousands of years, then any period of persecution by the representatives of a particular form of religion, however extended that period may be, sinks into insignificance, and may be treated almost as a negligible quantity.

It is further to be noted that it is almost certain that persecution has itself materially contributed to the progress and influence of religion. In almost every case the reaction, consequent upon persecution, seems to have exceeded in its effects the repression which immediately resulted from it. This is partly owing to the refining effect persecution seems to have upon that portion of mankind who suffer it. In religion, as in other matters, man seems to improve under the influence of adversity. Prosperity and power, on the other hand, have invariably been productive of deterioration and corruption. If then it be the case that persecution is

only an incident in the ebb and flow which ultimately result in the beneficial development of religion, is it not reasonable to assume that any mere detail of its immediate effect on individuals, whether persecuted or persecuting, is a matter which we may with safety assume to be capable of being accounted for satisfactorily if we could follow out the calculations of the Ruler of all things, even although we cannot for the moment see the exact solution ?

These reflections lead me to another point which you have touched upon in your Lectures, but which seems to me to be capable of much more extended development than you have at present attempted, although I daresay I should find it in some other of your works. I am indeed by no means sure that my ideas, which I will endeavour to express, are not the outcome of some of yours which I have read and almost forgotten. I allude to the possibility of deducing a more general argument in favour of life after death, and ultimate perfection, from this wonderful doctrine of evolution as applied to man. Ever since I began to appreciate something of the truth and value of this doctrine as applied to physical subjects, and the strength of the evidence in its favour, it has seemed to me that, to a thinking man, it is full of much consolation, and that it contains in itself some of the strongest arguments in answer to the position of the Atheist and of the thorough-going Agnostic.

I noticed in your Lecture, No. VIII., that you point out that there is no scientific demonstration of a future life, that it rests upon faith and nothing more, and that you say that physical science is absolutely silent upon the question. This may be so in one sense, but I am not sure that you have not somewhat overstated the case, and that physics and metaphysics do not combine in such a manner as to enable us to draw valuable deductions upon this great question. It is one which I daresay you have long ago worked out in your own mind, and which I have not had time to develop critically ; but I will endeavour to give you a rough outline of the ideas as they present themselves to me.

I start from the proposition that we know nothing of the soul, either whence it comes, or what it is. We speak of life, the vital spark, instinct, intellect, mind, spirit, and soul, without any knowledge of what they are, where they begin, where they end, or upon what they depend. Philosophers and scientists of all types and shades of religious belief may discuss these subjects from their own points of view, and will undoubtedly differ. Physical and metaphysical science are helpless to define with certainty when and how life begins, where instinct ends and intellect begins, where intellect ends and the soul begins, or what is death. No one has yet succeeded in laying down any definitions or laws acceptable to all men on these questions. Their acceptance or rejection must, I think, much depend upon the idiosyncrasies of individuals, which are infinite in their variety; and the conclusion arrived at in each case will be more or less affected by the standpoint from which the subject is approached.

All men are, however, practically agreed that there has, in the course of ages, been a distinct and immense advance, not only in what we call knowledge, but in those qualities in mankind which make up what we should call goodness or virtue. There may have been much ebb and flow, but when we look back through the long vista of years now opened to our mental vision by the researches of recent times, this ebb and flow is nothing, compared with the enormous progress which, in the aggregate, has been made towards perfection, by steps which are in themselves sometimes imperceptible, and some of which are, or seem to be retrograde. The doctrine of the Creation of Man in the image of God, and his subsequent Fall to a lower state has, to all who dare to *think* upon the subject at all, become as obsolete as the dead mythologies of the ancients, or the Ptolemaic Theory. We are, according to my view, no more justified at the present day in talking of it to educated men as a living doctrine, because a few blind bigots still persist in hammering it into the brains of children and grown-up children, than we should be in contending that the old-world belief in witches is still part of the doctrines of the

Roman Catholic Church, because a few Irish savages burn an old woman to drive the devil out of her, as they did in the early part of this year of grace.

It is a curious and remarkable fact that the innate convictions of the thinking portion of mankind seem always to have revolted against the doctrines of the Bible and the Church, and to have tended towards belief in the perfectibility of man and his progressive elevation to a higher state. This is the doctrine that pervades some of the most ancient religions, and which may be seen underlying even the professions of eminent members of the Church itself.

There is, I should submit, an inherent tendency in man to believe in the doctrine of evolution as applied to spiritual matters. Every man seems to be driven by an irresistible force to form for himself a concept of what he would term a perfect man. Although this concept would differ in each case, as also the estimation of the stage at which mankind have at present arrived in their progress towards realisation of the ideal, still every individual feels that mankind, taken as a whole, have progressed, and are progressing, towards that goal. There is an irresistible conviction that the ideal *ought* some day to be attained, and indeed that it would be attained, but for the corrupt passions and propensities which are incident to the animal part of man. These again might in time be subdued and sublimated into something approaching perfection, but that the process is brought to an end by the perishability of the animal part of man, which culminates in what we call "death." The ideal therefore cannot at present be obtained in the individual upon earth, but must be looked for in the dim future, in the same way as we look back through the vista of countless ages, to observe the vast strides that have already been made upon the same road, and endeavour to realise the point from which man started, and that to which he may possibly attain.

Seeing then that we all believe in a process of evolution, not only in individuals, but in mankind as a whole, and that each generation practically starts, both physically and

mentally, from a vantage point as compared with its predecessors, there would seem to be no reason why we should set limits to the perfectibility of the individual man either bodily or mentally. I should contend that it is easier to believe in the perfectibility of the mind, intellect, spirit, and soul (or whatever we choose to call the immaterial element in man), than in the perfectibility of the body. The very immateriality of the subject seems to lend itself more readily to the belief in its perfectibility, because it does not necessitate exact definition of perfection. We are also tempted to believe that the grosser elements of the animal part of man may be gradually eliminated from the problem. Mind and matter, or soul and body, are however, as we understand them, so intimately connected, that it is impossible altogether to dissociate them in considering these questions, and immediately we endeavour to do so, we seem to lose control of the argument. It is, however, not only unnecessary, but illogical, so to do, and I cannot but think that if the doctrine of evolution as applied to man be rightly followed out, it will be found that it is quite consistent with the truest conception of the Deity which man is capable of forming. The tendency of theologians always seems to be towards taking man, as they find him now after countless ages of development; to separate him into what they call the material or animal part, and the mental or spiritual part. They then assume certain attributes for each of these parts, and from these assumptions draw conclusions as to what is, or ought to be, the past history of mankind, and the future of each part of their ideal man. This seems as fallacious a mode of procedure as if we were to take a sheep, ox, or horse of the present day, fully grown and developed, and endeavour to evolve out of our inner consciousness, disregarding all ascertained facts, the past history of the animal itself, and of the *genus* of which it is now the living representative. This was very much the method of reasoning of the ancients, and we know the fallacies in which it resulted. The only approach to safety in drawing conclusions lies in the careful study of such ascertained facts as the labours

of conscientious toilers in the particular field have placed at our disposal.

We must therefore start from protoplasm, and follow the process of evolution through its various stages, which are now disclosed to us by the labours of Darwin and those who have followed in his steps. These are now recognised, not as mere speculative theories, but as well ascertained and established facts. We find that after passing through phases of development, which it is quite unnecessary to describe, we arrive at organisms possessing a sort of rudimentary consciousness and intelligent purpose. Although we cannot always trace the connecting links in our present state of knowledge as to what has taken place during the incalculable ages of the past, we know quite enough to follow intelligently the process by which this rudimentary intelligence has developed throughout the progressive gamut of living creatures, until we arrive ultimately at its highest manifestation in man. When we reach the higher grades of animals, we have no difficulty in tracing instinct, will, affection, intelligence, and *even conscience*, and we can also detect the rudiments of most of these, even in very early stages of development.

The point which some mammals have attained in these respects is so remarkable as to render it next to impossible to condemn those who say that those mammals have what we are pleased to call a "soul." Some of the links may, as already pointed out, be wanting, but that there is a chain connecting the lowest with the highest organisms no one now doubts. The absence of one or two of the links no more destroys the continuity of the chain than the absence of one or two of the vertebræ in a fossil skeleton would entitle us to deny the pristine existence of the creature to which it undoubtedly once belonged. If then we reflect upon the immeasurable difference and distance between the lowest form, which can be said to show signs of anything approaching to thought and purpose, and the higher mammals, and again upon that which separates those lower types of man, which even now remain on the face of the earth, from the great minds which have been as beacon lights to past

and present generations, we begin to form some idea of the possibility that the process of spiritual evolution may be continued to a point as far surpassing that at which we have at present arrived as the mind of a Darwin surpasses the mind of a cave-dweller.

Intimately, however, as the development of the spiritual part of living creatures seems in one sense to be connected with the perfection of their physical organisation, we yet find that in another sense there seems to be a curious independence between mind and matter, for it is by no means a fixed and certain rule that that which we should regard as the most perfect physical development is accompanied by a corresponding perfection of spiritual attributes. We see the contrary occurring in every day's experience of the world. Nay, it is often found that accidental circumstances, which dwarf or prevent physical development, rather tend to bring out and force to precocious maturity some of the finer and more loveable qualities of the soul.

Theoretically, then, it would seem possible that mankind may, in some future age, arrive, even during their residence upon earth, at a point at which they shall become "as Gods knowing good and evil," and practising only the former. If this be the case, what is there to prevent our believing that this progress towards perfection may be continued by the spiritual part of man after death, when the spirit is freed from the trammels of the body?

We do not know, it is true, that the soul or spirit can exist apart from the body, and it is only those who arrogate to themselves a special "gift of the Holy Ghost" who venture to assert dogmatically that any particular result will ensue upon the phenomenon called death. We may, however, safely say that it is not more difficult to believe in a future existence of the soul than it is to believe in the phenomenon of life itself. Not even the most presumptuous will attempt to define the exact change that takes place at the coming into existence of what we call a "living" creature, either animal or vegetable. We know, nevertheless, that at some particular but undefined and more or less undefinable moment in the process of development, a change

takes place which manifests itself in the phenomenon called "life."

However much we may argue about spontaneous generation, and however closely we may approach to proving a negation of the general proposition that such a phenomenon may occur, science has not at present the means of explaining the positive phenomenon of "life," and its transmission from parent to offspring. It is no doubt this difficulty which led the writer of Genesis to the use of the poetical phrase, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." This may be poetry only and inaccurate, but it is as near the truth, in one sense, as science can go. It is really only the expression of the all-pervading conviction that there is in man something of that which he would call "divine essence," which, being divine, is capable of being perfected and of being hereafter restored to perfect communion with the Infinite Being from whom it emanated. How it came into existence, and quickened its earthly envelope, no one knows or can explain. We do know, however, that that event did take place, and that the result was manifested to the senses of man. That the manifestation ceases when what we call "death" supervenes does not, as it seems to me, constitute a logical ground for assuming that the cause also ceases, inasmuch as it existed before the manifestations.

Next, I would venture to point out that what we call death is no impediment to the conclusions I am seeking to draw. On the contrary, death seems to be that upon which the whole doctrine of evolution depends, that is to say, what we call death is merely a change of the form of matter, which assumes immediately another form, and thereafter shortly develops, and manifests again that which we call life.

I cannot but think that Darwin, and other great Apostles of evolution, have placed in your hands the key to the solution of the great problems on which you are working, and that the "evolution of religion," well handled, would prove a very attractive subject, and might be made comprehensible to all

intellects, except those of a very low order. A great many people have the germs of the idea already, but, as in most other subjects, they require the great teacher, who can lay the matter before them in so luminous a manner, that they will feel that he is only clothing in appropriate language, and giving adequate expression to, ideas which exist unspoken, and in embryo, in their own minds.

The doctrine of love, which you rightly press so strongly in all your Lectures, seems to me again to be aided by all reflections which tend to establish a conviction of the existence of a logically consistent system throughout the universe. Perfect love, the highest form of love, cannot exist without respect; and I defy any one who reflects deeply upon the teaching of the Church to feel much respect for its Deity. It is, however, possible to respect a God whose proceedings are found to be consistent, and whose "cosmos" is orderly and not capricious.

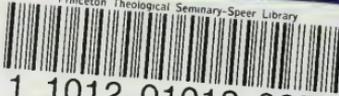
I regard each "religion" and all phases of each religion as stages in the great drama of evolution, and the (so-called) "Christian" religion merely as representing several of these stages.

Yours is another, and, as I believe, the most advanced stage, and the nearest to a religion without dogma and without idols; and I feel with you, that "Truth before all" is the only motto for those who seek to aid man in his progress towards perfection. In this sense I believe that yours is the only "natural religion," and the only one which can be brought into harmony with science.

I daresay you will feel that in a great deal of the foregoing I am only passing through my spiritual "measles," and that I ought to have had that metaphysical complaint long ago, and not bothered you with it. As, however, many of your hearers have doubtless to pass through the same stage, it may interest you to read the ravings of my delirium, and enable you to treat others who are suffering from the same complaint.

H. B.

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