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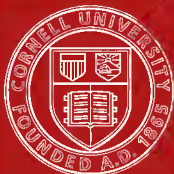

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POSITIVE RELIGION

ESSAYS, FRAGMENTS, AND HINTS

POSITIVE RELIGION

Essays, Fragments, and Hints

BY

JOSEPH HENRY ALLEN

Author of "Hebrew Men and Times," "Christian History in its Three Great Periods," "Our Liberal Movement in Theology," etc.

"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen"

BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1891

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University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge.

TO THE READER.

Who goeth forth and reapeth, bearing seed
Of precious Truth, shall doubtless come again,
Bringing his sheaves with joy. A purer Creed
Shall bless the waiting hearts of brother men;
And thou, a Child of God, if faithful now,
Shalt wear the Crown of Life upon thy brow.

Ps. cxxvi. 6.

PREFACE.

I HAVE sometimes wished it were customary for persons quite unknown to fame, who, living quietly but thoughtfully in common ways, have sanely and happily passed the bourne of three-score years and ten, to mark that event by some word which might honestly tell the meaning of life as they have found it, and serve as their particular legacy to the general thought.

The motive is strengthened, and becomes even a sense of duty, when one's vocation has compelled him statedly, seriously, and often, to meet the real occasions of the inner life, and to interpret them as he may in their relation to the Supreme Order; especially if he has been forced by circumstances frequently to revise those judgments. There are certain crops which thrive best when they have been repeatedly and severely cut back in their early growth; and it may happen, sometimes, that the harvest of the Word is one of these. The road

one follows in life is not often so smooth as it looked at starting; and the waymarks that seemed plain in the beginning call for many a correction before the journey is ended. He learns, not without a pang, to put away one thing after another that had seemed a part of his necessary outfit; and he must take account, more soberly, but perhaps not less gratefully, of the things which remain. This world has not shaped itself by his hopes and dreams, but he has won a more even temper of serenity in his clearer acquaintance with the existing fact. And he finds, to his surprise perhaps, that life has not lost its sacredness or its joy; while its light is mellowed, and its horizon begins to grow grey with the dusk of evening.

The pages which follow are, so far as the writer is conscious, absolutely faithful transcriptions of those phases of experience, or of the judgments upon them, to which he has been led in the course of the fifty years since this general line of thought became the occupation of his life. During these years he has taken an active part by voice or pen in nearly every public discussion, or controversy, that seemed to touch on religious theory or social ethics. In these same years he has enjoyed the near companionship of very many who have been

eminent teachers of their generation, or have given the testimony of obedient, humble, and consecrated lives. In whatever he has written, he has sought to do justice to what he has found highest and best in this company of witnesses, and to interpret with his utmost ability those lessons of life which their word or example has shed light upon. So far as he is aware, he has not attempted to prove, still less to controvert, a single proposition open to dispute: he has sought only to utter, as plainly as might be, the testimony which was his to give. The personal convictions, meanwhile, which alone would make that testimony worth his giving, he has not in the least attempted to disguise, any more than to conceal those parts of it that may be thought to represent incidents of his private experience.

Respecting the significance of his title he may be allowed here to say a single word. The long habit of regarding Religion as a thing of opinion, of emotion, or of ceremony, has tended greatly to blind men to it as an element in their own experience, or as a Force, mighty and even passionate, in the world's affairs. And it appears to him that any word however feebly spoken, or any hint however imperfectly conveyed, which recog-

nizes first of all that positive quality in it, — independent of party, race, age, or creed, — is a step towards the revival of it as a Power wholesome, invigorating, and inspiring, in the lives of men.

J. H. A.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS,
December 25, 1890.

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PART I.

ESSAYS.

POSITIVE RELIGION.

I.

HOW RELIGIONS GROW.

"The Word is a *live seed*" (σπόρος).

WHEN Professor Gray wrote that most charming of text-books, "How Plants Grow," he gave us a hint of the way we are to follow in our study of the law of life in everything that lives. I will take that hint, then, in what I have to say about the growth of Religion.

This we may here understand, without any further definition, to mean *true* religion, the higher life of the soul, apart from the rubbish of superstition or the morbid growths of passion that have been entangled with it.

The first point which I wish to note is this: That little book shows us how, when the seed of any common plant falls into the ground, it swells in time, with moisture and heat, and then begins to unfold, from the very start, *in two opposite directions:* it sends down the tiny fibres of the root to grasp at particles of the earth which it feeds upon; and by the same effort it throws up a slender stem, with its pale-green rudiments of leaves,

into the air and sunshine, which give it vigour, colour, and the capacity of continued growth. Now "the seed is the Word." And I shall ask you to observe the analogy in the law of life when we speak of Religion, which unfolds from its earliest germ in two directions, not in one only: it lays hold upon the earth below with the firm roots of love and duty; it flowers out in the upper atmosphere of our life, in hope, joy, trust, aspiration, and peace. In each of these two directions it appears as the soul's higher or ideal life; and both are equally essential to its completeness. Thus, in our study of its growth, we have to keep alike in view its two great departments, — Ethics, or DUTY, and Piety, or WORSHIP.

For one moment more I will call back your attention to the analogy we started with. When we come to look more closely or more broadly at the life of plants, we find that there are three points of view, or objects of study, which we must attend to, to make our plan complete, — several others, perhaps, but at any rate these three: first, the *origin* of that life; second, its *development*, or unfolding, in the particular plant or kind; third, its *grouping*, or classification by genus and species, showing the relations, dependences, and conflicts, of many different kinds. To apply this to the topic before us, we find, then, that we have three questions to answer instead of one: namely, 1. How Religion grows; 2. How *a* Religion grows; 3. How Religions grow. Of these the first seems to me by far the most important and interesting, and

by far the most neglected at the present day. So I need be the less troubled if I should seem to neglect, in comparison, either of the others.

To go back once more to the analogy of vegetable life. Of the origin of this, I do not know that any other account can be given than that it appears to be spontaneous and universal wherever there are conditions fit for it. Not only it is so, in amazing constancy and variety, on all parts of the earth's surface we know, but some astronomers have seen, or thought they saw, pale-green streaks on the face of the moon, from which they at once inferred a remnant of atmosphere, water, and vegetation.* Now we need not trouble ourselves in the least about any theories of its origin, — whether germ-theories, or theories of chemical evolution, or theories of special creation. For our purpose, one is as good as another; nay, for anything we know, they may all, in our higher philosophy, come to the same thing. All we have to do is to look at the fact, to understand it as well as we can, and to see what it may possibly lead to in our study of the higher life. For, as soon as we go far enough back, our definitions run into one another. All we can say is, that life flows immediately, by any open channel, from the Universal Source of life; and in saying this we are just where we were at the beginning, only with the advantage of seeing more clearly what our words mean.

To apply this now to our question, How Religion grows. You observe that I wish to keep it dis-

* See Langley's "New Astronomy," p. 148.

tinctly in view that the Source of Life — no matter what we assume it to be — is here, now, and always, acting by direct contact or pressure, under laws always uniform and the same. This thought is what is called, religiously, the thought of "the Immanent God," and is very characteristic of the religious dialect of the day. I do not wish to define it, still less to defend it, but only to see what it leads to in the treatment of my subject.

That leading surely is that we should study the growth of religion *on the spot*, in the phenomena which are, or may be, familiar to us in the observation of human life in our own day and (as it were) at our very side, — nay, in the hints and experiences that may happen to any one of us to-day. Now I observe that this is very often not the way taken, even by those to whom it would seem to lie openest and nearest. They will speak, perhaps, of our being always in the presence of "an Eternal and Omnipresent Energy from which all things proceed," and say that religion is, at bottom, the emotion with which we contemplate that Energy; but, as soon as they come to speak of the origin of religion, and its phenomena, they take us ten thousand years back, or into the customs of some barbarous tribe ten thousand miles away, and give us some ghost-theory, or dream-theory, some talk of fetish-worship, or star-worship, at an enormous distance from anything that touches us in our own lives. This may be a very curious thing to know, and a very useful thing to do, but

it is not at all the thing that concerns us now. If the belief in an "Immanent God" is good for anything, or if the theory of an "Eternal and Omnipresent Energy" is good for anything, it seems to me that it is good for exactly this: to help us understand the facts of the religious life just as they are, in us and about us, now; not the supposed beliefs of savages, and not the real or imaginary notions and practices interpreted to us by painful antiquarian study. In the view of it that we are to take, Religion, where it exists at all, is full as fresh and original a thing, and quite as near to the Eternal Source of Life now and here, as it was in the days of the cave-dwellers, or the sun-worshippers, or those feeble folk whose imaginations ran on ghosts and dreams.

Again, I wish to keep clear as I can of theories, and look to facts. A hundred years ago there was a cheap and easy notion, very commonly professed, that religion was devised by the craft of priesthoods, with intent to deceive, and to serve their private ends; but we have got far beyond that now. The past century has been very fruitful in theories which explain some one feature, but do not begin to embrace the whole. We need not dwell long on any of them. If Schleiermacher says that the origin of religion in the soul is "the sense of our dependence," I reply, That may be very true, but it is not the whole truth; for religion starts quite as often with a sentiment of enthusiasm, of courage, elation, gratitude, or hope. If Channing, or some disciple of Channing, says

that its origin is in aspiration to the Divine and Holy, I reply that that may be; but it may equally begin from a sense of sympathy, contrition, or despondency. If I am told that it essentially consists in "the effort of man to perfect himself," I reply that so it is no doubt in many an intelligent and generous soul; but I remember too, as characteristic of it, a temper subdued to the most abject servility, a self-discipline carried to the austerest practice of ascetics, which degrades far more than it ennobles, yet by common consent is included in the name.

Then, too, we have been very much accustomed to hear religion described, or religions classified, as consisting of people's opinions or beliefs about the universe, duty, and destiny. Thus Dr. Martineau, at the beginning of his luminous and massive "Study of Religion," defines it as "BELIEF in an ever-living God, that is, a Divine mind and will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind," — which last, as he afterwards explains, includes belief in personal immortality and a future state of rewards and punishments. This is an accurate account of the fundamental doctrines of that form of the Christian religion which he has in view; but it gives us a definition not much more adequate for our present object than the sentiment or emotion religion is sometimes taken for, to explain how it enters as an actual experience into human life.

Still, I cannot get along with my argument any more than those authors whom I have quoted,

without narrowing my topic down by some term or phrase that will hint to us the real nature of that experience we have to deal with. I will begin, then, not by attempting a new definition of my own, in which I might be no more fortunate than the others, but by putting into words, as best I can, what seems to me the real origin of religion, considered as a fact in the experience of life. You may find my words technical, and even a little strange, considering the poverty of the religious dialect which most of us employ; but they are the only ones I can think of that appear accurately to describe the fact. I say, then, that religion enters as an element into the experience of a man's life when he finds himself, in whatever way, *face to face with the Eternal;* and in that same hour knows that the deepest law and highest welfare of his life are somehow enfolded in it. For the nature of the experience is such that both these impressions come together.

Here, you see, I have to use a figure of speech, instead of the accurate terms of science; because our first business is to recognize the fact, and till we have done this we have no business to analyze or define it. Still, I think the general sense of what I mean will be plain enough. For you will observe that I offer no theories about it. I take nothing for granted as to the existence of an "eternal world" outside of us, but speak only of a particular element or phase of our own experience; I say "face to face with the Eternal," just as I would say "face to face with Love, or Pain, or Death,"

— phrases which you will admit are quite familiar and intelligible to us.

And we may all, too, probably agree in admitting that there is that which we name "the Eternal," — even if it were no more than bleak, blind, Eternal Fate, — something beyond our grasp, beyond our conception, beyond our imagination, beyond our faculty of reason, which yet does enter as an element into the experience of our life; nay, is that substance, or groundwork, without which our thought of life itself would be impossible. And I say that when — by direct contact, as it were, or by a certain mental shock, and not by a mere process of understanding — it is distinctly recognized as a factor in our own life, then and then only that which we call Religion may be properly said to begin with us, as a part of our life's experience.

I wish to keep as clear as I possibly can of all professional or technical phraseology, which would only obscure the fact till we have the fact itself to read it by. I will begin, therefore, with the simplest possible appeal to your imagination of what you have seen a thousand times yourselves, — possibly (as I had done) without the interpreting hint. I was travelling many years ago in a railway train through the lovely scenery of western Connecticut, with the second volume of Ruskin's "Modern Painters" (then just out), which I used as a running comment on the phases of natural beauty we were passing by. It was as the glow of a clear sunset was beginning to fade that I came upon these

words, which seemed to give the key to a feeling I had often had at this superb spectacle, without understanding it: —

"There is yet a light which the eye invariably seeks with a deeper feeling of the beautiful, — the light of the declining or breaking day, and the flakes of scarlet cloud burning like watchfires in the green sky of the horizon. I am willing to let it rest on the determination of every reader whether the pleasure which he has received from these effects of *calm and luminous distance* be not the most singular and memorable of which he has been conscious; whether all that is dazzling in colour, perfect in form, gladdening in expression, be not of evanescent and shallow appealing, when compared with the still, small voice of the level twilight behind purple hills, or the scarlet arch of dawn over the dark, troublous-edged sea. . . . It is not by nobler form, it is not by positiveness of hue, it is not by intensity of light, that this strange distant space possesses its attractive power. But there is one thing that it has, or suggests, which no other object of sight suggests in equal degree, and that is — Infinity. . . . The sky of night, though we may know it boundless, is dark; it is a studded vault, a roof that seems to shut us in and down; but the bright distance has no limit; we feel its infinity, as we rejoice in its purity of light." — (pp. 39, 40.)

Now this direct appeal to the impression made on our own sense by the daily spectacle of dawn or twilight glow is better than to prove, by volumes of dissertation on dawn-myths and sun-myths, that precisely the same impression stirred the same sentiment of devotion in our Aryan ancestors thirty

centuries ago. We have got hold of an original fact of our own experience, which gives, as I said, the simplest possible illustration of what we mean when we speak of coming "face to face with the Eternal." There are many and many ways of it which affect us far more profoundly, — which, if we think of it at all, stir in our minds a response to those words of Jacob: "Surely, the Eternal is in this place, and I knew it not!"

Observe that the next words hint that the first feeling is deep awe: "And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!" I may compare this feeling, akin to terror, with what suddenly comes to a boy learning to swim, who for the first time finds himself beyond his depth with nothing to buoy him up: his life is committed to a new, strange element, which he has not yet learned to trust. Coleridge tells us that the sense of terror is what one naturally feels at first when he finds himself in direct presence of the spiritual realm; and he illustrates it by a case which he seems to have known himself. I give it from a very distant memory. A young man, he says, professed a complete and scornful disbelief of what is commonly called the world of spirits, and some companions of his planned to put his scepticism to the proof by the very simple trick, that one of them should personate a ghost; but as he was known to be resolute, and a dead shot with a pistol which he kept loaded by his bed, they took the precaution of drawing the ball first. When the ghost appeared, he at once challenged it and gave warning; then,

counting three, fired at it point blank. The ghostly form stood unmoved; and in another instant the young man fell back dead. The shock of finding — or of suddenly seeming to find — that real which he firmly believed to be only the shadow of a dream, had, said Coleridge, its natural effect. Many of our modern ghost-seers have had their reason quite unhinged when they too have been thus brought, as they supposed, into sight and touch of those things which are invisible.

But there are gentle and normal ways, as well as those that are violent and abnormal, which deeply affect the mind by the presence and touch of what I have called "The Eternal." Here, for instance, is a story which I find very touching, cut from a New York paper. It is of a young girl who had led a life of shame and misery, with increasing horror and repugnance, drowning her remorse from time to time in drink. "But one night," says the narrator, "I was taking her home after she had been on a terrible spree, when all of a sudden, in a dark block, she sank right down on her knees on a flagstone in the pavement, and vowed to be a Christian, and to lead a good life; and from that night she has [done it], and every year at the anniversary night she goes to that spot, and kneels on that flagstone and renews her vow. That poor girl," he goes on to say, "going on pilgrimage once a year to a flagstone on the east side, and there, in darkness and silence, renewing her vows to God on the spot where His grace smote her down as it did Paul on his way to Damascus,

is just as real and literal as the dialogue of two witty people in a drawing-room; and to many of us it seems to furnish a type of theme better worth a master's touch." I do not ask you to accept any theory whatever by which this experience is to be explained. Think as you will of sudden conversions, and interpositions of Divine Providence in human life. I only ask you to look at the fact; and then you may put it in any phrases which you think describe it better than those that I have quoted. What you are to notice is that *that is how religion grows* in a certain class of minds, and under certain conditions. It was the case of an ignorant, poor, probably superstitious, and what most people would call a vicious girl, if not irredeemably lost. But at that one instant — to use the best phrase I can think of — she stood "face to face with the Eternal;" and from that instant she was saved.

She was ignorant and superstitious, we say. But the same thing happened in another way to another woman, who, of all I have personally known, perhaps best represents to the world what in New England is most cultivated and enlightened. You read in the life of Margaret Fuller that, on the journey in Europe from which she never returned alive, she lost her way one misty evening, while coming down a mountain side in Wales. The party who were with her went to seek a guide, but they too were lost in the impenetrable mist; and all night long she wandered alone, till in the morning she reached a place of safety.

So runs the account as nearly as I remember it. But what is not so generally known, says a friend of her earlier years, is that on that night (to use his expression) *she found religion.* She left behind from that hour the stage of experience in which she might seem to have shown only a type of mere literary culture, which is but vanity and vexation of spirit, and became that other woman who has gone into history transfigured and heroic because her later life was all given to service of others in the cause which seemed to her the most worthy and noble.

I might go on with other examples which show how that element in our life here called The Eternal cuts like a flash across the path of every-day experience, showing by that flash the real things of a higher life, which, if we embrace and cling to it, becomes our religion. For instance, a man is struck low by a sickness or an accident or a heavy grief, that makes him suddenly realize, as he never did before, how our human life is continually beset by "an Adversary still as Death, swift as Light, strong as Fate," — an Adversary whom it is impossible to question or resist; and it is in the sense of his utter helplessness at that emergency that he first comes to know what those great words "Absolute" and "Eternal" mean.

The first emotion, as I said, is apt to be one of terror; but the permanent impression, as I think, is more commonly that of peace. Before that which in comparison with any strength of ours is Infinite and Almighty we do not rebel, but sub-

mit; and in the act of submission we find the calmness which is a test, and perhaps the final test, of that way of life properly called religion. Thus Death, which is absolutely certain and inevitable to all, is at first contemplated by most men with extreme terror; but physicians tell us that, when it actually approaches, it is met by almost everybody with perfect quietness and content, and without any dread at all. When the great scholar and diplomatist Bunsen said on his death-bed to his noble English wife, "In thy face have I seen the Eternal," he testified to another side of the same truth, — that a loving trust so constant as to hint neither measure nor change is a type of that which in its very nature is immeasurable and unchangeable, and brings with it a deep peace.

I come back, then, to my phrase, which I hope has by this time been relieved of anything that might seem vague or commonplace, and say again that "religion enters as a fact into the experience of a man's life when he finds himself, in whatever way, face to face with the Eternal." It would be proper now to go on and show how from this germ — that is, this moment of experience — it puts forth, stage after stage, its two-fold life, laying hold upon the earth below with the firm roots of love and duty, and flowering out in the upper atmosphere of our life in hope, joy, trust, aspiration, and peace. But in doing this I should be simply following out the lines of illustration and appeal which are familiar to us, or ought to be, in our own observation of life about us, or in the

great body of religious thought accessible to everybody. I must pass all that by, in order that I may complete what I have to say by attending briefly to the two remaining departments of my subject.

And here we must go back to our study of the life of plants. Each seed that germinates grows "after its kind," as the Bible says, — that is, by a pattern or model which we call the TYPE of that particular plant. Thus the germ of a lily will always send down its roots in separate threads, and send up its leaves with parallel veins, and produce a flower modelled on a pattern of threes; while the germ of a rose will always put forth branching roots, and leaves with branching veins, and flowers modelled on a pattern of fives. What we call the type of the plant appears also in every fibre of the wood, in the odour, colour, or taste of every drop of sap, in the build of the plant itself, and in the structure of the fruit; so that, if you cut an apple across in thin slices and hold them up to the light, you will see a pattern of the five petals just as they were in the blossom before the fruit was formed.

Now when we try to understand how a Religion grows, we must get if we can not merely at the *facts* of its growth, but at its *type*, or law of growth. We find it, I think, something in this way: Each of the great religions of the world has been in its origin what we call a REVEALED religion; that is, it has been founded, or declared, by a man of religious genius, who has in the course of his life been brought face to face with the Eternal in such

a way as to impress him very powerfully, and to take complete possession of his life. In one way the case of the Buddha Sâkya-muni is an example of this, — who, being a prince brought up in every luxury, was overwhelmed suddenly by the spectacle of human misery in its most pitiful forms, and renouncing all personal indulgence, devoted himself to a religion of infinite pity and extreme self-denial till his death, and is said to have created the type of religion for a third of the human race.

But the case of Moses is more familiar to us, and gives us a better example of what we mean by an historical religion. He, having been a great captain in the armies of Egypt, and an adopted prince, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, struck one hot blow in defence of a slave from the cruelty of his taskmaster, and then fled to the desert; where, long brooding in presence of the Eternal, he wrought out the faith which makes to this day the religion of his people. Now this religion is of a very marked type indeed, perhaps the most so of all that have ever existed. In particular, as we find it in the Old Testament, it combines two contrary qualities in a supreme degree: one being belief in a God just, compassionate, and holy, who is as a father that pitieth his children, and whom his child may confide in to the uttermost; the other being adoration of an awful Sovereign, whose will overrides all human compunction or desire, and who is served by his chosen people with a fierce, bigoted, and intolerant loyalty to him

alone. This, I say, is the character, the two-fold type, of the Old Testament religion.

But this religion, taking its stamp thus from the life and character of the man, has developed two great offshoots, each far greater and mightier than itself, as they have reached out into the life of the modern world, and each especially characterized by one of those two qualities so marked in the original stock: I mean Christianity and Mahometanism. When we study the character of Jesus we find something in it of the heroic, aggressive, and dominating temper which, under other but quite supposable conditions, might have made him a great political and military leader, — especially through his wonderfully attractive and controlling power upon the minds of other men, — and this is the quality which appears to have most struck the minds of his first followers; but very much more of that compassionate and tender quality which made it so natural to speak of him as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." In Mahomet, on the other hand, we find sudden gleams, indeed, of a compassion almost as tender, and a piety almost as confiding; but, in the main, the temper of a fierce, relentless, sensual desert chief, controlling other men by passion, terror, and arbitrary will, or else seducing them by promise and permission of every indulgence of the flesh with its grossest passions and lusts.

Through all the conflicts and events of history, through all revolutions of opinion, through examples of heroism and devotion, through crimes and

atrocities unspeakable, shared (we might say) almost equally between the two, that radical difference of type has remained to this day. Each religion has kept something of the stamp put on it by its founder. The heart of Christendom has always repeated that strain of tenderness and mercy; the heart of Islam has always been intolerant, fierce, and domineering. "We are equal to you in every other way," said a learned Oriental to an English visitor, "but you have *pity*, which we have not." And where the two religions come in sharpest conflict to-day, in the heart of Africa, we find that those two types continue still unaltered. With all its enormous influence over the native mind, and its swift conversion of whole negro tribes, and the lift it gives them to a little higher level of intelligence and self-respect, the Mahometan faith keeps up the most horrible of plundering raids, and continually sends great caravans with miserable gangs of slaves to the remorseless, all-devouring East; while Christian explorers are everywhere the protectors of those wretched tribes, their only hope of deliverance from that frightful bondage, and there are never lacking Christian envoys ready (like David Livingstone) to lay down their lives in tropic swamps that so the soul of Paganism may be redeemed.

I say, then, that the question *how a religion grows* must be met by trying to understand what is the real type of each historic faith. Particular beliefs may help explain it; but it is seen a good deal more plainly in the race-type, or the particu-

lar moral quality, which, it is likely, is found most fully developed in its Representative Man, the founder of that faith.

And when we inquire, further, *how religions grow*, I think we are forced to answer that they do not tend to grow together, as some suppose, or to lose their identity in some characterless compromise of creeds which might superficially represent an "absolute" or a "universal" religion; but that they grow like trees in the forest, like shrubs and flowers in a field, each keeping true to its own type, and matched in a perpetual struggle for existence that the fittest may survive.

I might illustrate this at great length from the conflict of faiths in history. I might show how some religions have been exterminated by the sword, like the dismal tribal faiths of Canaan; how there have been attempted conquests, heroically beaten back, as when the Persian monotheists tried to extinguish the idolatry of the Greeks; how Cross and Crescent fought two centuries together on the soil of Palestine, with never a truce that bartered a jot of either warrior creed; how Oriental faiths crept in, under the mask of that long battle, making the "heresies" which papal Rome tried to blot out in fire and blood; how the vanquished religion has again and again cropped out — as in Brittany, Bohemia, Bulgaria — under its old likeness, which had been thought to be quite destroyed; how indestructibly all types of Paganism survive, under the thin veneer of conversion laid on by Christian missionaries, — as we are

told it is among the negroes of our Gulf States; how the modern Free-Religionist, who thinks himself emancipated from Christianity, carries its birthmark in every feature of his widening philanthropy and his enlarged intelligence.

But the task would be too long for you or me. And I can only close by saying that, if we would know the law of life in anything, we have these three things to do: first, to see the fact for ourselves, and so come to know it as an element in our own experience; second, to ascertain as nearly as we can the exact type of growth in that particular form of life which comes nearest to ourselves; and third, to accept the law, or the fact, as naturalists explain it to us, of that conflict of types which has wrought out the wonderful variety, wealth, and harmony of the living world we see.

II.

RELIGION AS EXPERIENCE.

"I will not let thee go until thou bless me." *

SO KNOCKS FATE AT THE DOOR! are the words which Beethoven is said to have spoken when he struck with his own hand the first two bars of his great Fifth Symphony. It was my good fortune to hear this composition the first time it was performed in Boston, about forty-five years ago; and again the last time, a few weeks back. In the interval I have many times heard that strain, delivered timidly, melodiously, hesitatingly, brilliantly, as the case might be; and it was with a certain shock of recognition that I caught now the imperious and almost angry emphasis with which that superb array of instruments announced the phrase. This Conductor, I said to myself, is right. That is what Beethoven meant!

The next day there befell a certain thing, which appeared to throw light upon that same phrase from another quarter, and to help show how the life-problem which is set in the soul's direct touch with

* The earlier portion of this chapter was composed during recovery from illness, and committed to writing afterwards. I have preferred to retain the language and imagery just as these were suggested at the time.

the Fate that stands at the door and knocks — that great unsounded mystery which we hide under the name Nature — must be met by every man not in the way of rationalizing speculation, but in the way of living experience.

For Nature as a *general* problem, more especially, Nature in those hostile or malign aspects in which it is so often compelled upon our thought, remains the same blank and insoluble mystery that it has been since the beginning. It does not appear that either our Science of Nature, which has grown to be so rich, so wonderful, so fruitful in practical results, or our speculative Philosophy of Nature, which attempts to take all this in and explain it by symmetric theory, has ever advanced any man a single inch towards that mental peace and composure which is the only true solution of our life-problem. The one simply expands into a gorgeous and complex Cosmography, which is indeed one of our chief intellectual delights, but lies all outside the realm of personal experience in which, if anywhere, that peace is to be found; while the other is at best a plausible Theodicy, or formulated optimism, held with a more or less wavering hold in theory, but in practice of not the slightest spiritual service, unless well kept in hand by a mind that has already found its peace, or won it, in personal touch or wrestle with what we may call a *transcendental fact* of its own life's experience. And what I mean by this phrase, we shall see by and by.

Moreover, while it is probable — nay, certain —

that no one soul, from the beginning, ever found its peace, joy, strength, salvation (whatever name we give it), by way either of natural science or of speculative philosophy, it is at the same time true that hundreds of millions of souls have found it, and are actually finding it every day, in the exceedingly plain and unpretending way of real life, — which by the postulates of either physical or speculative science ought to be a blank impossibility. It might, indeed, be more strictly accurate to speak of hundreds of millions of daily *acts* of reconciliation, than of so many truly reconciled lives; since religion is at all events a vital process, not a statical condition. But, if one will take the trouble to think of it, he will see that these lives, in the sense we mean, are, by any reckoning we will, prodigiously numerous. Nothing is, in fact, a more touching thing in real life than the serious acceptance, without question or protest, of the most adverse conditions of life among the suffering and lowly. No prejudice is at once more shallow and more cruel than that which regards Religion, in this humblest and noblest sense, as somehow a perquisite of "the elect;" all the worse, if these elect are held, in any special way, to mean the educated and the refined. The faith which it implies may be grasped only a point at a time, very likely only for a moment at a time; for it is a process that must be as incessantly renewed as leaves upon a growing tree. That is *the way of faith*, and there is salvation in none other. The method of it makes the most interest-

ing and the most fundamental of all investigations of religious psychology.

In order to see more clearly what is meant by a "transcendental fact" of personal experience, I will take up one not rare and recondite, but so common that most persons have encountered it more than once, and all of us have got, knowingly or not, to meet it, sooner or later, face to face. Our purpose, then, shall be not simply to know it when we see it, but to look at it so closely as to find out what is in it, seen through and through.

A busy man (let us then suppose), in his ordinary health, so far as all known tests go, is contentedly nearing the end of his week's work, fairly satisfied with what he has done, and ready, but not nervously anxious, for the next task in hand. Suddenly, as he begins to lay by his tools, a cold touch, as of a finger of ice; a chill, that the glow of fire will not mitigate; a fast-increasing shiver, which yields to no enfolding comfort; then a shudder and a great trembling, which throws him upon his bed doubled up in distress, turned inside-out with physical self-loathing, each corporal agent seeming in his little state in hot rebellion against the Lords of life; and in half an hour this busy and cheerful person, who stood alike ready for an invitation to dine or an afternoon walk, knows that he has got, with what heart he may, to face a week or a month of ignoble miseries, with possible relays of sharp pain, — with the chance that by the end of another week or month, by skill of tending, humiliating personal cares, and favouring con-

ditions, that same blind, pitiless Force may let him back to his task with lame hands and halting upon his thigh; or, failing these, may just as unconcernedly deliver him to his burial. Meantime, he lies helpless, and waits the event. *So knocks Fate at the door!*

This, as I have said, is no peculiar and rare experience, but an exceedingly common one, of daily and even hourly occurrence. Still, coming as it did, it has touched him on a new spot, and has sharpened his apprehension to a new set of relations in which he finds himself placed to the universal laws of life. When we speak of it, among other facts of his experience, as a "transcendental" fact of his life, it is not that as a bit of human history it is less familiar than the others; not that it is less easily traceable among the sequences of cause and effect: but that, more definitely than the rest, it puts the point of individual experience in touch with the more obscure and general laws of our being; it appeals in a different way and (so to speak) under a higher authority to his own consciousness of what he does or is. It has brought him, for one moment of his life, face to face with the Eternal.

Naturally, he is desirous to find out all he can about it, looking at it from outside, or with other people's eyes. Thus, for example, his scientific adviser will probably qualify the experience by some euphonious Greek term — *pneumonia*, or whatever it may be — which stands to the initiated for a certain group and sequence of morbid symptoms,

and so is convenient for the classifying, defining, or practical handling of them, without hinting a word of their meaning or value as an element in his conscious life. The smooth-tongued idealist, who affects by fine-woven theory to fit it in with some optimistic scheme of things only half real or believable to himself, is in yet worse plight than the other, when he has to face a state of mind to which a fever is after all just a fever, a simoom a simoom, and a blizzard a blizzard, — all of them deadly and irreconcilable enemies to that plausible theory of life which to such a state of mind has as yet no sense or reality. The moral process must *go before*, to make the mental one intelligible: first be reconciled, then come and offer the gift. For all the help that is offered him so far, the seeker must go forth alone upon his solitary quest. He has come, in his soul's pilgrimage, to his ford Jabbok, and there he must wrest if he can a blessing from the very Phantom with which he has wrestled until the breaking of the day.

When he has come to that point, he finds that the first shock of the experience is something like this: he has become suddenly aware (perhaps really for the first time in his life) that over against this orderly system of things — in which he has his daily being, in which his accepted theories have taught him that science or skill have made men masters of their destiny — there stands an Adversary, still as Death, swift as Light, strong as Fate: he has, as it were, caught a moment's sight of this Adversary, vanishing formless like a dream, and seen the

glint of the sword that had so nearly touched his own life while it as suddenly withdrew into the enveloping darkness. Henceforth he knows that it is the one problem of the higher life with him how to contend victoriously in the spirit against the Adversary that is sure, sooner or later, to foil and overthrow all strength that rests on flesh or mind or will. To win that one victory must be his main life-purpose now; and the winning of it is the attainment of what we call by those great words Atonement, Reconciliation, and Salvation.

For not only there are griefs and pains and final overthrow in every human life, incessantly calling for a renewal of this reconciling process, but the experience is as old and as wide as the life of humanity itself. All men from the beginning have had this Vision, out of the great darkness menacing their ignorance, their helplessness, and their fear. Always there has been hinted to the bewildered thought some terrifying form of Dualism, in which the Adversary is personified as a Power hostile to that realm of order and light in which our life is cast: as the jealous Ahriman of the Persians, adopted as Satan into the mythology of Jew and Christian; as the gloomy Tsarnebog, "black god" of the heathen Bulgars, that went into the dark terror of mediæval heresy; as the mighty Mumbo-Jumbo, that gives shape to the most abject forms of savage superstition now. The experience is human and universal; the name it takes is merely the symbol of the one great Dread.

Thinking on it a little further, he will not be content to stay in these abject levels of gross terror. He will remember, first, that "the Shadow feared of man" is, after all, a part of the same system of Nature amidst which long generations of men have found possible not only life, but with it reconciliation and peace, prosperity, contentment, and joy. And then he will call to mind what in its literal sense is the meaning of the name Nature, — the great encompassing, enshrouding mystery; the Divine Mother, whose face indeed is always veiled, as in that statue at Saïs which bore the legend "No mortal hath my veil uplifted," yet whose motherly heart all men have seemed to feel somehow beating against their own. The name by which we know the great mystery is NATURA, *She that shall bring to the birth.* And in that phrase he finds not blind mystery only, but a certain suggestion of comfort and hope.

Nay, under the spell of this gracious interpretation, he is led still farther on, so as to give voice even to the very experience of life that had first raised his abject terror, in some such way as this, speaking the kindly heart of the Universal Mother: —

"My poor Child. thou hast sinned. Passion and desire were too strong; the flesh was weak, and that has felt the necessary scourge. But the stroke is for discipline, not for vengeance; only be thou wise and heed its meaning. Go in peace, having suffered the pain and smart; and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee."

Or else the Voice will say: —

"My dear Child, how small was the measure of strength bestowed on thee, and how narrow thy opportunity, and how light the task that I required of thee! And yet thou must needs attempt some great thing, and overspend thy strength, and risk the great end of life, to win a proud name, or heap up large treasure, or put forth a power not thine own upon the lives of other men. Thou didst not know how easy my yoke is, or my burden how light. But behold! thy strength is taken wholly from thee, and thou art become as a little babe. Yet it shall be given back to thee for a season, this once; and then do thou remember to work wisely while the day lasteth, knowing that the night cometh, when no man can work."

And again the mild Voice speaks, tenderly and gravely: —

"Come back, my Child, to the Everlasting Arms! Thou art weary and spent. Thy little day is past. What thou hast done in it wisely and well shall go into the great treasure of the world's life for which thou hast laboured: that is thy reward. What thou hast wrought in it of waste and wrong is for evermore a shame and loss: that is thy judgment. But now thou must pass through the deep water, — no longer the shallow ford, — and leave all that life behind, that thou mayest enter upon the eternal life, where is peace which passeth understanding, and where the weary be at rest."

Now it will be observed that the process which has brought about this soothing and comforting interpretation of the dread mystery, is *what has actually come to pass* in the generations of the world's religious life. In particular, with all its

fulness of meaning, it is the ripe fruit of what we call spiritual Christianity. It has been effected by no intellectual or logical play whatever: it has been wrought out by the patient effort to meet and vanquish, one by one, the pains and fears that beset the actual courses of men's daily and common life. It expresses itself, frankly, in the language, not of critical opinion, but of emotion and of symbol. Attempt to formulate it in doctrine, ever so simple, and it is instantly caught up by the busy understanding and rent to shreds, which then became either castaway rags, or else the badges of division and debate — never a living vesture for the soul. The life and efficiency of the process depend on its remaining fundamentally RELIGIOUS, not critical, not philosophical. It begins with the conscious beating of the human heart against the Universal Heart.

It springs from what we may call the appeal in our common nature to the *motherly* element in the life of Nature. So far as our timid theology has dared to recognize it, it has been found in the blind, passionate demand for the co-equal divinity of the Holy Spirit, which in the Christian formulary represents that interpenetrating universal Life. The hard Hebraic piety caught for once a flavour of its tenderness from afar, when it said that "as a father *pitieth* his children, so the Eternal pitieth them that fear him." But the rationalizing intellect and the masculine domination tend continually to prevail against the brooding emotion and the submissive will. Conscience, too, asserts the in-

dependent vigour of the ethical sense, with its recognition of a sovereign supreme Authority. What is purely passive and feminine, in the early germinating of the religious life, is taken up more and more into the wider circles of thought and experience. And, with this larger mental grasp and more vigorous ethical sense, we find the soul at length fully emancipated from the ancient terror; and in place of the austere and sombre Fate to whose stroke he listened at the beginning, the grown man hears the voice of a Father, saying to him, BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK!

In short, the conquest of Nature, or the solution of its darker problems, taken in this sense, is in no way a scientific or a speculative process, but purely a religious one. It may, to be sure, be helped or hindered by the gain in accurate knowledge, or by the general conceptions men hold respecting the Universal Life. But, by the actual evidence we find in religious history, it is extraordinarily little dependent on anything of the kind. Ignorance the most gross and blinding, doctrine so appalling that if really believed it would needs drive the dullest into a frenzy of uncontrollable terror, does not in point of fact seem in the least to shut out the *unquestioning* believer from the serenest religious peace. A hint of question, of doubt, will it is true wake to a great passion the horror of that ghastly fear: "and fear hath torment;" wherefore it is needful that it be banished by any method of rational conviction that can be had. Still, first and last, the fundamental

thing to be had in mind is this: that while, scientifically, the problem of Nature, or the universal life, is not even thinkable, and while speculatively it is and must ever remain absolutely unsolvable, yet practically it both can be and continually is *perfectly* solved in the experience of the religious life.

The effect of the last half-century's debate has been to make us look at Religion too much from the outside; to find it in men's theory, opinion, doctrine, speculation *about* religion, — nay, of late, even in their system of natural science, as in the much-preached doctrine of evolution, which has come with some of us to have a sort of sacredness, as of a creed. Or, by a singularly one-sided definition, it has been held to consist in the mere emotion stirred in us when we stand consciously in presence of the Infinite Force which embraces and controls our lives, — an emotion that easily evaporates into sentiment, vapid and thin, a feeble parody of the mighty force which religion is in the soul, — as when Herbert Spencer exalts the mood in which we contemplate the vastness of geologic periods, in disparagement of the humbler and homelier notion which he rails at in the "religion of humanity." Or, again, Religion has been in these latter years confounded by many with Ethics, which is really its complement or counterpart. Each may expand so as seemingly to cover the whole ground included in the other; but in truth

they are as spirit and body, or as the right hand and the left. Religion, as we have practically to deal with it, as a power in men's lives, is at bottom *the effort of the soul to find inward peace* in a world of sin, sorrow, pain, and death, where to so many life is an unexplained and unrelenting tragedy; while Ethics is in substance *the effort of the soul directed outward*, to subdue existing wrong, want, or suffering, or to attain some nobler pattern of individual or social life. The sorrow, pain, and wrong are *essential conditions* of mortality in human life as we find it. Without a vivid sense of them, and a hand-to-hand conflict against them, Religion would not exist as a power in men's lives: it would be at best a dream, a theory, an emotion, a vision of the fancy, a figment of the brain; not what it really is and ever has been, — deliverance, salvation, strength.

That is what, in fact, religion really means to us. The solution, it may be, must be sought through the extremest anguish and wrestling of soul that one is capable of; but, unless we see that it may be had, and accept the method of attaining it, we have no gospel to work with, and religion is at best a vague outside thing to us. The very exhaustion which has come upon men's speculative faculty — that which we call "agnosticism" — seems of itself to force us back upon the conception of religion as a thing of LIFE, in order to interpret the commonest facts of experience or the plainest evidence of history. Some men, wise in their own conceits, overlook that way altogether;

but by the understanding heart of genius it is easily discerned. Among what we may perhaps regard as Count Tolstoï's wild exaggerations on this subject, there is one view of it he puts which is profoundly touching and profoundly true. Among the prosperous and cultivated he had found every form and degree of scepticism; a proud, prosperous, and cultivated man himself, he had fallen into a condition of blank intellectual despair, which lasted till he found genuine faith again among the ignorant, the suffering, and the poor.

I listened the other evening to a highly instructed young Japanese, who set forth with much ardour his sense of Christianity and Buddhism, as the two great world-religions glorified by the personal character of their founders; and I could not avoid a certain feeling of resentment that a serious parallel should be drawn between the two. We may set wholly aside, if we will, the statement respecting Sâkya-muni by the Hindoo critic, — that his conversion was the late recoil of a more earnest nature from the voluptuous life of an Eastern Prince, so far remote from the clean, wholesome village tradition of the Child in Nazareth. But, take it at the very highest estimate ever made, there is in that Oriental type this prime defect: we find nothing at all in it of a vigorous, joyous, constructive virtue, — not a touch of the fine quality we call *manliness*. It is, in short, the virtue of a Saint Francis of Assisi without his sunny cheer; the morbid asceticism of Saint Ignatius Loyola without his flaming courage; the tenderness of

Saint Charles Borromeo without the resolute temper in him, that ran into severity and sternness of administration, while it gave him the strength of hand to help. And these, too, are mediæval or Catholic types, without half the rounded manhood, the intellectual courage, the statesmanly vigour, of our modern ones. Take, on the other hand, such estimate as we can get of the character of Jesus on its purely human side; and we find, among other traits, a passionate sympathy with his people's sense of wrong and their fervid patriotic hope, which in manly quality is degrees above an equally passionate sympathy with mere hopeless wretchedness. In the one there is at least a hint of what might possibly be developed (as it was) into the conception of a world-Saviour; in the other, with the tenderest of sympathy, there is at best but a purely passive surrender to misery as an overwhelming Fate.

The critical temper of the last half-century had something in it to blind us to that unique and inestimable ideal which we call "the character of Christ." This is not quite the same as what we mean when we speak of the character of "the man Jesus;" for of that we know too little for a comparative judgment of any value. It is best, here, to keep outside the disputed province of historical criticism: leave that with the critics, where it belongs. But when they have said their last word, or the last that we care to hear, we may return with all our hearts to that ideal of a Divine Humanity, as the very richest moral legacy left us

by the faith and reverence of the past. That ideal, we may well grant, is not so much the character of an individual, as it is the creation of long "ages of faith." The very steps in its development are not difficult to trace, however inconsistently or reluctantly we may have consented to accept the notion that there has been such a development at all.

Reluctantly, I say. For the first steps of that idealizing process are very strange to us, and in violent conflict with our modern feeling. Far from taking what is tender and compassionate in the heart of Jesus, which we always think of first, these early witnesses even exaggerate the qualities that belong to imperious self-assertion, such as men looked for in the expected triumphant Sovereign; nay, they distort these qualities into the fierce, vindictive temper so marked in the popular Messianic hope. And so we hear of Christ's second coming "in flaming fire taking vengeance" on his adversaries (2 Thess. i. 8), and of shrinking from "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16), when the victim turns and retaliates upon those who have slain him; while with Saint Paul "the judgment-seat of Christ," far from thoughts of mercy and pardon, suggests a certain "terror of the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 11), of power to "persuade men."

These testimonies show that not the tenderness and humility of the Beatitudes, not the passionless exaltations of the Fourth Gospel, not the mystic transfigurations in the later Pauline thought,

were the features earliest ascribed to the glorified Redeemer; but, instead of these, an exaggeration of the austerity and terror hinted at in the stern denunciations or apocalyptic visions of Matthew and Luke. This is to say, again, that the traits first adopted as a groundwork in that extraordinarily complex ideal which later times have worshipped as their incarnate Deity, were the strong and masculine traits, including especially an imperious sovereignty and a deep capacity of wrath, — the farthest possible from the pallid, morbid, almost feminine image found in the mediæval Christ and the Oriental Buddha. It is, humanly speaking, a far nobler and wholesomer conception, alien as it is from the tone of our modern sentiment; and in a time of deepening moral conflict, like that which is upon us now, we shall turn back to it with a profounder sense of the value of its stringent, chastening quality, in a world that continually needs, not the tones of comfort and condolence only, but the sterner voice of a "Captain" of its salvation.

III.

WHAT IS A REVELATION?

"The heavens were opened and I saw visions."

LITERALLY, we say, a revelation is "drawing back the veil." It is the rising of the curtain at a theatre, which shows a scene that was there before, but out of our sight. Anything is a "revelation," which suddenly discloses to us the motive or the circumstances of an action that before was perplexing and unintelligible. In the very highest sense, it is a revelation to us when, in like manner, the riddle of the life we lead, and the deep mystery of the universe, is solved, or seems to be solved, by a vision that comes — no matter how — showing us its real meaning and purport, solving its perplexity, and giving us intellectual repose. Thus to many persons of the present generation the theory of evolution, coming to them as a fresh solvent of their mental difficulties, has been a revelation in a sense as strict as our argument requires.

All this turns, to be sure, on our taking for granted the objective verity of that which is thus disclosed. The thing that was hidden was there before: now that the curtain is drawn, we see it as it was. This makes what we call the "realism"

of poets and philosophers, when they discourse on what we call spiritual truth. In a sense perfectly intelligible, all the higher, nobler, larger conceptions which men's minds are capable of have come to them as a discovery of something seen (as it were) with "the mind's eye." Religion, say philosophers, is of two sorts or sources, — natural and revealed. Natural religion consists in the reflex action we are conscious of upon the phenomena of the outward universe, especially those which touch the imagination, or waken strong emotions of awe, terror, wrath, love, delight: such is the religion of the Vedic Hymns, of the Greek mythology, of most popular superstitions. Revealed religion is that which comes in the long brooding and reflection of superior minds upon the deeper law and the hidden meaning of human life, whose fundamental significance is ethical: such is the religion of Moses, of Buddha, of Zoroaster, of Islam, of Æschylus, of Christ.

In popular use, however, this sense of the word is narrowed to something more specific and definite. It becomes imperious, intolerant, exclusive: making one particular revelation true, it declares all the others to be false. Thus every so-called revealed religion has had its propaganda, its missionaries and martyrs, its conquests, its persecutions, contrasting with the generous pantheon of what was purely natural or ethnic. Xerxes was a "defender of the faith," as much as Mahomet or Charlemagne, and attacked Greece as a nation of idolaters, just as the Crusaders did the Saracens.

The Christian creed is not the only one to be condemned as intolerant, though many persons seem to think so; indeed, the more the particular faith is prized and vigorous, the more sharply it sets itself against all rivals. The claim of the Christian revelation, accordingly, interests us not as a dogma, but as a type; no longer as a point to be defended or attacked in theological debate, but as a fact of human nature to be studied and explained. It has been taken, almost under our own eyes, out of the realm of speculative doctrine, and brought upon the quite tangible ground of historic criticism or philosophic inquiry. And it is upon this latter ground that I propose to consider one or two points of interest which it may offer.

The first thing we have to notice, as to the claim just quoted, is that the canon-worship it prescribes is not confined to Jews and Christians. It is only one example of a fact which we find wherever — east of the Mediterranean, at any rate — sacred writings have been preserved and cherished (as they seem always to have been) in an obsolete if not forgotten tongue. "The orthodox Hindoo," we are told, "regards the Vedas with the most intense reverence, as the inspired word of God existing from eternity, and as the foundation of everything in religion, philosophy, art, science, and literature." The *Vendidad* "is cast chiefly in the form of colloquies between the Supreme Divinity and his servant or prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster), in which the former makes known to

the latter his will respecting his creation." "The Koran is, according to the Moslem creed, coeval with God, uncreated, eternal. Its first transcript was written from the beginning in rays of light upon a gigantic tablet resting by the throne of the Almighty; and upon this tablet are also found the divine decrees relating to things past and future." In the Jewish Sanhedrim, "it was a question whether the Law itself or the tradition were the holier: 'The words of the Law are weighty and light, but the words of the Scribes are all weighty,' was a saying among the Jews, — one which must have been vehemently contested, until the dispute was compromised by affirming that both, if not absolutely eternal, at least existed in Paradise before the world was." There is no space here to trace the subtile association of ideas, or the mental habits of the race, or all the steps of development, that led to such a belief. It is enough to show that, in dealing with it, we are dealing with a fact not particular and exceptional, but widespread and general. We are met, if not by an experience as broad as human nature itself, at least by a characteristic which prevails in all the Oriental races whose religious writings we know. We may call it superstition, dogma, or tradition: what we find is a certain condition of their religious thought. The writings themselves to which the religion clings are in each instance writings whose contents, character, and date are ascertained, as nearly as may be, by the ordinary critical or historical proofs.

The thing we notice is, next, that during the creative period of Hebrew literature there are no symptoms whatever of the set, artificial, and "sacred" character which later times ascribed to the same writings. All that is an after-thought. It belongs to a period when the differences, so obvious now to an educated eye, were merged in a fond, uncritical reverence, a grateful memory, that knew no longer any controversy of prophet and priest, of Jahveh and Elohim; that saw the life of Israel single and unique, relieved against the dim background of a prehistoric past. There is a Jewish legend which, in a very characteristic way, introduces us to this later phase of the Hebrew mind. It tells that, in the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar and in the captivity of Babylon, all the sacred things were plundered or destroyed, and every record was burned: the sacred history, song, prophecy, all that inestimable treasure of venerable writings, had perished utterly; but Ezra the Scribe, in the return to Jerusalem, was specially *inspired to remember* every word just as it had been written in the sacred books, so that he dictated to an amanuensis a copy in all points identical with that which had been destroyed. Translated into modern phrase, this task of Ezra was the task of editorship. Like those modern scholars who are deciphering the literary remains of Nineveh and Babylon to-day, he was the compiler, arranger, *rédacteur*, of the relics that had floated safe from the general wreck. Fragments they were, no doubt, from a vastly greater bulk, — fragments

which no skill of editing could so piece together that the loose joints and the diversity of material should be disguised. Nor does any sign appear that this was even attempted. It is rather as if, with a pious and reverent care, everything had been bundled together that could be gathered up, without even wiping off the unclean sea-slime and the noisome weeds. Nothing, in such a gathering, is common or unclean. Each portion keeps the mark, colour, flavour, that belonged to it in its original form. Often, as in despair of any harmonious adjustment, the fragments are simply cast in, side by side, without pretence of date or sequence or consistency with one another, to piece out the rude structure, and so to make the editor's task complete.

It is, perhaps, the symptom of a certain mental lassitude and despair which come upon a people in its decline, that sacred writings, thus fondly idealized and made the type of every perfection, come presently to be ascribed to a superhuman source. The native genius in its decrepitude cannot even conceive the imagination of a mind to create or a voice to give utterance to them. It finds in itself no likeness or suggestion of such a power: it is dazed, like the dwellers near Baalbec, who gaze with fear and amazement at the mighty ruin, and think that those vast stones were piled there by genii, and not by men. With a people in that mental condition, the achievement of the past, even the work of its own ancestors, serves no longer to stimulate and instruct, but to oppress and overawe.

We have seen, and still see, enough of this intellectual timidity, even in a population so daring and irreverent as our own, not to be surprised at the shape it took in the more slavish and imaginative East, and among a people whose only monument of the past was the group of sacred writings gathered about the shrine of their ancestral faith. To that sentiment we may ascribe no small share in forming those *previous conditions* under which the doctrine became not only possible but natural, — nay, inevitable. Canon-worship marks the transition from a creative period in the national genius to its faintness and eclipse.

It would seem too as if the formal definition of a revelation which limits it to some particular group of sacred writings, when we trace it far enough down from its source to its final issue, brought us back to our starting-place in the moral experience. Minds of a certain order have been deeply, and often *suddenly*, convinced of truth which seems not the mere generalization of fact, but belonging to quite another sphere. We call this truth spiritual or transcendental, meaning by that term that it is no such mere generalization of fact. Our apprehension of it we call a revelation, meaning that it was covered (as it were) by a veil from our sight until the veil was put back and it became as clear to our vision as stars in the sky when the curtain of clouds drifts off. The *thing revealed* may include this or that; but it presents itself to our thought as a moral or divine Order which rules and shapes the system of things we live in,

so that we can find peace only in somehow adjusting our life in harmony with it. It makes the sphere of our practical religion; and only in this sense is it true that religion, as has been said, implies "a theory of the universe." The thing seen is that the moral or divine Order, thus revealed, is of supreme authority both in the sphere of thought and the sphere of action: it is the supreme Truth and the perfect Right. Whatever else men have agreed or differed in, all to whom such insight has ever come are agreed in this.

In the sphere of experience, then, a revelation, however it comes, is always held to be valid and absolute as to the thing revealed. But it is the deepest problem of all philosophy what this thing really is. Is it only (so to speak) *a state of mind*, in which, conditioned as he is, man finds his truest peace? This, I suppose, would be the Buddhistic interpretation of it, as distinct from the Christian. For the Christian view has always been that the Divine Order is a sphere objectively real, — just as we may suppose depths of the sky successively revealed to us by the telescope, — and that the eternal life it includes is one which we may share in, consciously, surviving all the accidents of time. Now this, from the nature of the case, is not contained in the experience; it can at best be only suggested by the experience. And it is not obvious, at first sight, how it can have the validity of "revealed" and objective truth. To say that it is truth of a spiritual order, made known to us by the conscience and heart, and not by the criti-

cal understanding, is perfectly true and sound as long as we confine ourselves within the bounds of men's religious history and experience. But it is a mere play of words when we say that it proves the real existence of anything outside those bounds, — unless we are agreed upon some method, or canon, by which the subjective experience can be translated into objective fact. And for this the process is no way scientific: at best it hints what may be, it does not prove what it is. We may approach the question, tentatively, in some such way as this: —

First, the universe, by the best understanding we can gain of it, is made up of facts which show present, active, and (as it were) conscious THOUGHT controlling the phenomena: in the formula which Dr. Hedge has made familiar, *Intelligence coordinate with Being*. Mind and matter are the warp and woof of things. The mathematical accuracy in selection and the mechanical nicety in adjustment which make what we call the "law" of crystalline structure are an intellectual, not a merely material, phenomenon: we find a series of facts prearranged and controlled by the forming Mind. Where are the invisible fingers feeling in the darkness? where is the grouping instinct among the "atoms," that will not be content with anything less than absolute obedience to that law? where is the far finer than any chemist's balance, that determines the exact proportion and weight among them? Or, where method and purpose appear still plainer, as in the growth, the symmetri-

cal flowering, and the nicely-timed fructification of a plant, it is the same thing on another plane. Who will affect to say either that there is no controlling and (as it were) consciously contrived and intended plan, or that that plan resides in the mere blind elective affinities with which the chemical atoms are supposed to be endowed? Will any atheistic fatuity or positivistic reticence deny the simple fact, that the instincts of animals, to say nothing of the adaptations of their structure, show directing intelligence somewhere, which it would be wildly absurd to ascribe to the rudimentary mental structure of the animal tribes themselves, — the beaver, the ant, the migrating swallow, — or to the laws of their organization as such? We say nothing here of the attributes of an assumed Creator: that is a matter quite beyond our province to determine. At this point we must keep clear of all the tangle of prejudice and misrepresentation that has gathered about the argument from design. At present it is enough to say that, when we speak of controlling thought or purpose in these things, we commit ourselves to no doubtful theory whatever, but are using the simplest and plainest language we can find to tell the most familiar fact.

Again: these hints of controlling intelligence in single things are found to be in harmony with some larger plan which we are but slowly coming to comprehend: they constantly involve harmonies remote, occult, unsuspected, which are sure to be made more and more clear with the advance of scientific discovery. The operations of the con-

trolling Mind are nowhere shown to be mistaken or deceptive; only a few of the obscurest facts of physiology so much as perplex us as to their true intent. The adaptation is just as perfect where it involves spheres of being apparently quite distinct — as the animal instincts in migration or in the choice of food — as in the simpler cases of vegetable growth corresponding to soil and climate, or the narrow play of affinities in the structure of a gem. The intelligence which forms, guides, and controls, does in fact (whatever else we may think of the nature of it) compel each grade of existence to conform itself, as if by clear purpose and forethought, to conditions of being *wholly outside its own range;* while in every instance the course of action so compelled upon it is found to correspond, in entire harmony, with laws and facts made known only by patient search in other fields. I am not repeating here the exploded arguments of an old-school teleology. Take that curious summing-up by Hartmann of the facts of this order, and for his phrase "The Unconscious" substitute some theistic equivalent, and you have, without other change of a single word, a chapter out of some modern Paley. He escapes the charge of theism only by his adroit use of the neuter gender. This second step in our argument — what we may call the veracity of nature — has nothing to do with any doubtful theory to account for the fact, but is simply our plainest statement of the fact itself.

We are apt to think that the conscious intellect

covers the whole ground of our thought. The popular notion draws a sharp distinction in kind between those forms of animal intelligence we have just noticed and our own, holding that man is devoid of instinct (or unconscious reason), while the brute has neither rational faculty nor conscious thought. Another view degrades the instinct in man to those lowest forms of intelligence or passion likest the brutes, recognizing no super-conscious as well as sub-conscious action of the mind. But all religious philosophy has declared, in one or another form, the agency in our higher thinking of a universal Mind — a Spirit, "Over-soul," Logos, or Divine Reason — whose sphere is outside the limits of our thought, and is quite as plainly to be found in human life as in inferior forms of existence. Where do we find, in human history or experience, the evidences of such a controlling Mind?

For one thing, we may reply, in those "laws" of history, especially the law of evolution in human thought, now coming to be acknowledged by all classes of thinkers. The life of nations, the destiny of races, the genesis of historic periods, the development of intellectual systems, follow some law, or plan, capable of being stated in intelligible terms, which existed ideally before the beginnings of human history; which was just as active before mankind began to think consecutively as it is to-day; which is so far beyond the scope or fathom of man's thought or will, that we cannot even conceive of it as a possible attribute of the

human mind, any more than the laws of planetary motion. To trace that law, or intelligible plan, was regarded by Comte as the proper business of a "positive" philosophy.

Again, there is the case of exceptional minds, — what we call *genius* in any of its forms. The most striking to the imagination are, perhaps, the instances of mathematical or of inventive genius. These imply the clear intuition of an order of facts and relations so remote and complex that often they cannot be intelligibly stated to persons not gifted with a corresponding faculty, while they can be shown to be *regulating* facts and relations, of the utmost value in practice: thus a table of logarithms is a blank mystery to the common sailor, who steers in obedience to it every day. Whence comes that faculty of intuition? The mind conscious of it is apt to speak of it, reverently, as "a gift." What is the Mind that gives it? Or shall we take the materialistic assumption, and say that it is simply the result of an organization very finely endowed in this particular way? And what does this assertion mean, once challenged and analyzed, but that the universe is (so to speak) charged with Absolute Intelligence, which manifests itself wherever there is a way for it, — like an electric battery, whose current can be drawn upon by any channel fitted to conduct it, — an Intelligence of which instinct, reason, genius, creative skill, are but the successive manifestations in heightening degrees of intensity?

If it were so, the first obvious condition or limi-

tation would be that which is found in the mental or cerebral organization of the individual. The capacity of the human mind as to particular orders of truth seems to be as strictly gauged as that of a hollow vessel for its contents, or of a musical instrument for harmony. The limit of capacity may be harder to find, but it seems almost as definitely fixed. Most students find that in pure mathematics there is a barrier which they may indefinitely near, but which no diligence of theirs will ever reach or cross. The line of excellence is even more sharply drawn in poetic or artistic gifts: no matter what eager aspiring, what devoted toil, the average mind stays always in the lower rank. There is no reason to doubt that the same limitation exists as to man's capacity for what we call spiritual truth; and that this limitation, whether residing in brain or nerve, or in some still more occult and delicate organ of our structure, makes one condition of faculty to receive what we call a revelation of such spiritual truth. Or, if we assume the absolute freedom of a Divine Intelligence in selecting the receivers and agents of that truth, still it is like the freedom of the artificer who selects a tool because of its fitness, or of the commander who knows already which officer or man shall be assigned to the special service. Only such are direct channels for that current of the higher mental life. Most men must accept the revelation of it at second-hand: only the highest minds are (so to speak) in intellectual touch with the Eternal.

We have noticed, perhaps, in persons exceptionally gifted in any unusual way, the mark of *certainty* in the exercise of their peculiar gift — especially if it is not an attainment won with pains, but wells up in their unconscious or spontaneous action. It is — says Renan, speaking of the complexities of human speech — the peculiar mark of what is "spontaneous," that it knows no such thing as hard or easy: the feats of a sleep-walker would amaze and terrify him by their sheer impossibility in his waking hours. Such gifts are found sometimes under structural conditions which we conveniently term "nervous" or "magnetic," — meaning only that they are quite unintelligible to us; they are found in acts that show control over wild creatures, or some forms of morbid excitement, or furious insanity; they appear in oratorical or military genius at its highest pitch. And of the exercise of them we observe that it has the same unconscious ease and certainty that we remark in the movements of an untrained animal, — an ease and certainty that can be had by no imitation, and are the result of no conscious effort. Such cases suggest how easily, how certainly, how inevitably, the Universal Life shapes itself to the conditions already existing, amid which it has free play.

It is so, too, with the certainty of some men's perception of spiritual fact. Socrates has no other explanation to give his judges than that he was enjoined by "the Divinity" (*τὸ δαιμόνιον*), whose voice he was compelled to follow. This compul-

sion, this certainty, is quite distinct from the power of clear ratiocination or accurate definition, which make the merit of religious philosophy as such. It is the power of simple vision. The statements of religious truth are the assertion of certain facts, which can be verified by no method of proof at second-hand. They must be seen and known *as facts*, or not at all. And this, in our modern understanding of such things, means facts of actual experience. They must be accepted either from direct knowledge of them, or else on the authority of persons held to be competent witnesses of them.

The facts lying back of the conscious religious life are commonly reckoned to be these: a Divine Order embracing all forms of life; the supremacy of Good over Evil in the ultimate laws of being; the Eternal Life, in which is found the completion of the destiny of every creature; the certainty of a just Retribution of right and wrong. As to these, it is probable that most persons have no intuition or first-hand knowledge whatever; while there are multitudes — whether we call it knowledge in them, or whether we call it faith — to whom they are clear and evident facts, such that it is a light and easy thing, in the assurance of them, to undertake any task however hard, to encounter any peril however frightful, to bear any burden however grievous. This we call the "power of faith" in them. It is, for them, the absolute solution of the problem of life, and its crowning victory. And to most of us this experience,

though known to us only at second-hand, is probably the strongest evidence we can have of the objective verity of those facts of a spiritual order on which it rests.

Still, there are the select few — not for the present to go beyond the bounds of actual experience — to whom facts of this order come in a way that they can describe only as a direct "revelation," a literal removing of a veil, so that they see by immediate vision what is hidden to the common eye. Of course, such a claim made for or by anybody needs to be sifted and examined with honest pains. But we need not, for all that, refuse to recognize the experience itself, with whatever value it may have as a fact of human nature. And we may claim to follow strictly the analogy of nature and the conditions of certitude in other things, if we accept this insight of theirs (duly verified and checked) as a veritable revelation to ourselves, and acknowledge it as a genuine authority within its special field of vision. True, their experience strictly proves nothing beyond a certain condition of the mental or moral life — which we may rightly hold to be more precious and important than the proof of any external "spiritual" realm. Nay, it may be taken in evidence of an objective realm of being which it asserts — as truly as some persons perceive mathematical relations incomprehensible to us, which are yet proved to be objectively real, or are sensitive to impressions that we have never known. It is, at all events, AS IF there were such a realm of

being — real enough, at any rate, to make a practical guide of conduct — of which we are ourselves at moments dimly conscious, which we may even be in touch with, though blindly or as in the dark, which to a few it is given to behold with the naked eye.

IV.

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE.

"Are they not all ministering spirits?"

WE may fairly enough assume that atheism — that is, straight-out old-fashioned atheism — is out of date. A hundred years ago it was common enough to deny that there is any Divine mind or life beyond the things we see. But the more scientific temper we have to deal with now is content to say that whatever power, thought, or will there is beyond the range of natural law, is inconceivable to our mind, — unknowable, as the phrase goes. And so it is. No man in his senses, whatever his logic or whatever his creed, will pretend that an Infinite Intelligence, or the way of its working, can possibly be conceived in human thought. We may seem to ourselves to prove, logically enough, this and that attribute — omniscience, eternity, almightiness — which we say are essentially contained in our thought of God; and the argument is perfectly sound and good *while our mind is bent that way.* But we find, fashioned as we are, that as soon as our mind is *unbent*, the infinite complexity of the universe and of life rushes in upon us, and our imagination is baffled and overwhelmed. We must get back our sense of the nearness and reality of the Divine Life in

quite another way. Our life itself, in its countless mazes, in the bitter and sweet of its experience, in its depths of emotion and lifts of thought; the imagination, nourished and enriched by all we have felt and thought and seen and known; the soul, with such wealth of capacity and mastery of passion as it may have won, — this must, after all, make for every man the mirror, which at every point reflects some different aspect of the universe, and at every turn does something to brighten or deepen the picture that images to us the Universal Life. To a mind religiously trained that picture is what we call "the thought of God."

The point of view I wish to take is shown in a little parable, or apologue (here copied from a religious paper of some years back), supposed to represent the way a teacher might talk to children about some of the familiar marvels of human life. It is there entitled —

ANGELS.

Once upon a time, there was a little child so beloved by the Queen of Fairies, that she took it into her own particular care. And she called her spirits from far and near, from the air above and the waters beneath and the fields around, and gave the child into their keeping.

And to one company of them she said, "Build me up the body of this dear child in beauty and health. Sort out every particle of her food and put it to its use, so that this shall run red in the blood, and that shall make the flesh supple and firm; and every hour the frame shall grow a little taller and a little stronger, with fine grains built in and invisible threads woven together

in the exact proportion. See that the hairs of her head are all numbered, and that every one is fed through its fine tube, that the ringlets may lie elastic and bright upon her neck. Of the million and million fibres of the frame see that every one is exactly nourished, without any confusion, without an instant's neglect or delay. Where any part is hurt or worn, see that it is softly dissolved away, without any distress or pain, and fresh material put in its place. Make not one mistake in measure or proportion, while the building and the altering go on every minute of every day. And see that all is done so exactly that she shall grow up by hair's-breadths, daily, continually; and no eye can tell the difference from hour to hour, from week to week; yet after certain years she shall be no longer a child but a lovely maiden, and after certain other years a beautiful and noble woman." And it was so.

And to another company of her spirits she said, "Weave the delicate sunbeam that shall play upon my child's cheek. Weave it of innumerable bright colours softly blended in one transparent beam, that shall shine back brown and golden from the hair, snow-white from the clear forehead, blue from the liquid eye, damask from the cheek, ruby from the lip. Take [she said] these two elements of vapour, one fiery to scorch, the other choking to the breath, weigh them out accurately, and mingle them to form every dewdrop that moistens her face, and every sip of water that gives savour to her food. And for the food itself, which is to be dissolved and wrought up into frame and fibre and life-giving current of the blood, let that be moulded with your nicest skill from salts mingled in the earth and particles that float invisible in the air, built together and ripened into fruit or grain through the long summer days and the balmy nights,—all without

haste or rest, as the manner of nature is. And for her clothing the silkworm shall spin his thread, and the cotton-boll whiten in the sunshine, and the flax plant shall ripen; and the innocent kid shall give his soft skin, and the lamb his fleece, and the skill of a hundred artificers shall combine, and my darling shall be fed and clothed." And it was so.

But on a day it came to pass that there was an evil vapour in the air, or a poison in the food, and the busy spirits were troubled and perplexed. The child's blood ran hot in fever; her brow throbbed with pain; day-light glowed in burning crimson on her cheek. The fair form lay helpless; the pulse beat swift and wildly, bearing not health but throbs of suffering. Some law of that precious life had been broken, ignorantly or wilfully, and the ministering spirits were driven back as if by some unseen enemy. But only for a time; for when the rage of the poison was spent, it was a wonder to see how swiftly and with what strange skill they thronged back to their task of defending and building up again the threatened life. So in a few days the fever was abated; the cheek regained its natural hue; the breath was cool and sweet again, the step more firm and elastic than before. And the fairy guardian, who watched all this from her throne where she sat invisible, or from where she hovered in the air, silent and unseen, saw all that was done, and behold, it was very good.

In some such parable as this one might try to lead a child's thought to see the miracle of life, as it is daily fulfilled in every one of us. "He hath given his angels charge over thee" says the Hebrew psalm, "to keep thee in all thy ways." I do not know in the least how all this wonderful thing

is done; and I do not think the very best chemist or physiologist could help me at all to understand. What is the Power that lives behind that series of phenomena (as we call them), which are all that our science can tell us anything about? We call that Power by the name God, — a name that simply lifts our thought from the lower level of knowledge to the higher level of reverence and trust. We are as helplessly ignorant as the youngest child, or as the author of the Hebrew psalm from which I take those words. The little parable which attempts to put that great wonder to childish fancy does not go in a single phrase beyond the facts of the case, as they are rigidly set down by chemists and anatomists and physiologists. Indeed, it goes but a very little way upon that path, crowded with wonders, which they by laborious investigation are opening to our view. What shall we say, for example, of the four hundred and fifty thousand strands of the optic nerve, bearing each its separate message from the world without to the world within? or what of that harp of three thousand strings set within the structure of the ear,

> "Untwisting all the chains that tie
> The hidden soul of harmony"?

Because we are ignorant of the way, shall we overlook the wonder of the fact? Is the miracle of life any less real than it seemed to that poet of old time who composed the superb strains of this ninety-first psalm? Surely not. Increase of knowledge only widens the horizon of wonder and mys-

tery. The firmament of sky, the depth of waters, the caverns of the earth, the marvels of the human frame, are far more crowded with mystery and awe to us now than they could be in an age that only looked timidly and ignorantly upon the surface.

And again: that parable speaks only of the life of the body, — as if that were to grow up in mere beauty of form, a phantom of delight, a breathing statue. It says nothing of the far greater wonder (if that were possible) of heart, mind, conscience; how the passions come, and the affections; of thought, motive, and educated will. Take them as we will, — as mere cerebral phenomena, if we choose to call them so; or as real spiritual facts, evincing the growth of a living soul, as our common feeling prefers to view them, — and the wonder deepens, as when we look through the telescope at a cluster of stars. If we try to cover with our parable the process we find here, what shall we say of the ministering spirits that attend upon it, the angels who have this given to their charge? For here we can see even more plainly how it must be given in charge of "angels" — that is, *intelligent agents of a higher will.* While before we had to personify the simple chemical or vital forces in air, water, sunshine, vein, nerve, tissue, here the forces we deal with are personified already, — in the mother's tenderness, the father's directing intelligence, the teacher's patient fidelity, the thousand influences, sympathies, associations, of daily companionship.

Or if we fancy that these take us a step farther away from the Infinite intelligence and power, we have only to reflect an instant, to see how each soul from which these constant influences ray out rests very literally on the bosom of forces boundless and incomprehensible, where we trace as best we may the very power and presence of the Almighty. Nay, think how slight a film it is in which all life floats upon this planet. On a ten-inch school globe we could hardly spread a thin enough coat of varnish to represent the depth of the layer of air in which it is possible for human beings to live; and this, laid on in patches here and there, to show where they actually do live, covering not one-tenth of the globe's surface, all put together. In all this boundless universe, those few filmy patches on a ball almost lost to view in the vast immensity — those are all that indicate to us the range of human life, seen as a portion of that immeasurable expanse. All beyond it is — what?

There is no need to disparage the amount or the value of our knowledge. Its mere growth is a wonder and a triumph. Its mere acquisition is of inexhaustible relish, as the fit food and stimulus of the mind. To win it and hold it is our only pledge of the control we have over nature, for comfort, defence, or gain. Still, outside of that narrow thin range just described, it is a bare registering of a few physical, mathematical, and chemical facts, utterly beyond our reach to grasp or modify or control. In that thin layer, between the too great grossness of the vapours below

and the two great rarity and chill of the air above, lies what we call the sphere of our life, — really, a little part of the surface of a sphere, — resting quite literally on the bosom of unfathomed forces beneath, and wrapped about quite literally by a universe of unfathomable forces beyond!

So to speak, there is nothing for us really to understand, except the conditions and laws by which our little life is bounded, and which we can figure plainest to our thought as the pressure of an Almighty Hand upon us. The forces themselves, which we name and classify as we can in our study of them, — so intelligently controlled, acting with such unerring accuracy and skill at every moment, on every atom of matter, in every spot of space, — it seems no very violent imagery to call them agents, messengers, Angels of the Almighty, having us in charge.

We are apt to think of angels as we see them in pictures, — mere human creatures etherealized and refined, and disfigured with wings; having neither the sex of women nor the vigour of men; beings of a fainter and thinner humanity; the soft and sentimental side of our religious imagery. But what does the Bible say of them? "I saw a mighty angel come down from heaven clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was about his head; and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the land. And he called with a loud voice, and when he called, seven thunders uttered their voices!" What does

that magnificent picture mean, but by a splendid personification to set forth the grandest and highest that could be conceived of almighty power? It denotes the might and splendour of the immediate messenger of Omnipotence. We prefer (it may be) the abstract name Force, — a name which speaks not to imagination but to reason. We speak of the "force" of gravitation or electricity; the "wave-motions" of light or heat. The Bible personifies the same thing, and calls the force an "angel." We might personify electricity just so, if we were great poets too, like the author of the Apocalypse. "The winds are God's angels, the flash of lightning is his attendant," says the Hebrew psalm. And so with all the rest. When we say that our life is sustained by forces vast and inscrutable, working in ways hidden to us, but always and unerringly, with skill far beyond the reach of our thought or the cunning of our hand, we are saying in our poor way what the Bible says in its nobler and grander way: "He hath given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways!"

One of the chief perplexities of our religious thought at the present day, as it appears to me, comes from our confusing together three things, which in their nature and use are really quite distinct: I mean our Science, our Philosophy, and our Religion. Each is true in its way; but they are true in very different ways. It is the business of science to investigate all that can be found out about the things that make up the known

world, — their orderly arrangement, succession, and so on, — especially what will be of any practical use to us. It is the business of philosophy to find out, if it can, the original source of these things, and what they are in themselves, apart from the forms in which they appear to us; or, in default of that, to set them in intelligent order, and trace out the laws of thought by which we grasp them. But it is the business of religion just to take the best symbol it can get of those forces — spiritual, moral, vital — which make or mar the higher life of man; and to use it in the best way we can, to cultivate the affection, to build up the character, to guide the conduct, to regenerate the life.

In these high matters objective truth, saving only the priceless truth of human experience, is outside our province as it is certainly beyond our reach. "We teach the wisdom of God in a mystery," says Saint Paul. What is wisdom? It is practical knowledge, — not speculative, not dogmatic, not theoretical. What is a mystery? As the word is here used, it is the *symbolic* expression of a truth. We must take the symbol that comes nearest home to us. In the Greek mysteries, which Paul doubtless had in mind, the person to be initiated was first blindfolded, — very much as the Lord of our life treats us now, when we would look too deeply into the secrets of his power.

> "When o'er these dizzy heights we go, one soft hand blinds our eyes;
> The other leads us safe and slow, O love of God most wise!"

As to the truth of fact behind the mystery, there is not the least likelihood that we shall ever, in this life, know more about it than we do now. We see at least this: that there are intelligence and force and hosts of unseen influences, always and everywhere present, which, if we were poets, it would be easy to clothe with form, and call them Angels, and show how, as in Jacob's vision, they are continually ascending and descending between us and God.

We do not know anything about it. But this at least it is borne in upon us to take note of: that our life is apt enough to be sordid, dull, and sorrowful; and that any view of it which clothes it but for a moment, in one of our better moods, with living glory, is a strength and a help to our frail humanity.

V.

THE LAW OF JUSTICE.

"With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged."

THE phrase "reign of law" is commonly understood of the processes in nature that show an orderly and (as we are apt to call it) necessary sequence of phenomena, which we are able, within certain limits, to understand, predict, and control. It is not commonly applied to what makes up the realm of human character and human actions, which, whatever our theories about them, we habitually think and speak of as contingent and free. Or, if we do so apply it, we are apt to find that our view of what comes by common consent within the range of moral liberty, or is included in what we term the "spiritual life," is cramped and unsatisfying, — as untrue to the facts of our higher consciousness as (for example) the theories of inorganic chemistry would be to explain the vital processes of a living body. Thus Herbert Spencer, in his *Data of Ethics*, having already (as he thinks) disproved the faculty of moral choice and reduced all acts to be the resultant, or transmutation, of pre-existent force working out mechanically, is obliged to limit himself to calculable pleasure or pain as the one moral motive; to disparage or condemn those waves of moral enthusi-

asm, or self-sacrificing heroism, by which the great victories of humanity have been won; and, as a final evidence of the inadequacy of his view, to scoff and repudiate as mere nonsense the *dictum* which he cites from Carlyle, that "a man can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness."

Now in our ethics the religious experience of mankind fills the same function that poetry or imagination does in the realm of natural science: it is the pioneer of the accurate intellectual description given in science or philosophy. Religion, in its higher forms, has always recognized a "law of the spirit of life" as distinct from "the law that is in our members;" and a few words touching the nature or bearing of that law * from the point of view of human experience may not be needless at the present stage of the discussion.

For some fifty years or more — dating, I should say, from the currency given to Combe's *Constitution of Man* — there has prevailed a more or less popular view of what we may call the physical law of retribution, as if it filled all the space, and embraced all the penalties, that were once held to belong to the domain of theology. It was supposed to cover the whole ground when it pointed out the certain consequences of certain acts: when it showed how a drunkard will certainly ruin his health, and a spendthrift his fortune; how a liar will lose people's confidence; how an ugly temper will make enemies; and so on.

* Or "method," *νόμος*; not *θεσμός*, "enactment."

Doubtless all this was a very important and instructive thing to say, when the theological argument was only beginning to wear thin. Further, it has gained great weight, range, and force, as we have come to understand better the laws of life in our own constitution and in the constitution of things round us. But it shows us only one side of the subject, — the obvious, the superficial, almost we might say the coarse and rude side of it. It warns very powerfully against the gross vices, such as drunkenness and debauchery. It discourages knavery and cruelty, which make a man, secretly or openly, the enemy of other men. And this is well, so far as it goes.

Still, it warns against these things very much in the same way as it warns against unwholesome food, or change of weather, or bad investments in business. The virtue of mere prudence, which is all it teaches, is not only not the highest sort of virtue, — though it is the same in kind that the popular religion often stops with, — but it has no charm in it, and little honour. Men's sympathies run out to the frank vice and frank contrition of the prodigal, more than to his elder brother's thrifty and calculating obedience. The "law of the spirit" which we have spoken of goes deeper, and touches more powerfully the real springs of life. An ordinary historian can trace out for us the series of events that show how an unscrupulous ambition, crowned with every success, leads on to deeper stakes and unintended crimes, till it culminates in some fatal disaster, such as Waterloo or Sedan. But it

takes a great poet and dramatist to show how the same ambition, in the noon of its success, is after all the wreck and despair of the life: as when Lady Macbeth says,

> "Nought 's had, all 's spent,
> When our desire is got, without content."

As soon as we attempt to follow out the line of thought which this suggests, we are arrested at two or three points of view, which should be firmly held to in considering how to meet the sophisms which beset the current religious argument on the subject.

In the first place, with our modern habits of thought, it is absolutely necessary that we should discard the notion of anything *arbitrary* in what we call the Divine reward of virtue or penalty of guilt. No doubt, what we speak of, ignorantly, as "laws of nature" have been appointed (to speak after the manner of men) with intelligence, forethought, and distinct purpose, — the laws which govern the results of good and evil in human character, as much as those which govern, for example, the relations of carbon and oxygen in producing the vital heat of the body. The thing to be observed is that *to our mind* all the laws of life are ultimate, and have nothing arbitrary about them. They are what they are by what we may call a Divine Necessity. That is, we cannot possibly think of their being other than what they are. To our mind they are simply the expression of the ultimate constitution of things, so far as

conceivable by us; so that it is absolutely impossible to follow out in our imagination the consequences that would ensue from the smallest change in that actual constitution of things, physical or moral: if, for example, the air we breathe were one-fourth part oxygen, instead of being (what it is) about one-fifth.

It is not of the slightest consequence, in this view, whether that constitution of things is the best possible or the worst possible. Indeed, it is not clear whether these phrases, which figure so much in some schools of philosophy, have any intelligible meaning to our mind. No doubt we can easily enough imagine a more fertile soil, a pleasanter climate, a more orderly and happier state of society, and so on. Here, we are simply dealing by comparison with what is known and familiar. But the instant we come to the "laws" (that is, the ultimate conditions) by which these things are determined, — gravitation, evaporation, sympathy, retribution, — we come upon ground bordering directly on the unknown and unknowable; ground where we have simply to accept the fact; ground which we cannot by any possibility conceive to be other than it is, while earth is earth or man is man.

In like manner, whatever our opinion may be about any of the laws that affect our moral life, we cannot rest until we have divested them to our thought of any smallest appearance or remnant of an arbitrary character. Thus a child needs to be told that a lie is wrong, and, if need be, that it

must be punished by parental discipline. An average man needs to be practically convinced that dishonesty is an evil thing to him, — if necessary, by shutting him up for years in prison, which implies a complicated apparatus of courts and judges. To teach men of a rude time that falsehood at heart is a baleful and fatal thing, it was necessary to carry over the same machinery of courts and a Supreme Judge to the invisible world, and to say that "liars shall have their portion in a lake of fire and brimstone," — however we interpret those awful words. But, taken carnally, that is not the kind of imagery that impresses us now. And we shall never be satisfied with our own opinion as to the judgment that follows wilful falsehood, until we see it as an ultimate fact in human life constituted as it is, just as unerring and just as little arbitrary as that which regulates the consumption of carbon and oxygen in evolving the vital heat.

In the second place, we must disconnect — that is to say, logically disconnect — the penalty of guilt from any notion of *suffering*, such as is either arbitrary in its infliction, or can be made apparent to observation or taken into our calculation of consequences. Now this dissociation of suffering, arbitrary or calculable or apparent, from guilt is one which our thought strongly rebels against. It seems even an outrage upon our natural sense of justice. And yet not only is it the fact which constantly meets us in the experience of life, but we must come to it squarely, face

to face, if we would succeed in seeing the whole thing in its true light. For example, the consequences of drunkenness or licentiousness, which are so often made (and rightly made) the type of God's moral judgments, are by no means the penalty of the *guilt* of drunkenness or lust. They are simply the expression of a physiological fact. They are the natural, but by no means constant or unavoidable, sequence of a definite act; and some of the worst of them are perhaps oftenest suffered by the innocent, not the guilty. As the old phrase ran, they "work corruption of blood." The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and it is the children's teeth that are set on edge, — which it would not be if it were spiritual law we were dealing with, not a simple fact of physiology. With a little prudence, the guiltiest person of all will sometimes keep all his vices and — so far as another eye can see — escape all their consequences.

And again, if we think of suffering as the real penalty of guilt, we are confounded at once by finding that the innocent suffer full as much as the guilty, — perhaps more. "On the whole," writes an observer who has given much thought to subjects of this nature, "the most pitiful object I saw once in a great hospital, which gathered up the wrecks of the city's debauchery, was a little infant born there blind, — its blood poisoned at birth, and its bones rotten by the sin of its progenitors; so that it could at best linger a few weeks in blind misery, and then be laid in an unpitied grave, having never tasted once the sweet joy of life."

Master, said the disciples, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents, said Jesus; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. That was his way of saying that suffering *as such* is not the penalty of guilt *as such.* The "work of God" to be made manifest in the blind man was what? It was, simply, to cure his blindness.

Now it is just here that "we have the mind of Christ." It is none of our business to be theorizing about the ultimate source or the reason of human suffering. Our only business with it is to prevent it if we can, and to heal it when we can. One great passionate outcry has gone up from the heart of man since the beginning, echoed alike by Job and Isaiah, by Æschylus and Homer, by Tennyson and Carlyle; but no answer better than that has ever come, or probably ever will. An inflammation in a spot no bigger than a pin-point strikes the sensitive nerve of eye or ear; and your innocent child — to-night perhaps — shall suffer agonies that stir in your heart all that bitter, helpess sense of the mystery of pain. As to that mystery, as just said, there is no other apparent answer possible than this: that our only business with suffering is to soothe it when we can, to prevent it if we can, and to heal it where we can.

Once for all, if we will deal at all with a matter so serious as guilt and its penalty, we must learn not to confound that penalty with the pain that afflicts guilty and innocent alike. It was of One conceived spotless as a Lamb of God that it was said,

"The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." It is the tender-hearted, compassionate, and pure, that really feel the awful burden of the suffering and sin that oppress mankind. To live comfortably through life, — to escape that great burden of sorrow and pain, — two things, it has been rather cynically said, are chiefly requisite: a hard heart and a good digestion. Such words mock, perhaps, our easy and childlike notion, that the good should be made — divinely or artificially — happy, and the bad — divinely or artificially — miserable. In this life, once for all, it is no such thing. Not that certain moral qualities — as amiability, generosity, content of mind — do not contribute to life's happiness: indeed they do, as certainly and plainly as fresh air and sunshine to bodily health. Not that certain immoral qualities — as idleness, envy, ill-regulated passion — do not contribute to life's misery: indeed they do, as surely as poisons in the air bring fever. But these are only incidents. They are fringes, as it were, to that great web of mingled delight and pain which constitutes our experience of life.

God makes his sun of gladness, so far as we can see, rise impartially on the evil and on the good; and sends his rains of sorrow, so far as we can see, equally upon the just and on the unjust. That is, the surface gladness and the surface pain, which are all that our eyes can see, are distributed with absolute impartiality, so far as moral merit is concerned. Who supposes that the un-

distinguished crowd of victims in a great war, — who suffer anguish of terror, rending of households, destruction of property, pangs of starvation, miseries of pestilence, outrage of person, and eclipse of life, — who supposes that they have deserved worse of the Almighty than the victorious commanders, who have the glories of conquest, or the beaten commanders, who have at least the solace of compliment and compassion in their defeat? And, if we would think of it, the enormous misery that results from this one single source, wars of policy and ambition, is so vast as utterly to overwhelm and confound whatever notion we can frame of those milder distresses, which are all that most of us know of human wretchedness.

The prodigious question, then, of the suffering which mankind endure, or are capable of enduring, we must set absolutely aside from our view, when we deal with the law of the spirit of life, as helping to explain the Divine compensations of evil or good as such.

And, still further, we shall not find that it helps us at all in our understanding of it, when we carry over that suffering, retributively, to our notion of another life. Pain by way of arbitrary infliction will never reconcile itself to the judgment or conscience of a reasonable man. Our natural first feeling about it is doubtless different from this. Revenge, which Lord Bacon calls "a sort of wild justice," demands eye for eye, tooth for tooth, pang for pang. And that rude sense of justice in us all is justified, no doubt, at any-

thing which seems (as it were) the very reflex of a criminal act, as when a wife-beater is heartily flogged on the bare back. But, if we will think of it, the flogging of a wife-beater is mercifully meant to save other men's wives; it is a punishment that speaks sharply to the coarse understanding of men who are capable of beating their wives; it is not meant revengefully, to wreak the anger of the State. It would surely be a pitiful thing for the great, rich, strong State, made up of hundreds of thousands of people, to act revengefully upon a criminal whom it had got safe in its grasp and reduced to helplessness. The general security alone justifies the law's severity.

Just so with the dispensations of another life. It does not satisfy in the least our sense of absolute justice that an Almighty Being — we will not say *forever*, since that is too horrible, beyond all range of imagination, to think of for a moment, in its hard, implacable malignity — should inflict we will even say one single pang, by act of arbitrary will, upon a creature absolutely helpless and unresisting, on account of guilt alike unrepented and (as we must recollect) unhindered in a previous state. We may, on the other hand, very easily conceive that such a soul, stripped naked, as it were, of all defences, and looking back on a course of evil in a light hitherto unimagined and unsuspected, — we may easily conceive that such a soul should undergo flames and agonies of remorse at the mere fact of its wilful alienation from infinite purity and right, typified truly enough in the im-

agery of parable and apocalypse, feebly paralleled by the like tortures that have scourged convicted offenders here. Such a destiny as that may very well enter into our conception of a future life, when we try to apply to it the spiritual law we seem to discern in the present life. But we must first of all conceive it as the working out of that spiritual law: it is as essentially and necessarily part of our human constitution as those relations of carbon and oxygen in the blood, which evolve the vital heat of the body.

Such a view of the subject, furthermore, is in harmony with those methods of thinking which are now everywhere accepted as sound, and is demanded by them. If these methods are right anywhere, they certainly are in the department of theology, which, properly understood, is the reflex in philosophic thought of one special range of human experience. Accepting so much, we have, then, brought this matter round upon the ground where it has got to stand, if it is going to have any real or permanent value as part of our religious thought. In brief, either there is a good and a bad, a better and a worse, for us, or there is not. And by this we must mean a good and a bad, a better and a worse, entirely aside from the sense of calculable pleasure or pain. The real good in life, its true and highest good, is what all grave thinkers are agreed in calling moral or spiritual good; that is, it belongs not to sensation, but to *the quality of the soul.* The deadly enemy of such a view is the method of thinking known by such

fine names as eudæmonism, or hedonism, or Epicureanism. Under all these fine names — nay, even though the sense of them should be expanded and glorified into an eternity of selfish bliss — it is the doctrine of Belial as opposed to the gospel of Christ. Religion always assumes that there is such a higher good, quite irrespective of pleasure or pain; carrying this so far, sometimes, as to say that the real test of fitness for salvation is willingness to be cast off from all joy forever, out of pure loyalty to God.

The utmost that can be claimed for pleasure as the reward of virtue is that on the whole, out of innumerable instances, it will be found that the preponderance in the long run is in favour of virtue as against vice, as a source of human happiness or satisfaction, — for the individual a slender and doubtful preponderance, while immensely great for society at large. As a voice to the soul, we must take rather the splendid paradox that has been already cited from Carlyle: "There is in man a higher than the love of happiness. He can do without happiness, and instead thereof find blessedness!"

But I should be afraid, in the name of religion or common-sense or general experience, to promise a young person, in the bewilderment and whirl of life, in the maze of passion and temptation, — I should be afraid to promise that he will have more pleasure in virtuous self-denial. How do I know? How can I compare? Our standard of such things shifts as we get to middle life. I

have heard of persons who affected to look at the whole thing deliberately, who deliberately chose the pleasures of profligacy, and to take their chance. How, on their ground, could I gainsay them? I could, it is true, warn them of the certain horrors of certain forms of profligacy; — though even these will not deter a man of stronger passion than judgment. But, by a little discretion, he may perhaps avoid those horrors without forfeiting the indulgence.

Now I do not say that I could deal with such a person any better by reasoning from principles of pure virtue. Probably not. But at least I can avoid the mistake of attempting to deal with him on unsound principles — on ground that will not bear the heavy pressure of fact. And, for persons whom I can impress — young children, for instance, and inexperienced persons who are really trying to do right, and those who know they have gone wrong and really wish to be set right, — for these I can at least avoid a falsehood and a fallacy in dealing with them. For all such, I am perfectly sure that the true method is to inculcate *right because it is right*, not because it is profitable; to warn against *wrong because it is wrong*, not because it is unprofitable.

Moreover, I think the natural mind and heart answer quite as quickly to the right — or what seems so, as to the pleasant or expedient — or what seems so. Or as St. Paul urges, Religion ought to set a mark at least as high as a prize-fighter, who will let himself be battered to death in

the ring sooner than show himself a coward or own himself beaten. I am not at all sure that the desire of right is so much weaker. Nay, I am sure that in a healthy natural mind the desire of right is far stronger than the desire of pleasure or happiness. This is doubtless what Jesus meant when he said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall save it." These paradoxes are the common-sense of the loyal soul.

Now there is a sphere and quality of life, call it what we will, — wisdom, as Solomon called it; or self-control (σωφροσύνη), as Socrates called it; or virtue, as the Stoics called it; or moral excellence, as we say in our homely English; but what we like best to call by those noble Scripture names, love, joy, peace, spiritual life, kingdom of heaven, in one word, BLESSEDNESS, — *which is the best thing for us, constituted as we are.* If a man has the least notion of such a sphere of life, or a belief that it exists, he necessarily feels after it, struggles towards it, as plants towards sunlight. We need not quarrel with any one who prefers to translate by so tame a word as "pleasure" that abounding joy, that deep peace, that expanding life, in which this "blessedness" consists, provided only he recognize the fact. If we do not so recognize it, then so much the worse for us. Not that it is a sin, which will be visited by a specific penalty; but that it is a sort of "outer darkness," — a blindness, a sickness, an impotency of the soul.

Now this, as we have already hinted, is not a

matter of speculation or dogma; it is a fact of human experience. And it is this fact of human experience that gives its significance to our customary religious phraseology. Thus, "Heaven," says Dr. Hedge, "is the sum-total of ascending spirits; hell is the sum-total of descending spirits." In these ranges of experience we do not talk about reward or punishment. The glory and the joy are in the higher life itself. The gloom and pain are the forfeiture of that life. The arduous struggles by which it is won are not "merit," by which it is earned as a reward. They are but incidents of the climbing, a cheap price for the glory of the ascent. They are no more than the painful steps one climbs to view the splendours of a mountain sunrise; no more than the price which that man paid who "with joy sold all that he had" so as to buy that "pearl of great price" which this kingdom of heaven had become to him.

Plainly enough, if Religion is to regain in an age of reason anything of the power over men's lives which it is held to have lost since the "ages of faith," it must be not by bringing down its claims to the lower level of a speculative opinion or a carnal prudence, but by making plain those facts in its own domain, which are just as real and certain as the facts of astronomy or physiology. These facts lie in a region of experience which it has been too much the fashion of late to disregard, in an eager grasping at the glittering generalities of science, or in the efforts of a practical philanthropy, or in the allurements of mate-

rial, political, and social progress. Everything that is certain in this world comes to us from going back upon the primary facts of experience. And it is for Religion, just as much as it is for any department of the sciences of observation, to assert and defend very jealously that particular domain of experience which is rightfully its own.

Finally, something like the thought which we have here attempted to express we believe was in the mind of Paul when he wrote those noble words: *The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

VI.

THE LAW OF SACRIFICE.

"He that loseth his life shall save it unto life eternal."

THERE is a sentence of Saint Paul which has often come to my mind in a way to make it seem very puzzling and inconsequent. He is made to say, in our common version (Rom. v. 7), "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." This, as it stands, is flatly unmeaning. I certainly cannot understand it; and I do not think the translators understood it, either, or else they would have made it more intelligible. Naturally, then, I turn to the Revisers, to see what they have made of it; but I do not find that they understood it any better, for, in the latter half of the verse (which is what particularly puzzles me), they only change it to this: "FOR peradventure for THE good man [or, for the Holy Spirit] *some one* would even dare to die." The paradox and the fatuity remain just what they were before; simply, we can give a better guess at what the Greek may possibly have been, — at least in the two words "for" and "the."

I now do what I ought to have done at first, and turn to my Greek text. And here I begin to find

a little light. For I notice that (in the latter half of the verse) the verb means "dares," and cannot possibly mean "would dare;" that its subject is not "some," or "some one," but rather "any one," as in the earlier half; and that for the phrase rendered "a (or, the) good man" the literal meaning is "the Good," or some other expression (as "the good cause") denoting pure quality. But especially I note that for the strange and unmeaning term "peradventure" it would be a much more natural rendering to say "swiftly," or "promptly." And, putting these hints together, I seem to find a meaning like this: that, while it may be hard to find one willing to die for a point of mere individual right, yet any man braves death *readily* where a point of conscience or personal honour is concerned.* And in this, instead of the vague and paradoxical assertion that puzzled me before, I have a meaning that is both intelligible and noble. I do not know what the commentators say about it, but this, it seems to me, is what Paul him-

* The verse as it stands in Greek is as follows: *μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖται· ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾷ ἀποθανεῖν.* It will be seen that the interpretation turns on the ambiguous meaning of *τάχα*, to which I have given what seems to me its more natural interpretation. To make sure, however, I sent the text to a friend, a very eminent professor of Greek, who replies as follows: "Not knowing the context, I should be inclined to understand it thus: 'For one will hardly die for what is just, and yet one may easily venture to die for the Good.' Is it an argument for elevating the good, *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, in Plato's sense, above the [special] virtues? The omission of the article with *δικαίου* and not with *ἀγαθοῦ* suggests this."

self says, — certainly, a far manlier and nobler sentiment than what his translators have given him credit for.

For, as we cannot fail to see, the meaning we had first found has something in it quite pitiful and craven. It seems to show that when the words were written the spirit of sacrifice — in the sense of devotion to duty — which we are so familiar with, both in its humblest and its grandest forms, was quite in its infancy. It seems to show a clinging to life and a dread of death, in men's average temper, which we should call mean and dastardly. It would appear a piece of almost incredible heroism, that one should risk his life for the noblest cause or the noblest leader!

Now I need not speak here of the Christian martyrs, whom these very words of Paul — leading up as they do to his noble exhortation, "I beseech you by the mercies of God that ye give your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is your reasonable service*" — were helping to educate up to that high pitch of moral daring. We are well used to the same thing in other shapes, and nearer home. There are the old familiar stories of feudal devotion of clansmen for their chief: nay, only a few weeks ago more than one loyal subject offered his own life, if by any miracle of surgery it might be made effective to save the dying Emperor of Germany. There is the absolute self-surrender of the Nihilists of our day for a cause that seems to us not holy at all, but very atrocious — save for this one quality, of in-

spiring such devotion. There was the humble heroism of that negro boatman in the war, who said, very simply, "Somebody has got to die, and it may as well be me," and so cast off the boat under a storm of shot that instantly struck him down. Every year, it is likely, there are scores of firemen, who take their lives in their hand, knowingly, to rescue those helpless in the flames; of railway engineers, who go open-eyed into the jaws of death, hoping by their own risk to save the train; of pilots and ship-captains, who will not quit the post of danger while one life may possibly be saved. A case happened the other day which shows exactly what all this means, which we probably all saw in the papers at the time, and most of us have forgotten since, in the crowd of newspaper horrors: an apothecary's clerk, having to unpack a carboy of nitric acid, found that by some defect in the glass or the packing the acid had escaped; and, in doing what he could to save others from the deadly fumes, he inhaled them himself and died that night, giving his body a living sacrifice, which was his reasonable service, doubtless — as an apothecary's clerk. In short, Saint Paul appears to be arguing with a far lower temper of mind than what we all know by examples so familiar, which we may fairly enough call the fruit of that Christian training the world has lived under for these eighteen and a half centuries since Jesus lived and died.

I need not, then, go on with Saint Paul's argument, to show how that voluntary sacrifice of

Jesus bridged over (so to speak) the unfathomable gulf between man and God, and served somehow as a "reconciliation" and "propitiation" for us; so that, however guilty in his own esteem, one might take heart from that high example, and approach the Eternal Judge without abject terror and with some good hope. We sometimes, indeed, hear it said by the rationalism of our day that it was by his example, not by his sacrifice, that Jesus saved the world from its burden of despair and guilt. But, if we look at the evidence of any of those earlier centuries when the struggle was most visibly going on, we shall find that the record of his actual life was almost wholly lost sight of: such a thing as to find a human example in him is (so far as I remember) quite unknown; while the one point continually put before the believer's conscience is the wonder of that great sacrifice, — not at all in its modern "vicarious" sense, but in its purely moral quality, of willingly laying aside the greatest splendour and power, to assume the lowest service and to die a slave's death upon the cross. In this sense, as those records will show, that sacrifice made the central thought and power of the first Christian ages. And, that we may rate this great moral fact at its just value, we should try to understand, if we can, the temper of mind to which Paul speaks.

It seems probable that the ancient conviction of the value and efficiency of sacrifice, as a means of placating the Deity, may have had to do with what we call the Oriental feeling of a sovereign's abso-

lute right to dispose of his subjects' lives. This Oriental feeling I will illustrate by two anecdotes out of Herodotus. When Xerxes was setting out on his expedition into Greece, a certain prince, who had shown the monarch magnificent hospitality, begged as a special favour that the youngest of his six sons might be allowed to stay at home to comfort his old age; upon which the king ordered the heads of all six to be struck off and set on stakes on the two sides of the way by which the host was to march, as a warning that no man might with impunity speak of right or favour where the Sovereign was concerned. Again, as he returned to Asia from that disastrous expedition in a single crowded ship, which laboured in a storm, and the captain said it was impossible that so many should be saved, Xerxes appealed to his lords and nobles on board to devote themselves for their king, —which (forgetful or unmindful of that insolent act of cruelty) they instantly did, paying him reverence, and plunging into the wild sea; then, landing safe, he first rewarded the captain's skill with a golden crown, but directly after ordered him to be beheaded, as having caused the death of so many Persian nobles.

These stories show us that Asiatic notion of absolute sovereignty, which in all its essentials is held there to-day. By a recent report the Shah of Persia, who is the successor to the throne of Xerxes, has only begun this very year to show a sense that the sovereign may have duties as well as rights. We have to do however. not with that,

but with the religious idea of sacrifice it led to. And here let us look at a few examples.

The patriarch Abraham had it borne in on him (as we should say to-day) that to insure the favour of his deity he must kill his own son and burn his body on a hilltop on a heap of stones, — the regular way of sacrifice; and he created a new era of religious sentiment by coming through a deeper insight to see it in a different light, and daring to set a humaner example. Thus the sacrifice of Isaac — as it is sometimes very improperly called — is in our modern critical view a legend or myth, telling in a way partly fictitious how that step was made from the dismal superstition of human sacrifice in its most pitiful form, the offering of the oldest child upon the altar. But, though the form was left behind, the idea has remained. Fathers and mothers, during our civil war, offered up their sons "on the altar of their country" with a feeling as distinctly, solemnly, tenderly sacrificial as that we ascribe to "the father of the faithful." In a more consciously literal sense we find the old thought colouring the entire argument of "Romans" and "Hebrews" where they speak of the death of Jesus. Down even to this day, the vocabulary of "revival melodies" reeks with the thought of blood, — the blood of human sacrifice.

We have little occasion, at the present stage of liberal exegesis, to discuss the theological idea — which is little more at this day than the ghost of an idea — of vicarious sacrifice in its stricter sense. But there is also a human idea, a point of human

character and experience, represented in the phrase "sacrifice and reconciliation," or "reconciliation by sacrifice," which we may briefly reflect upon to our advantage.

I will begin by copying an illustration from Mr. Ruskin. Now Mr. Ruskin is apt to take a view of things which seems to most of us wildly ideal and unpractical. But his view is at the same time in itself a very lofty one, while his language in setting it forth is often both superbly eloquent and austerely noble. In fact, if we wish to see what the Gospel code of morals really is, and how it applies to common things, we might look far before we found a teacher to whom we could go so well. Here is his illustration of what we mean by sacrifice: —

> Five great intellectual professions, relating to daily necessities of life, have hitherto existed, and these exist necessarily in every civilized nation: the Soldier's profession is to defend it; the Pastor's, to teach it; the Physician's, to keep it in health; the Lawyer's, to enforce justice in it; the Merchant's, to provide for it.
>
> And the duty of all these men is, on due occasion, to die for it. On due occasion: that is, the Soldier, rather than leave his post in battle; the Physician, rather than leave his post in plague; the Pastor, rather than teach falsehood; the Lawyer, rather than countenance injustice; the Merchant, — what is his due occasion of death? It is the main question for the merchant, as for all of us. For, truly, the man who does not know when to die, does not know how to live.

Passing over what is here said of the merchant's double function, as a dealer in commodities and

as an employer of other men, and the way the rule of integrity is exhibited in each, we come to what follows: —

> Supposing the captain of a frigate saw it right, or were by any chance obliged, to place his own son in the position of a common sailor; — as he would then treat his son, he is bound always to treat every one of the men under him. So, also, supposing the master of a manufactory saw it right, or were by any chance obliged, to place his own son in the position of an ordinary workman; — as he would then treat his son, he is bound always to treat every one of his men. This is the only effective, true, or practical rule which can be given on this point of political economy.
>
> And as the captain of a ship is bound to be the last man to leave his ship in case of wreck, and to share his last crust with the sailors in case of famine, so the manufacturer, in any commercial crisis or distress, is bound to take the suffering of it with his men, and even to take more of it for himself than he allows his men to feel; as a father would, in a famine, shipwreck, or battle, sacrifice himself for his son.

Here we are arrested by these words: *sacrifice himself for his son*, — which is here spoken of as a thing of course, and which we feel to be a thing of course. But what a long way we have advanced from the idea of Abraham's time, when it was thought a natural and right thing for a father to *sacrifice his son for himself!* Even as far down as Micah, fifteen hundred years later (to trust the common reckoning), it is spoken of as quite a possible thing that a man should give "the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul," — that is, kill

his own child for a scruple of conscience or an act of worship; and against it the prophet urges that all the Lord requires of us is "to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with our God."

But at any rate we see this: that the idea and the need of sacrifice are not outgrown in modern life. So far from that, it is the element of sacrifice that more than anything else makes a man's life moral, — something better than that of a well-trained animal. Even the simplest, easiest, commonest, pleasantest duty, *done as duty*, has that element in it. More than any other, it is the mark of a true nature, that when the moment comes to make the sacrifice, it is made (as Paul says) *promptly*, cheerfully, and without hesitation, — just as a brave soldier does not hesitate, when the order is given to advance; just as a true father or mother does not hesitate, when personal comfort or indulgence must be given up for the benefit of a sick child. The virtue of the act consists in renouncing something: that is Goethe's own hint of the pivot of a manly discipline. Even those very relations of human life which are most absolutely founded in mutual love and trust — the relation of husband and wife, of brother and sister, of parent and child — are not at all fulfilled by indulging the sentiment so natural and sweet, but are precisely those which most constantly demand the sacrifice of present feeling or interest or comfort to instant duty. One is constantly struck, in diaries, letters, or other records of the Puritans, with the austerity of the sense of duty on one side, con-

trasted with the extreme tenderness of family affection on the other. Nay, without something of that austere savour, those relations can no more be kept true and sweet than food without salt. We do not see the salt; we do not taste it, *as such;* but we know by the wholesome flavour that it is there, in every particle of the food. Much more, "every sacrifice is seasoned with salt." Mere sympathy and affection, the placid, kindly flow of family love without break, jar, or difference — such as we like to dream of, such as we find in the "goody-goody" class of sentimental stories — is in most cases, probably in all cases, mere illusion but for that saving salt. And the disappointments of domestic life, which make the great staple of modern introspective novels, come thickest, fastest, and worst where — as in the lawless "Bohemia" of continental fiction — love is regarded as a sentiment to be indulged, not as a quality to be ripened under training, a quality that requires daily sacrifice not only *for*, but *to* the object it lays hold on. The lamp that shines clearest and steadiest upon our daily walk is what Ruskin has so well called "the Lamp of Sacrifice."

But I wish to keep as close as I can to the religious motive and thought we started with. And so I come to consider what we may call the response in the soul, or the correlative in the religious life, of the idea of sacrifice: that is, the idea of reconciliation or redemption.

Reconciliation, religiously speaking, implies two parties to be reconciled, and two things to be

done. It implies on our part what is called ransom, or propitiation, which is the price offered; and on the part of the Divine Law what is called pardon, or acceptance, which is the reward obtained. In the symbolic language of the New Testament, Christ is said to pay the ransom for us with his blood, and to purchase by it the Divine pardon, which is then freely given to the believer. This we hold to be the language of pure symbol, not of literal fact; yet it stands for a very real fact in the life of the soul, and it is this fact, not any theorizing or dogmatizing about it, which we are trying to understand. Doctrine or symbol apart, then, what does that language mean?

That the sacrifice made by Christ in his acceptance of the doom of death was in any literal way the purchase of our redemption, turns upon a notion of the sacrificial act which is so far away from our present notions that we can hardly see how it exists at all, or realize that it ever did exist. We cannot possibly think seriously, for example, of such a thing as seeking to buy any favour or advantage to ourselves by cutting the throat of an innocent animal, a lamb or a kid; still less by knocking down a bull and bleeding him to death. But this was so familiar and must have seemed so reasonable once, that in "Hebrews" it is freely used to impress upon Christian disciples the moral value and religious meaning of a martyr death, like that of Jesus. With us it is just the other way. As a religious image, "the lamb that was

slain" does not impress us at all, till we think of the sinlessness and patience of the victim it represents. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth:" that is the prophet's picture of the just man brought to the bar of his persecutors, and the symbol abides in the world's "heart of heart." So the girl princess standing at the altar in Aulis, her scarlet robe (in the vivid poetic diction of Æschylus) picturing the blood about to gush at the stroke of the high-priest's hand, made in her virgin innocence so pitiful a picture to the fancy of the Greek that later fancy, out of pure compassion to that pleading image, held that she was caught from the sacrificial knife by the same offended deity that had demanded the offering, and was made, herself, a priestess at that deity's altar. It is the human aspect of the tragedy that comes home to us. We are quick to feel the moral quality, where we find only horror and disgust in the ritual act. That a brave man should meet death bravely when it comes in the line of duty; that a pious man should meet it piously, with trust and resignation; that a patient man should endure patiently the agony of it when it comes in an agonizing form, — all this seems to us very natural and simple: very noble, also, as we see it on its purely human side. It is the highest form we know, of that great tragedy of human life, whose office (according to the old saying) is to purify the soul by those two profound emotions, awe and pity, — as we have seen of late years in three marked examples, each of which

enchained for months the sympathy of the civilized world.*

And of sacrifice in this purely human sense the noblest form is self-sacrifice for an object wholly free from all taint of self-seeking: of which the death of Jesus is the accepted type. He is often said to lay down his life for us; and once (John x. 18) he is said to do it of his own free choice. Now many martyrs have died of their own free choice; and many a Hindoo widow has burned herself on her husband's funeral pile of her own free choice. But to our thought that free choice hurts the moral value of the act, giving it something of the reproach of suicide. And, if we look to the circumstances in the case of Jesus, we see that it was not like that. He surrendered himself — full of abounding life as he was — to the certainty of death with great agony and conflict. This we see in the Garden of Gethsemane, and hear it in the bitter cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" But, that crisis once past, he met the destiny before him with absolute patience and trust. It was like a soldier's fidelity, who will not turn back when wounds and death are in the way; and so he is called "the captain of our salvation." It was like the obedience of a child, which takes its mother's hand and submits without shrinking to the painful necessary operation of a cruel surgery; and so he is called God's "well-beloved Son." The merit is not in the pang

* The Emperor Frederick, and the Presidents Garfield and Grant.

of suffering, but in the willing submission to a doom that is seen to be inevitable.

And this willing submission appears — by some law that lies very deep in our spiritual nature — to be the *essential* condition of that state of mind implied in the words "pardon" and "reconciliation." Here, perhaps, it is just as well not to try to analyze the fact by any psychological process, but simply to look at it and see if we can what it means. We will take, then, a chapter of simple common experience, and listen to plain first-hand testimony about it. And the testimony I shall select is couched not in the language of every-day life, which might deceive us by its apparent shallowness, or else take a colouring too emotional for our present use; but it shall be a passage which I copy from the record of a pious woman of five hundred years ago, in which the antique phrase may perhaps catch the eye, and serve to put the experience she speaks of in clearer relief: —

It is God's will that we have three things in seeking of his gift. The first is that we seek wilfully and busily, without sloth, as it may be with his grace, gladly and merrily, without unreasonable heaviness and vain sorrow. The second, that we abide him steadfastly for his love, without grudging and striving against him, unto life's end — for it shall last but a while. The third is that we trust in him mightily, of full and true faith; for it is his will that we know, that he shall appear suddenly and blessedfully [blissfully] to all his lovers.

And this is a sovereign friendship of our courteous Lord, that he keepeth us so tenderly whiles we be in sin; and

furthermore he toucheth us full privily, and sheweth us our sin by the sweet light of mercy and grace. But when we see our self so foul, then we ween that God were angry with us for our sins. Then we be stirred of the Holy Ghost by contrition into prayer and desire, amending of our self with all our might to slack the wrath of God, unto the time we find a rest in soul, and softness in conscience. And then hope we that God hath forgiven us our sin; and it is true. And then sheweth our courteous Lord himself to the soul merrily, and of full glad cheer, with friendfully welcoming, as if it had been in pain and in prison, saying thus: *My dear darling! I am glad thou art come to me in all thy woe. I have ever been with thee; and now seest thou me loving, and we be oned in bliss.*

If we had been trying to describe some such experience as that, we should have dropped all this quaint dialect, and this charming old imagery — as if we were trying, very humbly, to do service to some very powerful and kind-hearted nobleman, who was too great a gentleman not to be polite to the very humblest of his servants. We should have spoken, perhaps, of some duty that had seemed to us very hard, till we took hold manfully, and were all the happier for having done it. We should have spoken, perhaps, of some fault or misdeed that had made us very much ashamed, and of an effort to get the better of it — which very effort had given us great joy. We should have told, perhaps, of some sorrow or pain, sickness or loss, in which we had found real peace by throwing ourselves (so to speak) upon the bosom of the Eternal, much as a spent seaman trusts

himself to the buoyancy of the wave, and so receiving in a moment that which religionists speak of as the salvation that comes by faith. If we are really at once humble of heart and clear in understanding, we shall not, I think, speak of it as if the Lord of all things were really thinking about us and pleading so with us. That is the language of the heart, not always to be translated into the dialect of the understanding. We set it down as imagery and symbol, in which all of us have at times to speak of religious things. The one main fact which we seem to have a glimpse of is this: that there is a deep sense of unworthiness, weakness, ignorance, shame; and that the way of the meanest duty has been the way of deliverance from that gloom into a great light and joy.

That duty was our act of sacrifice. That joy was the joy of our pardon and reconciliation. Somehow — we do not well know why — a certain sense of alienation, of disobedience, of unworthiness, is likely to come first, and to come with a very keen and deep sense of contrition, as the condition of the peace and joy that follow. This, we may perhaps say, is our way of sharing that sentiment which claims no merits and no rights in presence of one's Sovereign. We are but unprofitable servants; we have done only that which it was our duty to do. At least, the humility which that sentiment implies is the condition of the reward that follows. Possibly, we may not have felt it for ourselves. Perhaps we shall think we have not, even if we have. But, if we think of it

again, — longer, deeper, and alone, — we may find, after all, that we are not quite strangers to such experience. We, too, have had something like a sense of alienation, contrition, unworthiness, unrest. We, too, by that way have found again harmony and peace. The experience came and went. It is one of the subtlest, deepest, obscurest, in our religious psychology. But it is there. And it may stand as our key, our hint, our help, in understanding that fact which has been of such enormous moment in the spiritual evolution of humanity, and which we call the Law of Sacrifice.

VII.

A RELIGION OF FEAR.

"The beginning of wisdom is Fear of the Eternal."

I FEAR God, says Sir Thomas Browne, *but I am not afraid of him.* His words are: "I thank God, and with joy I mention it, I was never afraid of hell, nor never grew pale at the description of that place. . . . That terrible term hath never detained me from sin, nor do I owe any good action to the name thereof. I fear God, yet am not afraid of him." (*Religio Medici,* Part I.)

These are brave words to have been written, as they were, amidst the angry controversies of two hundred and forty years ago. And that, it seems to me, is exactly the attitude of a sound and manly mind toward the highest, deepest, greatest Power that our minds can conceive. The feeling has nothing to do, necessarily, with the distinctness with which we can think of the Almighty as a sovereign Judge, exercising judgment in his own person. That turns on an act of the imagination, or else on a point of philosophical speculation, which, the more we think of it, seems the more impossible to grasp. Simonides, as Cicero tells us, was once asked by Hiero of Syracuse — the man of high genius by the crafty statesman — to

give his opinion about the Divine Nature. He asked a day to consider of it; then two days, then four, and so on, still doubling the time; and at last gave it up as wholly beyond the power of the mind to fathom. That is, in brief, the story of all human speculation about the nature and attributes of Infinite Force. It is not thought, but emotion, with which the human mind can contemplate the attributes of Deity. That emotion, at its highest, is a serene and unfaltering trust in infinite Goodness. But, at its deepest, it must always be a profound awe, a religious fear. To think of the lightning flash and the thunder-storm, the cataract, the earthquake, and the tornado; to think of the appalling speed with which this vast globe of earth is hurled along in its orbit, — twenty miles in a second, more than a hundred times as fast as the ball from a cannon; to think of the mere change of seasons, and that shifting wave of life that follows the sun's declination, now north, now south, with the amazing phenomena borne along upon it, — six months' flow and six months' ebb; to think of the wonder and terror, the passion and storm, that sweep across the narrow track of our own life on this terrestrial ball; and then, having thought of these, to take one glance, awestruck, at the spangled depths of the sky, above us and around; to remember that, in all this universe of wonder, glory, and dread, we have seen, as it were, but the fringes of the garment in which the Almighty wraps himself from our view, because (as the ancients thought) no mortal could behold

that unutterable splendour and live, — to think of all this, I say, it does not appear as if "the fear of the Lord" were likely ever to cease, as the real basis of the emotion that lifts us toward the Eternal. Take what shape it may, enlightened and lifted up as you will above the old slavish terror, it remains "the beginning of wisdom" to us all.

The scientific habit of the present day is to look back a good way to the origin of our emotions; to trace the development of them through many stages of animal life; and, for the sake of understanding better our morals and religion, to take our lessons from the naturalist.

I was travelling once with a very intelligent geologist, a man familiar with the philosophy of evolution; and he remarked upon this fact — that the ordinary condition of almost every animal, in a state of nature, is what he called a *condition of flight.* When it is not seeking its own food, — that is, fighting outright starvation, — it is generally straining its faculties to escape some one of the powerful, fleet, cunning enemies that seek it for their prey. The instant it falters in its powers of flight, it is struck down. This is what naturalists call the "struggle for existence." Sometimes we speak of it as the cruelty of Nature. And, in fact, it makes the ground of the argument by which some recent philosophers dispute a benevolent purpose in creation. But, if we only think of it a moment, it is rather the mercy and tenderness of Nature. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father." That is Nature's way — I

venture to say the only way we can possibly conceive, if animal life as we understand it is to exist at all — of removing the lame, the bruised, the sickly, the old, from the crowded ranks of life, and so escaping the accumulation of helpless misery, and keeping up the fresh vigour of animal existence. In this range of being the race is to the swift and the battle to the strong. Any hesitation in the Lord of Nature, any weak compassion here, would multiply many times over the misery it seemed to check. The inexorable, the inevitable, the most merciful law is the universal struggle for existence and survival of the fittest.

So far the naturalist. But the thing to be taken note of by the religious moralist is this: that the higher faculties of the creature — its strength, its skill, its swiftness — owe their very creation to this race for life, which makes its existence one long "condition of flight." The miraculous darting speed of a fish in the water, the strange writhing of a snake in the grass, the easy poise and amazing convolutions of a swallow on the wing, the slender grace and swiftness of a deer or greyhound, the almost human sagacity of the elephant, — all these, if we stop to think of it, are not (in our modern view) gifts outright made by the Creator to his creatures. They are faculties slowly evolved in that long process, through countless generations. And of them all the strongest motive, or impelling force, is that haunting fear which makes the creature's life so largely a condition of flight.

Take away that fear, and the incessant training

of every higher faculty which it compels, and you have — what? Fishes, such as swim lazily round in a glass tank; wild beasts, miserable, diseased, and discontent, as you see them in a menagerie; birds as you find them petted and pining in cages; pampered dogs, with all the faults of spoilt children, and even less chance to mend, for lack of any deep spiritual ground of moral life in them. In short, without that wholesome element of terror, without that stimulating condition of flight, all the free, wild, picturesque life, all that keen, healthy faculty of enjoyment in the animal creation perishes; and, out of mere inanition and atrophy of its higher powers, it begins inevitably to lapse back to the condition of those dull, stupid, lumpish creatures, that wallowed in the slime ages before man was born.

Now it is just as true of a man as it is of any other creature, that his higher faculties always need the stimulus of a wholesome fear. To begin with, man's life is a battle with the elements. His natural enemies are storm, hunger, accident, ague, fever, frost. In such rude habitation as he can find or frame, he is in a state of siege from wild animals stronger, swifter, and fiercer than he, — the bear of the wood, the tiger of the jungle, the wolf of the plain, the snake in the grass, the dragon of the swamp, the vulture of the sky. Look back on the beginnings of human life on earth; and instead of the fair garden of Eden innocence as Milton pictures it, watered and bounded by its four pleasant rivers, and with beasts that neither raven,

rage, nor howl, — a manifest allegory of the moral life of man, a mere late dream of Oriental poetry, — you find a condition so squalid, so pitiful, so gross, so beset with violences and fears, that only by a strong effort of imagination can we think of it as the state out of which our civilization, order, and intelligence have actually grown.

It may be that the mental endowment of the earliest men, at least of the superior race from which we claim to be descended, was something higher than would seem on the surface. It is hard to imagine, otherwise, how that wretched life, beset by so many enemies, could have continued at all, to serve as the basis of the immense advance that has been effected since. But the particular thing to be observed about it is this: that every step of that advance was made under the direct pressure and goad of some form of fear, — at least until pure intellect could get on its feet, and unfold itself independently, as in abstract learning and pure science and fine art, by its own laws or to serve its own delights.

Or take our condition now, with such vast accumulations of wealth, power, and skill as we have inherited from the past. Are we yet delivered from the pressure of the motive of a similar fear? I think not. What is our best engineering skill, but equipment for our conflict with the terrors of storm and flood and ocean wave? What is all our medical science, but a life-battle with pain and pestilence and inborn dread of death? Sometimes the great dread will be sprung upon us all at

once as it was thirty years ago) of losing at one stroke that unspeakable treasure and gain which we sum up in the ideal unity of the State; and suddenly we come to the consciousness of a new range of faculties and a new source of strength, — very much (to compare a great thing with a small) like what a young eagle must feel when a rattle-snake frightens him from his perch, and he trusts for the first time the power of his own wings in flight.

But in quieter times, what is it we are honestly, healthily, usefully afraid of? The poor, of more galling poverty. The poorest, of outright starvation. The richer, of losing what they have. The man in business, of loss or bankruptcy. Those of somewhat higher but insecure position, of the loss of caste, security, comfort, social standing. The energy and hope that make our limbs to walk and our wings to fly are set off over against that background; their bright is relieved against the shadow of that besetting fear.

I put all this on a very low level. It is best to start so. And I say that this meaner fear is necessary to the developing and sustaining of our higher faculties, — if not the highest, at least our working, executive faculties. The mere shelter, for a single generation, from what we call "the healthy stimulus of prospective want" generally, as we see, incapacitates a rich man's children, at any rate his grandchildren, from having skill or self-command or foresight enough so much as to keep the wealth he leaves them. The faculty, it

would seem, can only grow, can only be maintained, like forests on a hillside, by the actual beating of rainstorms and wrestling with the stress of wind.

There is no time to follow out these forms of natural dread, nor is there need. We only wish to see how that motive of fear plays its part in the unfolding of the higher life. For "the terror of the Lord," in the old theological sense, has faded almost wholly away from the cultivated mind of our generation. That we cannot help. It is no fault of ours that it has come to be so; it is no use our trying to revive it. But it is a matter of very great consequence what emotion, or what class of emotions, may come to occupy its place. A blank defiance of the moral laws of the universe — what goes in life by the name of practical atheism, or in politics by the name of anarchism — is very much worse, in its effect on character and human welfare, than the fear which it derides as superstitious. And we are not much better off, when we find ourselves on the level of those mean and sordid fears which common life is apt to generate.

The old religious terror has left to our inheriting a name which has not yet lost all its appalling significance. Let us think, one minute, of that name.

"Hell [says Carlyle] generally signifies the Infinite Terror, the thing a man is infinitely afraid of, and shudders, and shrinks from, struggling with his whole soul to escape from it. There is a hell therefore [he goes on to say] which accompanies a man in all stages of his history and

religious or other development; but the hells of men and peoples differ notably. With Christians, it is the infinite terror of being found guilty before the just Judge. With old Romans it was the terror not of Pluto, for whom probably they cared little; but of doing unworthily, doing unvirtuously, which was their word for unmanfully. And now, what is it [he asks], if you pierce through his cants, his oft-repeated hearsays, what he calls his worships, and so forth, — what is it that the modern English soul does in truth dread infinitely, and contemplate with entire despair? What is his hell — after all those reputable oft-repeated hearsays, — what is it? With hesitation, with astonishment, I pronounce it to be the terror of not succeeding; of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world, — chiefly, of not making money. Is not that [he asks] a somewhat singular hell?"

"Better than none," we might reply. Better than none. It is very important indeed that there should be some fear, some terror at something, to push men on, to shore them up, so that they shall not lapse back into mere helpless indolence, indigence, idiotism, or despair. We think it a great matter when a young man, after his wild, idle, or sentimental years, distinctly conceives such an aim in life as to make a fortune, to distinguish himself, to achieve an honest independence, spurred on by the healthy stimulus of prospective want. We think it a great matter when a reckless spendthrift or drunkard distinctly conceives a motive even so low as a mere selfish prudence, — dread of beggary, perhaps, or of delirium tremens, — still more, if he conceives a motive so high as a

generous ambition, that can lift him out of the slough and the ruts of a wasted life, and make him in some way a help to other men, at least to his own wife and children, and no longer a burden and drag upon them. By all means let us do justice to any motive that will keep men from wallowing in the slime of mere sensuality, or sliding into sheer recklessness and despair. After all, this modern hell, at which Carlyle flings his sharp sarcasm, is not so much worse than some of the ancient ones.

But there is a fear, and there is a hope, that belongs to a higher level of life than that.

I was asked one day — it was by an elderly Orthodox Quaker: What is the difference between your own and other views as to the doctrine of hell and future punishment? I answered that I thought the difference was like this. The Orthodox doctrine, as I understand it, is as if a magistrate should sentence a criminal to imprisonment — I might have added, with torture — it may be for a term of years or it may be to hopeless imprisonment for life: future punishment would be like the latter. The Universalist doctrine, as I understand it, — at least, as it was taught once, — is as if a criminal should be sentenced for a limited term, five, or ten, or twenty years, with the certainty that he will be released at the end of the term, and the chance that by repentance and good behaviour he may have the time of it considerably shortened. The opinion we hold is simply and only this: that sin — that is, any evil thing

willingly harboured in the soul, is like a poison in the blood, which brings fever and suffering *because it is a poison, and not as a punishment for being poisoned;* and there is no such thing as pardon except getting out the poison, and no such thing as salvation except restoring the health. This is the only doctrine about it which I profess, or have any pretension to understand. And in this view of it, it does not make the slightest difference, as to the motive we appeal to, whether life is longer or shorter — whether it ends on earth or continues to all eternity: our business is to get rid of the poison. And that poison, or the torment of it, is what we mean by hell.

Now this poison — the poison of vileness and degradation of character, the poison of corruption and disorder in the body politic — is what I am very much afraid of. It is that particular "terror of the Lord" which, as I hold, can have a very real meaning to us, here and now. So far from fading out as men grow more thoughtful, more intelligent, more moral, it appears to me that this real and wholesome fear must become more living, powerful, and keen. I have not the least hesitation in saying that there is no other sense whatever in which we have anything left of what may be called the terror of the Lord, or of any of the laws of his government, as they bear on the destiny of our soul. None — whatever. We can accept, if you please, all the imagery and symbolism that have depicted that terror to other minds and other times, — the Eternal Judge, the sheep and goats,

the lake of fire, the torments of devils. Let us try to understand what we can, not dispute upon what we can never know anything about. Look deep enough, look far enough: none of those images are too vivid and intense to tell the simple fact. But that fact is not — what seems horrible blasphemy to say — that torments are wreaked outright for vengeance upon a naked, shivering, helpless soul. It is that the soul is sick, and wants healing; the soul is hungry, and needs to be fed; the soul is blind, and wants restoring of its sight; the soul is fevered with the poison in its veins, which needs to be eradicated; the soul is well nigh dead, and must be brought to life again.

This hospital imagery does well enough to hint the terror. But the reality of it is found, when we have seen for ourselves, as Shakespeare saw, the baffled thirst of selfish ambition; the insatiable jealousy and envy; the dull stupidity; the sharp malignity; the impotent lust; the gains that have no pleasure in them; the remorse of wasted opportunity; the craving of passion that can never be content. When we have seen these things, we have seen a living soul in hell. The fires of that hell smoulder underneath many a smooth surface, and behind many a polished mask. That is the hell for us to fear! "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Again I say: Be not afraid of them which kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear

Him" — not as we must understand it now, not the good God, but the spirit of evil, the enemy of God — which after he hath killed, — when courage is dead, when hope is dead, when all is gone that made life worth the living, — hath power to cast into the hell of black despair! Yea, I say unto you, fear Him!

VIII.

A RELIGION OF TRUST.

"They also serve, who only stand and wait."

THE discipline of life sometimes puzzles our understanding, quite as much as it baffles our will. For the time it makes us not stronger, but weaker; not confident, but fearful: it does not lift us up, but humbles us under an overwhelming sense of failure and disappointment. We stood ready, but have to wait. We try, but break down helplessly. We form plans and hopes — only to be thwarted and renounced. We set our heart upon some task, which seems the one thing most needing to be done — only to find it slipping from our hands. We launch our little bark bravely; but it is cast all adrift by some stroke of the impenetrable, mysterious, inexorable Power, that works its sovereign will with us.

Now the lesson of practical duty is, commonly, very plain and simple; and its practice is not, commonly, very difficult. It is, to serve the daily service of our life in the station where we are; to take its situations as they come, for our opportunity; or, at some critical moment, to act, to dare, to say the right word, to do the right thing, and so win the post where we can do some higher and harder thing that may be claimed of

us afterwards. But there is another lesson, deeper and not so plain. It is the lesson of perfect resignation and trust, when the time comes to wait; to suffer; to be defeated, misunderstood, or laid by as useless; to linger in sickness or mortal pain; to see the hopes of life crushed, its activities baffled, and its lines of service cut off.

As life is laid out in its main courses for most of us, the time comes for both, and each comes naturally in its place. The discipline of life is a very different thing for a strong man in the flower of his years, and for the same man crippled by accident, smitten by disease, or bowed with the weight of age. The easier lesson is what we are to learn first, — to spend our strength in willing obedience, serving God's law and man's need with our best fidelity. As Milton, in the flush of his young hope, said at twenty-three: —

> "Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure even
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Towards which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven:
> All is, if I have grace to use it so,
> As ever in my great Task-master's eye."

The other, harder lesson comes afterward, — that which he had learned by heart at length, in blindness, old age, loneliness, penury and pain: —

> "God doth not need
> Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
> Bear his mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
> Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
> They also serve, who only stand and wait.

We may have thought of this sometimes, when we have seen it in those we honoured and loved, who have grown old before us, or have fallen sick among us: how tenderly, how thoughtfully, how reverently we have been moved to feel towards them, seeing in their lives how well the first lesson of brave fidelity had been practised; how hardly and painfully that other lesson of patient trust had to be learned at last, through long waiting, pain, decrepitude, and tears! Not lightly — not lightly — but oh how wisely and kindly, when we learn at length to see it as we ought, does the Lord of our life lay on us the burden of his yoke, and comfort us by his rod and staff, and bid us come to Him — to Him — that we may find rest!

As one comes on to middle life, or past it, his thoughts might often take a turn like this: "I have been led all along," he might say, "by a Hand that I did not see, in a path I did not know. I seem to see, now, that it has been very little any choice of mine what post I should stand in, what work I should do, the sort of success I should find, or the sort of trial I should bear. I seem to have accepted these things, not chosen them. I should not have chosen so. I should have marked out beforehand something very different. But I see that it is better for me now, than if I could have had my own way. And for what of it is left I will trust, as I might have trusted for what is past already."

So he might say to himself — and wisely. None of us can take the full measure of his powers be-

forehand. None of us can guess what successes, losses, crosses, and gains will come to him; what accidents he must encounter; how his own will must clash with the wills of other men. All these, which make so sharply marked and so large a figure in the pattern of life as we look back on it, are out of sight; they are not to be seen, they are not to be guessed at, when we try to anticipate what that pattern will be. Do our very best to forecast and judge and determine, there is the wide margin, which is quite beyond our eye to see or our power to control. We may hoist the sail, and govern the helm, and study the laws of the elements that bear us on. But, when we are once afloat, it is the infinite deep below and the infinite space around. The two oceans, of wave and wind, hold us between them in an embrace we cannot quit; and our surrender to them, in the last resort, is as absolute, helpless, and complete, as that of the child, who is hushed by their rocking, or frightened by their roar and swell!

It is good for us, now and then, to fall back on this thought of our direct, personal relation to the Infinite Power that sustains our life. If any of us were asked, "What is the most important thing you can imagine or desire, for the well-being of the one person you hold dearest — the child of your love, the cherished companion of your life?" — I think he could not fail to answer, in substance, this: *To be on right terms with that Infinite Power.* This one answer we may put in a variety of ways. It might mean health, success in life, a

congenial occupation, an honourable position, happiness in general. But take it only on its religious side. Some will put it doctrinally, and say it is the assurance of forgiveness, acceptance, salvation, on the terms God has been pleased to reveal in his holy Word; and they are right. Some will say, philosophically, that it is a conscious harmony with the all-enfolding Spirit, and the laws of universal Life, as we come to know them; and they are right. Some will call it, morally, simple fidelity to Truth and Duty, as it comes clear to the heart and conscience; and surely they are right. But all mean, at bottom, the same thing which may be still better said religiously, — that is, practically, in the simplest, plainest way. It is, the surrender and trust of the soul, childlike, to a Power which we are sure has a right to govern, and will not command for nought, — the surrender of perfect obedience, or else the surrender of perfect trust.

Now I do not know whether your mind, whether my mind, whether any man's mind, is able to reconcile (as we call it) our philosophy and our faith, — the facts of our life with what we believe, or have been taught, of the universal wisdom and the Eternal love. I should rather think not. But this I know: that the space between them *is bridged over*, in the experience of a right-minded and true-hearted man. When he comes to the point where he must meet God's angel (as it were) face to face, in a narrow way, where neither can turn out, he must fling his theories away, and submit himself just like a little child.

That is the way in which the Lord of our life chooses to receive us. I do not say that he picks out a subject here and there to exercise in this way, experimenting (as it were) with various and doubtful result upon the human heart and destiny. But only this: that, in the broad conditions of human life as we find them established here and now, there are certain great constant facts — among them joy, love, hope; and among them also disappointment, grief, care, and pain — which occur so often, and on so large a scale, that we cannot fail to trace in them some special service in the moral discipline of the soul.

To speak here only of a single one. Have we ever felt that shrinking and awe which comes upon the heart, when it is upon the threshold of untried duties, or under the shadow of an impending sorrow? Then let us try to see what was in part the Divine signification of it to us. It was, to put our mind in a position that makes such words as those before quoted natural and true words to us. They profess to tell us nothing of the utterly inscrutable designs of God. They only speak the mood in which the mind accepts them. They tell the faith, without which the heart would break, or consume itself in its lonely agony.

That faith may be an intelligent faith, when we have learned more of Him in whom we have believed; when we know that "He is able to keep that which we have committed to him," for the day when such secrets will be revealed. But often, again, it will be a *blind* faith: blind, as

when my poor little bandaged and suffering child once put her hand in mine, and I led her blindfold through the streets of a strange city. It is absolute, entire, unquestioning: it cannot stay to question: else it is only weakness and doubt. The soul by its own effort and prayer must win it, in the conflict with passion and infirmity, and the struggle against despair.

"They that are sick" need a physician, not just now a physiologist. When the act of surrender has come, when the soul's health is in some degree restored, then it will be time to set about the task of interpretation. Just now, everything is staked on the previous process of reconciliation. And for this we need, as the first condition, a submission as absolute, as complete, as when one with a bruised and broken frame puts himself in the surgeon's hands, and then resigns himself to sleep, that Nature's healing process may go on unhindered.

As for the ills of life we meet, I am the last to counsel any bare, unintelligent submission to them. I say, Bear them like a man if you must; while I also say, Contend against them like a man while you can. Study them, intelligently as you may, to see how you may shield yourself or others from them.

But the time may come — it may come any day to me; I know it has come to some of you — when these are all vain, untimely, and barren words. And, by the laws of the soul's constitution, by the lessons of all human experience, I know that the only wisdom then is trust. Faith is then just

what the Scripture says it is: "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," — the only evidence they can have as yet. It is the very beginning of the higher life in us. It is the first step, implied in all that follows. It is that without which any religion at all, any comfort, any peace, would be impossible.

And finally, what does that faith declare? Simply this, that *the soul is safe at last, in a life whose law is truth and whose end is peace.*

Do I mean by this that God's dealings are always gentle with us? that his yoke is always easy and his burden light? No: it is not by indulgence and ease that He rewards his faithful ones. The reward he promises is to give them a larger measure of fidelity; ability to do more and suffer harder things; more spiritual strength and light. The very triumph of faith is often in the despair and abandonment of all that had made the earthly joy of life.

If in the painful parts of our experience we should ever question how the wisdom or justice or love of God is seen in human life, then let the answer be already familiar to us, and learnt by heart beforehand — that *difficulty and not ease, toil and not rest, suffering and not relief* is the portion he assigns often to those nearest his own heart, because so the deeper law of the spirit of life in them is made manifest. It is a higher and nobler thing to obey a summons to peril and pain and toil, than one which promises ease, security, and delight. These are the blessings we instinctively

crave — for ourselves, perhaps; at any rate for those we love best. But God does not so judge for us. Often, indeed, "he giveth his beloved sleep," which is forgetfulness of care and pain; and he gives it to them all at last. But oftener, again, he giveth hardship, that the soul may ripen its better strength; grief and loss, that it may be driven to throw itself utterly into his arms, and so learn to bear the consecrated cross. "Soldiers!" said a patriot captain to his little company of banished men, "in recompense of the love you bear your country, I offer you hunger, thirst, cold, wounds, and death. Who accepts the terms? let him follow me!" The enthusiastic legion, we are told, followed him to a man. That is the temper, I think, which the Lord of our life likes to see in those whom he summons to his service!

IX.

THE TERM "AGNOSTIC."

"High as heaven : what canst thou do? deeper than hell: what canst thou know?"

THE distinctive thing in the Agnostic position, we have been told, is that it "surrenders the possibility of an *intellectual* solution of the problem of the universe." To me it would appear more correct to say that it fails to find in the human mind, under present conditions, the capacity for an *adequate* solution of that problem. There are solutions in plenty, but all that we are acquainted with turn out, on further acquaintance, to be tentative and provisional. Take the Multiplication Table, for instance, which is as good as any so far as it goes. It is, as Professor Whitney well remarked of it, "rich in facts," announcing one hundred and forty-four distinct, unimpeachable "objective relations," true of every class of objects that can possibly be imagined. The philosopher Pythagoras (if it was he who invented it) is said to have held Number as a key to the entire system of things. But from the multiplication table the distance is not half so far to the *Mécanique Céleste* and the theory of Evolution as from these to the infinite complexity of the universe itself.

Now no problem can be adequately solved by the "method of science" until its data are known, which in this case means all the facts of the universe, — at least, all *genera*, or distinguishable groups of facts; and no one will pretend that these are all known and classified as yet. For one thing, that whole "night-side" of nature, which to the common mind makes by fâr the more important hemisphere of our thought, — and rightly, so long as there is such a thing as death, and a future life is thought of as possible, — cannot be even distantly approached by any scientific method we are acquainted with: except for a special revelation, it remains to us a blank mystery, to be met only by "an act of faith." So that it cannot possibly be meant that the problem of the universe has yet been solved. And when the contention has been narrowed down to this, — when the philosopher asserts that the thing *can* be done, and the man of science replies that he hopes so, but it has not been done yet, — we may fairly say that the line of difference is too fine to be seen by the naked eye.

But a question of much greater interest to us is raised by this discussion: namely, whether a correct and adequate "intellectual solution of the problem of the universe" is essential to sound ethical convictions or the permanency of the religious life. It would be a pity to take up such a position as that just yet, when we must be some centuries distant from the "adequate" solution it demands: the feeling of weariness and impatience,

in things of the Spirit, is quite strong enough already. We have, it is true, abundance of formulas, serviceable for present use; but a formula is not a solution: it needs to be interpreted to the understanding, as much as the facts themselves which it professes to interpret. A very good formula is this of Mr. Abbot's: that we may conceive the universe under a threefold type, — as a Machine, whose law is *use;* as an Organism, whose law is *life;* and as a Person, whose law is *holiness.* Seen under this threefold type, he says, the universe is God. This new Trinity of his may be allowed to have some advantages over the old Christian symbol. But it certainly needs explaining, quite as much as that, and is likely to invite quite as much misunderstanding and dispute. For we know nothing whatever of a "machine," except as constructed by the skill of some fabricator to produce a result external to itself; and nothing of an "organism," except as shaped and modified by some environment, which it reacts upon till its vital force is spent, when it perishes and is absorbed back in that; and nothing of a "person," except as holding moral relations with other persons, and acting freely upon the realm of things in which it lives and moves. So that the critic will be apt to say that our symbol is not a happy one. If we must have a formula for these transcendental matters, we might even prefer that simplest of all, in the words of Scripture, that "God is Breath" (*πνεῦμα ὁ θεός*), which binds us to no predicates at all.

We have, again, in the religious world, those three types of Christian thought, the Catholic, the Calvinist, and the Transcendental. Each has been helpful in its way to the life of piety; each, it may be, fails to satisfy us now. What then? must we pause in our devotions till Science has completed its vast and intricate formula? Surely, it were better to do as the men of Athens, whom Saint Paul beheld in their devotions grouped about the altar of an Unknown God, and commended them for it, as the Revisers have explained. Not (he adds) that God has left himself quite without witness; for, without troubling himself in the least about solving the problem of the universe, a common man can see enough by natural vision, when his eyes are once open, to stir his imagination, his reverence, his gratitude, and his awe, — that is, the whole group of the emotions which make the breath of the religious life.

So far, indeed, from the religious life being staked upon the adequacy of any such intellectual solution, it might be enough to say that all known religions have rested, frankly, on the bosom of the mysterious and unknown, — "mysteries which heaven will not have earth to know;" and that, even where religion allies itself by preference with the scientific rather than the speculative habit of thought, it still appeals not so much to science as to the mystery that lies beyond the horizon of science. The term "Agnostic," in short, has come to be frankly accepted to define a certain form of religious mysticism as well as of irreligious scep-

ticism; and it seems worth while to consider it also in this new meaning.

There are evidently three distinct sources of man's deepest religious conviction or belief, and not one merely, — the purely speculative, the logical or scientific, and that which we may call the way of experience. There are those whom each one of the three fails to satisfy; while either one, if accepted in good faith, seems to him who accepts it to be valid and sufficient, perhaps the only valid and sufficient foundation of the religious life. And, speaking strictly, the term "Agnostic" ought to apply, *religiously*, only to one who by some process of reason finds them all alike unsatisfying and unreal. To such a one all the phenomena of the religious life, whether in soul-experience or in great tides of passion that alter the course of human history, must seem alike abnormal, mere unintelligible aberrations from the orbit of sanity and reason; while, in the present view, religion might apparently be as genuine and vital a thing to the imagination, emotion, and conscience, even if speculation and logic were to fail utterly. In fact (to judge from our own experience), some such view as this ought to be taken, in the present condition of general thought about such things, unless we should do gross injustice to many a sincere seeker and sharer in the religious life, and even to human nature itself.

The word itself, we are told, was first thrown out by Professor Huxley in conversation, in the year 1864, so that it has had an existence of just

over a quarter of a century. It was meant, we are reminded, not as a challenge of hostility, but as a term of courteous neutrality among thinking people. Its quick adoption and wide currency since show that the term was a needed one, and it is not likely soon to be disused. But we notice two things in the use of it, since it has become popularized, which appear to be worth attending to.

The first is a disposition to depart from the temper of passionless neutrality which it was meant to convey, and to make it a name of enmity or contempt. The term "Agnostic" comes in popular use to be a sort of nickname, a bit of theological slang, doing service very much as the more uncivil words "sceptic," "unbeliever," "infidel," in rising grade of animosity, did half a century ago. Naturally, this tendency has been encouraged by those theologians whose ardour was stronger than their argument, to throw obloquy upon a troublesome opponent. Some of them have even complained that it was not pungent enough: the self-called agnostic has been coolly invited, for honesty's sake, to accept those good old words "atheist" and "infidel." Why not go one step further, asks Mr. Huxley, and say "miscreant" at once, this being the same thing, etymologically, as "infidel"? Words of theologic import are dangerous weapons of debate. They begin, innocently enough, by putting a mark on some merely intellectual distinction, but they soon become a badge of moral antipathy. We, certainly, who have suffered great injustice, as we think, from the animosities of sectarian war-

fare, ought scrupulously to guard our lips from polemic nicknames and party slang.

Further, not only the religionist confounds (as we might expect) suspense of judgment with rejection of the truth; but the philosopher (who is apt to be as sharp a dogmatist as anybody) insists that this attitude of mind means denial of first principles, of objective reality, of the possibility of intellectual hold upon anything: it is, he says, the same thing with universal scepticism. This charge surprises me, — first, because the metaphysician, who has studied the laws of thought, ought to know what is meant by suspense of belief where evidence seems lacking, and ought to be particularly scrupulous about using any terms with a supposed theological imputation; and, secondly, because the scientific Agnostic is apt to be quite as firm and positive in his own field as any of his critics: it would be absurd to say that Mr. Huxley is not as convinced a "realist" in his biology as the most absolute of Hegelians in his constructive metaphysics. When he dissects a beetle, for example, he surely is, to his own thought, just as distinctly looking at "the thing itself" as any philosopher could possibly explain to him. In short, what we have learned to call "agnosticism" is the very thing which thirty years ago, with equal contumely, was reviled as "positivism" — by none, if we remember rightly, with more vivacity than by Mr. Huxley himself, when he attacked certain inferences from it in the line of religious practice.

We notice, again, that in its proper sense the

term applies not to knowledge or opinion in general, but to *particular lines* of opinion, or assumed knowledge. We know very well what is meant when it is said that certain facts or beliefs are "verifiable:" they can be proved, to anybody, by observation, by experiment, by accomplished prediction, or by first-hand evidence. The whole business of scientific proof is to bring the fact, or the belief, within one of these four classes; and that is "verifiable" which may, supposably, be so reduced: thus the condition of Central Australia is unknown, but not "unknowable;" what is on the other side of the moon — so that we cannot imagine it to be made known to us, and if anybody should say there are trees or houses there, he could neither prove nor we disprove it — is supposably "knowable" in its own nature, though not in fact; while such matters as are implied in the problems of ultimate Being, we cannot so much as imagine to be brought within the circle of our knowledge, using that term in any legitimate or proper sense.

Now most subjects of religious controversy are what has been, is now, or will be hereafter, going on behind a veil absolutely impenetrable to human eye, — such as the origin of the world, the Divine decrees, the future destiny of man, the rank and nature of the celestial hierarchy. In deed, the very meaning and claim of a revelation is that it is a lifting or pushing aside of that veil by some superhuman hand, so that certain privileged persons can actually see and know what is beyond it, and then declare it to others, — appre-

hension of these facts being assumed as the most indispensable of all for man's true life and welfare, but not "verifiable" in any scientific sense.* They are the objects not of knowledge, but of faith.

Nay, we need not go back to those unknowable and transcendent matters which were supposed to have been settled at Nicæa, at Chalcedon, at Dort, or at Westminster, — problems of the Eternal Son, the Eternal Decree, the Eternal Destiny of Man. We have in our own day a large body of propositions just as positively asserted or denied, making fragments of what in the strictest sense is as purely a gnostic creed, just as incapable of any conceivable process of verification. It is in view of these we observe that Professor Huxley, instead of announcing a general scepticism, draws up a list of specific assertions that have been flung at him in the way of argument, so that we may know just what it is he defines his agnosticism by.

We need not be at the pains to rehearse his list, which is made up of the assumptions of his individual antagonists, — whose name is Legion, for they are many. But we may draw up a little summary of our own, which will help show how natural and how obstinate is the habit of mind to deal with matters that lie out of the range of any conceivable knowledge or proof, — especially in the realm of religious thought, which by its very nature ever strains beyond the visible horizon. Take the whole Andover controversy, for example, on such a question as this: Is there or is there not a

* See, above, the paper "What is a Revelation?"

"future probation" for those who have not known Christ in the present life? Or such a statement as this, from the Congregational "creed of 1883:" that, since his resurrection and ascension, Christ "carries forward his work of saving men, and sends the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and to lead them to repentance and faith," — a tender and beautiful heart-belief, doubtless, but surely the last thing to offer as a challenge to the critical intelligence. Or that elaborated scheme of conflict between God and Lucifer set forth many years ago by Charles Beecher, a man of true religious genius, in his "Redeemer and Redeemed," as to which he says that his mind "has worked and struggled and agonized day and night for twenty years," and remarks, incidentally, that "it is of great importance to obtain *a full knowledge of the original heavenly empire*," — exactly as some men now insist on the need of a full "intellectual solution of the problem of the universe." In short, all the open questions of dogmatic theology belong to that order of "transcendentalism" which, as Professor Caird tells us, "all the great metaphysicians of modern times agree in rejecting." *

The peril of this kind of assumption is nearer than some of us are apt to think. In 1844 one of our own preachers argued to his own satisfaction that the explosion on board the "Princeton," by which Secretary Upshur was killed, was ordered by Divine Providence so as to prevent the annexation of Texas, which the Secretary was then

* The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte, p. 64.

plotting: surely, an awkward and bloody way of deferring the political crisis for only a single year! How many of us may have had an experience like that of Schleiermacher, who was implored with agony and tears, by the widow of a young friend, to say categorically that that friend still lived and loved in the world of Spirit, — *his very self*, — which she scarcely found in his assurance of that Life in God, which to his ardent faith was the most real of all existences! We have nothing to do with the truth or error of any of these propositions: it is even a fair question whether the grand enthusiasms of religious history would have been ever possible but for the audacity that so affronts and defies the bounds of reason. *Intelligo quia credo!* The "peril" that lurks in them is the peril of staking our religious conviction, or any part of it, on assertions impossible to prove, or on ground which to the human mind must remain forever "unknowable," or on the attempted solution of "problems" which sober reason shows to be "unsolvable."

I do not see why anybody should be afraid or angry at these words, awkward and ugly compounds that they are, when they simply point out with convenient precision where lie the boundaries of *verifiable fact.* Science is held rigidly within those boundaries. Religion is not; but by its two great wings of imagination and adoration it continually soars in a realm beyond them. It is the capacity for that, which keeps us from sitting content in a fixed and orderly scheme of knowledge,

however intricate and expanded, and makes us anyway capable of the intellectual life of faith. "The light we have gained," says Milton, "was given us not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge." The religious life always assumes the glad possibility of realms beyond our sight, and (so far as we at present know) incapable of being scientifically proved. At the same time there are things of more importance yet in the life that now is, which *can* be proved, "still closing up truth to truth, ever as we find it;" and these, to keep our mental sanity and firm footing for our thought, must always be sought in that rich, unsounded, unmeasured, unexhausted, and inexhaustible realm of men's actual experience of the religious life.

X.

THE NAME "GOD."

"By my name 'The Eternal' was I not known."

A RECENT journal of advanced liberalism, in commenting on a volume of religious discourses, offers with a preface of much seeming conviction the following suggestion: —

For the expression of the thought to be conveyed, some other word than the word "God" would be much more properly used in these, and all other discourses, by the liberal speakers and writers who now, simply for convenience or for convention's sake, make use of the term in question. For the "God" here is *not* the God which men in general know by that name. The "God" here yearned after and sought and found and rejoiced in is a something far higher and nobler, and more to be desired than the ordinary religious man would suspect, or could possibly hope for, from what he could by any means have in mind as "God." The Majestic Presence of the universe, as revealed in latter-day scientific vision, is too high and fair and helpful and meaningful to be labelled any longer with the label of ignorant, superstitious years! With the label goes all the burden of the word's dark, century-laden connotations. For us who know what those connotations are (and they are burned ineradicably into the popular mind as well as into the minds of scholars) the higher in the word *cannot* overbalance the lower.

It is likely that this suggestion will seem to many persons merely offensive — possibly impious, and even blasphemous: certainly it would not have been a proposition safe to make a century or two ago. But it is best to give the maker of it credit for no evil intention; rather to take it in good faith, to see where the plausibility of it lies, if it has any, and what sober reasons there may be for or against it.

I have said "for or against." For, whatever our own use of terms, we cannot fail to see that the name "God" has continually been taken in vain, by more than one class of persons, so as to mean something which all of us repudiate with all our hearts. Not only have we the Pagan

> "Gods partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
> Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust," —

but in many a Christian confession of faith the name has been used to designate a Sovereign capable of whatever wrath, partiality, vindictiveness, and vengeance we ascribe to the worst of Oriental despots; One who claims all reverence and homage for the holiest of attributes, but puts his own favour arbitrarily at the price of such homage; One who inflicts torment unspeakable, just as arbitrarily, with a relentlessness that such despots can only emulate afar off. That implacable Sovereignty we shudder to designate by the name "God."

Again, in a large part of modern speculative philosophy the name "God" is used to give a certain

sanction to what are in truth mere metaphysical abstractions: as when Spinoza says that "there cannot be, and we cannot conceive, any other Substance than God;" or when by craft of speech an "Absolute" without any attributes whatever is smuggled in, to occupy the title and throne of Deity. These modern substitutes had doubtless better go by their proper names, and not usurp a religious one.

And so, too, with the "cosmic theism," which is merely a synthesis of all forces, known and unknown, in the hypothesis of one Universal Force. To cite words I have before used in a different connection: —

> To say that God is the source of all life, all force, is perfectly satisfying as a postulate of speculative theology. But when it comes to mean (as it must mean) not only that the germinating life and the law of social evolution are acts of God, but just as much the explosive force of dynamite and the ferocity that would use it to wreck the social fabric; the hideous disease alike with the healing skill that fights it; the crime and the criminal on exactly equal terms with the heroism and the saint, — then we find how worthless for any religious uses is that fine-sounding definition, after all. The term "God" in this sense has only one advantage, that I can see, over "The Absolute" or "The Unknowable" or "Persistent Energy" or "Stream of Tendency," — that it is shorter, and easier to speak or spell.

We certainly shall not object to any new ideal of human speech, that it repudiates the name in any such sense as that.

Then again there is the gospel of passion, so dominant in modern poetry and fiction, which (knowing nothing holier than itself) easily decks itself with the holy name: as when Faust says, "Call it Chance, Heart, Love, God!"—these being all words on a like low level of mere emotion. The divinity of human sentiment is here poetically set forth in words that have become classic, whose passionate eloquence is sometimes cited as if they held a valuable religious truth. But, when we look for those words where they belong, we are struck rather by a certain dramatic significance which Goethe, it is likely, intended to convey in them: namely, that the speaker utters them with the phial of deadly anodyne in his pocket, which is presently to be administered to Margaret's mother, so as to put the poor child more completely in his power. That is the parable of *pietistic sentiment divorced from righteousness*,—as it is in the phase of modern literature here referred to.

Of recent poets, Browning is the one who oftenest of all delights to introduce the name "God," sometimes with a sharp sense of irrelevancy and a painful shock. And in his writings, with their astonishing dramatic energy, it has been said by an admiring critic * that the gospel of passion—that is, as distinct from the reason which discerns a higher law, or the conscience which constrains us to obey it—makes his real poetic creed. Just how that great genius, of such rare insight into the subtilties of men's hearts, may accept that creed

* Professor Boyesen, in the "Independent."

as a rule of conduct, it would not be fair to infer; but so shining an example may at least put us in mind of others, whose name in modern literature is Legion (both for their number and their attributes), who have not only crowned Passion lord and king, but have kindled in his devotees something very like a religious glow. We are glad of the freshness of any new ideal that will help keep that sort of apotheosis in check.

This is to say, in other words, that neither material vastness and splendour as we find them in the visible universe, nor largeness of speculative view, nor emotional intensity on the passionate side of life, can justify the bringing in of the name "God," denuded of the one particular attribute of moral holiness. Here we have nothing to do with any question of metaphysical theology: we reckon only with the plain facts of human life. Language is but an outgrowth of that life — as Max Müller reminds us — by a process of development as strictly scientific and inevitable as that of any animal or plant growth. Except by deliberate suppression of the order of experience it stands for, we only fumble and bungle when we refuse to employ the language we inherit from the past. Now our religious phraseology has come down to us from the wisest, the most thoughtful, the most reverent and aspiring, of all past time. These are agreed in expressing by the name "God" their conception alike of the highest Moral Ideal and of the Universal Life — running the two together in the "daring faith" that, when we come to the

heart of things, the highest and the holiest are one.

The name, doubtless, not only reflects the mood of adoration it sprang from, but also signifies a personal Object of adoration, — personal, that is, in the only sense that can apply to existence, of which imagination itself can conceive no bounds. The term "person" we use, of course, purely as a symbol, not a definition, — a symbol we cannot discard at pleasure. Who are we — babes and sucklings, borne upon the bosom of great Humanity, mother of us all — that we should disown our mother-tongue which she has taught us, to substitute some philosophic phrase of our own inventing? We are not bound, just at present, to accept any of the "connotations," the collateral ideas, which help fill out that symbol of the Unknown; to admit all or any of those "attributes" which a forensic divinity has logically deduced from its postulates of universal Being. We have only, for the present, to say that there comes into the heart, now and then, a conception mingled at once of thought, emotion, and moral glow; and that, when this is once known and felt, the homage of the soul finds in it the testimony of a mysterious Presence, which it has learned to speak or think of only under that name "God." Without that conception, without the capacity it implies, the mind is starved and poor.

So far, I have in mind only the protest of a particular intellectual mood, which no way commits itself to any speculative opinion about the Ob-

ject that has called it forth. Dr. Samuel Clarke, as Voltaire appears to have been strongly impressed by noticing, "never spoke the name of the Deity without a certain manner and tone of awe;" but it is not likely that he felt this awe towards the result of his own philosophical deduction of "the being and attributes" of Him whom he already worshipped in his heart as one "that passeth understanding." It is that very emotion of awe itself, that makes a clearer testimony. When Hamlet, in the extreme moment of mental agony, says —

> "O God!
> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!"

he is not uttering a personal appeal, or hinting at any personal faith: it is simply a testimony to the pregnant fact, that by a certain instinct, which we do not explain, the profoundest emotion clothes itself spontaneously in language reserved and consecrated for its religious uses. Where this emotion is lacking, there is a certain shrinking and dislike, in minds of a serious cast, to employing such language at all. Thus Saint Paul says, in the simplest phrase of avoidance, "let it not be" (μὴ γένοιτο); and I have heard grave objection made, by a highly cultivated man, to the levity with which the translators have rendered it into the colloquial English, "God forbid." Such phrases have, to the great displeasure of that class of minds, too much in past time invaded our familiar speech: thus it gives us an unpleasant surprise

in the correspondence of Charles Darwin, to find that when he had (as he said) quite outgrown the very capacity of the emotion they imply, he continued to express it in the conventional phrases of every-day friendship.* It may be, indeed, that our less positive and more halting faith makes us more sensitive on these points; for certainly it would be a shock to us to hear what once came so naturally to the lips of a devout believer, "God bless me!" to express a mild surprise, with as unembarrassed a tone as, "I beg your pardon." Samuel Joseph May was once asked, quite innocently, by a member of his conversation-class, whether there would be anything amiss in calling Electricity by the name "God!" I do not know what his answer was; but most of us, whatever of mystery and awe we feel towards that swift, unseen, subtle, and seemingly almighty agent, cannot possibly liken it to reverence for Him whose mere messenger it is.

We imagine a vain thing, again, when we seek to exalt our notion of Deity by dwelling on its assumed physical and material attributes. Or, if we say, as a sort of pious axiom, that God is ALL, and there is nothing else besides, we find a monition of our peril in Christian history, which tells us how, from the most sweetly pious and humble-minded mystics of the Middle Age, "in secret places, and by underground channels, the pantheist idea spread unseen — pantheism which now was

* As in the French conversational *mon Dieu* and *pardieu*, which are not at all profane, as they would be in English.

no longer vague and veiled: *We do not believe in God, and we do not love him, and we do not adore him, and we do not hope in him; for this would be to avow that He is other than ourselves.* Thus speak these heretics of the fourteenth century. So far have they pushed the phrase, *God is all that exists.*" For again we read, concerning the mystical pantheism which asserts that "God is all and matter nothing," that it "is capable of two interpretations. . . . It may mean the life of the mind and soul carried always to the highest possible pitch; or it may be, and too often is, the excuse of the basest sensualism. Since, neither for sin nor for sanctity, the body can affect the soul, since sensuous pleasures are quite independent of the spiritual existence, the lower pantheism may excuse debauch as a permissible relaxation not affecting the spirit. And this is what it generally does come to mean among communities of undisciplined and ill-educated enthusiasts." *

There are a great many things, then, in which our common sense of fitness entirely accords with the suggestion, which at first sight seemed such a startling one, that the name "God" should be disused in our ordinary vocabulary. But there are quite as many other things, in which that disuse is forbidden by all that is best in us. So far in my argument, I have kept strictly within the limits of the thought and experience itself, and the felt proprieties of speech; I have not concerned my-

* "The End of the Middle Ages," by A. Mary F. Robinson, pp. 37, 25.

self about the objective reality of that to which our emotions or thoughts refer. Further, it is not within my purpose to enter upon what we may call the field of forensic divinity, — to prove, or to illustrate by argument, what we really mean when we use that name; what are, in the actual realm of Being, the attributes, or the conceptions, with which we must clothe it; what the words *wisdom, might, tenderness, justice,* even *personality,* must mean when by the terms of our argument we apply them to the Infinite. Our fathers were fond of defining these things very sharply: we, it may be, see them in what seems more and more a dissolving view; and we shrink — perhaps in no greater humility of spirit than theirs — from the good set phrases which they loved.

It was because of the very difficulty — nay, impossibility — of bringing together the two lines of thought here implied, that the metaphysical symbol of the Trinity was devised, seeming to bring the Infinite nearer to the apprehension of the human mind; that ardent, emotional theists, like Henry Ward Beecher, have said, frankly, "Jesus Christ is the only God I know;" nay, that in hymns and devotional exercises of many of our modern churches the name "God," with the contradictory attributes it has borne, is quite dropped out by an over-scrupulous orthodoxy, and the name of the Teacher from Nazareth has been substituted in its place.

A like scrupulosity would forbid the term "Father" — unwisely, so long as we accept that

term, and all such terms, as symbolic of a relation which we can only indicate, not define. Under the old notion of the universe, implied in the term "creation," the word "Father" was most natural, as implying both generation and sovereignty; under the new notion implied in "evolution," the term "Mother" (which Theodore Parker loved) would be still more natural, and just as true, if it were not as yet strange and unfamiliar. It is even likely that, if the evolution-theory of the universe had been as familiar to the Hebrews as it was to the Greeks, the feminine symbol would have had a fully equal reverence with the other in the noblest devotional poetry of the world. Thus we may find in Wordsworth's

> "Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 't is her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy; for She can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,
> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
> Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
> Is full of blessings," —

we may find in these exquisite lines a modern or Christian parallel to that great verse of the Hebrew psalmist: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters; *He restoreth my soul.*"

And it is a fairly open question whether the name "Jehovah" did not (as Renan thinks) come to be substituted in some such way, to suit the capacity of the fierce Hebrew clan — for which the plural name of Deity, with a far grander and wider meaning than of old, was afterwards restored. If it was so, it is one more proof of what we have been trying to say all along, — that, whatever the expanse of our knowledge, whatever the breadth of our speculative view, whatever the depth of our emotional experience, the soul needs some one word absolutely set apart to the single use of identifying that largest conception we can frame with our ideal of that which is also Right. If that universal Law, which is our final generalization in the realm of physics, is also (to quote the language of Saint Paul) "holy and just and good," there can be no error in defining by the name "God" the Life manifest in all things, which it inteprets to us. If the realm of physics, taken by itself, is dead, having no such life in itself, then we need that name for what is beyond it, and includes it.*

Not, however, because our physical or our metaphysical speculation needs to be rounded out for

* It is obvious that this argument does not apply to the name as found in other groups of languages than our own. Thus the old Aryan *Dyaus* (Ζεύς) signifies, apparently, the expanse of a material Heaven; *Deus* (from which *Dieu*) may add to this something of the cheer of Daylight; the Semitic *Elohim* (*Allah*) suggests the idea of Force, and *Jehovah* (*Jahveh*) that of abstract Being. Only the Germanic tongues, so far as we know, make the ethical sense the primary one; and even this is denied by some modern philologists.

mère completeness' sake. The need is rather that of the heart and soul which cry out for the Living God. The name, we hold, should be distinctly reserved and set apart to denote our reverence for the Holiest. It is not that we profess to define or comprehend a single one of the properties, or attributes, that make up what some strangely call the "character" of God. It is not that we have any private theodicy of our own, and think by the charm that is in that name to reconcile in our thought the conflict, the mystery, the guilt and pain, that make part of all the life we see. All that, we have learned long ago, is quite beyond our province. But we want to feel still free to use a Name which, in its original sense, expressed the faith of the heart, that the soul of the universe is GOOD; that the Law, which looks so often bleak and cruel, which is at best so perplexed and tangled in its working, is yet "holy and just and good," because of the Soul that lives behind it all. That is what in its first sense the name God means, and all it means; and that is a sense which the heart of man will not willingly let die.

XI.

THE NAME "CHRISTIAN."

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."

WHEN that eloquent apostle of the most spiritual faith of India, Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, made his remarkable address before the Ministers' Institute in Lowell, in 1883, he roused attention and perhaps some self-inquiry among us by saying that, with all reverence for Christ, he claimed or desired no share in the name "Christian." His countrymen, he appeared to think, had been rather browbeaten by the terror of that name, as illustrated in the practice of their conquerors, and heartily repudiated it when offered to them as the only symbol of salvation. At the same time, their imagination and conscience had been stirred by the hint of some higher conception of the Divine life than they found in their native creeds; and, just as some of us have found certain moods of religious thought quickened and moved by aspects of Brahmanism or Buddhism, without accepting either of those great Oriental faiths, so they were drawn by something in the word and spirit that gleamed in spite, not in virtue, of the doctrinal system taught by Christian missionaries in the name of Jesus.

This pungent declaration, with what it might possibly imply, was brought back to my mind while reflecting on the proposition of Dr. James Martineau, in a late number of the "Contemporary Review," under the title "The National Church as a Federal Union." The proposal is to give legal and official recognition, with certain ecclesiastical privileges (hitherto the exclusive property of the Church of England), to the whole group of Christian sects into which Catholic England has been divided. As it is elsewhere more fully stated, the proposal is limited by the test of a hundred years' corporate existence, and a minimum of two hundred associated congregations; also, it is to be assumed, by the common acceptance of the name "Christian."

Advantage (he says) should be taken of a certain "set of the tide in favor of comprehension." What is demanded "is no longer a unity of opinion, it is a unity of faith." Seeing the numerous Christian bodies, all professing to work for the same sacred object, the aim should be — following the analogy of the American Federal Union — to "cluster them all together as confederated members of a common country, a divine commonwealth, with plenty of human work, claiming the heart and hand of all." Further to disarm hostile prejudice, it is urged that the object is "not to liberalize the [Anglican] Church; not to give benefices to non-Episcopalians; not to subject the Church to the lay control of parishes, — to release it, rather, from parliamentary control, and so confirm its

religious independence on a broader basis than before." The economies pointed out are the displacing of a vast amount of sectarian machinery (which works now clumsily, costlily, and with interference) for charities and the education of the poor, and the simplifying by combination of the whole great task of practical Christianity. And among the obvious gains is urged, especially, the restoring of cathedrals, and other great ecclesiastical foundations of an earlier time, to their legitimate service as property of the nation; with the harmonizing and noble effect (such as an American in England feels) of sharing or at least witnessing, however remotely, the grave and solemn rendering of the established ritual.

It may, however, be remarked here that this proposal, religiously broad and generous, is logically incomplete. It deals with the Church establishment and Church endowments as a national possession, and the enjoyment of them as a national right. But, if we consider the nation, first, in its very largest sense, as signifying a British Confederated Empire (real or supposable), it is not likely that one-fourth, possibly not one-tenth, of its population are Christian, nominally or in any other sense whatever. In such a view as that, a cathedral should be, frankly, a temple of Humanity, not the possession of a sect or of any group of sects. If, next, we think only of the British Isles, about one-sixth of their population are Catholics, of whom no mention is made in this scheme, and who would contumeliously reject such a compro-

mise if it were offered, looking forward, as they do, to entering some day on what they regard as their own inheritance. Or if, lastly, we look at England alone, we find not only the various dissenting sects outside the Church, but some of the devoutest souls quite outside the boundaries of sect. Nay, a bishop of the Established Church is recorded to have said not long ago that the worshipping assembly of Comtists, having a distinct religious profession and aim, is fully entitled to be recognized as a religious body, with whatever privilege that may imply. And how happens it that we have overlooked the Jews? Surely, they have existed as a religious community for "more than a hundred years;" and their Saturday service would be not half so embarrassing to the solemnities of the place as the Sunday gathering of the Methodists. In short, when we deal with a nation, and not a sect, such distinctions as Jew and Gentile, Christian and non-Christian, must vanish quite away. Moreover, this would be to introduce no absurdity, no impossibility. If the vast spaces of the cathedrals in the Middle Age were open, at fit times and under due regulation, to courts and markets and games, surely they may well be open now, for their soothing and humanizing influence, for any serious attempt to meet the problems of the time and organize its higher life. The only real difficulty is in those who hold the portal key.

There is another phase of this matter which it is well to consider. A recent article by Canon

Fremantle, in the "Fortnightly Review," begins with these words: "A professor of divinity, who has been thought at times to be by no means insensible to a reputation for orthodoxy, preaching in the University of Oxford a few days ago, said, The field of speculative theology may be regarded as almost exhausted: we must be content, henceforward, to be Christian Agnostics." And this statement, he tells us, was "accepted without a murmur," — a thing which could not possibly have happened twenty-five years ago. Such is the first aspect in Canon Fremantle's view of "Theology under its changed conditions." The phrase he uses may possibly puzzle or alarm the reader more than it really ought. For "agnostic" is used here in its legitimate sense, as the opposite of "gnostic:" it simply means, "void of speculative theology." Now, when positive theology — which builds its propositions on an assumed definite revelation of divine truth to the human understanding — is openly or tacitly abandoned, it follows that speculative theology, which is only its ghost or shadow, must also vanish, to be replaced by some reflex of the religious thought and life as made known to us in human experience. The way of thinking here called "agnostic" — while doubtless a confession of helpless ignorance on the highest matters of speculation — may be as positive, and even helpful, as the system of opinion which it displaces.

It is not however the negative, it is the affirmative side of the assertion, with which we have to do just here. What meaning, if any, lies in the

phrase "*Christian* agnostic"? Unless the phrase is merely and intentionally misleading, it conveys something which is supposed to describe a mode of current opinion, — of some importance, besides, or else it would not be used by an educated theologian to describe a body of educated men. In other words, what is the meaning of the name "Christian," when completely divorced from the whole body of doctrinal opinion it was once supposed to cover?

To this question we shall be apt to answer, first, that it means something we have long been quite familiar with, and are not in the least alarmed about. From the earliest days of our Liberal movement, it has been constantly urged that "character, not opinion" makes a man's true title to the name "Christian." It is hardly worth while to ask too curiously just how logical this protest has been in the mouths of those who used it. Most men doubtless see, or else presume in the minds of those they happen to be allied with, a nearer reflex of their own views than can safely be taken for granted, and so tacitly assume a premise which may at an unlucky moment be knocked from under their feet. It was so with the theological prepossessions which our fathers brought over from their orthodox tradition. Their eyes were honestly holden, so that they could not see all which their argument might imply. But what they did see — the abuses of bigotry, the pitfalls of casuistry, the peril to freedom of conscience, and the vanity of religious professions without that free-

dom — they saw with a perfect clearness; and the positions they took were such as could be held in all their integrity through all the changes of opinion that followed. The newest Radical school has never stated those positions with more precision and emphasis than were given them by the earliest spokesmen of the Liberal protest. And so it happens, to our unspeakable advantage, that when the momentous revolution in common opinion, already spoken of, is fully accomplished, — when "the field of speculative theology may be regarded as *quite* exhausted," — we shall still be standing as we were before. For those twenty-five years twice over we have been used to the maxim that (in Channing's phrase) one is to be judged "not by the rightness, but by the uprightness, of his opinions;" that the name "Christian," in its only creditable sense, is to be justified by character, and not by doctrinal belief. The purely ethical or spiritual meaning of it is what we have all along taken for granted.

Further, we are well accustomed to comparisons, on sundry points of view, in which the name "Christian" is made not at all a term of honour. Our sympathies hold themselves quite impartial and independent, as between Christian and non-Christian. Sir Walter Scott was a loyal and sturdy believer of his own day; but he does not hesitate to enlist our admiration for the Jewess Rebecca or the Moslem Saladin, as against knights of the most valiant order of Christian chivalry. We find ourselves, most of us, siding warmly with the Moors

in Spain against their conquerors; we freely own the debt of modern learning to Moorish schools; we think with amazement and horror of those pious acts of faith by which Queen Isabella secured the Christian ascendency in the Peninsula. We are amused or pained, as it may be, but never think of being angered, by the Turkish boast, "Here you may trust any man's word: there are no Christians in our village!" In the "ages of faith" it was very different. On a certain day (the Sieur de Joinville tells us), as the custom was, the Jews of the district were gathered at Cluny by authority of the holy King Louis to listen to a sermon and arguments for their conversion; when an old knight, lame and leaning on a crutch, approached. "That is no way to deal with these vile heretics!" he exclaimed; and forthwith put bluntly to the leading Jew one of the chief mysteries of the Catholic creed, demanding his assent, which being refused, he instantly knocked him down with his crutch. To which tale the pious king subjoined, "Only a great scholar should reason with a misbeliever: the right thing is to thrust your sword into him as far as it will go!" Beside such truculent loyalty as this, the name "Christian" is quite void of praise or blame to our modern ears. We do not passionately resent neutrality to it, as in time of war we do to the name of our country or the folds of its flag. We speak it, or we hear it spoken, with as little warmth of tone as one should say "Platonist" or "Hindoo."

There is, again, a hostility that goes much far-

ther than that indifference. Multitudes of men — subjects of merciless conquest by Christian nations, victims of ecclesiastical or sectarian bigotry, oppressed classes jealous of the strength and wealth that profess the name in a temper of pure insolence, free-thinkers exasperated by the mere bald hypocrisy of its pretenders — regard the very name "Christian" with positive emotions of scorn, wrath, hate, or fear. With all these we have to reckon, when we look at its signification in a wide way. Take, for example, this grotesque travesty of the origin of Christianity, which I find in a late number of a popular journal: "About the time which forms the significant turning-point of our chronological era, the nations of the Aryan race were stricken with the plague of a moral epidemic. An Asiatic pest, the poison of the life-blighting doctrine of pessimism, crept over the moral atmosphere of the mediæval god-gardens; for a series of centuries the light of reason underwent an eclipse, the ethical standards of millions of our ancestors were perverted, first by an insidious depreciation, and afterward by a remorseless suppression, of their normal instincts." It is easy enough to find historic facts to verify every item of this bitter indictment; and that it should be seriously set forth by anybody, to explain the existence and power of Christianity in the world, — that the whole phenomenon should be exhibited as a thousand years' reign of maniacs and devils, — shows us that we cannot always take for granted our complacent, home-bred theories. It is our business to bring

them out into the light, and prove them, if we can, by a better understanding of the facts.

This is what I shall attempt — not, indeed, to do adequately, but to show in what direction it should be done. We cannot, as we have just seen, any longer take serenely for granted that the reverence we feel or profess is shared by everybody; and, if the doctrinal opinions once covered by the name have faded out of it, it is not by reviving those that we can restore the ancient reverence. Fortunately, with us, the name "Christian" is a recognized name of honour, at least of conventional respect. What we have to do is to see, as clearly as we can, just what it really means, — not in the dialect of theologians, but in the literature of the world; not in the common doctrinal apprehension, but as we analyze the very complex elements that have gone into, and perhaps displaced, that common understanding of it. Well for us if we can do this thing successfully; for, indeed, the name "Christian" is far more to us than we have yet implied: it is a name of supreme tenderness, sanctity, and veneration to innumerable souls, and it would be one of the great spiritual losses to the human race if it should come to lose that pure divine significance.

Some persons have of late years tried to meet the case by identifying Christianity with that colourless, formless thing they call "absolute religion." A name that grew up in history and belongs to history can never be explained in that cheap and easy way: it implies form, feature, colour, and

definite events that shaped it out. The term "absolute religion" means either a philosophic *datum*, shorn of all such attributes, which would make it a very unworthy substitute for what has life and feature of its own; or else the common spirit of aspiration, virtue, and so on, that remains when the specific features of all the great world-religions have been shorn away, — a sort of common idealizing of them all, — which it would be sheer arrogance to claim as the special meaning of any one. It was a weakness on the part of Theodore Parker, for example, that, while he stood in a critical or even unfriendly attitude towards every historic form of Christianity in the actual, his traditional feeling for the name led him to do that singular injustice. Indeed, its historic forms do not seem to have occurred to him as variations or even distortions of any common type; but simply as falsities, to be put aside in favour of that philosophical ideal with which he would not prove but assume it to be identical.

In quite another temper than this, if one is still to keep his loyal adhesion to the name "Christian," he must accept it — with all its blames and stains — in the sense which history has put upon it. Historical Christianity, like other historical phenomena, has been developed under conditions of space and time. These have made it something very different from that divine ideal which Milton imagined of the "perfect shape most glorious to look on" of the apostolic age; very different, again, from the philosophical ideal, such as Theodore

Parker imagined, which should remain when historic Christianity should have vanished quite away. We can respect those gracious and noble ideals, but in the business of criticism we cannot abide by them. Assuming the human features, we must try honestly to see what they were and are; and, as our loyalty holds good at a pinch towards our own country and institutions — imperfect as we know they are, wicked and corrupt as we often charge them to be — better even, perhaps, than we should to Plato's ideal Republic if we had the luck to live in it, so, it may be, we shall find that with a whole heart and a clear conscience we may keep good our veneration for this name, also, into which we were born.

Looking at it in this view, there are three aspects of it, by each of which we must try, first, to see what its real character and features are, and then whether or not we honestly accept it so. And in this view, as we must bear in mind, we have nothing whatever to do with any of its professions of doctrinal belief.

First, in respect of Time. Christianity, so regarding it, is an historical product, which came into being at a definite period of human history, and which it should not concern us in the least if we should find or imagine likely to pass away, as a distinct historic force, in the lapse of time. That is, any such theory as that — which is pure theory for us, at any rate, since there is no present indication whatever that Christianity has done its work — ought not to trouble our minds at all. We

have only to ascertain our own relation to an actually existing thing. Our real field of study is not the metaphysical ideal, but the very tangible field of Christian history. And we see at once that that is the field in which our own life has been nourished, all there is of it. The sap of the world's life has come into our own veins through the soil of that particular field. As soon as we think of any part of our intellectual or spiritual inheritance, we see that it has come to us, if not always from a Christian source, at any rate through a Christian channel. It was, and is, no choice of ours whether to inherit that life or not. If our modern theories of evolution teach us anything, it is that what we may call the *subconscious* elements of our mental and moral life are the most important of all, — those which we have received, like the shape of our features and the composition of our bones, as they were moulded and dealt out by forces acting before our conscious thought, and independent of our conscious will. In this sense, when we look at the religious side of our life, we find ourselves Christian not by choice, but by unconscious inheritance. The act of reason and will comes not when we assume that name, but when we repudiate it, as we are doubtless free to do. But many a good man, who thinks that in that way he has outgrown his Christianity and cast it off, like a garment moth-eaten and old, would find, by a better self-knowledge, that his moral motive, his judgment, his ideal, all that we call his conscience, was shaped in a mould not of his making,

and that every drop of his blood runs Christian, to his finger-ends.

This is what we mean when we say that a man's religion is historical, and that he has received it by inheritance. It is of comparatively small importance whether or not he recognize the fact: what we want is to see the fact itself. It is not likely that Napoleon knew or cared anything about the laws of heredity, as philosophers state them, when he showed in their most virulent form all the traits of his Corsican inheritance. He was none the less a Corsican to the last fibre of his frame. When we speak of a religion as historic, we mean that it was secreted and developed under definite conditions that helped make it what it was. It has evolved a type of its own, which stands out like the individuality of a man or a tree, qualifying every drop of blood, giving savour to every slightest trickling of the sap. It is not, of course, easy to look through the innumerable subtypes and variations that have appeared in the course of centuries among countless groups that we include under the one name, and see just how the common type appears in all, — looking, as we must, from the outside and far away. But it is perfectly easy for any one person, tracing his own spiritual descent from the common stock, to see just how and where and what it is. Not an opinion, not an aspiration, not a hope, not an emotion of fellowship, not a moral judgment, not a movement of penitence or praise, that does not take its tone and colouring from the invisible forces

that have run in the blood of fifty Christian generations; and, in comparison with that fact of the higher science, it is of very small account indeed whether he confess the fact under the name "Christian" or under some other name.

Secondly, in respect of Space. As to this, it is not of so much consequence to say that Christianity has spread very widely in the world, as it is to see that it has been limited and defined by boundaries. Nature, it may be, and as Ruskin tells us, knows nothing of outlines; but she covers all her live products very carefully up in protecting surfaces. There must be, besides, some relation — which we do not always understand very well — between the growth and the soil or climate. Why Christianity should be accepted by one race treacherous and fierce, like the Frank, and rejected by another race thoughtful and humane, like the Hindoo, it is hard to tell; and we need not trouble ourselves with such questions: we must accept the fact. Our present business with the fact is to call up what is really very curious when we come to think upon it, — that in matters of race-sympathy we are so little controlled by moral judgment, so much by the pulse of that unconscious heredity spoken of before.

To illustrate: it happens that the great conflicts of history known to us have mostly been between those (like the Greeks and Persians) nearly alike wide of us in race and faith, or else those (as the French and English) both so near that other reasons sway our preference, if we have any.

But it is a sentiment that runs deeper and shows itself in subtler ways, when a visible type of religious affinity, like the symbol of the Cross, touches us with a sense that possibly our better reason might disown. All the education we have got from historical criticism and moral judgment does not alter much our involuntary sympathetic admiration of the ferocious and disastrous adventure of the Crusades; and, Cross against Crescent, we have very likely been swayed just so in our unconscious sympathies on the ever-recurrent struggle in the East. There was founded in Europe, over a thousand years ago, what Comte calls a "synergy" of nations, including a group of Catholic populations that came to share a common political consciousness, and had its natural ally in the Eastern Empire. That common consciousness, half political, half religious, has made one of the great factors in modern history; and, as we reflect upon it, we shall see that its force is very far from being spent, even yet. We do not go into historical proofs or illustrations: we merely hint the fact essential to our understanding of the name "Christian" in its real breadth of meaning. Mr. Johnson, in his "Persia," has finely told with what vigorous sweep of imaginative sympathy the poet Firdusi gathered into one vast epic the most widely scattered traditions of the great Iranian race. With some suggestion like that, the obscurest and most ignorant of Christian sects, through scripture, hymn, or missionary appeal, has had its imagination lifted and widened, so as to take in, however

dimly, grotesquely, feebly, a sweep of vision that marvellously supplements the narrowness of its traditionary creed.

Thirdly, in respect of Quality. If we try to put clearly to our thought the precise task and the best task which Christianity had to undertake, as a factor in human history, we shall find it to have been the long, slow, and hard task, *to create a new type of social order*, — that of antiquity being rotten and effete, that of barbarism being gross and rude. The essentials of that task were done during the terrible transition of what we call the Dark Age, — say from the fifth century through the eighth, — while the elements of it, and the law of its development, are found in its incessant reference, at every point, to the ethics of the New Testament. The process by which this was done makes the real significance in Christian history of what we know, very inadequately, as the creation of Canon Law. Our present business with it is this, — that from the type of social morals thus developed we have all inherited and grown, dropping some features, adding others, but keeping those most fundamentally characterizing it; so that, when we speak of Christian civilization, society, or morals, in distinction from Mussulman or Oriental, we know pretty accurately what we mean.

It does not follow that we prefer it always, or at all points, to other types or other forms of social life; still less that those trained to another will admit the superiority of ours. A few years ago, Lutfullah, a cultivated Mahometan Hindoo, a trav-

eller in England, made in the delightful record of his journey an elaborate comparison, on moral grounds, of English with Mahometan customs, particularly in regard to what we think our strongest points, family life and the treatment of women; deciding gravely in favor of the Oriental. On some other points, such as temperance and honesty in trade, we might perhaps more readily assent. But it is not at all necessary to decide such questions as that, absolutely or comparatively. What we are more or less conscious of, whether we clearly admit it to ourselves or not, is that — quite independent of our individual standard of right and wrong — such a difference exists; and that such qualities as we have are to be grown and ripened after our own (that is, the Christian) type of social ethics, and not that belonging to other peoples or other lands.

Comparing one time or faith or people with another, we are, indeed, far more apt to see the difference than the likeness, and to imagine that there is little or nothing in common. Even near neighbours are intolerant of their small differences; and, when it comes to aliens in race or faith, the feeling deepens to hatred and contempt. At the first hint of social customs that have grown up, unblamed, under the oldest and richest of the "ethnic" religions, — the Turkish harem with its eunuch-guard, the Hindoo Zenana and Suttee, the systematic infanticide of China, — we regard them with the same sort of abhorrence that we do the tattooing and cannibalism of a Polynesian tribe:

a feeling which is in part purely moral, but is in good part the mere antipathy and loathing which bespeak alienation of race and faith.

It does not belong to my argument to go here into any full description of what I have called the "Christian" type. That would be, indeed, to forestall the tens of thousands of excellent sermons which will be preached next Sunday in exposition of its several points; for men, like bees, toil unconsciously together in the dark, working out the one pattern which an unseen Architect has prescribed to them all alike. What I have aimed to do, all I have aimed to do, is to insist on the manifest but forgotten fact that there is such a type of character as I have spoken of; and to urge that this, not doctrinal or ecclesiastical definitions, is where we must seek the proper meaning of the name "Christian." That name, as most of us will admit, has quite lost its doctrinal signification; but it still means to us something, and that something is very precious and sacred and dear.

I have spoken of it, indeed, in terms of character, morality, social custom. These are comparatively obvious and coarse. Where we feel the deeper and nobler meaning of the term is rather in the region of emotion, — of aspiration, contrition, sympathy, trust, hope, and joy. For these we should seek quite another sort of symbol, — one which we might find, perhaps, in the common sentiment that runs through the myriad "hymns of the ages;" but still more purely in that unique form of Chris-

tian art which we call ecclesiastical music, — not including the florid modern "quartette," which is an outgrowth of the Pagan Renaissance, having nothing to do with Christian worship; but what is at once manlier, tenderer, and nobler, and has grown from a million longings, sorrows, hopes, and prayers of many generations. It is, after all, but a single type, from the simple Gregorian chant up to the stupendous strains of Mozart's *Requiem*. For ourselves, wonted as we are to the most sterile and rationalizing forms of Protestant religious thought, we have never witnessed a genuine monument, relic, or ceremonial, such as older countries are so rich in, of a faith that was once hot and fervid, in form however widely differing from our own, without a deep powerful thrill of sympathy, pride, awe, gladness, — spontaneous, and from a source back of conscious thought, independent certainly of all doctrinal assent. The blood of that life is thicker than the water of our thin clear logic.

Of course, we understand that nineteen-twentieths of the Christian world would treat our pretension of spiritual fellowship with scorn and contumely. The visible symbol and the spoken creed make the ordinary test, and not the "witness of the Spirit," of which I have spoken. The most radical and the most conservative of us stand together on the equal level of that all but universal "Christian" contempt. But our business is with the fact, not with men's imaginations or interpretations of the fact. The scornful denial of

the nineteen-twentieths does not cancel the law under which we inherit. It does not prevent us from saying, in perfect good faith and loyalty, that, by no choice of ours, but by birthright and inevitably, the name "Christian" includes us also, forming an ineradicable element in our higher life.

XII.

THE WORLD-RELIGIONS.

An address spoken before the London Ministers' Conference, May 30, 1890.

ABOUT eight years ago, in the university town where I reside, there happened an event which impressed me very deeply as significant of a certain change which has come about, quite recently, in our intellectual attitude towards the great Religions of mankind beyond the pale of Christendom.

A Chinese mandarin, a man known as a scholar and a poet among his own people, an instructor in the University, whose gentle and courteous manner and rich Oriental costume had made him a marked and welcome figure in our streets, — where his wife, tottering on her "little goat-feet" (as the Abbé Huc calls them), and his children waddling at their side, heavily swathed in their felts and padded silks, were often companions of his walk, —had died; and his funeral, with official ceremony severely simple, was held in the College Chapel. At the head of the procession, beside the President, walked the eldest son, a lad of fourteen, clad from head to foot with white cap and robe, the mourning costume of the Chinese. The

funeral service was conducted by the head of the Faculty of Theology. And here was the great — though seemingly almost unnoticed — interest of the occasion. For all the rest may have been but spectacle and form; but here was the interpreting word, to be spoken by a scholar of singular purity and refinement of thought, deeply read in the literature of the Oriental religions, who, with a felicity of phrase that seemed unconscious of itself, and a simplicity of effect that was the touch of genius, taught us the lesson of the hour.

The charm of that simplicity, I think, beguiled most of those who heard him from recognizing at the moment the singularity — almost I might call it the revolutionary daring — of the words he spoke. The University had been founded in the severest faith of the Puritans for the instruction of their own ministry, and had continued for nearly two hundred and fifty years strictly true to the essentials of Puritan thought and form. The Chapel was dedicated to a worship strictly and even austerely Christian, though under the most liberal interpretation of that name; the speaker was the official expounder, of the highest rank known in the University, of the form and learning of its religious thought. Yet the words he spoke were the clear recognition of that most modern of religious conceptions, — that in spiritual dignity the great religions of mankind stand (in the ratio of their intellectual range, or moral purity) on the same equal level. In the brotherhood of the Spirit there is no room for condemnation, or even for so much

of contempt as may be implied in the tolerance, of other forms of faith. The speaker praised the dead professor for having remained three years true to his own Pagan creed, though surrounded by Christian influences and forms of thought which he did his best to interpret into his own religious dialect. His reading of the Scriptures was in the phrases of Confucius and Mencius, adding only the brief comment, more familiar to our ears: "Now I see of a truth that God is no respecter of persons; for in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." And in the funeral prayer he gave thanks not (as most of us have been wont to do) for the salvation that came by Christ only, but for the Word that spake through the mouth of those far-away prophets of an alien faith.

Brothers, and fellow-students of that same Divine Word! I have dwelt long, perhaps, on this single illustration, because it really tells us all I have to say, so far as the range, the heart, or the vindication of my topic is concerned. I have no argument to offer, and no rhetorical phrase in which to plead, for that wonderful expansion of the faith we were brought up in, which has come to pass (I may say) before our very eyes. For the process it implies is one that belongs wholly to the last half-century, or a little more, of which many among us here have been eye-witnesses. I remember what an interest it was among us, when I was a child, and Rammohun Roy was a visible presence known and loved among our friends in England,— the in-

terest, that a Hindoo Rajah, a Brahmin of purest caste, should accept for himself and diligently interpret to his people "the precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness:" no mere convert, either, in the vulgar sense, renouncing his own that he might receive another's; for when, as we were told, he died and was buried among you, it was his last care that the scarlet thread should not be disturbed that marked his spiritual rank, and showed that he had not forsaken his people's elder faith. That, I think, was the first example that brought home to us the *fact* of spiritual brotherhood, which no boundaries of Christian or non-Christian may divide. And when, not quite seven years ago, the superb and fervid eloquence of Protap Chunder Mozoomdar was spoken to a congregation of our ministerial brethren in America, it not only lifted us, in imagination and sympathy, far above the level where those boundaries may interfere, but taught us another lesson of humility as well; for, said he, while I accept Christ himself as my teacher and my master, yet Christianity has not hitherto shown itself to us in such a shape and spirit, that we ourselves desire or are willing to be known as Christians.

Indeed, I cannot think that Christianity has generally shown itself in an attractive attitude or aspect to those of alien faiths. And here I do not speak merely of its conquering and domineering temper. For it is not always so. If we recall the names of Heber, Martyn, Brainerd, Colenso, Livingstone, we shall find as noble examples as in

all religious history, of tenderness, patience, devotion, heroism, justice, — virtues that impress most profoundly the common heart; but almost always with some tacit assumption that robs them greatly of their charm. The tone is apt to be patronizing, not brotherly. I do not undertake, however, here to criticise either the temper or the results of so noble an enterprise as that of Christian missions, which, as soon as we look at it a little closely, fills us with humility and astonishment. We only wish to see as clearly as we can the change of mental attitude which the years have brought about.

It has been said that in one of the New England coast-towns — and probably in others — the first liberalizing influence upon the old Puritan theology came from merchants and shipmasters of the East India trade. As soon as they came into those warmer latitudes, their crust of prejudice melted and cracked from them like films of ice; and, in place of the narrow tradition they took out with them, they brought home the germs of a broad religion of humanity. That was about a hundred years ago. And since then, as we know, the wide study of the world-religions has created whole libraries of a new literature, a new philosophy, a new ethics, a new sense of fellowship, that have quite revolutionized the relation in which the great faiths of mankind stand together.

In the main, the result of this century of new thought bearing that way would appear to be placid acceptance among Christian scholars of

what we have learned to call comparative mythology, comparative ethics, comparative religion. The first effect is tolerance — a neutral effect; a rather passive than active, and a somewhat disabling virtue. For, as we must remember, most religions of the world are fiercely intolerant: if our generous optimist, who discourses glowingly of that universal faith in which all local or race-creeds are presently to be merged, should seriously offer his alluring compromise to the Sultan of Turkey or the Shah of Persia (who was lately mobbed in his own palace for accepting the gift of a Christian Bible), without the backing of English cannon, he would run imminent risk of instant beheading or impalement — unless they should think him an inspired madman, and so shut him up to be worshipped as a saint! So that it is of great interest to us to see, if we can, what response our word of universal brotherhood is like to get from that heathendom which we so long to gather to our arms.

It would appear that we have not far to go for a very cordial response from the heart of Paganism to the common ethics and the common religious sentiment, which are the spiritual bond of our common brotherhood. A few months ago, a meeting was called in Boston of six or eight gentlemen who were to confer with a highly intelligent and educated Japanese government envoy touching the prospects of a liberal Christianity in Japan. The conversation (which I was present at) was a long and interesting one; but perhaps the most signifi-

cant thing in it was when this envoy said that, for his part, he saw no difference between a liberal Christian and a liberal Buddhist: neither of them made account of creeds, and their virtues were just the same. Now this remark of his may have been the profound insight of one who had studied the moral characteristics and penetrated to the spiritual identity; or it may have been the shallow surface view of one incapable of knowing the vast ethnic forces, the conflicts and revolutions of past history, the enormous growth of tradition that like the life of forests has melted into the very subsoil of regions a whole diameter apart, which make every drop of blood run different in the veins of each, and nurture a life of another characteristic flavour, that courses in every capillary tube or reticulation of vital tissue woven beneath the skin.

I have tried sometimes to understand how this thing really looks to a member of those vast populations, of a civilization and a culture twenty centuries older than our own, with whom the gates of intercourse have been suddenly thrown wide open to us within the last thirty years. How far can the great Christian tradition, which is so familiar and living a thing to us, possibly be made real or intelligible to them? In meeting them we are baffled first by their exceeding grace and courtesy, which seem all along to assume a perfect understanding with us though they have it not; and then by that fine and subtile intelligence of theirs, which catches so deftly at the novel thought, and seems to grasp the sense at first hint of the elusive phrase.

I should like to know how they explain the same thought amongst themselves in that dialect of theirs, which so defies our plainest maxims of grammar, idiom, and logic.

In this quest I went once, about five years ago, into an evening congregation of Chinamen in California, who (I suppose) considered themselves to be Presbyterian Christian converts. The Scripture lesson of the day was comprehensible enough, — the parable of the Prodigal Son; and it burned upon my lips to say a word of its touching application to these myriads of younger sons — for to the eye the Chinese population there is almost a population of boys — who have gathered together their poor little substance, and come into that far country with quite another thought than to spend it in riotous living. How could Christianity look to them otherwise than as a malign power, that chilled them with its icy reception, and scourged them by its cruel contempt? It was very strange to listen to their rude attempt to sing a Christian hymn in the uncouth accents of that alien tongue; still stranger, to listen to their chanted recitation of the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed. Did that grave code of Ethics rebuke, mockingly perhaps, the lawlessness they and their brethren had been helpless victims of? Could those ancient mysteries and symbols of Christian faith — could the words "Messiah," "Redemption," "Atonement," which they so fluently repeated — possibly carry to their thought anything of the inspiration, solemnity, or awe with which they are listened to

by those who inherit a tradition running back into far ages of faith? or ought we to desire that they should?

Questions such as these I could not avoid as they pressed themselves upon me, and the nearest answer I could give was this. These helpless strangers, cast in ignorant multitudes upon our shore, would fain learn the spell of that mighty, superb, victorious, implacable Christian civilization, which came to them in armoured ships and with all the formidable equipment of modern science. They would search our Scriptures, to see if in any wise they might find the key to that great and terrible mystery which the invading life of the West must be to them. If they could only catch the syllables aright, — if they could only pronounce the *Open Sesame* of that obscure world of strange arts, enchantments, and deadly spells, and a remorseless strength as of a demon-realm, — might there not be even yet some defence for that rude, gigantic, massive, but in comparison inert and helpless system of things, in which they and their fathers had been nourished?

But to come back now to our own proper point of view. I do not think we ought to be content with the placid contemplation of that wider horizon of ethics, or of speculative theory, which is open to us now that our narrow doctrinal traditions of the past, so sacred and dear to us through long generations, are dissolved in the free air of modern thought.

And it is not only, it is not even chiefly, this in-

tellectual expansion that I have in mind. When we speak of the "world-religions," we think first, indeed, of that which makes them world-possessions, not local, but universal. That impassioned Brahmanic poetry of nature, with its gorgeous symbolism that has gone through Greek channels into the very heart of modern culture; the childlike, quaint, ethical wisdom of China; those tender mystic dreams of the Buddhists, which throw so curious a sidelight on the Christian gospel; the heroic temper of the Parsee epic of Right and Wrong; the fierce, remorseless loyalty of the faith of Islam, — we begin by adding the memory and the meaning of these to enrich our studies of Religion in its larger sense. But we have chiefly to bear in mind its deeper sense. What is it that has made each of these race-creeds a sacred and inalienable possession to its own people? What has made it to them not a theory of the universe only, or a rule of conduct only, but a RELIGION, devoutly and passionately clung to, as the very soul of that nation's life? This question lies at the heart of the matter we are considering; and our answer to it will show us just where our touch with those world-religions may not dilute and weaken, but reinvigorate our own faith.

That answer we shall find in the fact that each has been received by its disciples not as a thing of human instruction or device, but as a REVEALED religion; and then, in considering attentively what it is we really mean by that phrase. Beneath all our speculations and discussions in this field one

constant element remains, — namely this, however we may explain the phrase: that what we truly call Religion first enters as a living fact into the experience of a man's life "when he finds himself, in whatever way, face to face with the Eternal."

That experience, I think, comes home to us in every deeper crisis of our own life, glad or painful, — when we are sensible (as it were) of living touch with that Presence

> "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,"

as the old Aryan poets saw and felt it, or when we have to face the Adversary that must be met and overcome in the battle of life, as in Jacob's wrestle with the Phantom of the night. But very few are those chosen and gifted souls to whom the things of the Spirit are the only real things; whose whole life (to our human vision) is spent in the immediate presence of the Eternal. Of such are the holy men and seers, to whom the veil is removed, so that, like Moses, they "see God face to face and live;" to whom the things of the higher life are directly revealed — by insight, not outsight — so that they become the revealers of them in turn to other men. Every great and powerful faith that has grown into a world-religion, so as to be accepted by millions and cherished through long generations, had its origin, it is likely, in the revelation so made through a gifted prophet-soul.

Now the actual subject-matter so revealed may be dimmed and distorted through lapse of time; its elements, if we could see them as they really

were, might seem to us very meagre and crude; the world's great life, historic, ethic, intellectual, may long ago have absorbed all that was worth keeping in it, so that the costly casket that enshrines it may be as good as empty: still there is the significance of that first fact, which is perpetually valuable to us. For the race and age that first received it, it was the revelation of the highest law of life — of conduct, of human relation, of ultimate destiny — which that race or age was able to apprehend; and so it stood for them as a revelation of the Highest, the Absolute, the Divine. And it is this element in it, which it is our first business to detect and explore by some kindred faculty in ourselves.

When, accordingly, we set ourselves to understand the religion of a remote age or people, our proper task is not to interpret a particular cosmology, or mythology, or theory of the Divine nature, or form of apprehension respecting a future life: these are but side-hints and indications of the direction in which we have to look. It is not to study a code of ethics, shaped out by circumstances far remote and unlike our own, so as cunningly to trace its root in our common nature, or see how it has led to conduct and custom which we can observe from the outside, as we study the ways of bees and ants. It is, to see for ourselves, if we can, how that element of experience which we have called vision of the Eternal has entered *as a live fact* into the individual soul. When Mencius says, "I like life, and I also like righteousness:

if I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go and choose righteousness," we must lay that saying to heart in the same shrine where we keep those other words: "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth it shall keep it unto life eternal."

It is of small account to discuss the date and authorship and literary phenomena of the Pentateuch: what we really want to know is what is meant by Abraham's call, and the sacrifice of Isaac, and Jacob's wrestle in the night-visions by the ford Jabbok, — after which crisis he is known as Israel, "Prince of God," and the wrongs and meannesses of his youth are all washed away; and what it was that Moses saw in the Burning Bush, so that from that hour he was no longer a timid fugitive or a dreaming exile, but a world-hero and a prophet of Jehovah! It is of small account that we have mastered all the schools of New Testament criticism, that we can place every incident in its right setting, and give the true interpretation of every text: our real lesson — however you may explain the highly symbolic language I am obliged to use — is what we find at the heart of the Gospel of Christ, and is recorded for us in the imagery of the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, and the Cross, telling how that living touch with the Eternal made the Man of Nazareth a messenger to all souls from the Most High, speaking as Son of Man to all the Sons of Men!

And now, brothers and friends, why is it that I have thought it worth while to bring this one thought from so far a distance, and to gather its echoes into one focus from that wide whispering-gallery which the great faiths of the world, broadly explored and deeply pondered, have become to us? It is because we are ourselves messengers and interpreters, to the heart of our own generation, of the same Eternal Word. We must seek the hint of it in our own heart, touched by the vivid experience of our own passing life. We shall hear the echo of it, if we listen to those voices — of hope, grief, awe, passion, lamentation — that come to us out of the heart of our own time. God hath never left himself without witness; and we must listen, before we have a right to speak. That burden is laid upon us now, and is the real meaning of all our painful endeavours and our weary search after what we deem the Truth. Like those processes of painful initiation at the Greek mysteries, so the degrees we take in filling out our course of preparatory study are steps towards the inner sanctuary, where the veil is taken away and we see face to face.

For the vision we look for must be found in the immediate life of our own time. Here or nowhere is for us the presence of the Living God. We may be sure — nay, we may see with our own eyes if they be not dimmed by prejudice and old conceit — that a new world-religion is laboring to the birth among us, even now, which will doubtless be clear revelation to our children's children,

though most men's hearts are hardened so that they do not see it now. "The younger generation are happier than we," said the statesman Cavour, "because they will live to see that greatest of historical events, the birth of a new religion."

Our first reason for believing it is this: that, such is the constitution of our human nature, a system of knowledge, opinion, belief, in proportion as it is clearly and symmetrically held, — a system of social right and obligation, as it becomes uniform, fixed, and orderly, — much more, an inspiration of duty, or an aspiration towards a more perfect justice and a nobler life, when shared by a generous contagion among the hearts of a kindred multitude, — has a tendency to beget a sense of sacredness, a personal homage and allegiance, a moral enthusiasm that absorbs all individual desire, interest, or hope, and clothes itself in the qualities characteristic of the religious life. Each of the three, — the intellectual ardor, the social instinct, the moral heroism, — when it attains its purest form and lifts itself towards its own ideal, becomes an avenue by which the soul may come to dwell in the realm of the Eternal. And when, for any era, people, or man, the three are perfectly harmonized and blended, then the conditions are made ready for the Eternal Spirit to come and make its tabernacle among men.

Now we may clearly see that the spiritual unrest of our time — nay, its very scepticism, pessimism, and unbelief — is the symptom of a mental struggle, which if wisely guided will be a victori-

ous advance, to that "higher synthesis" of thought and life, which is the nearest definition we can get of what may be a world-religion in the coming day. For some three centuries, natural science has been feeling its way in a wilderness of unexplored facts; so that our mind is caught, as it were, in a thicket, and no longer discerns the path of life that seemed so plain and easy to our fathers. It is only within our later recollection that its last and highest generalizations seem to be shaping themselves to a new and completer world-conception, which will be in better harmony with our thoughts of the higher spiritual life. In the realm of politics and society, a four centuries' struggle has been going on since the violent collapse of the Mediæval Order which had given a certain unity to the higher civilization for near a thousand years; and we find ourselves in an age of revolution, when men's social ideals are separated by a wide and ghastly gulf from existing fact. But it is surely only a reasonable hope, that the astonishing advance which our century has witnessed in industrial development and material wealth or power will be followed in the new century we are so soon to enter on by a corresponding development of social justice, the harmony of liberty and order on a far vaster scale than any that has been seen as yet. An age of Reason should naturally be followed by an age of Faith.

And again, when we consider the realm of the individual life: the domain of scientific necessity has seemed to widen and encroach, till it threat-

ened to wrap and enfold all the elements of our nobler being, and a generation is growing up that "have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." This, I say, is the present first effect of that invasion of the realm of conscience by the rude advance of materialistic discovery. It must needs be that this tribulation come to perplex our understanding; but it only shows the new conditions under which the old problem of man's life has to be studied, and the soul must win new victories of faith. That problem is not to be simplified by suppressing or evading any of its terms. All the elements of a vaster universe, a more complex order of society, an increasing intricacy of motive and perplexity in the relations of man to man, — all these must be met and conquered, one by one, before the Voice can cry again in the wilderness, "The way of the Lord is prepared, and in the desert is made straight a highway for our God."

And yet, that result we may be sure will follow, — as sure as that intelligent, wise, and devoted men will survive, who will give their lives to the task which it implies. But it is best not to content ourselves with prophecy. The salvation we seek is not a far-off joy: it is a present consecration. It is our particular privilege, that, while we keep in our heart all the gracious sanctities and the living tradition of past ages of faith, absolutely nothing stands in the way to hinder the clear vision of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell a more perfect righteousness. As stu-

dents of the Christian record we have listened to the voices of the Past, that have told us something of the life within those walls, set four-square, of the New Jerusalem which ancient seers beheld, "coming down from God out of heaven," in visions that have long comforted the fainting hope of men. But now we must look forward, not back; for, lo! before our very eyes those walls of separation, so long the necessary bulwarks and defences of that hope, are crumbling down visibly. We must look out, not in, that we may the better see how not one narrow enclosure only, but the Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the World and they that dwell therein!

And for us as Christian workers there can be no higher privilege than this: to do our own part, ever so little and ever so weak, to make that vision of a broader Religion of Humanity something alive and real in the world. I am not at all sure that this means any change visible to the naked eye in the outer frame of things we live in — the institutions and the organizations of society. "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation," nor is it a thing which the violent can take by force. Religion consists not in what a man or an age *has already attained* — whether of knowledge, belief, opinion; or whether of institution, custom, or set form. "We are saved by Hope," says Paul: by hope, not achievement; by faith, not works. Religion consists in exalting men's ideal of what is right and necessary to be done, — thus kindling their faith in something for

which they are strong to live, to suffer, or to die. It is not the building of a Temple, which is a task for men's hands and skill, with noise of hammers; but it is like the breath of Spring, which silently creates ten thousand forms of fresh spontaneous life, each after the law of its own kind. Its prophets and interpreters are few, but its power goes forth upon many; for those few are they who have entered most deeply into the life of their own time, and so can best guide its action towards the noblest ends.

These noblest ends, as our time conceives them, lie chief of all, doubtless, in the direction of social justice and equal right. And that purely spiritual vision, vouchsafed to few, must take its form and colouring from that great nineteenth-century inspiration. If ever so few and weak, it is theirs to make the vision a living reality. Their face is set and their steps are bent, in this our day, not towards any New Jerusalem with its golden streets and its songs of joy for the Elect, but towards a vaster City of God, whose law is the more perfect reconciliation of Eternal Right with the common life of men; in whose light we shall see plainly how the many world-religions of the Past were but steps, ordered in the universal Providence, that have led to the one grander world-religion of the Future.

PART II.

FRAGMENTS AND HINTS.

WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.

"We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."

A CERTAIN witness before a court of justice, describing the incident he was summoned to testify upon, went on to say, "I thought" this or that; when he was instantly stopped by the counsel: "We don't want to know what you thought: tell us what you know!" He had just been sworn to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;" and this, he was given thus sharply to understand, did not include his own opinion about the truth. That formula, in its incessant repetition in the ears of every witness, is a standing confession that what society wants most, and demands first of all, is simple *truth of fact.*

"Opinion in good men," says Milton, "is truth in the making." But for the uses of human life what we generally want is truth *ready-made.* And it occurred to this witness, in thinking over the matter afterwards, that it is just the same with truth as to the order of the universe, the law of life, the obligation of virtue, the destiny of the soul or of the world: once sifted down, what we say about these things, on which we spend so much of our rhetoric or our sentiment, is a statement of what is true or false in fact, as much as

the testimony of a witness in an action for assault and battery. For any real or permanent use, its value depends not on the eloquence or pathos with which he states it, but on whether it is true or false; on the pains he has taken to test its truth; on his ability to make the fact of the case clear to other minds besides his own.

In the revolution of religious thought which we have been going through in the last half-century, there has been a good deal among us of "truth in the making," as distinct from truth ready-made, or, at least, taken for granted. This freedom of ours has had its inconvenience as well as its advantage, — the inconvenience, in particular, of regarding religious truth as truth of opinion merely, or of sentiment merely, and not as truth of fact; so that one is often tempted to cry out, as the lawyer did in court, "We don't want to know what you think about it: tell us what you know!"

The great and powerful churches, Catholic or Calvinist, have never made the mistake here hinted at. Their system of religious authority, or religious terror, is built up on the assertion of facts, or what are meant to be taken as facts. The great strength of their appeal, or their claim to obedience, has always rested on the matter-of-fact way in which the assertions of the creed are taken for granted. Even where the creed has been sublimated into a mere semblance or ghost of dogma, "without body or bones," one is often struck with the great advantage its professors have, from their inherited habit of taking their foundations for

granted, and with it a business-like tone in their appeal, which too many of us have lost. But what a force this is when the creed means something real and substantial! "Cock-sure? of course I am!" I heard Mr. Spurgeon say once; "do you suppose I would say anything here that I did n't know?" A few years ago, a very intelligent observer in the north of Ireland was drawn by curiosity to hear a revivalist who was driving the neighbourhood frantic with religious terror. To his surprise, he found nothing at all of sensational appeal or impassioned declamation; but a quiet, business-like setting forth of the Divine judgments, which the speaker assumed that he knew all about, exactly in the tone in which a surgeon would explain to his patient the necessity of a serious operation which he had got to suffer.

The task of the religious teacher is to testify what he has seen, and what his hands have handled of the Word of Life. Most likely he has no opinions on matters of theory that are worth much to anybody else, — apart from the main body of wholesome opinion generally admitted, — whatever be their value to himself. Yet, such as they are, they have cost him pains, and he is very apt to plume himself on the many things he thinks more than on the few things he has seen and known. "But what shall I do with my Coleridge?" asked a beginner, fresh from the theological school, of a wise, eloquent, and famous preacher. The answer was to the general effect that theories of the universe, or of the Divine Life, may well

make the atmosphere of his religious thinking; but the real business of it is with those facts of daily life, the sight of which is common and open to all men. In a collection of Sermons, of some years back, I find the following passage, which I copy here to enforce what has been already said:

One might well doubt and question with himself whether he is able to hold and declare the great faith of Eternity amidst the wrecks of Time; at least, whether the truth he is able to retain as the outcome of all his questionings shall be also a Gospel, of power to save his own soul alive, and to afford an answer of strength and comfort to other hearts and lives besides his own: to do it, too, in simple honesty and sincerity with himself, knowing as he must the endless differences and uncertainties that hang upon every point of speculative opinion. My business here, then, must be to teach not what I think, but some few things I know. My opinions, such as they are, are not worth much, I think, to anybody but myself; and my speculations, such as they are, are worth still less. I should be ashamed to offer either of them as the message I am expected to bring. But the great Book of Life lies open before us all. In that book I have been a student for more than fifty years. And one must have been a sorry student, who should not have carried away some lessons that are no longer matters of opinion with him. Those lessons are some of them noble and inspiring; some, very grave and stern; some, profound in their application to our pity or sorrow or fear. It is not a teacher's business to mince matters. He must take those lessons as the Lord of Life reads them out to him. He must declare the Law of Life as it is made known to him, — as it is, not as he thinks it ought to be.

A NINETEENTH-CENTURY RELIGION.

I READ lately a very charming account, from the pen of an affectionate disciple, that brought back to me many a pleasant memory of a form of faith — I might almost call it a new religion — which sprang up something more than fifty years ago in the bosom of a Christian community, which laid its powerful influence upon the mind and heart of two generations, which had its definite effect upon a circle of events of great public importance, which had its own sects and divisions of opinion within itself not hurting its deep sense of interior fellowship, and which has already, in the form it was known by, passed away, having done its work, with the state of things that gave it birth.

As a separate body, with its profession of faith and form of observance, the sect it gave rise to no longer exists; but in its time it had all that we could ask to make it a peculiar and in some ways a very beautiful and noble form of our common religion of humanity. It had its witnesses, its saints, its martyrs even, and its eloquent apostles. It had its convictions so sharply defined and so sacredly held that its disciples had no hesitation to separate themselves from any companionship, however near, from any religious home, however venerable, that did not accept their faith in all its

austere purity. Its deep sense of fellowship was such as to merge all other distinctions of race, wealth, social position, culture (for it included the most ignorant along with the most refined), or sectarian belief, in a common brotherhood. Its self-sufficing courage was such as to reject without hesitation all half-way adhesion, that in the smallest degree compromised its one sacred article of belief. It had that sense of intimate communion away from and independent of all other ties, that the most solemn occasions of life, a rejoicing, a mourning, or a burial, could not be met as they ought without the company and words of its own lay preachers or advisers, who went long journeys to administer its words of comfort and its simple sacraments. Its creed interpreted the most serious duties of life, and its radiant faith coloured every emotion of grief, wrath, love, or hope that possessed the souls of its adherents.

What I have been trying to describe was the interior life of that remarkable body which has passed into history under the name American Abolitionists, partly as it was known to me in very near and affectionate relation with some of its saints and witnesses, but partly as it is brought back fresh in the charming narrative to which I have referred. It is hardly possible that the wider community indifferent or hostile to it at the time, or that a later generation to which its true tradition is grown already dim, should understand the full force of those qualities in it which made it what I have called "a new religion" in its day.

And, again, what I have said of its interior life does not proceed from assent to the precision of its doctrine, or sharing in the line of action it prescribed. But I hold it to have been a great misfortune and loss to any one who was then old enough to understand, not to have caught through sympathy something of the sweet piety and nobility of its better spirit. I cannot, as I write these words, think of any finer or nobler illustration of what we mean by the purest confessors of the great ages of faith than I recall of hours passed in intimate companionship with some of those brave souls, — in particular that noble-hearted mother of sorrows,* Eliza Lee Follen, whose generous friendship continued through many a difference of opinion to the end of her life. No one can have had near knowledge of any such disciples of that school as are here spoken of, without being sure that they would have gone as freely to the stake or to the lions, rather than betray an instant's wavering of their faith, as any Christian witness of the Martyr Age. These memories are recorded here, to make as living and personal as possible what it was that made the life I speak of not only a powerful force at the heart of a great political crisis, but in the strictest sense a *religious* development, unique and peculiar, the outcome of the most vigorous piety and the intensest moral feeling, probably, known to that day.

* This phrase is a suggestion of her portrait, painted by Gambardella in 1840, the first year of her widowhood. In fact, by native temperament and in disciplined character, she was as cheerful and buoyant as she was earnest and brave.

I have tried to indicate what is so strikingly shown in Mrs. Wyman's narrative, — that completeness of the interior life, adequate to every occasion or want that was consciously felt, which made this in some sense a religion by itself. The roots it grew from were nourished in the soil of many a Christian body whose juices they retained; and it ripened fruit of many forms and flavours, as warmed or coloured in different religious climates. But these differences were dominated or obscured by the one article of faith which the time seemed just then to make imperative. Its creed was of the shortest, — only a single article, and that a mere ethical axiom, with not a word of theory or a syllable that any one would care to dispute, — namely this: *The Negro ought not to be enslaved.* It was not the novelty of this truth, or its verity (which no one would contest), that made it the key-word of a new religion. It was simply that, in those particular minds, it became a LIVE truth: the ethical maxim was transfigured to the sharp imperative, *The Negro* MUST *not be enslaved.* And, as every such truth is part of a living unity, it gathered to itself all those affiliations of affection, courage, sympathy, resolution, hope, which left no sense of lack or defect in the hearts of those who accepted it. That one word, with what it involved *to them*, made it a sufficient bond of strength to all the conscious needs of a living heart and soul.

One could not come in near contact with this spirit at its finest and purest, without feeling a

certain remorse in case the critical understanding was unable to accept that simple creed, with its rigid authentic interpretation, as a sufficient solution to the vast and perplexed political problem that was then upon us. To many of us it would have been so comforting, so delightful, if only we could have received the faith in that short and easy way! But, as with all creeds, the moment the critical understanding was left free to cross-question its real meaning and application, divisions of opinion must come about, even in that inner circle of professors who in the sharpest earlier struggles had presented a united front to every adversary. The most ardent faith cannot be held proof against the assaults of reason, and in the long run it will be reason that proves the stronger.

But my purpose is not here to criticise that vivid demonstration of "ethics touched with enthusiasm" — some men's definition of a true religion — to which in its purely religious aspect we have ourselves owed so much, and which made perhaps the most characteristic moral force of the last half-century. My purpose is rather to show, by an illustration or two, how naturally one point of intense moral conviction becomes a radiating point, like an electric arc-light, — imperceptible perhaps in dimension, but filling the whole nature with an ardent glow. In considering the possibilities of religion in the future, we must learn to detach our thought from all schemes of opinion, from all historic tradition, from staking anything upon the accuracy of any point of theory. What makes

religion a vital power anywhere is the vivid conception of a Living Power in the soul, as revealed in some first-hand conviction of right and truth.

In one shape or another, the religion of the future must be a religion of humanity, — a phrase much maligned because little understood. But what it may be, as a guiding and inspiring force, in some larger revelation of it hereafter, we may partly realize by recalling its quality and strength in that one most marked spiritual phenomenon of our own time.

THE WORSHIP OF HUMANITY.

NO one in his senses supposes that "worship" (in the sense we commonly give that phrase) is to be paid to the human race as such, whether in the abstract or in the concrete. If there were an equivalent in English for so plastic and broad a term as the French *culte*, the grotesque misrepresentation of it, so common, might have been spared. Unfortunately, the English "cult," which looks a good deal like it, is even more narrow and rigid in its accepted sense than "worship;" and we must do the best we can with the materials we have. *Culte*, as I understand it, implies something of the emotion of "worship" and something of the formality of "cult." Probably we should understand it better, if its pliable Catholic antecedents were as familiar to us as the austere and lofty Protestant sense of "worship." Certainly, it was possible to make nothing but a caricature of the whole matter by confounding the two.

But, adopting the phrase under this protest, what does "the worship of humanity" really mean? Now, nothing is sorrier than our usual attempts at definition; and so, instead of giving one, I will ask the reader to recall those

lines in Longfellow's poem, "The Building of the Ship:"

> "Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
> Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!"

And so on, to the closing lines —

> "Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
> Our faith, triumphant o'er our fears,
> Are all with thee, — are all with thee!"

Here is a vigorous poetic expression of a pure moral homage, an ardent intellectual idealization — of what? The Union, represented officially, when those lines were written, by office-traders and slave-holders; the Union of the compromises and the Fugitive Slave Law; the same Union in which the same poet, a little while before, had written, speaking of its bondmen, —

> "What earthquake's arm of might
> Breaks his dungeon-gates at night?"

This last citation is a keen protest against a single wrong. The other embodies what, for want of a better term, we may call the *culte* of the American Union, — the passionate faith (as it proved) of millions of people; frankly and boldly, in spite of the coarser facts, idealizing an institution that included both that and a thousand other kindred wrongs. In a loose, large way, we call that popular devotion to an idea by the name "worship;" and Professor Seeley has shown us, in his "Natural Religion," how large a part of what is best in the religions of mankind has consisted in just such idealizing faiths.

Mr. Parton, in his admirable sketch of John Randolph, copies from Dr. Russell of the "Times" the story of a sick Confederate soldier, who gasped out, almost with his last breath, "Stranger, remember, if I die, that I am Robert Tallon, of Tishimingo County, and that I died for States' Rights. See, now, they put that in the papers, won't you? Robert Tallon died for States' Rights." And he adds the comment, that "nearly all on one side of an imaginary line were willing to risk their lives for an idea which the inhabitants on the other side of the line not only did not entertain, but knew nothing about." We say that the Southerners made States' Rights their religion. And we say right. For the real object of a man's religious homage, the real object of his reverence and faith, is that for which (to translate Paul's phrase correctly) he "gladly dares even to die." That loyal faith, dim and blind, makes a far nobler conception of religion than the complacent indulgence in intellectual contemplation, or pious emotional fervour, with which some of us are apt to confound the term.

But can Humanity be the object of as sincere a worship and of as willing sacrifice as the American Union on one side, or States' Rights on the other, proved to be in the conflict of thirty years ago? In attempting to answer this question, two or three things have to be borne in mind. On the one hand, this worship should not be confounded with the formal meditation, ritual, or apostrophe, by which members of the "Positivist Church"

have braved the ridicule and obloquy of their religious critics. To most of us at a distance, and, I confess, to me, these performances, as reported, seem a poor and cold imitation of the least attractive portions of a sacerdotal Christianity. But then I never saw them, and do not know how spontaneous and genuine they may possibly be. I dare say a description (especially an unfriendly one) of a prayer-meeting or a grove-meeting might be just as distasteful to me, if I had not actually been there, and known something of its genuineness, and caught its fervour. I am sure that a good many prayers we hear are nothing but apostrophes, more or less poetic; and the abstractions I have listened to, many a time, as they came from a Christian pulpit, were quite as empty as those reported of the Comtist "worship." Only they were couched in a less unfamiliar dialect.

Again, in our current fashions of speech, we strangely pervert and interchange such terms as "worship" and "service." For this, we have good authority, — that, namely, which says, "Serve the Lord with gladness;" and, presently after, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," — both, apparently, referring to the same act, and that act being the temple ritual. But it is certainly taking great liberties, even under so excellent authority, when we *identify* "divine service" (as we often do) with singing a hymn or preaching a sermon or saying a prayer in public, or sitting in a pew to bear witness to these acts. It would be well, at any rate, to remember that

this curious confusion of terms has two sides to it; and that, if the form of worship is so often designated "service," the form of service may also be the best reality of worship.

So, to our question, "Can Humanity be an object of worship?" we may very well reply, Certainly: of service, at any rate; and thus, in an accepted sense, of worship too. But this, we feel, is a little evasive. We will put it, then: "Can Humanity be the object of moral homage or emotional veneration?" To this we answer, Certainly not, — if we mean by it men as we find them; any more than we revere the crude patent fact of a Union of States represented by office-traders and slave-holders. We must idealize the object first. This, as we have seen, is the process by which a poet or a patriot succeeds in getting an object of homage and devotion out of such unpromising materials as were to be found in the United States of forty years ago. We might even say that we idealize the more intensely, the more we are opposed by facts. We see the higher possibility in sharper relief. I am not sure that there was not a purer worship of the Union in its evil days of forty years ago than now in its wanton prosperity, pride, and strength.

What moves my astonishment in some of the criticisms I have seen, is that the writers of them, out of pure unwillingness to see, should be totally blind to the cheap and common miracle that is wrought every day, among such humble devotees as Robert Tallon and the nameless millions who

are every day glorifying the possibilities of our commonest humanity. I am all the more astonished that this should be the ordinary prejudice of religious minds in particular, which might be supposed to know, at least, the raw material martyrs are made of. Of course, it is not the common mind, held in by ignorance, bigotry, prejudice, and hate, that can exhibit the worship of humanity in its purer and higher forms. It is only the capacity of such worship, proving itself under all sorts of limitations and error, that one sees in average cases. A very little acquaintance, one would think, with so much of history as we find in the Old and New Testaments, — still more, when our knowledge or our experience widens out, to take in the innumerable witnesses, high and low, to the capacity of service, the best one can render, without claim, hope, or dream of reward, — a very little knowledge (I say) of *the religious life as it is* should rebuke the poor and beggarly notion some men cling to, of what it is that ennobles and saves our poor human nature.

My astonishment at the attitude so often chosen by the Christian mind is deepened by another thing. Christianity is set apart among the religions of the world by making its object of worship a Divine Humanity. I have nothing to do here with the dogma, only with the symbol. As that symbol is generally interpreted now, at least in those forms of thought most familiar to us, "Christ" signifies not the historic individual, but the Divine Life indwelling in the soul of man, and mak-

ing the highest life of mankind at large. And, then, those who have made this magniloquent declaration turn about and studiously mock those others who have taken them at their word, and have found, or profess to have found, a real object of homage and service in Humanity itself, as the highest embodiment of Creative Power we can know anything about; nay, seek to confute this crude and blundering faith by dwelling on the meannesses, miseries, barbarisms, and crimes that disfigure human life as we find it. Alas! if we could not idealize, love, serve, revere that which the critical eye finds full of imperfection, but which the heart clings to because it is bound up with our common humanity, we are no longer capable of any religion at all, and there is no life left in us.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

THERE are doubtless many ways in which this sin may be committed. But of them all the most vulgar, as well as mischievous, is to declare that a prosperous scoundrel is more to be commended for success in life than a suffering hero or saint, unless their outward condition is somehow to be reversed in a future state of being; and that the hero or saint, on that supposition, has made a great mistake in not choosing to be a scoundrel instead.*

Perhaps the likeliest person to commit this particular form of the "sin against the Holy Ghost" is one who makes a professional gain of godliness, so that at all events it shall be profitable for the life that now is, however it may be with the life to come. But I am very much amazed that religious teachers, or teachers professing to be religious, do not treat that declaration with the contempt and horror it deserves, — especially in a period of history in which, on the one hand, there is a very wide-spread scepticism as to the reality of any future life at all: else, why should the argu-

* The comparison had actually been made, with this "immoral," between Saint Paul and the profligate Fouché by a prebendary of the Church of England.

ment for immortality be so incessantly repeated? and when, on the other hand, there are crowds of irreligious men — nihilists, anarchists, revolutionists of all sorts, as in Russia to-day — who stand ready at any instant to die for an idea, and who could not be bribed by any earthly prize to abandon a creed which brings them only imprisonment, torture, and exile, under conditions to which Paul's daily martyrdom was comfortable and serene.

The mystery of life and suffering is painful enough: our trust in some revelation hereafter, that will throw light on what is beyond our comprehension or endurance, let us by all means hold fast to, as firmly as we can. But, for the sake of all the nobler possibilities of human character, let us practise, if we do not profess, something better than a creed of unrighteousness and a gospel of poltroonery!

THE DEATH OF JESUS.

THE influence of the death of Jesus on his followers was more quick and profound than the influence of his life. Why it was so, they felt dimly and explained variously. Their explanations settled soon in the Jewish mind into the symbol of a Sacrifice, and in the Gentile mind into the symbol of a Ransom; and in one or other of these symbols it has been chiefly adhered to, from that day to this. But we must go behind the symbol, if we would get at the fact. That fact we shall find no longer in the form of a "propitiation" of Divine wrath by the shedding of innocent blood, — that quaint, strange, and abhorrent dogma, which has so warped the Christian mind for centuries. We shall find it, better, by attentively considering the circumstances of the time, and the state of mind to which it spoke.

What we call a "martyr" death — that is, death in "witness" of a truth; death voluntarily suffered as the sacrifice for an idea — is something very familiar to our modern notion. We know just what a martyr death is, in the case of John Huss. We know just what we mean by a "martyr people," when we speak of the Huguenots, the Covenanters, or the Hollanders of the sixteenth

century. But the contemporaries of Jesus did not know. How little they knew, we see even in the splendid eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where such truculent popular heroes as Jephthah, Gideon, Barak, and Samson come in to fill out a list that shows us not one martyr for the faith, pure and simple, unless it be the allusion to the mother of seven children in the Maccabees.

Two hundred years later, there was already a far more splendid and fast lengthening roll of Christian martyrs in the most explicit sense: take the pure memory of Blandina and Perpetua for example; and the world knew exactly what that particular phase of moral heroism meant. Something had come over the spirit of antiquity, Jewish as well as Pagan, that took away the terror of death, and made torture easy to be borne. What was it? Victory of the soul, of that sort, had been a Stoic dream. Read the Fifth Book of Cicero's "Tusculan Questions," and you find (so to speak) the drama of martyrdom for the truth rehearsed beforehand. But it was only a dream. How craven seems the spirit to which Paul himself makes appeal in his Epistle to the Romans! "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." The Greek (τάχα), to say nothing of the better sense, might tempt one to read, "would *promptly* dare to die." Those Romans would seem to have forgotten the devotion of Decius or the valour of the Tenth Legion in Gaul. Within ten years, under Nero's persecution, it was quite another thing. Martyrs came

fast to the front then, and a martyr enthusiasm was born.

What brought about the difference? It is none too much to say that the difference was brought about by the high example of Calvary, and by those words associated with it: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It is clear that the death of Jesus, voluntarily endured as it was, appealed in a singular way to the imagination, as well as to the faith, of his time. This had much to do with the fact that he went deliberately, with open eyes, in the assurance of a great cause for which he must testify, to meet an agonizing doom which he might easily have avoided. He refused to say the one word which Pilate almost entreated him to say, that would have set him free.

Martyrs, in that sense, were not common in those days, as they afterwards came to be in the inspiration of that example. On the other hand, there had been abundance of speculative and eloquent descanting on the nothingness of death and pain, and the glory of suffering for the truth. But nobody stood ready to put those fine theories into practice. There was suffering enough; but it was impatiently and angrily borne, among the Jews as well as everywhere else. There were abundant traditions of heroic lives, and even of martyr deaths, among them of old. But these great glories of the past seemed beyond the reach of a speculative, restless, complaining generation. A spell, as it were, seemed to have passed upon the higher moral faculty; and the best righteousness the age

could know was "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

That spell was broken by the death of Jesus. Those great words are true, then, which say that there is verily something better than life, than this earthly life! — those words which had so long been spoken vainly, as in a dream. A man can enter into that higher life, and become indeed superior to the fear of death! And so that act became, to those who could receive it, the revelation of another life than they had known before. The cross had "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." It was the one thing then needed — like the death of the first man shot in battle — to break the spell of the old fear, and to strengthen ordinary men and tender women even to court and welcome, as they soon after did, any form of death or torture, that should be their witness to the truth.

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN.

THAT which is distinctively a *religious* view of life, not merely speculative and not merely scientific, always takes account of an element which we are agreed in common discourse to call "mystery." In one sense this recognition of mystery is the mental act, or experience, in which religion begins as a fact in human life, — "when a man finds himself, in whatever way, face to face with the Eternal." But this is not to be taken in any narrow sense, as if it meant only that supernatural realm of Being which, interpret it how we will, embraces and enfolds all life like an atmosphere. Its expression is not merely in the doctrines or the symbols which speak to us of the transcendent truths of the Divine Life, the Infinite Holiness, the Eternal Destiny that make the religious view of things looked at away from ourselves. It is found, just as much, in the plain common solitary experience of life as we share it, needing only the observation or analysis of an open eye to discern it; just as to a fine ear there is a subtilty in the harmonies of music which we cannot account for by any mathematical measurement of the pulses of sound. When once it is recognized, we know what is meant by the religious

interpretation of life; and see how little this is accounted for by any analysis that would merge it in utilitarian ethics, or emotional piety, or practical benevolence, or a cultivated understanding.

The simplest of all forms of such religious interpretation is doubtless mere submission to the inevitable. And in this act of submission there is a sort of comfort, — as if the human heart, in its instinctive loyalty, accepted it as true that "whatever is is right." *It was to be* were the pathetic words in which a poor woman, in my hearing, appeared first to find solace in a crippling accident. But the real religious lesson of pain and sorrow is far deeper than that. "Behold, we count them happy which endure," says the most practical-minded of the apostles; and of the consolations of human sympathy it has been remarked: "that they *alleviate* exquisite pain is something; that they *transmute* the pain which must be borne and is borne into a healing and beneficial agency is more." It speaks more profoundly of the Divine meaning of our life than the common arguments of our religious optimism. Thus one writer finds an evidence that life is good in this: "If we are ourselves in good health, and will think of it, we find that there is not a single bodily function, from taking food into our lips to the violent energy of a foot-race or the rapture of sensation in a glorious landscape, but is a special and particular source of pleasure: just that delight, no doubt, an infant finds in winking its eyes and brandishing its hand; and just that delight, as in the luxury of dropping

off to sleep, the dying feel, as their conscious sensation lapses into eternal rest." But what shall we say of the opposite of this condition, where the conscious sensation is only agony and grief?

One recalls here the desperate picture which Milton draws, from descriptions of the "lazar-house" of earlier times, where it seems as if no alleviation of mercy or hope could possibly be thought of. But a more merciful age not only has learned faith in such possible alleviation, but has made the way of it open to many and many a sufferer. Even the actual relief of misery is an inferior boon to that revelation of "the law of the spirit of life" which it begins to make discernible. Take, in contrast to those unrelieved sights and sounds of woe in "Paradise Lost," the following account which Mrs. Oliphant gives,* under the comforting title "House of Peace," of a visit to a great hospital of incurables near London: —

I have gone through the greater part of those rooms, filled with indescribable aches and sufferings that are without hope, and I have found nothing but a patient quietness, a great tranquillity, a peace which fills the careless spectator — coming in out of the fresh air, out of the sunshiny world, where everything is rejoicing in life and strength and the radiance of the morning — with awe and respectful reverence. Some of these poor people are never free from pain; some are subject to periodical paroxysms of anguish, cannot move at all, even by the nurse's aid. And yet there is Peace breathing all round us. Not only no complaint, but a composed and mild endurance, often

* Copied from the "Spectator" of February 15, 1890.

accompanied with smiles, scarcely ever with a countenance of gloom. An atmosphere of cheerfulness fills, like sunshine, the quiet chambers. What struggles there may be in lonely hearts or tortured bodies, it is not ours to inquire. Such struggles there must be, or the sufferers would be more than human. But we can see nothing but patience and peace. Our hearts cry out for them as we pass from one bed of anguish to another, but from these beds there rise no cries. All is tranquillity, patience, a great quietness: the Palace of Pain is also the House of Peace.

"It would almost seem," is the comment upon those words, "as if *the withdrawal of all hope* tended, in the beneficent ways of Providence, to quiet afflicted nature, and to bring about a composure and calm of soul, which is proof against many keen temptations." Not, of course, in all, but in "them for whom it is prepared." In many of those who receive it so it is, no doubt, the reflex of a very positive belief in an everlasting life of conscious and increasing joy, to which they may enter only through the gateway of pain; but in many others it seems to be the simple, natural effect of that discipline of "strength and purification" which is the profounder meaning of pain, so that they are already, without knowing it, entered into the eternal life,—nay, as in some cases known to us, have felt a certain exaltation of spirit in the conscious sense that they have been thus singled out by the Lord of Life, as those worthy, like their Master, to be made "perfect through suffering."

AT SIXTY: A NEW-YEAR LETTER.

THE following was written in reply to a grave and despondent, almost despairing, statement by a friend, of the way in which the life-problems of religion had come home to him. The writer and the receiver of the letter were each just turned of sixty: —

I am deeply obliged to you for your long and very touching letter which I have just received, and cannot do better with the rest of my new-year's morning than to give you such an answer as I may have it in my mind to write.

It is a serious thing, as you hint, that the years are rolling over our heads so fast, and that others will begin to call us old, whether we feel ourselves to be so or not, and that meanwhile we seem no step nearer the sort of solution we hoped for once, to the questions we entered on together forty years ago. On the other hand, there is something very peaceful and comforting to me in this same thing. A good many have gone before, including my own father and mother, whom I had known in the fulness of their life, when they were twenty years younger than I am now, whom I have seen pass away in perfect peace; and I know that probably within twenty years it will be so with me. The thought of it does not disturb me in the least. It leaves room only for this: that I must do the work of Him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh, when no man can work.

I have perhaps too little patience with some men's sentimental reaction towards orthodoxy; because in the broad sweep of opinion this seems to me very clearly a temporary makeshift, which would leave a man all the worse after it, like waking from an opium dream. The fact is, the state of mind of the believer in the "ages of faith" was — always excepting the peace of holiness he may have attained — what no one of us would consent for a moment, even if it were possible, to accept in exchange for what the frankest and simplest materialism leaves us. At best, it was the chance of a paradise, with the immeasurable background of hell, — a prospect which no decent man would accept as *comfort*, however he might be forced to assent to it as *dogma;* far less than he would desire a pleasant park of his own, on condition that all London should undergo for five years the horrors of siege and assault.

Accordingly, I do not look back with the least longing or desire to any form of a more dogmatic or positive faith that has been held in past times. I simply admire and honour the moral qualities of fidelity, courage, tenderness, and the rest, with which it has been held. As to myself, and my own place in the universe, I am not in the least disturbed by anything that materialism can say, even if all its negations were accepted as proved. I have no anxious desire to live an hour longer than the system I live in has prescribed; and, so far as I am aware, should accept either side of the alternative with equal acquiescence: infinite duration, or instant blotting out of consciousness. I do not know why either of them (which I must share with all who have ever lived) should disturb me. If the glory of the first, it is so much, which I neither have deserved nor can apprehend, added to the immense privilege and opportunity I already find in living.

Why should I be troubled that I cannot solve a problem, of which no man has yet approached the solution, and which, in twenty years or twenty-five at most, will no longer be a problem to me? The best thing I can possibly look for in the interval is to be in some degree worthy of the hope.

So far, then, as concerns my own life and place in the universe, the question is very simple, and gives me no anxiety whatever. Of course, I feel that, like Dives, I have had many good things in this lifetime, and that, in comparison, the great majority have had many evil things. Still, strictly speaking, that touches me only so far as I am personally responsible for what I do or fail to do,—which makes the sphere of ethics, that is, of religion and morals, as I understand them. Whether the lot of that majority is better or worse than no life at all, I am not in the least competent to say. To say it is better, is to meet favourably the only question that can be fairly raised. To say it is worse, is to accuse either the Omnipotent and All-wise, which would be blasphemy and absurd; or else to accuse an impersonal System of things, to whose laws we have nothing to do but submit,—and that, if not blasphemous, is even more absurd. To say, on the other hand, that we can make life a hair's-breadth better or worse for anything that lives, is to put quite a new meaning upon it, and to open up all the possibilities of human character and condition: that is, the whole sphere of practical religion.

This, you see, is putting the whole thing on the very lowest ground,—not a ground on which, any more than you, I am content to stay by *denial* of anything that may be beyond. Still, I think it is a good thing, now and then, to accept that situation *provisionally*, and see what we can make of it. It is a good place to start from, at

any rate, however unsatisfactory it may be to rest in. Least of all should a man despair, and reproach or afflict himself, because for the present he sees nothing beyond. If there *is* anything, he will see it as soon as he is capable — by death, if not before. If not, he has still less occasion of self-reproach for not seeing what is not. He ought, then, in decent self-respect, to take a position at least as good as a pagan Stoic's: it is a pity if, after all these years, he cannot do something to improve upon that.

I should say, besides, that he should keep his mind open, and not shut, to all hints of the possibility of higher ranges of truth. And, then, that he should do all he can to enter, by sympathetic study and understanding of that spirit, into the larger and higher life of Humanity, as it has been lived by those who have done most honour to human nature and most good according to their opportunity.

And, for another thing, it means to keep in relations of as deep and true sympathy as possible with other lives near our own. I cannot, any more than you, solve these questions by speculation and argument. Very rarely indeed, if ever, when I have had to face them in the way of professional duty or personal experience, has the ground failed me.

THE QUESTION OF A FUTURE LIFE.

ALONG with decay of the old ecclesiasticism, many have felt their hold giving way upon faith in a future immortal life. It appears to me not wise to disguise from ourselves the gravity and extent of this change. It is brought home to us in two ways. On one hand, it is no longer possible to appeal with any confidence as proof to the resurrection of Jesus, because that is the very fact of history most open to dispute — to say nothing of multitudes of eager believers in immortality who would be only affronted and perplexed by being asked to stake it on an event like that, or the millions outside the Christian world to whom it is pure fable. On the other hand, as the terms of the question come to be better understood, there results a state of mind which feels that no testimony and no argument can cover the whole ground. To such a state of mind reason and imagination are alike dumb and helpless, when once it is admitted to be an open question.

In reality, it is not one question only, but three: If a man die shall he live again? if he live again shall he live forever? if he live again and forever, shall he live with his present thoughts and memory, bearing still in his soul the impression of this

transitory life? It is easy for the mind to repose in a belief which it never questions. It is easy to look forward if not with confidence yet with hope — with intellectual calmness at any rate — to the possibilities of being that may unfold themselves hereafter. But it is not only difficult, it is (I think) clearly and even necessarily impossible, to obtain anything like intellectual certitude by such process of argument as has commonly been attempted. The best our reasoning can do is to legitimate the belief when we already have it.

Let me state the point, if I can, with absolute candour and plainness. I do not at all undervalue the assurance which many persons undoubtingly profess. I do not think that any conceivable worldly gain, or prospect of success, or delight, or suffering, could weigh for a moment in comparison with the positive certainty of endless existence, including the judgments and compensations it must bring with it. Indeed, it seems ridiculous even to hint the terms of such comparison. But have I any reason to suppose that I can by any process of reasoning establish that certainty? I learn in history that the best minds of all ages, from Plato down, have spent themselves upon that matter, with results absurdly futile and vain if we compare the thing attempted with the thing achieved. I learn, again, that many generations have lived in undoubting belief of immortality through the Christian revelation — sometimes in abject terror at its judgments, sometimes in ecstatic hope of its celestial glories. I learn, still

further, that the genuineness of that revelation, or its meaning, opens that one question about which the learning, the critical science, and the honest judgment of our day are most hopelessly divided.

Such is the net result, the summing up, of near three thousand years of disputation. Now I have already lived for seventy years, and I cannot at best look forward to so much as twenty more. At twenty, as I can look back and well remember, I had a strong, intense, passionate desire to know the truth behind the veil. To that desire I may probably owe more that has gone for good into my own mental life than to any other single thing. But to my eye, at least, that veil has not yet been lifted. It is even thicker now than it seemed those fifty years ago. It appears to me that I can make a better use of my remaining time, than to devote my powers, such as they are, to attempting what no man has done yet in these three thousand years, — that is, a grasp of rational assurance in this matter, to satisfy myself or others. There is a great deal for me to learn yet in the present life, and I trust something for me gratefully to enjoy: something, no doubt, to suffer. At any rate, there is a great deal for me to do of a different sort, which I honestly think I can do, as I honestly think I cannot that. So I will not question and torment myself in vain; but wait and hope.

This, I think, is a right and legitimate state of mind. It is confirmed in me by what I see around me. I should have been afraid, once, to imagine how many I have since known, who have come,

gravely, sadly perhaps, but at length quite contentedly, to the same result. In some cases it has been with conflict and bitterness, after a hard, joyless, unprosperous, painful experience of life. In such cases I have deeply lamented that some way could not have been open, by religious sympathies and fellowship, to unseal the fountain of sweeter and happier emotion. Such sealed-up capabilities, such baffled and broken struggles, are perhaps, after all, our best indications of another life — such as they are; far better, certainly, than logical demonstrations, or the rapturous assurances that almost invite a reaction into unbelief.

Now to such persons, in their actual state of mind, it would be wholly out of the question to accept the common argument for a future unending life. In fact, they have no desire to look forward to it. The mere thought of continued existence has become a burden. Again and again, such persons have said to me that they craved and looked forward to nothing else than the repose of sleep and utter forgetfulness. Rest from toil, ease from pain, oblivion from the torment of haunting memory, — this negative bliss was the only boon they longed for. Any form of conscious life or activity — to endure even for another period so long as they have lived already — it would be mere weariness and pain to anticipate: the blank anticipation of an *eternity* of contemplation and repose (which is what it means to many) would be a prospect of unspeakable dismay. What can I say to these so widely different moods of mind?

What can I say to one class of minds, that would not seem to mock the hope or else to increase the burden of the other class?

This I think I can say, in the first place, with absolute confidence: that I am very much more sure that the law of my being is ordered rightly, than that it is ordered in any particular way. I do not know in the least whether unending existence would be best for me, constituted as I am; but I am perfectly sure that if it is best for me, constituted as I am, — which is the same as saying that it is in harmony with the laws of my being, — then it will be my destiny. I do not see that we need have the least anxiety to know more than this. To know as much as this — in the only sense in which we can be said to have knowledge of such things — is not a matter for scientific proof. It is simply an experience, an attainment, of the religious life. It is simply the fact of what in the language of religion is called our reconciliation with the will of God: that is, to accept intelligently the law of our existence. If any one craves and seeks a clearer certainty than this, then I say that his only likelihood to get it is not by any process of intellectual argument, but by cultivating the emotions and the forms of religious sympathy that lead that way.

One thing more I might say to such a one: that this great hope of humanity, if it cannot be proved, so on the other hand cannot be disproved, and should not be denied. The miracle of life is so prodigious, that it seems of itself to invite the

mind into that larger hope. In some conditions of life — in bereavement, disappointment, or hopeless suffering — I should say that one might do well to devote his best thought and endeavour to cultivate that mood of mind, to attain (if it may be) that faculty of celestial vision which always sees the heavens open and angels of God ascending and descending between us and him. To others, again, I should say rather: "Keep that hope in your heart as a treasure *in reserve;* do not deny it or cast it away, for the day may come when you would give all you are worth to bring back only a little gleam of it."

But I should also say: "Do not let any doubt that may rest upon it be an excuse for debasing or forfeiting your belief in what *is* high, pure, noble, generous in life. Above all, do not consent to that whining and craven tone indulged in by many religionists, which professes to find nothing to enjoy, nothing to be glad of, nothing to be grateful for, in this life, unless the Author of it shall add to it an infinity more of the same sort, or better. This last degradation, this most contemptible form of impious ingratitude in the guise of piety, — at least clear your soul of this. There is much to do in life — a task worthy and noble for the humblest of us. There is much to enjoy, something to suffer, for us all. Make this life true; and it shall be well with you whether for this life only, or for life everlasting. For the times and the seasons the Lord of Life "hath kept hidden in his hand."

HOPE, AS AN ANCHOR.

IT is the nature of hope, and the occasion of it, to lay hold on some definite thing, something fixed and certain, and use it as a working force, — as a motive of action; as a stay to resolution; as a rest to the lever with which the soul must bear against the world and hold up the sorrowful weight of it. And always its strength and its hold are in something which is out of sight; which is, as it were, the firm bottom in a tossing sea. No discovery of science will ever bring within our vision the ground on which it ultimately rests. No process of logic, no reach of learning, will ever serve to make into knowledge what from its very nature is only faith. Not merely that one who has it can perhaps justify it to no other mind but his own. Most likely it will be quite as hard to justify it to his own mind. But it is just as certain there — just as much the strength of his arm and the inspiration of his heart — as the far-off suns and fields of the tropics, which win the wild geese and swallows in their autumn flight, because in their simple heart that instinct, pointing to warmer latitudes, is fixed as law and strong as destiny. "For God hath made them so."

The strength of hope is found in the habit of acting by what is fixed and certain now, so as to learn

to trust it, — as much as the mariner trusts the safe mooring when his ship is actually fastened to the shore; as much as the farmer trusts the harvest when the yellow ears already break the husks, basking in sunshine and the October air. This is exactly against the habit we are sometimes advised to — of trusting nothing but what can be proved true and certain. If we wait for that, we condemn ourselves to a vain and barren dream. Certainty in Science, which deals with things that our eyes can see and our hands can handle, must come through doubt, experiment, and proof. But the processes of Faith, which deals with ultimate realities that come home to the conscience and heart, are exactly contrary to those of science. Faith must get its fundamental truths by experience and insight: there is never any proving them. Faith belongs to the things of Life; and certainty in things of life comes not from reasoning about them but from living them. The end of life, said Goethe, is an action and not a thought.

It is weakness not strength, it is scepticism not faith, that comes from waiting before we act till the difficulties are all cleared away. The difficulties will vanish, step by step, only as we ap-approach them. The battle of life, as most of us have to fight it, is a sort of campaign in the Wilderness. We can only see our enemies when we are close upon them. We can only meet them by going into the wilderness where they are. We can only beat them, often, by outflanking them, — that is, by getting deeper into the wilderness

than they are, and so beyond them. Now hope comes from the habit of acting by what is fixed and certain now — ever so little; even from acting by what only seems fixed and certain. If the seed is no bigger than a mustard seed, it may yet grow till it becomes a tree, and birds of the air come and lodge in the branches of it. "We are saved by hope," says Paul; "but hope that is seen," he adds, "is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

And this is the way, too, of immortal hope as the solace and cheer of this mortal life. It is no cant, no vanity, to say that we all need whatever strength we can get from it. We need it all. We need it, all of us. For no doubt the days of darkness will come to us all; the days of declining strength, of gathering age, of weary pain. And, for such a time, we need that light, that strength, that star, that "anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, entering into what is within the veil." Now I do not suppose many of us are likely to have it in the rapturous and eager way we sometimes read of in religious biographies, and are apt to associate, perhaps, with the natural close of a Christian life. It is a blessed thing when it is so. It is a kind of revelation of what we might not see without that help. It is like the vision of an artist's eye, which shows us a beauty and a glory in the world about us, which we should never have known but for that unsealing of our own faculty of sight.

But this is a matter of temperament, — an

affair, so to speak, of special grace. What we have a right to look for, and a trust to win, is a grave, steady, and quiet hope, — "a hope like an Anchor," solid, strong, secure among deep and eternal things. And I think it is most likely to be had, when we have dismissed all vain questioning and anxiety about the destiny of our own soul. God will take care of that. That, we may safely enough leave with Him who made it. If he loves it and cares for it, what fear have we? If He does not love it or care for it, — or if we thought so, — what hope have we? It is not on special favours to ourselves we rest; but on unchanging, wise, eternal Law — law which we know, as Paul says again, to be "holy, just, and good."

And this grave, manly hope, this patient waiting for what shall be revealed hereafter, this surrender, with no vain anxieties and alarms, to the True, the Merciful, and the Just, — this we shall be likely to gain in proportion as we quit thought about ourselves, and put our hand honestly to our appointed work, with as little thought for ourselves as a mother who tends a sick child. It is not for her own sake she tends the child: it is for the child's sake. Nay, the more completely she forgets herself, and thinks only of the child, the more sure she is of the reward of her faithful care. It is so that our strength and our peace will come. "It is good," said the prophet, "that a man both hope *and quietly wait* for the salvation of the Lord."

THE DIVINE JUDGMENT.

IT is worth observing that the apostle Paul, in all he says of sin and its penalties, hardly ever — perhaps not once — speaks of retribution in the future life. Of guilt, or evil in the soul, he has a very strong and constant sense. His own conscience had been stung very sorely (as we may suppose) in thinking of his violent and unjust persecution of the disciples before his conversion, especially his share in the martyr death of Stephen, which seems to have haunted him ever after. Guilt is to him — as it must be to any one who realizes what it is — the worst calamity that can befall a man. Salvation from it is the one great and precious gift that Christ has brought. But of its penalty, as a thing apart, Paul says almost nothing. The divine judgment, as he puts it, is all contained in the law of growth. Leave what you will, good or bad, to work out its natural results, and you have the strictest as well as the justest retribution that the Divine law could impose. What we, too, really want to see in all such things, is not the separation but the identity. We do not pretend to know what is beyond the veil of death, but we may try to understand what we can, by watching the course of things that de-

termine our condition now. The most tremendous sentence ever spoken, as well as the most unerringly just, is that we find in the last chapter of the New Testament: "He that is unjust — let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy — let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous — let him be holy still." No man can afford to mock, and no man can possibly defy, such a sentence as that.

And now, a word upon a view of the matter which has been far more common. No man, knowing what the words mean, — no man, that is, fit to receive salvation, — would consent of his own will to accept his own rescue at the cost of hopeless misery to any human creature. I cannot think what some people mean, when they pretend to thank God for their own particular salvation from a doom which multitudes are falling into every day. As if unending life were a desirable thing in itself — so desirable, that we must be grateful for enjoying it at that horrible price! I do not say it cannot be so; I do not say it is not so. I only say that to any decent man endless felicity for him, with an endless hell for anybody annexed, would be no comfort at all, but a very frightful thing to look forward to. Besides, it is nonsense to our better reason. Salvation is the fruit of holiness; and holiness must be one's free and constant choice. We know nothing about a blessedness that can be put upon a man from outside, like clothes or riches. It would only be tying apples on a twig, or roses on a bush: they make no part of the life; they only cover up the

life. What a man wants is not felicity, but opportunity. As long as he chooses evil he will have it —till it grows into him, and becomes a part of him, and the worst thing that can happen to him.

What we may hope, as to that other higher life, is that its drift, its tendency, to good may be stronger and steadier than we find it here. I have not the least idea that it will (as some people seem to suppose) make saints and angels of us all, all at once. I, for one, should be very sorry if it did. I do not want to be an angel. I had rather be a man as the Lord made me, with the faults and virtues of a man, —though the faults may be very many, and the virtues very few. I like to feel, always, that there is a chance of something better; and this means that there is room for improvement, and something to improve. How it is about the splendid or the terrifying imagery of the Bible about these things, I do not pretend to know. But I observe that the Bible speaks to us by the voice and imagination of men who felt very keenly the conflict of right and wrong, and went into it very heartily. I wish to stand by their side. Not before the throne, waving palms for a victory that is theirs, not mine. But by their side in the battle of life; that I may at least strike one good stroke before I die, to help in the final victory. I, for one, had rather be growing fit to stand with them before the throne, than to be already there!

PARDON.

THE *consequences* of an act are physical, and go by natural laws. What we call the *sin* of an act is a moral condition, subject to moral or spiritual law. These laws always leave the way open for expiation, atonement, pardon: which all mean at bottom the same thing — that is, that one shall overcome it, outgrow it, get the better of it in his own heart and life. There are laws and conditions that help him in this; and these are what we appeal to in dealing with sin religiously.

But first let us look back for a moment to the consequences. These, too, to some extent, we can control and overcome — not by imploring an act of forgiveness from above; but by practising simple fidelity here below. There are remedies and reliefs — as when we try to heal our child of a sickness or accident it has fallen into by our neglect. This very care and pains of ours may work by spiritual as well as natural law — by creating a tenderer and dearer relation between parent and child than there would have been if the child had not suffered that wrong. Nothing in all the world is more deeply touching than what we may sometimes see — the love of a little child, crippled or blinded, perhaps, by some neglect for which the

parents can never forgive themselves; while the child loves them all the dearer, unknowing of the deep pain which is the well-spring of that tender and devoted care. The parents' love has in it something of remorse: the child's love has in it something of the sweetness of an act of pardon. But shall we say the child pardons the fault it does not know?

Now what can we possibly mean, when we ask to be forgiven *as we forgive* the debts that are owing to ourselves? An honest man does not wish to escape the payment of his debts. As long as his means hold out, and he can do it without positive cruelty to his family, he chooses that all he can earn and all he can spare shall go to the payment of them. He will not even accept the forgiveness of them, though the law fully justifies and even offers it. An honourable merchant, who has failed and afterwards made a fortune, will not hold himself released from the old obligation: his sense of business honour will force him to make full payment when he can, principal and interest. That is a style of conduct which we sometimes see in men of the world. It ought to shame those religionists, who talk to men as if the one great aim of religion were to escape the just consequences of their acts, and shirk their debts by getting some one else to pay for them. On the contrary, what true religion does for a man is to make him honest enough and strong enough to look those consequences in the face, and take them without complaint, whatever is his honest share of them.

If he accepts a meaner principle, the mischief does not stop with him. That feeling itself which makes the life of conscience is deadened. That wholesome judgment which holds every man to the consequences of his acts is debauched and bribed. The very foundations themselves of civil society are undermined when the motive of private virtue is diminished: we have done what we could to make human life itself false, hollow, and corrupt.

Now precisely what true morality is in our relation to men and the laws of social life, that true religion is in our relation to God and the laws of the spiritual life. Let us look at it in the same manly fashion. In one case, as much as in the other, we do not ask to escape our obligations; or to escape the consequences of not meeting our obligations. If a man really cares for anything — his farm, his learning, his profession, his discoveries — he wants to do not as little as he can: he wants to do as much as he can. His aim is to do a man's full work in the world, according to his means and ability. And again: no man who does try, and who makes mistakes and faults, wants the wheels of the universe stopped, or set going the other way, to relieve him of the consequences of his misdoing. Any such concession to his moral weakness, he clearly sees, would be to increase the weakness and aggravate the harm. It is a law of life and hope we want, not a law of discouragement and death. The great gains in human power have almost always come from the

resolute effort to overcome some weakness, or make good some mistake, or supply some lack.

Mature life is rich with the fruit of such victories: as wood that is grown on an exposed mountain-side has its grain enriched and made precious by the storms it has wrestled with, by the bruises and scars it has outgrown, by the wrenches and twists that warped its fibre, while it was struggling through the exposures of its earlier growth. Every ripe and noble character, if it should suddenly be made transparent, would show the marks of similar bruises and scars; and we should see that what we took for a native grace is really the fruit of a moral victory. Our talk about debt and credit in our account with the Eternal is only a figure of rhetoric. It means the service we owe in a good life — a debt from which there is no discharge; or else the consequence of negligence in that duty, from which there is no escape. And when we speak of the forgiving that debt we speak in a figure or symbol: what we mean is the fruit of true penitence or faithful effort — that joy and peace which are in the soul of him "whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered," as wrenches and strains are covered by a new growth of fibre; as bruises and scars are covered by the growth of sound flesh: and this is a very genuine and a constant experience in the religious life.

STEPPING-STONES.

THE profoundest poem in our language, — or perhaps in any language, — regarded as a piece of spiritual history and experience, begins with these lines: —

> "I held it truth, with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

Now what are these "stepping-stones of their dead selves"? In general, we may say, they are any part of our life, or experience, which lies back of us in the past, and so is, in a sense, dead to the present; as we say, "Let the dead past bury its dead." All our past experience may be, and ought to be, a series of steps, carrying us up higher. This is the "ladder of Saint Augustine," where

> "All common things, each day's events
> That with the hour begin and end,
> Our pleasures and our discontents,
> Are rounds, by which we may ascend."

But, in particular, that phrase means any shock, any trial, any suffering, any wrong, which we have once succeeded in *overcoming and putting under our feet.* We were on a level with it once, or perhaps below its level. It came to us as a burden. It rested on us as a burden. If we chose to keep

it hanging to us so, — if we did not choose the effort of grappling with it and getting the better of it, — then it remained as a clog, a burden, a bitter and weary weight, a drag to our spirit. We were crippled, hindered, held down, carried lower by it, as a man swimming in deep water, who carries a useless weight. Put under foot, *the same thing* raises us up, and makes us stronger. The "stumbling-block" becomes a "stepping-stone."

No doubt we have all known persons — children, or grown men and women — who seem always to be weakened and discouraged by any such shock as I have spoken of. If it is any personal grief and trouble, they make no effort to grapple with it, or to turn their thought firmly to something else that would give them strength. If it is any fault they are guilty of, their sorrow is a weak and empty sorrow, leaving them all the more apt to do just so next time: like a drunkard, who in his hours of remorse is most pitiful and abject in his self-humiliation and confession of guilt; but at the next breath of temptation is the more apt to fall.

What is the meaning of that shock, that trouble of conscience, that sharp sense of wrong?

It is as the sting of frost. It is as the pang of fire. It is as the pinch of poverty. The pain is meant to put us in the attitude, and give us the spirit, to resist! It is by resistance that we are set on the road of recovery. There is a point where the frost benumbs us; where the fire stupefies us; where poverty makes men callous, indolent, and

hopeless. But our very business is to stave it off; never to come to that point; to keep ourselves sensitive to the sting, open to the pain and shame, as the condition of a healthy resistance to it and a complete recovery from it.

There are always the two ways to take. A man finds himself in debt, for instance; and for the present he sees no way out of debt. Now he may rack and torment himself — by toil, by self-denial, by all effort an honest man can make — to bring himself clear; or he may slide along till the pain of the shock is over, and glide on smooth and easy waters into the gulf of insolvency and ruin. He has been tripped up — once, twice — by what seemed harmless indulgence in an appetite or a pleasure. He may go on, forget all about it, and drift on the smooth broad course to degradation and despair; or he may meet the thing manfully in the face, and accept his present smart as a heavenly voice of warning. He cannot do both.

He cannot do both; and of the two the fatal way is almost sure to be the pleasanter and easier way at first. "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." The meaning of the moral experience is to put him in an attitude of resistance; to set the wrong thing he has done sharply over against the right thing he means to do; to make the dead past his stepping-stone to a living future.

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

TO listen to some of our evil prophets, one would think Religion itself was going to perish out of existence in the controversies of the day. I do not think any such thing; because to my mind the name "religion" means not any set of opinions, but simply the highest life of which the soul is capable. Nay, more: so far as the existence of religion, in any form worth having, can be said to be staked on anything, it is on its ability to stand with the free and unfettered advance of thought in any direction open to the human mind. Honest opinion, whatever the shape it takes, is better for the soul's true life than insincere and cowardly opinion, however precious and sacred the form it clings to.

Very much of the gloom which darkens life to many persons is simply the shadow of unbelief — that unbelief which fails to see or know the bright side of life. This shadow will steal sometimes upon a mind of a very high order; it will even make a sort of fashion in literature or in society. The modern pessimist does not proclaim his creed by loud tirades against gross evils, or by sentimental sympathy with the victims of a social wrong. He only strips off the disguises that cover men's real selfishness, jealousy, and greed. He only

shows how seeming goodness may be the cloak of villany at heart. It is half a confession, half an insinuation, that we, with all our virtuous emotions and our excellent intentions, are at bottom no better than the rest of the world. Perhaps so. But then this confession ought to go along with a very positive belief in goodness, with a real "hunger and thirst after righteousness;" or else it may come to be a meaner hypocrisy and a more disastrous cant than the other. The cant of a Pharisee is at least decent and orderly, and on the side of virtue. The cant of a Cynic assails that boundary which human nature itself has set up for its defence between virtue and vice.

And besides, it is a root of great bitterness in heart and life. What we call a genuine conviction of sin — if we are still old-fashioned enough to use the phrase — is really a strong conviction that there is something far better than we have now, or are now; that it is within our reach, and we ought to reach it. Thus instead of deadening, it quickens and stimulates our sense of moral freedom. I suppose the highest joy one can feel is that generous joy which springs from his belief and love of something higher and better than himself. Nothing makes him so strong as to feel that that better thing is within his reach, and to try for it. Without that, he is still in the low levels. With it, he is already on the upward track. To build on what we have — to mount from where we stand — to reach forth to that which is before — is the very end and aim of the religious life.

It is curious, if we only think of it, how little the world we live in depends, for what it is itself, on anything we can do; how wholly it depends, for what it is to us, on what we think and feel and are. If the eye is single, the whole body is full of light, says Jesus. And then he goes on, almost in the same breath, to speak of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field as signs of our Heavenly Father's care. "What!" a naturalist who is only a naturalist might say; "these field-flowers that grow everywhere about? that we trample under foot? that we do all we can to get rid of when they grow like weeds among our corn? that we find in the field to-day, and to-morrow cast into the oven for cheap fuel to bake our bread? What! these birds that build their nests everywhere and anywhere? that pick up their food as they can and where they can? that perish of starvation, or are cruelly stoned to death by boys, or are hawked at by owls and kites, and die miserably by many millions in every tempest? Are these the signs, are these the objects of a protecting Providence?"

"Yes, even so," Jesus might have answered; and I think he would have said it very reverently and tenderly. "What skill of yours or mine could have spread the tints so on the petals of the wild flower? brighter than Solomon in all his glory, yet cheap and common as grass-blades! is all that feast of beauty to your eye to pass for nothing? Yes!" he might have said. "See how curiously, how skilfully, nay, how tenderly, the little bird is fashioned for flight, and sheltered in its hidden

nest. See how all this bright world of sunshine and melody is set before it, as it were, to make its innocent heart glad during its brief life. Think how little it has to suffer, how little to be anxious about, how much to enjoy. And do not think it a hardship, either, that when it must perish — as we all must perish — to make room for those young broods which it loves far better than itself, it should be by one sudden tempest, by one sharp frost, by one stroke of the keen talons and the hungry beak, and it is all over, — not by the long misery of lingering pain. I tell you," he might add, "that not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father!"

So Jesus might have explained the natural fact, and shown how even the dark side as well as the bright side of things illustrates the same all-embracing Providence. But it took the open eye, the reverent heart, the believing mind, to see it so. It took the light that was in him, the light he tried to kindle in them, to show the fact in its wider meaning. And where a mere lover of science might see only a blind, aimless, and cruel struggle for existence, this serener wisdom sees in the same fact a fresh illustration of the Divine care and skill that have so provided for the largest number the largest chance of life and joy.

GOING FORWARD.

LIFE begins always in the individual germ. See, we might say, how tenderly the Father of all seems to take his child by the hand, as it enters this strange path of life, and to lead it on, from slow first steps, to the wider and higher way! Helpless, speechless, in its pitiful impotence, the baby lies — dazzled by the glare of light, stunned by the rush of noises upon its undistinguishing ear — the most forlorn and pitiable of creatures. But in that frail casket is hid the precious germ that will ripen into so rich and vast a life! All things are given, as it were, for its instruction and help. As its sight steadies and strengthens, it reaches out for the universe as a plaything. It catches at the moon and stars, as if it would pull them from the sky in its baby grasp. All voices of human love and tenderness invite it forth; kind hands stronger than its own hold it up and lead it on. As a bird's nest, lined with softest down, screens the fledgling till it is ready to try its wings against the storm, so our atmosphere of soft indulgence broods about and nourishes the budding strength; the Divine love is echoed in the tones and reflected in the loving eyes, that attend the frail unfolding life.

The first voluntary steps must take it out of that sweet Eden into a harsher air. The first conscious thought must break the charm of that blissful ignorance. The first wakening of conscience to a higher life will most likely be the wakening of remorse from the pungent after-taste of some forbidden fruit. It is a long and weary way, between the ignorant innocence of early morning and the solemn calm repose of the silent night. But when the shades of that night begin to gather, and the promised hour of rest beckons after the heat and burden of the day, — then to most of us, I think, it will come as a grateful memory, that we have been led by a Hand we knew not, in a path of which we were not aware, to an end that was peacefuller and better, if not more smiling and radiant, than our wish had planned it out. It is not then the delusion of self-flattery, it is grateful acknowledgment of a Power not ourselves that has wrought with us for righteousness. That Power — the law of the spirit of life in us — did not work blindly and vainly, but by a counsel and a wisdom better than our own. And we learn to think as gratefully of the Heavenly Father then, as we think tenderly now of the human love which broods so pitifully, so watchfully, over the new-born babe.

I say we may learn to think so. For it is not only a sentiment: it is also an attainment. It does not mean solution of the enigma of the universe; it does not mean explanation of the dark things in human life. It means fidelity in our

own appointed work; it means patience in our own narrow way. It may be that our thoughts about the Infinite, and his ways toward us, are as vague, as dim, as unreal, as those of an infant respecting ours would be, if it could put them into words. It may be that we have tried every theory of the universe which philosophers or pietists have framed, and have found them all alike to be less than nothing to us, and vanity.

But the religious life does not promise us the solution of the enigma of the universe; it does not promise us the interpretation of the mystery of our own lot. Its best fruit, very likely, will be not clear vision, and not triumphant faith: nothing better than that poor humble thing we call "the patience of hope." But then — "we are saved by hope;" and "hope maketh not ashamed!"

In our reading of the lessons of this life, I am not sure that we can get much beyond these simple words. Of course we can learn something — can learn much; and that learning is a joy, a privilege, and a delight. But all rests on mystery at bottom. A few steps, and we land in outer darkness. But see how it is in other things. The clearest-eyed science must be content to rest at last with the largest law that has yet been disclosed: call it gravitation, call it affinity, call it persistence of force — there is no accounting for any one of them. Just so it is with the submission of the religious mind to the highest law it knows of the inward life.

RELIGION AND MODERN LIFE.

"Friend, go up higher."

OUR sympathy runs out very quickly to the expression of strong feeling, so long as it is kept within certain bounds; but is quickly set back if it goes beyond those bounds. When I was in Italy, many years ago, I found that I was soon hardened to and irritated by the practised beggar's whine, which seemed very pitiful at first; while the cry of a beggar child, or the street singing of the blind, brought pain to my heart and tears to my eyes in an instant. In one case the cry was, or seemed to be, sophisticated and unreal; in the other, the strongest appeal to pity was in the dumb appeal of that most sad and piteous fact, blindness and poverty, most likely unpitied and uncared for. So the high-wrought rhetorical expression of feeling makes what Aristotle calls a "frigid" style, — cold from contrast, as Whately explains, like an empty fireplace on a chilly day. Now in no direction does the ardent expression of feeling outrun our sympathy sooner, than when it sets toward piety: which is, itself, an emotion that many excellent people do not feel very strongly. And so the exposition of the higher life as a life of emotional piety gets unreal and dim; and is often, I

fear, regarded at best with a good-humoured and tolerant contempt by many excellent people of the world.

Religion, again, has suffered incalculably from being left to the interpreting of ascetics, recluses, valetudinarians, and poltroons. It is a dangerous slope, said Maurice, from "the spiritual man" to the sneak. Consider what a robust, out-door, wholesome thing is the religion we find in the Old Testament, — in such types as Abraham, the emigrant Arab chieftain; in Samuel, the sternly upright and vigorous magistrate; in David, the shepherd-boy, the freebooter, the hardy adventurer, the self-willed, hot-tempered, magnanimous, capricious, jealous, vindictive king; in Isaiah, the king's counsellor, reckless in his passionate patriotism, sharp in his appeal to the popular conscience, the eloquent poet of a splendid future! What a loss and descent it is when we come down to modern pietists! None of those men were saints, or ever pretended or wished to be. Their religion was as natural a part of them as their delight of eye or ear, their wrath, or ambition, or pride; and it was what history has found worth preserving and remembering of them.

So, too, religion was worth respecting, and commanded worldly men's respect, in such men as the intrepid broad-hearted Luther; the patient, wary, courageous, and devoted Orange; the scheming, crafty, resolute, powerful Cromwell, — great forces, all of them, in times of great movement and change. Contrast with such men the puny and

sentimental religionists who to common thought represent the name now. They may be more clean of heart and free from guile than those strong and valiant natures: there is no need to disparage either the genuineness of their sentiment, or the tender and sweet fidelity of their work. But their interpretation of the thing, taken alone, warps the great name of Religion into something effeminate and unwholesome. What can the gentle recluse really know of the height and depth of those mighty forces which move the world, acting through the lives of strong and courageous men? What can a conscience morbidly tender, or a mind scrupulously narrowed to a single view of the Divine life, know of those powerful currents that sweep their way through history, or of the higher Law written out in all organized life upon the globe? What can he who habitually cowers in dread of the awful Judge, whose justice he dare not question and whose penalties his heart whispers him he too well deserves, — what can such a one know of the freedom, joy, courage, of the higher life? Scarce any greater harm has been done to the name of Religion than to leave it to the expounding of such feeble-spirited and abject pietists as too often claim a monopoly of it.

A like mischief — possibly even worse — has been done by putting the sphere of the higher life away from and outside of the present life. This cardinal error belongs alike to the pale ecclesiasticism of centuries ago, and to the timid epicureanism of modern days. It is wholly apart from the spirit

and sense of the Bible it ignorantly appeals to — whose pages glow, wherever the Divine life is spoken of, with the glad light, and are braced with the conscious strength, and exult in the abounding freedom, of a spirit that comes from a higher source indeed, but makes the very joy and strength of this labour-laden and sorrow-laden life that men live here. If in some downcast mood, or under stress of argument, Paul did say once, "If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable," that one lapse from his habit of cheerful courage might well be pardoned, the outward conditions of this life being then so merciless and hard. But there is no such reason to be given now by those who misquote his words. There is nothing of it in the Old Testament — where the times were just as rough, but where all the gladness, strength, and hope of religion are for the actual here and now. And all that is strongest and sweetest in the New Testament, while it opens up the comforting vision of the glories of a world to come, at the same time glows and throbs with a present joy that is felt to be divine, and is linked in, naturally and continually, with the experience, the affection, the duty, of the present life. Religion in those souls was felt not as a theatrical illumination reserved for some far-off holiday; but as a kind of sunlight, which filled and brightened the whole horizon of men's natural life, as broadly as they could possibly feel or think or act.

What narrowness — ludicrous, if we would but think of it — has been incurred by our modern

habit of ghostly interpretation! Because some fervidly enthusiastic Jew had gone out once in holiday procession to welcome his King with the waving of palm-branches and the singing of patriotic songs, to the sound of the best instrumental music of his day, and thought there could be nothing in heaven or earth so fine, and so composed an ardent "song of degrees" celebrating the event, — our children, at the end of two thousand or three thousand years, must be taught that Heaven is a place where they shall literally (if they are very good) play on golden harps, wave palm-branches, and sing psalms, to all eternity! till some poor child, in weariness at the thought of it, asks her mother, pitifully, if the Lord will not perhaps allow her, when she has been *very* good, to go away sometimes to the other place, where she may play with the naughty children Saturdays! To think of the grotesque cruelty, the real mockery and mischief of this thing!

The fact is — the more distinctly we see it the better — that Heaven cannot possibly be anything else to us than the culminating and idealizing of what we honestly love best and care most for, here; Hell cannot possibly be anything else to us than the culminating and idealizing of what we honestly most dread and hate. The higher life and the lower, the highest life and the lowest, are thus intensely conceived as taking outward colour and form in the gates of pearl, the walls of porphyry and jasper, and the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal; as realized to the senses in the

flames and anguish, the stench and darkness, the brimstone fumes and throngs of fiends, that make up the dreadful imagery of the Pit. It is a vivid, intense, descriptive poetry — a gorgeous and fiery phantasmagory — a poet's idealizing of Good and Evil in their most vast, sublime, comforting, overwhelming shapes.

If we compare the conditions of life now with those when that stupendous imagery was conceived, we are struck first of all by the immensely greater range of it in almost every direction, — particularly in the direction of knowledge, thought, and practical power; I might add, in visible splendour too. For example, it would have been impossible for an ancient Jew or early Christian, any more than for a Bulgarian peasant to-day, really to conceive a Paradise half so gorgeous as a Paris exposition, or an Omnipotence equal to the display in a Krupp's cannon-factory, or an Omnipresence equal to the electric telegraph, or an Omniscience to rival the actual attainments of modern knowledge. We have in such things as these as much grander a scale of measurement in the mental life, as in our modern astronomy we have of the outer spheres; and we are not going to accept those comforting words, those glorious symbols of ancient faith, in any sense more narrow relatively to us than they had to those who first gave shape to them for our instruction, our warning, or our true peace.

It is the expanding, purifying, exalting, of what we *do* believe in and care for, not the painful

effort to realize what we do not half believe in or care for at all, that is going to give back to the name of Religion its true honour among ourselves. I look about, to see where men find in reality that honest, sincere, and unselfish joy in living. And I find it not merely in the emotion, fellowship, living piety, and good works of professed religionists — though theirs is a sphere of life noblest and purest of all, which deserves its first place in our honour and desire. I find it also in the joy of widening Knowledge; in the joy of the discovery of Truth; in the joy of creative Art; in the joy of noble Music; in the joy of all earnest Work; in the joy of all higher Contemplation; in the stern joy of all strenuous Combat; in the pure deep joy of all heroic Sacrifice. These all make part of the higher life of man. And not till Religion generously welcomes and enfolds them all, can her name receive the cordial honour, or her promises win the desire or gratitude, of such hearts as those which beat around us now.

I say, "unselfish joy." It is quite too late, and the world has learned quite too much of the conditions of right living, to fall back like the old nature-religions on anything sensual, base, or cruel. Into that higher life can be admitted (in the words of the Apocalypse) "nothing that is cowardly, or distrustful, or abominable, or idolatrous, or unclean, or that loveth and maketh a lie." All such "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" — whatever that may be — "which is the second death." Morality does

not constitute religion: very far indeed from that. But morality lays down, with severe exactness, the foundation on which alone that higher life can rest. Morality prescribes, with sharp emphasis, that rule of conduct which is the only pass-word into the Celestial City.

Here is the difference between our notion of the higher life and the thoughtless, gay, unmoral religions of Pagan antiquity: whose ideal was the complete training, perfecting, developing of "the natural man;" a worship of intellect and beauty, which descended to a riot of sense and lust and cruelty and greed. Christianity, with all its errors and the narrow understanding of its disciples, did set up a lasting barrier against that loose and lewd interpretation. It made, once for all, self-devotion and purity of heart a part of our ideal of human life; a part of our conception of the Eternal life. It was necessary, perhaps, that that ideal, religiously conceived, should be partial, narrow, ghostly, other-worldly, for a season; since, in the tempest of human passion, it is more important that one shrine should be kept sacred and pure, however secluded, than that the better life should be spread out all at once, so widely and so thinly too as all to be presently dissolved away.

That was necessary. But it is necessary, too, that in the vastly enlarged wealth, power, beauty, and in the wider humanities, of our modern life, those partialities, narrownesses, asceticisms, should be done away; that Religion should be as real and

vital a thing to us, with the vast spaces of our sky and the developed riches of our earth, as it was to those whose notion of the Lord's kingdom would be included in one of our counties, and whose dream of the splendours of Paradise would be outmatched by the wealth of a single city. Their limitations of thought can no longer confine and limit us. Let only the fervour, strength, and purity of their spirit guide and inspire our own aspiration to the Eternal Life!

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