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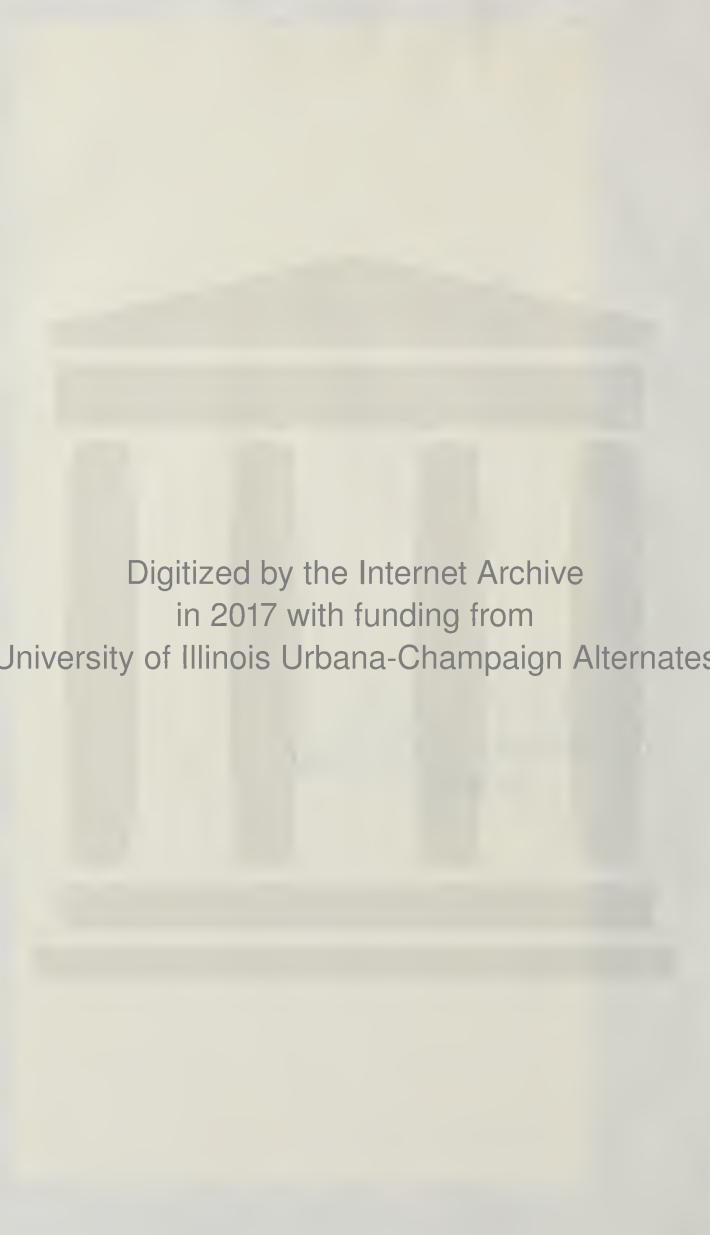
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The Biblical, the Ecclesiastical, and the Philosophical Notion of God,
and the Soul's Normal Delight in Him.

FOUR SERMONS,

PREACHED IN THE

Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends,

AT

LONGWOOD, PA., MAY 30TH AND 31ST, 1858.

BY

THEODORE PARKER,

Minister of the XXVIIIth Congregational Society in Boston.



NEW YORK:

JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER, 377 & 379 BROADWAY,
CORNER OF WHITE STREET.

1858.

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SOME years ago I spoke to you "Of the Relation between the Ecclesiastical Institutions and the Religious Consciousness of the American People." I am now here again to speak on great and kindred themes. You have no authoritative Scriptures; your Bible is the Universe, the World of Matter your Old Testament, the World of Man the New. In both there are revelations every day, for that canon is not closed, nor ever will be. With the catholic spirit of Universal Religion one of your Clerks has just read from the Scriptures of the Chinese, the Hindoos, the Persians, the Mohammedans, the Hebrews, and the Christians. There is one Material Nature about us all, one Human Nature in us all, one Divine Nature, one Infinite God above us all, immanent in each, and equally near to the Buddhist and the Christian, equally loving to all. He is no respecter of sects more than of persons. I wish to speak of the notions men have of God, and of the effect thereof. So, if your business allow and your patience will endure so much, I will preach four Sermons:

I. OF THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTION OF GOD IN THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

II. OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL CONCEPTION OF GOD, AND ITS RELATION TO THE SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS WANTS OF THIS AGE.

III. OF THE NATURAL OR PHILOSOPHICAL IDEA OF GOD, AND ITS RELATION TO THE SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS WANTS OF THE AGE.

IV. OF THE SOUL'S NORMAL DELIGHT IN THE INFINITE GOD.

These are all great themes, of interest to mankind—not least, I think, to Progressive Friends.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTION OF GOD IN THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire.—DEUT. iv. 24.
God is love.—1 JOHN iv. 16.

THIS morning I ask your attention to some Thoughts on the Progressive Development of the Conception of God in the various Books of the Bible.

In the human race nothing is ever still; the stream of humanity rolls continually forward, change following change; nation succeeds to nation, theology to theology, thought to thought. Taken as a whole, this change is a Progress, an ascent from the lower and ruder to the higher and more comprehensive. Individuals die, special families pass off, nations go under; and a whole race, like the American Indians, may perish, and their very blood be dried up from the ground; yet still mankind survives, and all the material or spiritual good achieved by any race, nation, family, individual, reverts at last to mankind, who not only has eminent domain over the earth, but is likewise heir at history of Moses, of the Heraclides, of Egypt, and of the American Indians. So of much that slips out from the decaying hand of the individual or the race, nothing is ever lost to humanity; much is outgrown, nought wasted. The milk-teeth of the baby are as necessary as the meat-teeth, the biters and grinders of the adult man. Little Ikie Newton had a top and a hoop; spinning and trundling were as needful to the boy as mathematical rules of calculation to the great and world-renowned Sir Isaac. The Progress of Mankind is continuous and onward, as much subject to a natural law of development as our growth from babyhood to adult life.

You see this change and progress in all departments of human activity, in Religion and Theology, as distinct as in spinning and weaving. Theological ideas are instruments for making character, as carpenters' tools for making houses. Take the long sweep of four thousand years that history

runs over, and the improvement in theological ideas is as remarkable as the change in carpenters' tools. You see this progress especially in the Conception of God, and in the Worship that is paid to him conformable to that conception. Here the change is continuous, and the progress is full encouragement for the future.

What unlikeness in the conceptions of God which Christian men have to-day! The notion of God set forth in certain churches differs from yours and mine more than Moloch differs from Jehovah. Certainly the God which some ministers scare their congregations withal, is to me only a Devil—a Devil who has no existence, and never appears out of the theological graveyard, where this ghost of buried superstitions "walks" from time to time to frighten men into the momentary panic of a revival.

The Bible has become the Sacred Book of all Christendom. It is not only valued for its worth, which is certainly very great, but still more for its fancied authority—because it is thought to be a Revelation, made directly and miraculously by God, to certain men whom he inspired with the doctrine it contains. Now, God must know himself, and that perfectly and if he make a revelation thereof, he must portray himself exactly as he is. So it is maintained in all Christendom, that to learn the character of God, you are not to go to the World of Matter, or to the World of Man, but only to Revelation, which mirrors back to you his exact image and likeness; giving you God, the whole of God, and nothing but God. Accordingly, it is said that the conception of God is the same in all parts of the Bible, howsoever old or new, without variableness or shadow of turning.

But when you come to look at the Bible itself, and study it part by part, and then put the results of your study into a whole, you find a remarkable difference in regard to the character of God himself, that depends on the general civilization and enlightenment of the times and the writers; the further you go back, the ruder all things become. Take the whole of Greek Literature, from Homer, eleven hundred years before Christ, to Anna Comnena, eleven hundred years after him, and there is a great change in the poetic representations of God. The same thing happens in the books of the Bible. They extend over twelve or thirteen hundred years; it may be, perhaps, fourteen hundred. Perhaps Genesis is the oldest book, and the Fourth Gospel the newest. What a difference between the God in Genesis and that in the Fourth Gospel! Can any thoughtful man conceive that these two conflicting and various notions of God could ever have come from the same source? Let any one of you read through the book of Genesis, and then the Fourth Gospel, and you will be astonished at the diversity, nay, the hostility even, between the God in the old book and the new one. Then, and at some subsequent time, look at the various books between the two, and you see what different notions of the Divine Being there are in this "infallible miraculous revelation of God."

Let us look at this great matter in some details, and to see just what the facts are, and make the whole matter as clear as noonday light, divide the Bible into its three great parts, the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, Genesis may perhaps have been written in its present form, about a thousand years before Christ, though some scholars put it a few hundreds of years nearer our own time; at any rate it seems to have been compiled from ancient documents, some of them, perhaps, existing thirteen or fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, though others are clearly later. The book of Daniel, a spurious work, was evidently written between 170 and 160 years before Christ. In the Apocrypha, the book of Ecclesiasticus is, perhaps, the oldest work, and seems to have been written about 180 years before the birth of Jesus. The latest book is the Wisdom of Solomon, of uncertain date. In the New Testament, Paul's Epistle to the Galatians is the oldest, and was perhaps written 58 or 60 years after Christ; the Fourth Gospel, I think, is the last, and was written, perhaps, 120 or 140 years after Christ. There are seventy books in the canonical and apocryphal Bible. With the exception of fourteen prophets, Ezra, Nehemiah, David and Asaph—the two authors of some thirty or forty, perhaps fifty of the Psalms,—we know the name of no writer of the nine-and-thirty books of the Old Testament. Of the Apocrypha we know the name of the writer of the book of Ecclesiasticus, of him no more; of others not even that. In the New Testament it seems clear that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians, that to the Romans, the two to the Corinthians; but I doubt if we are certain who wrote any other of its twenty-seven books! Here, then, out of seventy biblical books, containing the writings of more than one hundred authors, we know the names of fourteen Hebrew Prophets, two Psalmists, two other writers in the Old Testament, one in the Apocrypha, one in the New Testament—twenty men! This fact that we know so little of the authorship of the biblical books is fatal to their authority as a standard of faith, but it does not in the smallest degree affect their value as religious documents, or as signs of the times when they were written. I don't care who made the vane on the steeple, if it tell which way the wind blows—that is all I want: I don't know who reared these handsome flowers; it matters not; their beauty and fragrance tell their own story. We know the time the documents came from, and they are monuments of the various ages, though we know not who made or put them together.

Now look at the conception of God in the first and last of these three divisions. Of course, in the brevity of a morning's sermon I can only select the most remarkable and characteristic things. I shall begin with the oldest part of the Old Testament, and end with the latest part of the New.

I. At first, it seems, the Hebrews believed in many gods, and no effort of the wisest and best men could keep the nation from falling back to idolatry for centuries. It was not until after the Babylonian Captivity, which

began in 586 B. C., and ended about eighty years later, that the Israelite renounced their idolatry; then contact with monotheistic and civilized people corrected this vice.

At first, in the Bible, Jehovah appears as one God amongst others, and seems to have his council of gods about him. Next he is the special God of the descendants of Jacob, and called the God of Israel. By and by he is represented as stronger than any of the other gods; he can beat them in battle, though sometimes he gets worsted. Finally he is the only God, and has regard for all nations, though he still takes special care of the Hebrews, who are his chosen people. The book of Job, I think, is the only one in the Old Testament which makes it appear that God cares for all men alike, and this seems to be the only book in the Old Testament which was not written by a Jew. I think it is one of the latest books in that collection.

Now see what character is ascribed to God in the earliest documents of the Bible. The first five books of Moses are the oldest; they contain the most rude and unspiritual ideas of God. He is represented as a very limited and imperfect being. He makes the world in six days, part by part, one thing at a time, as a mechanic does his work. He makes man out of dust, in "his own image and likeness," breathes into him, and he becomes a living soul. God looks on the world, when he has finished it, and is pleased with his work, "and behold it was very good." But he is tired with his week's work, rests on the seventh day, and "was refreshed." The next week he looks at his work, to see how it goes on, and he finds that he must mend it a little. All animals rejoice in their mates, but thoughtful Adam wanders lone; he must have his Eve. So God puts him into a deep sleep, takes one of his ribs, makes a woman of it, and the next morning there is a help meet for him. But the new man and woman behave rather badly. God comes down and walks in the garden in the cool of the day, calls Adam and Eve, inquires into their behavior, chides them for their misconduct, and, in consequence of their wrong deed, he is very angry with all things, and curses the serpent, curses Eve, curses Adam, and even the ground. The man and woman have tasted of the Tree of Knowledge, and he turns them out of the garden of Eden lest they should also eat of the Tree of Life, and thereby live forever. By and by God repents that he made man, and "it grieved him at his heart," they behave so badly; so in his wrath he sweeps off all mankind, except eight persons; but after the flood is over, Noah offers a burnt offering, and God smells the sweet savor and is pacified, and says he will not again curse the ground; and he will never destroy the human race a second time.

To know what happens, he must go from place to place: thus he understands that the people are building a tower, and comes near enough to look at it, and, not liking the undertaking, he says, "Go to now, let us go down and confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech;" he scatters them abroad, and they cannot build the tower, which was to reach up to heaven. Afterwards he hears bad news from Sodom

and Gomorrah, that "their sin is grievous." He does not quite credit the tidings, and says, "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know." He talks with Abraham, who pleads for sparing the wicked city, beats Abraham in argument, and, "as soon as he had left communing with Abraham," "the Lord went his way."

God appears to men visibly—to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, and to Moses. He talks with all those persons in the most familiar way, in the Hebrew tongue: "The Lord talked to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with his brother." He makes a bargain with Abraham, then with Jacob and his children. It is solemnly ratified, for good and sufficient consideration on both sides. It is for value received: God conveys a great quantity of land to Abraham and his posterity, and guarantees the title; they are to circumcise all their male children eight days after birth; that is the jocular tenure by which they hold Palestine. God swears that he will keep his covenant, and though sometimes sorely tempted to break it, he yet adheres to the oath:

"And though he promise to his loss,
He makes the promise good."

He dines with Abraham, coming in unexpected one day. Abraham kills a calf, "tender and good." Sarah makes cakes of fine meal, extemporaneously baked on the hearth. Butter and milk are set forth, and God, with two attendants, makes his dinner!

While Moses was travelling from Midian to Egypt, the Lord met him at a tavern, and "sought to kill him," but Moses's wife circumcised her son before God's eyes—so God let the "bloody husband" go.

He is partial, hates the heathen, takes good care of the Jews, not because they deserve it, but because he will not break his covenant. He is jealous; he writes it with his own finger in the ten commandments: "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God;" and again, "*Jehovah*, his name is jealous." He is vain also, and longs for the admiration of the heathen, and is dissuaded by Moses from destroying the Israelites when they had provoked him, lest the Egyptians should hear of it, and his fame should suffer.

Look at this account of one of God's transactions in Numb. xiv. "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? And how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation, and mightier than they." And Moses replied: "Then the Egyptians shall hear it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of the land;" they will say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring the people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness;" "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people!" So, lest the Gentiles should think him weak, *Jehovah* lets the Hebrews off for a time, and instead of destroying

millions of men at once, he spreads their ruin over several years. "In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die!"

He is capricious, revengeful, exceedingly ill-tempered; he has fierce wrath and cruelty; he is angry even with the Hebrews, and one day says to Moses, "Take all the heads of the people (that is the leading men, the citizens of eminent gravity), and hang them up before the Lord against the sun."

Once God is angry with the people who murmur against Moses, and says to him, "Get you up from among this congregation, that I may consume them as in a moment!" Moses is more merciful than his God; he must appease this Deity, who is "a consuming fire." So he tells Aaron, "Take a censer, and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and make an atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from the Lord; the plague is begun!" Aaron does so, and the plague was stayed, though not till the fury of the Lord had killed fourteen thousand and seven hundred men! (Numb. xvi. 41-50). God hates some of the nations with relentless wrath; Abraham interferes, pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses for the Israelites, but nobody cares for the rest of the people, or burns incense for them, and so God says, "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." All the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites, are to be rooted out—seven nations, each of which was more numerous than the Hebrews: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them," saith the Lord. The Canaanites and Moabites were kindred of the Hebrews, of the same ethnologic tribe, but they could not enter into the congregation of the Lord unto the tenth generation!

"This God—powerful, terrible, partial, jealous, often ill-tempered, wrathful, cruel, bloody—is to be worshipped with sacrifice, the blood of bulls and goats, with costly spectacles by the priesthood, who sacrifice to him in a special place, at particular times; and God gives the most minute directions how all this shall be done, but he is not to be served in any other way, at any other place.

Such seems to have been the conception of God with the leading minds of the Hebrews at the beginning of their national existence, or at the later day when the early books were deceitfully compiled. Now see how much they outgrew it at a later day.

The highest Old Testament idea of God you find in the Proverbs and the later Psalms, which were written only four or five hundred years after the promulgation of those extraordinary documents which I have just quoted. In these God is represented as all-wise, and always present everywhere. You all remember that exquisite Psalm, the cxxxixth, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" There God is unchangeable; his eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good; no thought can be withheld from him. What grand and beautiful conceptions of God are there in Psalms ciii., civ., cvii. ! So in

almost the whole of that admirable collection, which is the prayer-book of Christendom to-day, and will be till some man with greater poetic genius, united with the tenderest piety, such as poets seldom feel, shall come, and, in the language of earth, sing the songs of the Infinite God.

There is a great change also in the manner of worship. At first it was a mere external act—offering sacrifice, a bull, a goat, a lamb; nay, God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and the father is about to comply, but the Deity changes his own mind and prevents the killing of the boy. Listen to this from Psalm li., and see what a change there is: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Look at this from Hosea: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offering.” Or this of Micah: “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?” What a progress from the early times! But even to the last book of the Old Testament there is the same wrath of God. The world has seen no such cursing as that of the Jews in the name of Jehovah. Take the sixth Psalm, and I will defy the hardest of you to wish worse and crueller things than the author imprecates against his enemies:—“Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the stranger spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children. Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. . . . As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones,” vs. 6-15, 18. I quote these because they are seldom read, while the devout and holy portions of the Psalms are familiar to all men. In Bibles which have laid on the pulpit for fifty years, and those read in private from generation to generation, the best parts are worn out with continuous use, while the evil passages are still fresh and new.

I think no Old Testament Jew ever got beyond this: “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob and hated Esau,” (Mal. i. 2, 3.) A Psalmist speaks of God as pursuing his enemies with wrath

“like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.” The Lord God of Israel says to his people, “I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.” “I have set my face against this city for evil and not for good.” If they do not repent, his “fury will go forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it;” and “this house shall become a desolation.”

Here is a terrible picture of the Hebrew God, sketched by the hand of a great master some time after the Babylonian Captivity. There had been a great battle between the Edomites and Hebrews; God comes back as a conqueror, the people see him, and the following dialogue takes place:

People:—Who is this that cometh from Edom?
 In scarlet garments from Bozrah?
 This that is glorious in his apparel,
 Proud in the greatness of his strength?

Jehovah:—I that proclaim deliverance,
 And am mighty to save.

People:—Wherefore is thine apparel red,
 And thy garments like those of one that treadeth the wine-vat?

Jehovah:—I have trodden the wine-vat alone,
 And of the nations there was none with me.
 And I trod them in mine anger,
 And I trampled them in my fury,
 So that their life-blood was sprinkled upon my garments,
 And I have stained all my apparel.
 For the day of vengeance was in my heart—
 I trod down the nations in my anger;
 I crushed them in my fury,
 And spilled their blood upon the ground.*

“Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits,” says the proverb; it is not less true of nations than of men. The religious, but idolatrous Jews met a monotheistic people in their captivity in Babylon, and came back with better ideas. Yet much of the old theological evil lingered still. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the author of the book of Daniel, devout men, intensely bigoted, knew only “the great and dreadful God;” that is the name the last of them calls Jehovah. But from the first five books of the Old Testament to the Proverbs and later Psalms there is great progress.

II. You come to the New Testament, and here you do not find much literary excellence in the writers. Wild flowers of exquisite beauty spring up around the feet of Jesus; only in the Revelation do you find any thing which indicates a large talent for literature, neither the nature which is born in the man of genius, nor the art which comes from exquisite culture. The Fourth Gospel was writ, apparently, by some Alexandrian Greek, a man of nice philosophic culture and fancy. Paul had great power of deductive logic. A grand poetic imagination appears in that remarkable book, the Apocalypse. But, taken as a whole, in respect to literary art, the New Testament

is greatly inferior to the best parts of the Apocrypha and Old Testament. It compares with Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon, as the works of the early Quakers compare with Hooker, Taylor, Herbert, Cudworth and Milton ; and yet, spite of the lack of culture, literary art, and poetic genius, in the New Testament as in Fox, Nayler, Penn, and other early Quakers, there is a spirit not to be found in the well-born and learned writers who went before.

1. In the New Testament, look first at the conception which Jesus has of God. I shall take it only from the first three Gospels. In that according to Matthew I think we have his early notion of God. He calls him *Father*. The same word is now and then applied to God in the Old Testament, but there I think it means only Father to the Jews, not to other nations. But it seems that some of the Greeks and Jews in Jesus's own time applied it to him, as if he were the father of all men. As Jesus makes the Lord's Prayer out of the litanies which were current in his time, so he uses the common name for the Deity in the common sense. With him God alone is good, and our Father which is in heaven is perfect. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." He pities and forgives the penitent, as in that remarkable story of the Prodigal Son. With what tender love does Jesus say, "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance." Such noble thoughts come out in that time as "shines a good deed in a naughty world." But what becomes of the impenitent wicked? God has no love for them; they shall go into everlasting punishment. So alongside of God there is a Devil, and to the left hand of heaven, there is a dreadful, fiery, endless hell, whither a broad way leads down, and the wide gates stand ever open, and many there be who go in thereat.

At first Jesus limited his teachings to the Jews; he would not take the children's bread and give it unto the dogs; he declared that not a jot or tittle of the Mosaic ceremonial law should ever fail; he told his disciples to keep all that the Scribes and Pharisees commanded, because they sat in Moses's seat. But by-and-by he nobly breaks with Judaism, violates the ritual law, puts his new wine into new bottles. With admirable depth of intuitive sight he sums up religion in one word, *Love*—love to God with all the heart, and to one's neighbor as himself. Fear of God seldom appears in the words of Jesus. Fear is the religion of the Old Testament. Mercy is better than sacrifice. Men go up to heaven for righteousness and philanthropy, and no question is asked about creed or form. Other men go down to hell for ungodliness; and no straining at a gnat would ever save him who would swallow down a whole camel of iniquity. Human literature cannot show a dearer example of tenderness to a penitent wicked man than you see in the story of the Prodigal Son, which yet the first Evangelist rejected, and two others left without mention.

All nationality disappears before Jesus. His model man is a Samaritan. We hear that word commonly used, and do not understand that the Jews hated a Samaritan as the old New England Federalists hated a Jacobin, as

the British used to hate a Frenchman, or as a Southern slaveholder hates a Black Republican to-day. Depend upon it, it created as much sensation amongst men who heard it when Jesus told this story of the Good Samaritan, as it would in Virginia to have some one represent a Negro as superior to all the "first families" of the State, on account of some great charity that he had done.

I do not find that Jesus altered the common idea of God which he found. He was too intent on practical righteousness to attend to that. Besides, he was cut off when but about thirty years of age; had he lived longer, it may be that he would have reformed the popular notion of God; for there are some things in the words that drop like honey from his lips which to me indicate a religious feeling far beyond his thought.

2. In the writings of Paul you find more speculation about God than with Jesus; for Paul was mainly a theological man, as Jesus was mainly a pious and philanthropic man. Jesus could start a great religious movement; Paul could make a theology out of his hints, and found a sect. But the most important characteristic of Paul's idea of God is this: God's wrath was against all ungodliness in Jew or Gentile, and he was as accessible to Gentile as to Jew. Nationality vanishes; all men are one in Christ Jesus; God is God to all, to punish the wicked and reward the righteous who have faith in Christ; the Jews are as wicked as the rest of mankind, and are to be equally saved by faith in Christ, and by that alone. Paul's Christ is not the Jesus of History, but a mythological being he conjured up from his own fancy. He says that the invisible God is clearly made known by the visible material world, and conscience announces God's law to the Gentiles as effectually as revelation declares it to the Jews. That is a great improvement on the Old Testament idea of God, as presented even in the Psalms.

3. In the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle attributed to John—both incorrectly attributed to him—the idea of God goes higher than elsewhere in the New Testament. God is mainly love. He dwells in the souls of men who love each other and love him, and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, not only in Jerusalem, but anywhere and everywhere. Perfect love casteth out fear.

This God has an Only-begotten Son, to whom he has given the Spirit without measure, put all things under his hand; he who believes on the Son shall have everlasting life, but he who does not believe on the Son shall not see life. Christ's commandment is that they love one another, and to those God will give another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who shall abide with believers forever; nay, Christ will manifest himself to them.

But this God has created a Devil, who will send all unbelievers into endless torment.

Thus ends the last book of the New Testament. What a change from Genesis to the Fourth Gospel! What a difference between the God who eats veal and fresh bread with Abraham, and commands him to make a burnt offering of his own son, who conveys all Palestine on such a jocular

tenure, and the God whom no man hath seen at any time; who is Spirit and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; who is love, and who dwells with all loving and believing souls! There are I know not how many hundred years between the two—what a series of revolutions! what vast progress of mankind had filled up that brief period of time!

But the idea of God which you gather from the Bible is quite unsatisfactory to a thoughtful and deeply religious man to-day. In the Old Testament there is no God who loves the Gentiles; he made the world for the Jews; all others are only servants—means, not ends. This being so, the Hebrew thought himself the only favorite of God; his patriotism became intense contempt for all other nations—was a part of his religion. In the New Testament, the God whom even Jesus sets before mankind has no love for the wicked; there is no Providence for them; at the last judgment he sends them all to hell, bottomless, endless, without hope; their worm dieth not, their fire is not quenched; no Lazarus from Abraham's bosom will ever give Dives a single drop of water to cool his tongue, tormented in that flame. Jesus tells of God, also of the Devil; of heaven, with its eternal blessedness awaiting every righteous man, and of the eternal torment not less open and waiting for every one who dies impenitent. Paul narrows still more this love of God towards men; it includes only such as have faith in Christ; no man is to be saved who does not believe in Paul's idea of Christ. The author of the Apocalypse constricts it still further yet; he would cast out Paul from heaven; Paul is called a "liar," "of the Synagogue of Satan," and other similar names. The Fourth Gospel limits salvation to such as believe the author's theory of Christ, that he was a God, and the only-begotten Son of God, an idea which none of the three Evangelists, nor Paul, nor James, nor Simon Peter, seems ever to have entertained. I think that Jesus never held such a doctrine as what Paul and the writer of the Fourth Gospel makes indispensable to salvation.

To the Jews every Gentile seemed an outcast from God's providence. To the early followers of Jesus all unbelievers were also outcasts; "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." I find no adequate reason for thinking Jesus ever spoke these words, found only in the doubtful addition to the second canonical Gospel. Yet there seems evidence enough to show that Jesus himself really taught that ghastly doctrine, that a great wickedness-unrepented of entailed eternal damnation on an immortal soul! Paul says human love never fails; it suffers long and is kind, and yet both he and the man whom he half worshipped, teach that God has no love for the wicked man who dies in his impenitence; endless misery is his only destination. Neither in the Old Testament nor in the New do you find the God of infinite perfection, infinite power, wisdom, justice, love; it is always a limited God, a Deity with imperfect wisdom, justice, love; God with a Devil beside him, the created fiend getting the victory over his Creator! The Bible does not know that Infinite God, who is immanent in the World of Matter and Man,

and also lives in these flowers, in yonder stars, in every drop of blood in our veins; who works everywhere by law, a constant mode of operation of natural power in Matter and in Man. It is never the dear God who is responsible for the welfare of all and each, a Father so tender that he loves the wickedest of men as no mortal mother can love her only child. Does this surprise you? When mankind was a child, he thought as a child, and understood as a child; when he becomes a man he will put away childish things.

How full of encouragement is the fact of such a growth in man's conception of God, and his mode of serving him! In the beginning of Hebrew history, great power, great self-esteem, and great destructiveness, are the chief qualities that men ascribe to God. Abraham would serve him by sacrificing Isaac; Joshua, a great Hebrew fillibuster, by the butchery of whole nations of men, sparing the cattle, which he might keep as property, but not the women and children. This was counted service of God, and imputed to such marauders for righteousness. In the notion of God set forth in the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle ascribed to John, it is love which preponderates, and by love only are men to serve God. With Jesus it is only goodness which admits men to the kingdom of heaven, and there is no question asked about the nation, creed, or form; but this sweet benediction is pronounced: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me;" "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

Shall you and I stop where the New Testament did? We cannot, if we would, and it is impious to try. What if Moses had been content with the Egyptian chaos of a Deity, "where every clove of garlic was a god;" what if Jesus had never broke with the narrow bounds of Judaism; what if Paul had been content with "such as were Apostles before him," and had stuck at new moons, full moons, circumcision and other abominations, which neither he nor his fathers were able to bear; where would have been the Christian Church, and where the progress of mankind? No, we shall not stop! It would be contrary to the spirit of Moses, and still more contrary to the spirit of Jesus, to attempt to arrest the theological and religious progress of mankind.

God in Genesis represents the conception of the babyhood of humanity. Manhood demands a different conception. All round us lies the World of Matter, this vast world above us and about us and beneath; it proclaims the God of Nature; flower speaking unto flower, star quiring unto star; a God who is resident therein, his law never broke. In us is a World of Consciousness, and as that mirror is made clearer by civilization, I look down and behold the Natural Idea of God, Infinite Cause and Providence, Father and Mother to all that are. Into our reverent souls God will come as the morning light into the bosom of the opening rose. Just in proportion as we are faithful, we shall be inspired therewith, and shall frame "conceptions equal to the soul's desires," and then in our practice keep those "heights which the soul is competent to win."

SERMON II.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL CONCEPTION, OF GOD, AND ITS RELATION
TO THE SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS WANTS OF MAN.

The great and dreadful God.—DANIEL ix. 4.

Our Father which art in heaven.—MATTHEW vi. 9.

IN the Religion of civilized man there are three things:—Piety—the love of God, the Sentimental part; Morality—obedience to God's natural laws, the Practical part; and Theology—thoughts about God and Man and their relation, the Intellectual part. The Theology will have great influence on the Piety and the Morality, a true Theology helping the normal development of Religion, which a false Theology hinders. There are two methods of creating a Theology,—a scheme of doctrines about God and Man, and the relation between them, viz.: the Ecclesiastical and the Philosophical.*

The various sects which make up the Christian Church pursue the Ecclesiastical method. They take the Bible for a miraculous and infallible revelation from God—in all matters containing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—and thence derive their doctrines, Catholic, Protestant, Trinitarian, Unitarian, Damnationist or Salvationist. Of course they follow that method in forming the Ecclesiastical Conception of God, in which the Christian sects mainly agree. They take the whole of the Bible, from Genesis to the Fourth Gospel, as God's miraculous affidavit; they gather together all which it says about God, and from that make up the Ecclesiastical Conception as a finality. The Biblical sayings are taken for God's deposition as to the facts of his nature, character, plan, modes of operation—God's word, his last word; they are a finality—all the evidence in the case; nothing is to be added thereto, and naught taken thence away. Accordingly the statement of a writer in the half-savage age of a ferocious people is just as valuable, true, and obligatory for all time, as that of a refined, enlightened, religious man in a civilized age and nation; for they are all equally God's testimony in the case, his miraculous deposition; God puts himself on his *voir dire*, and it is of no consequence which justice of revelation records the affidavit of the Divine Deponent. The deposition is alike perfect and complete, whether attested by an anonymous and half-civilized Hebrew fillibuster, or by a refined and religious Christian philosopher. The statement that God ate veal at Abraham's, or that he sought to kill Moses in a tavern, is just as true and

* See Mr. Parker's Sermon of "False and True Theology."—February, 1858.

important as this, that "God is love." It is said in the Old Testament that the Lord is a "consuming fire;" he is "angry with the wicked every day," and keeps his anger for ever; that he hates Esau; that he gives cruel commands, like that in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, forbidding all religious progress; that he orders the butchery of millions of innocent men, including women and children; that he comes back from the destruction of Edom red with blood, as described in the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah. In the New Testament he is called Father; it is said that he is Love, that he goes out and meets the returning prodigal a great ways off, and welcomes him with large rejoicing.

Now, say the Churches, all these statements are true, and the Christian believer must accept them all. Reason is not to sift and cross-examine the Biblical testimony, rejecting this as false and including that as true; for the whole of this evidence and each part of it is God's affidavit, and does not require a cross-examining, sifting, amending. We are not to reconcile it to us, but us to it; and if it conflict with reason and conscience, we should give them up. All the Bible, says this theory, is the inspired Word of God, and one part is just as much inspired as another, for there are no degrees of inspiration therein; each statement by itself is perfect, and the whole complete. The test of inspiration is not in man; it is not Truth for things reasonable, nor Justice for things moral, nor Love for things affectional. The test is wholly outside of man; it is a Miracle—that is, the report of a miracle; and so what contradicts the universal human conscience is to be accepted just as readily as what agrees with the moral instinct and reflection of all human kind. In the third century Tertullian, a hot-headed African Bishop, said, "I believe, because it is impossible;" that is, the thing cannot be, and therefore I believe it is! It has been a maxim in ecclesiastical theology ever since; without it both Transubstantiation and the Trinity would fall to the ground, with many a doctrine more. I think Lord Bacon was an unbeliever in the popular ecclesiastical doctrines of his time; he would derive all science from the observation of nature and reflection thereon; but he left this maxim to have Eminent Domain in Theology! It was enough for him to break utterly with the Philosophy of the Schools; he would not also quarrel against the Theology of the Churches: thereby he lost his scientific character, but kept his ecclesiastical reputation.

Joshua, the son of Nun, was a Hebrew fillibuster, with a half-civilized troop of ferocious men following him; he conquered a country, butchered the men, women, and children; and he gives us such a picture of God as you might expect from a Pequot Indian in the days of our fathers. It is taught in the Churches that Joshua's statement about God is just as trustworthy as the sublime words in the New Testament, ascribed to John or Jesus, and far more valuable than the deepest intuitions, and the grandest generalizations of the most cultivated, best educated, and most religious of men to-day! The Christian Churches do not derive their conception of God from the World of Observation about us, or the World of Con-

sciousness within us, but from the "Book of Revelation," as they call that collection from the works of some hundred writers, mostly anonymous, and all from remote ages; and they tell us that the teachings of Joshua are of as much value as the teachings of Jesus himself, far more than those of Fenelon or Channing.

Now from such facts, and by such a method, the Christian sects have formed their notion of God, which is common to the Greek, the Latin, and the Teutonic Churches; only a few sects have departed therefrom, and as they are but insignificant in numbers, and have had scarcely any influence in forming the ecclesiastical conception of God, so I shall omit all reference to them and their opinions.

To-day I shall not speak of the ecclesiastical Arithmetic of God, only of the Ethics thereof; not of God according to the category of number—the quantitative distribution of Deity into personalities; only of the character of God by the category of substance—the qualitative kind of Deity, for that is still the same, whether conceived of in one person, in three, or in three million, just as the qualitative force of an army of three hundred thousand soldiers is still the same, whether you count it as one corps or as three.

Look beneath the mere words of theology, at the things which they mean, and you find in general that the ecclesiastical conception of God does not include Infinite Perfection. It embraces all the true and good things from the most religious and enlightened writers of the Bible, but it also contains all the ill and false things which were uttered by the most rude and ferocious; one is counted just as true and valuable as the other. Accordingly God is really represented as a limited being, exceedingly imperfect, having all the contradictions which you find between Genesis and the Fourth Gospel; he is not infinite in any one attribute. I know the theological language predicates infinite perfection, but the theological facts affirm exceeding imperfection. Look at this in several details.

1. God is not represented as Omnipresent. When the theologian says, "God is everywhere," he does not mean that God is everywhere always, as he is anywhere sometimes; not that he is at this minute present in this meeting-house, and in the air which my hand clasps, as he was in the Hebrew Holy of Holies when Solomon ended his inauguration prayer, as he always is in some place called the Heaven of Heavens. There are degrees of the Divine Presence; he is more there and less here. Some spots he occupies by his essence, others only potentially. He was creationally present with all his personal essence at the making of the world, but only providentially present with his instrumental power, not his personal essence, at the governing of the world. Thus the Queen of England, by her power, is present in all Great Britain and the British possessions, while by her person she occupies only a single apartment of the Palace of St. James in London, sitting in only one chair at a time. So it is taught that

God must intervene miraculously to do his work : must come into a place where he was not before, and which he will vacate soon. So the actual, personal, essential and complete presence of God is the very rarest exception in all places save Heaven. He is instancial only in Heaven, exceptional everywhere else. He is not universally immanent, residing in all matter, all spirit, at every time, working according to law, by a constant mode of operation and in all the powers of matter and man, which are derived from him and are not possible without him ; but he comes in occasionally and works by miracle. He is a non-resident God, who is present in a certain place vicariously, by attorney, and only on great occasions comes there in his proper person. That is the ecclesiastical notion of Omnipresence.

2. He is not All-Powerful, except in the ideal Heaven which he permanently occupies by his complete and personal presence. On earth he is restricted by Man, who thwarts his plans every day and grieves his heart, and still more by the Devil, who continually thwarts his Creator. I know the ecclesiastical doctrine says that God is omnipotent, but ecclesiastical history represents him as trying to make the Hebrews an obedient people, and never effecting it ; as continually worrying over that little fraction of mankind, " rising up early and speaking " to them, but the crooked would not be made straight. Nay, he is unable to keep the Christian Church without spot or wrinkle for a single generation, charm he never so wisely ; but Paul fell out with such as were apostles before him, and the seamless ecclesiastical coat is roughly rent in twain betwixt the two !

3. He is not All-Wise. He does not know how his own creation will work. He finished the world, and found that his one man, running alone, did not prosper ; it was necessary to make a woman, to help him ; she was an afterthought. Her first step ruins the man she was meant to serve ; and God is surprised at the disobedience. He must alter things to meet this unexpected emergency ; he grows wiser and wiser by continual experiment.

4. He is not All-Righteous. He does great wrong to the Egyptians, for he hardens Pharaoh's heart, so that he may have an excuse for putting the king and people to death. He does injustice to the Canaanites, whom he butchers by Joshua ; he provides a punishment altogether disproportionate to the offences of men, and will make them suffer forever for the sin committed by their mythological ancestor, six thousand years before you and I were born ; he creates souls by the million, only to make them perish everlastingly. In the whole course of human history, you cannot find a tyrant, murderer, kidnapper, who is so unjust as God is represented by the ecclesiastical theology.

5. He is not All-Loving. Of the people before Christ, he loved none but Jews ; he gave no other any revelation, and without that, they must perish everlastingly ! Since Jesus he loves none but Christians, and will save no more ; the present heathen are to die the second death ; and of Christians he loves none but Church-members. Nay, the Catholics will

have it, that he hates everybody out of the Roman Church, while the stricter Protestants retaliate this favor upon the Catholics themselves. Nay, they deny salvation to all Unitarians and Universalists, to the one because they declare that the man Jesus was not God the Creator; and to the other because they say that God the Father is not bad enough to damn any man forever and ever. You remember that scarcely was Dr. Channing cold in his coffin, before orthodox newspapers rung with the intelligence that he was doubtless then suffering the pangs of eternal damnation, because he had "denied the Lord that bought him." You know the damnation pronounced on old Dr. Ballou, simply because he said men were brethren, and the God of earth and heaven is too good-hearted to create anybody for the purpose of crunching him into hell forever and ever. According to some strict sectarians, God loves none but the elect—an exceedingly small number. It has been the doctrine of the Christian Church for fifteen or sixteen hundred years that God will reject from heaven all babies newly-born who die without baptism; the sprinkling of infants was designed to save these little ones, who, as Jesus thought, needed no salvation, but were already of the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly, to save the souls of children ready to perish without ecclesiastical baptism, the Catholic Church mercifully allows doctors, nurses, midwives, servants, anybody, to baptize a child newly born, by throwing water in its face, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that saves the little thing. But the doctrine of infant damnation follows logically from the first principles of the ecclesiastical theology. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!"

6. He is not All-Holy, perfectly faithful to himself. He is capricious and variable; men can wheedle him into their favorite plans; now by penitence or a certain belief, they can induce God to remove the consequences of their wicked deeds; and the effects of a long life of wickedness will all at once be miraculously wiped clean off from the man's character; he will take the blackest of sinners and wash him white in the blood of the Lamb, and "in five minutes he shall be made as good a Christian as he could become by fifty years of the most perfect piety and morality." Since God is thus changeable, men think they can alter his plan by their words, can induce him to send rain when they want it, or to "stay the bottles of heaven" at their request, to check disease, to curse a bad man, or to pervert and confound the intellect of a thinking man. Hence comes the strange phenomenon which you sometimes see of a nation assembling in the churches, and asking God to crush to the ground another people at war with them; two years ago you saw Englishmen bending their knees in the name of Christ, to ask God to blast the Russians at Sebastopol, and the Russians bending their knees and in the same name asking God to sink the British ships in the depths of the Black Sea!

Put all these things together—God is not represented as a perfect Creating Cause, who makes all things right at first; nor a perfect Preserving Providence, who administers all things well, and will bring all out right at

last. Even his essential presence is only an exception in the world, here for a moment, and then long withdrawn. According to the ecclesiastical conception, God transcends man in power and wisdom, but is immensely inferior to the average of men in justice and benevolence; nay, in hate and malignity he transcends the very worst man that the very worst man could conceive of in his heart!

I. Now, this idea of God is not adequate to the purposes of Science. To explain the World of Matter, the naturalist wants a sufficient power which is always there, acting by a constant mode of operation; not irregular, vanishing, acting by fits and starts; but continuous, certain, reliable; an intelligent power which acts by law, not caprice and miracle. No other God is adequate Cause of the Universe, or of its action for a single hour.

But the Christian Church knows no such God, for all the Biblical depositions concerning him, all the pretended affidavits whence it has made its conception of God, came from men who had no thought of a general law of matter or of mind, and no notion of a God who acted by a constant mode of operation, and who was the indwelling Cause and Providence of all things that are. Just so far as any scientific thinker departs from that limited idea of God, who comes and goes and works by miracle, so far does he depart from the ecclesiastical theology of Christendom. The actual facts of the Universe are not reconcilable with what the ecclesiastical theology teaches about God. This has become apparent, step by step, in the last three centuries.

Galileo reported the facts of astronomic nature just as they were. The Roman Church must silence her philosopher, or else revolutionize her notion of God. Had not she God's own affidavit that he stopped the sun and moon a whole day, to give Joshua time for butchery of men, women, and children? would she allow a philosopher to contradict her with nothing but the Universe on his side? He must swear the earth stands still. "And yet it does move though!"

Geologists relate the facts of the universe as they find them in the crust of the earth. The Churches complain that these facts are inconsistent with the story in Genesis. "We have," say they, "God's deposition that he made the Universe in six days, rested on the seventh, and was refreshed! What is the testimony of the rocks and the stars, to the anonymous record on parchment, or the printed English Bible?" So the geologist also has a bad name in the Churches, many equivocate, and some lie.

For the history of the heavens and earth, theologians would rely on the word of a man whose name even they know nothing of, and reject the testimony of the Universe itself, where the footprints of the Creator are yet so plain and deeply set. Zoologists find evidence, as they think, that the human race has had several distinct centres of origination; that men were created in many places: and a great outcry is at once raised. Such facts are inconsistent with the ecclesiastical idea of God! So, to learn the

structure of the heavens, the earth, or of mankind, you must not go to the heavens, the earth, or mankind; you must go to the Book of Genesis, and if the facts of the Universe contradict the anonymous record therein, then you must break with the Universe and agree with the minister, for the actual testimony of things is worth nothing in comparison with the words of a Hebrew writer whom nobody knows!

The great obstacle to the advancement of science, nay, to the diffusion of knowledge, is not the poverty of mankind, not the lack of industry, talent, genius amongst men of science; but it is the ecclesiastical conception of God. Not a step can be taken in astronomy, geology, zoology, but it separates a man from that notion. The ecclesiastical conception of God being thus utterly inadequate to the purposes of science, philosophic men turn off from the theology of Christendom; and some, it is said, become atheists. Look at the scientific men of England, France, and Germany, for proof of this. In America there is no considerable class of scientific and learned men, who stand close together, write books for each other, and so make a little public of their own; so here the scientific man does not stand in a little green-house of philosophy as in Europe, where he is sheltered from public opinion, lives freely, and expands his flowers in an atmosphere congenial to his natural growth, but he is exposed to all the rude blasts of the press, the parlor, and the meeting-house; so is he more cautious than his congeners and equivalents in Europe, and does not commonly tell what he thinks; nay, sometimes tells what he does not think, lest he should lose his public reputation amongst bigoted men! To this there are some very honorable exceptions; scientific men who do not count it a part of their business to prop up a popular error, but who know society has a right to demand that they tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But if you will take the hundred foremost men of science in all Christendom who are not ministers, I do not think that ten of them have any belief in the common ecclesiastical conception of God. Some have better—nay, a true idea of God, but dare not divulge it; and some, alas! seem to have no notion at all. Accordingly, men of science turn from theology; some become atheists, and all lose much from lack of a satisfactory idea of God. You all know what clerical complaints are made of the infidelity and atheism of scientific men. Three hundred years ago the Church suspected doctors, and invented this proverb:—"As many doctors, so many atheists;" because the doctors knew facts irreconcilable with the ecclesiastical theology. I think the charge of atheism grossly unjust, when it is brought against the great body of scientific men; but where it is true, it ought to be remembered that in the last two hundred and fifty years the Christian Church has had no idea of God adequate to the purposes of science, and fit for a philosopher to accept; and if it be so, will you blame the philosopher for rejecting what would only disturb his processes? The cause of the philosopher's atheism often lies at the Church's door, and not in the scholar's study.

II. But this ecclesiastical conception of God is as inadequate to the purposes of Religion, as of Science. In religious consciousness we all want a God whom we can absolutely rely upon; who is always at hand, not merely separate and one side from the World of Matter or the World of Man. We want a deity who acts now, and is the Infinite God, who desires the best of possible things for each man, who knows the best of possible things, and has will and power to bring about the best of possible things, and that for all persons. We want a God all-powerful, all-wise, all-just, all-loving, all-faithful; a perfect Creator; a perfect Provider, who will be just to each of his children. I put it to each one of you—thoughtfullest or least-thinking—is there one of you who will be content with a God who does not come up to your highest conception of power, wisdom, justice, love, and holiness? Not one of you will be content to rely on less! You must falsify your nature before you can do it. But according to the ecclesiastical conception, God is the most capricious, unjust, unreliable of all possible beings. Look at this old and venerable doctrine of eternal damnation, believed by all the Christian sects, save the Universalists, Unitarians, and Spiritualists—not yet a sect—who make at the most some four or five millions out of the two hundred and fifty or sixty millions of Christendom. This is the doctrine:—God is angry with mankind, and will burn the greater part of them in hell, forever and ever. Why is “his wrath so hot against us?”

1. The Jews are God’s ancient covenant people; with them he made a bargain, sworn to on both sides: it was for a good and sufficient consideration, value received by each party; he commanded them to observe the Mosaic form of religion forever; if any prophet shall come, working never so many miracles, and teach them a different conception of God, they must put him to death, and all his followers, with their wives, their children, and their cattle. (Deut. xiii.) But now all these “chosen people” are to be damned forever because they do not believe the theology of Paul and Jesus, whom the Divine law commands the Jews to slay with the edge of the sword for teaching that theology. So God commands the Jews to kill every man among them who shall teach the Christian doctrine, and yet will damn them for not believing it.

2. The Heathen also are to be damned because they have no faith in Christ, no belief in the popular theology of the Catholic or Protestant sects. But that theology is unreasonable, and thoughtful, unprejudiced men cannot believe it; besides that, the greater part of the Heathens never heard of such doctrines, or of Christ; still God will damn them, millions by millions, to eternal torment, because they have not believed what was never preached to them, what they never heard they must believe. Three hundred years ago Spanish Jesuits preached the doctrine of eternal damnation to the heathen at Japan, who asked of the missionaries, “Is it possible that God will damn men forever?” “Certainly, without doubt,” was the reply. “And if a man dies who has not heard of these things before, will God damn him forever?” “Yes,” was the answer. The whole

multitude fell on their faces and wept bitterly and long, and would not believe it. Do you blame them for casting those priests from the island, and saying, "Let the salt sea separate us from the Christian world forever."

3. Then the Christians themselves are not certain of their salvation. The Catholics are the majority, and they say God will damn all the Protestants; the Protestants say the same of the Catholics. The ecclesiastical idea of God in both represents him as ready enough to damn either; and if the first principle of the Catholic Church be true, no Protestant can be saved; and if the first principle of the Protestant Church be true, then every Catholic is sure of damnation and nought besides.

See how the Protestants dispose of one another.

(1.) All "unconverted" and positively wicked men are to be damned; God has no love for them, only hate.

(2.) All "unconverted" men, not positively wicked; they have no salvation in them; they may be the most pious men in the world, the most moral men, but their own religion cannot save them. They must have "faith,"—that is belief in the ecclesiastical theology—and be Church-members; that is, they must believe as Dr. Banbaby believes, and be voted into some little company called a Church, at the Old South or the New North, or some other conventicle.

(3.) New-born babies not baptized must be shut out from the kingdom of heaven, if not included in the kingdom of hell; such has been the doctrine of the Christian Church from the time of Justin Martyr, who I think first broached it seventeen hundred years ago, and it follows with unavoidable logic from the ecclesiastical notion of God and the ecclesiastical method of salvation. So Jesus must have made a great mistake when he took babies in his arms, and blessed them, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven;"—he ought to have said, "Suffer *baptized* children to come unto me," &c.

Now what confidence can you have in such a God, so unjust, so unloving, so cruel, and so malignant? I just now said that God is represented as transcending men in hate and malignity. Look at the matter carefully, narrowing the thing down to the smallest point. Suppose there are now a thousand million persons on the earth, and that only one shall be damned; and suppose that some day a hundred years hence, all the nine hundred and ninety-nine million, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine of us are gathered in the kingdom of heaven, enjoying all the blessedness that Divine love can bestow on the vast faculties of man, still further enhanced by the first taste of immortal life; suppose that intelligence is brought to all and each of us that one man is miserable, languishing in eternal fire, to be there forever; suppose we are told that a globe of sand, big as this earth, hangs there before his comprehensive eye, and once in a thousand years a single atom is loosened and falls off, and he

shall suffer the cruelest torment till, grain by grain, millennium after millennium, that whole globe is consumed and passed away ; and yet then he shall be no nearer the end of his agony than when he first felt the smart. Suppose we are told it was the worst man of all the earth, that it was a murderer, a violator of virgins, a pirate, a kidnapper, a traitorous wretch, who, in the name of Democracy, sought to establish a despotism in America, to crush out the fairest hopes of political freedom which the sun ever shone upon ; or even it was an ecclesiastical hypocrite, with an atheistic heart, believing in no God, and loving no man, who, for the sake of power and ambition, sought to make men tremble at the ugly phantom of a wrathful Deity, and laid his unclean hands on the soul of man, and made that a source of terrible agony to mankind ! When you are told that this man is plunged into hell for all time, is there a man who would not cry out against the hideous wrong, and scorn heaven offered by such a Deity ? No ! there is no murderer, no pirate, no violator of virgins, no New England kidnapper, no betrayer of his nation, no ecclesiastical hypocrite even, who would not reject it with scorn, and revolt against the injustice. But the ecclesiastical doctrine represents God as thus damning not one man, but millions of millions of men, the great majority of mankind, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand, and those, too, often the best, certainly the wisest and most loving and pious men ! Do you wonder then, that thoughtful men, moral men, affectional men, and religious men turn off with scorn from this conception of God ? I wonder not at all. The fact that the majority have not done so only shows how immensely powerful is this great religious instinct, which God meant should be Queen within us.

Let me do no injustice. I admit the many excellent qualities ascribed to God in the popular theology ; but remember this, that as much as the noblest words of the New Testament add to the conception of God in the worst parts of the Old Testament, just so much also do the savage notions from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, from the baser Psalms, and the Prophets, take away from the Father who is in Heaven, the Spirit who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth ! In this "alligation alternate" one chapter of the Old Testament can adulterate and spoil all the blessed oracles of the New. Jesus is set off against Joshua ; the whole of the Fourth Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount, and many a blessed Parable, is nullified by a scrap from some ancient Jew who thought God was a consuming fire !

The Form of Religion demanded of men, in accordance with the ecclesiastical conception of God, certainly has many good things, but it is not natural Piety for its emotional part, the aboriginal love of God ; nor natural Theology for its intellectual part, the natural Idea of God ; nor natural Morality for its practical part, the normal use of every human faculty ; but it is just the opposite of these ; it has a sentiment against nature, thought against nature, practice against nature. In place of

Love to God, with trust and hope, the most joyous of all emotions possible to man, it puts Fear of God, with doubt, and dread, and despair, the most miserable of all emotions; and in place of love to men, to all men, according as they need and we are able, it puts love only for your own little household of faith, and hate for all who cannot accept your opinions; for out of the ecclesiastical conception of God comes not only the superstition which darkens man's face, clouds his mind, obscures his conscience, and brutalizes his heart, but also the persecution which reddens his hand with a brother's blood. The same spirit is in Boston to-day that in the middle ages was in Italy and Spain. Why does not it burn men now, as once it did in Italy, in Spain, and in Oxford? It only lacks the *power*; the wish and will are still the same. It lacks the axe and faggot, not the malignant will to smite and burn. Once it had the headsman at its command, who smote and silenced men; now it can only pray, not kill.

Such being the Ecclesiastical Conception of God, such the Ecclesiastical Religion, I do not wonder it has so small good influence on mankind. Men of science, not clerical, turn off from such a God, and such a form of religion. They are less wise and less happy; their science is the more imperfect, because they do not know the Infinite God of the Universe, the Absolute Religion. With reverence for a great mind, do I turn the grand studious pages of La Place and Von Humboldt, but not without mourning the absence of that religious knowledge of God, and that intimate trust in Him, which else would have planted their scientific garden with still grander beauty. I do not wonder that men of politics turn off from ecclesiastical religion, and are not warned from wickedness by its admonition, nor guided to justice and philanthropy by its counsels. Look at the politicians of America, England, France, all Christendom, and can you show me a single man of them in a high place who believes in the ecclesiastical conception of God, and in public ever dares appeal to the religious nature of man, and there expect to find justification of a great thought or a noble plan? No! when such politicians evoke the religious spirit, it is only to make men believe that it is a religious duty to obey any tyrant who seeks to plunder a nation, to silence the Press of France, to crush out the life from prostrate Italy and Spain, to send Americans kidnapping in Pennsylvania or New England. The great men of science have broke with the ecclesiastical notion of God; men of great moral sense will have nothing to do with a Deity so unjust; while the affectional and religious men, whose "primal virtues shine aloft as stars," whose deeds are "charities that heal, and soothe, and bless" the weary sons of men, they turn off with disgust from the ecclesiastical God, whose chief qualities are self-esteem, vanity, and destructiveness. One of the most enlightened writers of the New Testament says, "God is LOVE." "Yes," says the ecclesiastical theologian, "but he is also a CONSUMING FIRE; he gives all his love to the Christians who have faith in Christ, and turns all his wrath against the non-

Christians who have no faith in Christ. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

If a man accepts this notion of God, he can never be certain of his own welfare hereafter; he may hope, he cannot be sure, for salvation does not depend on a faithful use of talents or opportunities; but on right belief and right ritual. And when neither the intuitive nor the reflective faculties afford any test, who knows if his belief is right? The Jews are to be rejected for their faith in Moses and the Prophets. The Fourth Gospel makes Jesus say that all before him "were thieves and robbers;"—I think he never said it. Paul repudiated Peter, if not also James and John; he was a dissembler, and they only "seemed to be somewhat;" while the author of the Book of Revelation thrusts Paul out of heaven, consigning him to the synagogue of Satan. Now if Paul and Peter and James and John did not know what faith in Christ meant, and could not agree to live in the same Church, and sit in the same heaven, can you and I be sure of admittance there?

While the ecclesiastical conception of God is thus inadequate to a thoughtful man's religion, we are yet told that we must never reform this notion! There is a manifest progress in the conception of God in the Biblical books; but in the Christian Church we are told that there must be no further step; we must stop with Joshua. "Fear hath torment," says that anonymous, deep-hearted religious writer of the New Testament, seventeen hundred years ago; but "perfect love casts out fear." We are told we must not cast it out, but must have a notion of God, which we must fear! Shame on us! Mankind has made a mistake. We took a false step at the beginning. The dream which a half-savage Jew had of God we take for God's affidavit of his own character. We do not look on the World of Matter and Mind, to gather thence a natural idea of God, only at the statements of certain men who wrote seventeen hundred or three thousand years ago, men who did well enough for their time, not ours.

All round us lie the evidences against the ecclesiastical conception of God, within us are they yet more distinct. The great mistake of the Christian Church is its conception of God. Once it was the best the nations could either form or accept. To-day it is not worth while to try to receive it. It is inadequate for Science, either the philosophy of matter or man, explaining neither the condition, the history, nor yet the origin of one or the other. It is unfit for Religion; for Piety, its sentimental part—Theology, its intellectual part—Morality, its practical part. I cannot love an imperfect God, I cannot serve an imperfect God with perfect morality.

There will be no great and sufficient revival of religion till this conception be corrected. Atheism is no relief; indifference cannot afford any comfort; and belief makes the matter worse. The Churches complain of the atheism of Science; their false notion of God made it atheistic. You

and I mourn at the wickedness of men in power ; is there any thing in the ecclesiastical religion to scare a tyrant or a traitor? In high American office mean men live low and wicked lives, abusing the people's trust, and then at last, when the instincts of lust, of passion, and of ambition fail them, they whine out a few penitent words to a priest, on their death beds, with their last breath making investment for their future reputation on earth, and also in the Christian Church! For this mouthful of wind do they pass for better Christians than a whole life of eighty years of philanthropy gave Franklin the reputation for. Thus selfish and deceitful men are counted for saints by the Christian clergy, while the magnificent integrity of Franklin and Washington never gave them a high place in any Christian Church! You weep at the poverty of life in the American Church—thirty thousand ministers with right of visitation and search on all mankind, and no more to show for it! A revival of religion going on over the whole land—and a revival of the slave trade at the same time, and neither hindering the other! You mourn at the poverty of life in the Churches of America, but the Church of Christendom is no better—nay, I think the Church in the Free States of America is its better part; the Christian Church abroad strikes hands with every tyrant, it treads down mankind, nor will it be ever checked, while it has such a false conception of God.

Under us is the Earth, every particle of it immanent with God; over us are the Heavens, where every star sparkles with Deity; within us are the Heavens and the Earth of human Consciousness, a grander revelation of Deity in yet higher form. These are all of them a two-fold testimony against the Ecclesiastical Conception of God. Not one of them has a whisper of testimony in favor of atheism; all are crowded with evidence of the Infinite God,—First Good, First Perfect, and First Fair, Father and Mother to you and me, to all that were, that are, that shall be, leading us to life everlasting.

SERMON III.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEA OF GOD AND ITS RELATION TO THE
SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS WANTS OF MANKIND NOW.

Perfect love casteth out fear.—1 JOHN iv. 18.

THE religious element is so strong that it always will act both in its instinctive and its reflective form, for though here and there an eccentric man neglect or treat it with scorn, no race of men ever does so; nay, no nation, no little tribe, no considerable company of men. There are a thousand devotees who give up all to the religious faculty where there is not a single atheist who sacrifices that to something besides. Like the two other great Primal Instincts—the hunger for bread, which keeps the individual alive, and the hunger for posterity, which perpetuates mankind—this hunger for God is not to be put down. Here and there an individual man neglects the one or the other, the instinct of food, of kind, of religion; but the human race nor does, nor can. In Mankind instinctive nature is stronger than capricious will. Whimsy alters the cut of Ahab's beard, or the shape of Jezebel's ringlets; but the beard itself grows on Ahab's cheek and chin, will he or nill he, and Jezebel's head is herbage all over with curls, growing while she sleeps.

Soon as Man outgrows the wild state of infancy, where he first appeared, in his primitive sense of dependence he has always felt his need of God, as in his instinctive perception he has always felt the Being of God reflected therein, and formed some Notion of God, better or worse. Go where you will, you find that men know God. The notions they form of him vary from land to land, from age to age. They are the test of the people's civilization; how rude with the savage! how comprehensive with the enlightened, thoughtful, religious man! But no nation is without them, or without a sense of obligation towards God or the practice of some form of service of him.

The notion men form of God, and the corresponding service they pay, are both proportionate to the people's civilization. The Indian Massasoit's conception of God, two hundred and fifty years ago, fitted him as well as ours fits us. Let us never forget this, nor think that we are proportionately more favored than our fathers were. Little baby Jimmy in Pennsylvania, some seventy years ago, was as much pleased with a penny trumpet, which worried his aunts and uncles, as President Buchanan now is with the Presidency of the United States and power to scare all Democrats into obedience. To us our fathers in 858 are barbarians, and we wonder how they stood it in the world, so poorly furnished and provisioned

as they were. You will be barbarians to your sons and daughters in 2858, and they will wonder how you continued to live and have a good time of it. Yet you and I think life is decent and worth having. Milk and a cradle are as good for babies as meat and railroad engines for men. Small things suit little folks. So is it in religion as all else besides. I love to read the religious stories of rude nations—the Hebrews, the Philistines, the New England Indians. The Iroquois thought there were three Spirits, the Spirit of Beans, of Squashes, and of Indian Corn, and these made an Agricultural Trinity, three beneficent persons in one rude conception of a Mohawk God. Such a notion served their souls as well as the stone tomahawk and snow-shoe their hands and feet. Let us never forget that each age is as sufficient to itself as any other age, the first as the last. The immense progress between the two is also the law of God, who has so furnished men that they shall find satisfaction for their wants, when they are babies of savage wildness and when they are grown men of civilization.

From the beginning of human history there has been a continual progress of man's conception of God. It did not begin with Jacob, Isaac and Abraham; it will not end with you and me. Yesterday I mentioned some of the facts of this progress in the Bible, and pointed out the Jehovah of the Pentateuch eating veal with Abraham and Sarah, wrestling with Jacob, trying to kill Moses and not bringing it to pass; I showed the odds between that conception of God and "Our Father who art in heaven," which filled up the consciousness of Jesus, and the God who is Perfect Love, which abode in the consciousness of another great man. This progress is observable in all other people, in the literature of every nation.

Religious progress cannot be wholly prevented; it may be hindered and kept back for a time. This is the mischief;—men form an ecclesiastical organization, and take such a conception of God as satisfies them at the time, stereotype it, and declare all men shall believe that forever. They say "This is a finality; there shall never be any other idea of God but this same, no progress hereafter." Then priests are made in the image of that Deity, and they misshape whole communities of men and women; and especially do they lay their plastic hand on the pliant matter of the child, and mismould him into deformed and unnatural shapes. What an absurdity! In 1780, in a little town of Connecticut, Blacksmith Beecher, grim all over with soot, leather-aproned, his sleeves rolled above his elbows, with great, bare, hairy arms, was forging axes "dull as a hoe," and hoes "blunt as a beetle," yet the best that men had in Connecticut in those days. What if the Connecticut lumberers and farmers had come together, and put it into their Saybrook Platform, that to the end of time all men should chop with Beecher's axes and dig with Beecher's hoes, and he who took an imperfection therefrom, his name should be taken from the Lamb's Book of Life, and he who should add an improvement thereto, the seven last plagues should be added unto him! We all see the absurdity of such a thing. In 1830, in Boston, Minister Beecher, grim with Calvinism, sur-

pliced from his shoulders to his feet, Geneva-banded, white-choked, a stalwart and valiant-minded son of the old blacksmith, was making a theology—notions of Man, of God, and of the Relation between them. His theological forge was in full blast in Hanover Street, then in Bowdoin Street, and he wrought stoutly thereat, he striking while his parish blew. But his opinions were no more a finality than his father's axes and hoes. Let Blacksmith Beecher, grim with soot, and Minister Beecher, grim with theology, hammer out the best tools they can make, axes, hoes, doctrines, sermons, and thank God if their work be of any service at that time; but let neither the blacksmith over his forge, his triphammer going, nor the minister over his pulpit, his Bible getting quoted, ever say to mankind, "Stop, gentlemen! thus far and no farther! I am the end of human history, the last milestone on the Lord's highway of progress; stop here, use my weapon, and die with it in your hand, or your soul." Depend upon it, mankind will not heed such men; they will pass them by; whose obstructs the path will be trodden down. Progress is the law of God.

At an early age the Christian Church accepted the Ecclesiastical Method of theology, namely—that every word between the lids of the Bible is given by God's miraculous and infallible inspiration, which contains the religious truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and to get doctrines, men must make a decoction of Bible, and only of Bible, for that is the unique herb out of which wholesome doctrines can be brewed. By that method it formed its conception of God. First, it fixed the Ethical Substance of God's character, the quality of God, with all the contradictions which you find in the Old Testament and the New. Next it fixed the Arithmetical Form of God's character, the quantitative distribution into three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, alike in their Godhead, diverse in their function. Thus the capability to produce was in the Father; the capacity of being produced was in the Son; the capacity of being proceeded from was in the Father and the Son, and the capability of proceeding was in the Holy Ghost. These are the *differentia* of the total Godhead. All that was fixed well-nigh fifteen hundred years ago.

Since that time there have been three great movements within the Christian Church. First, an attempt to centralize ecclesiastical power in the Bishop of Rome; that was the Papal movement. Next was the attempt to explain the ecclesiastical doctrines by human reason, not to alter but expound and demonstrate by intellect what was accepted by faith; that was the Scholastic movement. Then came at last the attempt to decentralize ecclesiastical power, and bring back from the Roman Bishop to the common people what he had filched thence away; that was the Protestant movement. It split the Western world in twain, following the ethnological line of cleavage; and since that there is a Roman Church with a Pope, and a Teutonic Church with a People. But the Papists and their opponents the Laists, the Scholastics and their enemies the Dogmatists, the Protestants and Catholics, all accepted the Ecclesiastical

Method of theology, and so the Ecclesiastical Notion of God. So within the borders of the Christian Church, from the Council at Nice in 325 to the Council at North Woburn in 1857, there has been no revision of the Conception of God, no improvement thereof. Protestant and Catholic, Scholastic and Dogmatist, Laist and Papist, agree in the ethical substances of God and in the arithmetical form. The Athanasian creed set forth both; in the fourth century it was appointed to be read in the churches. What is called the "Apostles' Creed" has little apostolic in it save its name; yet it has been held orthodox for sixteen hundred and fifty years. All this time there has been no progress in the ecclesiastical conception of God, as set forth in the great sects of the Christian Church; the same creed which answered for the third century suffices the Church to-day. So long as the Church holds to this ecclesiastical method of theology there can be no progress in the notion of God, for only Biblical plants may be put into the ecclesiastical caldron, and from them all only that conception can be distilled, though it may be flavored a little, diversely here and there, to suit the taste of special persons.

But shall Mankind stop? We cannot if we would. We can stereotype a creed and hire men to read it, or scare, or coax them; but a new Truth from God shines straight down through creed and congregation, as that sunlight through the sky. In the last four hundred years what a mighty development has there been of human knowledge! In three hundred and sixty years the geographic world has doubled; and what a development in astronomy, chemistry, botany, zoology; in mathematics, metaphysics, ethics, history! How comprehensive is science now! But there has been no development in the Church's conception of God. The ecclesiastical God knows nothing of modern science—chemistry, geology, astronomy; even the geographic extent of the earth is foreign thereto; neither Jehovah nor the ecclesiastical Trinity ever heard of Australia, of the Friendly Islands, nor even of the Continent of America. The ecclesiastical conception of God was formed before the discovery of America, before modern science was possible. The two are not to be reconciled. Which shall yield, the Fact of Science, or the Fiction of Theology?

Outside of the orthodox Christian Church there has been a great development of the conception of God, a revision of it more or less complete, certainly a great improvement. Thus the Unitarians rejected the Trinitarian arithmetic, and said, "God is one nature in one person." The Universalists rejected the devilish element and said, "God is love all over, and is not hate anywhere." Once it seemed as if these two sects would make a revolution in the Church's notion of God: but alas! the Unitarians and Universalists both accept the ecclesiastical method of theology, and when they appeal to the miraculous and infallible Bible in support of their more reasonable and religious notion of God, they are always beaten in that court where Genesis is of as much value as the four Gospels, and murderous Joshua as great a theological authority as beneficent Jesus. So when they rely on the Bible, these sects are defeated, and draw back toward the

old Church with its belief of a ferocious Deity ; this explains the condition and character of these two valuable sects. Accordingly, little good has come from their movement, oncè so hopeful. They would change Measures and Doctrines, but they would not alter the Principle which controls the measure, nor the Method whereby the doctrines are made ; and so these sects leaven only a little of the whole lump ; they do not create that great fermentation which is necessary to make the whole Church take a new form. How much depends on the first Principle, and the right Method !

Now, by the Philosophic Method, a man takes the Facts of instinctive and reflective Consciousness within him, and the Facts of Observation without, and thence forms his Idea of God. He will be helped by the labors of such as have gone before him, and will refuse to be hindered by the errors of the greatest men. He will take the good things about God in this blessed Bible, because they are good, but not a single ill thing will he take because it is in the Bible. "God is love," says a writer in the New Testament, and our thoughtful man will accept that ; but he will not feel obliged to accept that other statement, in the Old Testament, that "God is a consuming fire ;" or yet a kindred one in the New Testament, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," "prepared for the devil and his angels." He will understand and believe that "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ;" but he will not assent to this, which the Christian Church teaches, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Because he accepts the good and true of the Bible, he will not fall down and accept the false and ill ; for the ultimate standard of appeal will not be to a Book writ with pens, as a minister interprets it, but to the Facts of the Universe, as the human mind interprets them.

In philosophic men the reflective element prevails ; but I do not think they often have much intuitive power to perceive religious truths directly, by the primal human instinct ; nor do I think that they in the wisest way observe the innermost activities of the human soul. Poets like Shakespeare observe the play of human passion and ambition better than metaphysicians like Berkeley and Hume, better than moralists like Butler and Paley. Commonly, I think, men and women of simple religious feeling furnish the facts which men of great thoughtful genius work up into philosophic theology. It is but rarely that any man has a genius for instinctive intuition, and also for philosophic generalization therefrom. Such a man, when he comes, fills the whole sky, from the nadir of special primitive religious emotion up to the zenith of universal philosophic thought. You and I need not wait for such men, but thankfully take the Truth, part by part, here a little and there a little, and accept the service of whoso can help, but taking no man for master—neither Calvin, nor Luther, nor Paul, nor John, nor Moses, nor Jesus—open our soul to the Infinite God, who is sure to come in without bell, book, or candle.

When a man pursues this natural, philosophic method of theology, takes his facts from consciousness in his own world, and observation in the world of matter, then he arrives at the Philosophical Idea of the God of Infinite Perfection. That God has all the qualities of complete and perfect being; He has Infinite Power to do, Infinite Mind to know, Infinite Conscience to will the right, Infinite Affection to love, Infinite Holiness to be faithful to his affections, conscience, mind, power. He has Being without limitation, Absolute Being; he is present in all space, at all times; everywhere always, as much as sometimes anywhere. He fills all spirit, not less than all matter, yet is not limited by either, transcending both, being alike the materiality of matter, and the spirituality of spirit—that is, the substantiality which is the ground of each, and which surpasses and comprehends all. He is Perfect Cause and Perfect Providence, creating all things from a perfect motive, of a perfect material, for a perfect purpose, and as a perfect means, and to a perfect end. So, of all conceivable worlds he makes the best possible, of all conceivable degrees of welfare he provides the best in kind and the greatest in bulk, not only for all as a whole, but for each as an individual, for Jesus of Nazareth who is faithful, for Judas Iscariot who turns traitor. There is no Absolute Evil in the world, either for the whole as all, nor for any one as part.

That is the Philosophic Idea of God and of his relation to the Universe. To-day I state it short, for I have dwelt on it often before, and perhaps at some other time I shall take up the idea part by part, and speak of God as Infinite Power, then as Infinite Wisdom, then as Infinite Justice, as Infinite Love, Infinite Integrity, and so on.

I think this Idea of God as Infinite Perfection, Perfect Power, Wisdom, Justice, Love, Holiness, is the grandest thought which has ever come into mortal mind. It is the highest result of human civilization. Let no man claim it as his original thought; it is the result of all mankind's religious experience. It lay latent in human nature once, a mere instinctive religious feeling. At length it becomes a bright particular thought in some great mind; and one day will be the universal thought in all minds, and will displace all other notions of God—Hindoo, Egyptian, Hebrew, Classic, Christian, Mohammedan, just as the true theory of astronomy, which actually explains the stars, displaced the Ptolemaic and all the other theories which were only approximate; just as the iron axe displaced the tomahawk of stone.

The Evidence of this God is in man's Consciousness and in the World of Matter likewise outside of him. When the idea is presented to a thoughtful man, he at once says, "Yes, God is Infinite Perfection, Power, Wisdom, Justice, Holiness, Love," for human nature is too strong for his theologic prejudice. To prove there is such a being as Jehovah, who met Moses in a tavern between Midian and Egypt some thirty-three hundred years ago, and vainly tried to kill him, you must know Hebrew, and understand the antiquities of the Jews, know who wrote the Book of Exodus, where he got his facts, what he meant by his words, what authority

he rested on; and when you have made that investigation, the story will turn out to be wind, and none the better because Hebrew wind thirty-three hundred years old; and after all that, you do not come to a fact of the Universe, but only the fiction of a story-teller. But to prove the Infinite Perfection of God, you have the facts in your own nature; you are to sit down beside that primeval well and draw for yourself, and drinking thence, you shall thirst no longer for heathen Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Gentile Damascus, nor for the Hebrew Jordan itself, for you shall find there is a well of living water within you, springing up to everlasting life; and as you drink, the scales of theologic leprosy fall off from your eyes, and you stand there a clean man, full of the primitive, aboriginal vigor of Humanity. As you look down into that depth of consciousness do you behold the eternal and immutable Idea of the Infinitely Perfect God forever mirrored there. This depends on no subjective peculiarities of the individual, but on the objective forces of the Universe. So, by its name to distinguish it from all other notions of God, I will call this the Philosophical or Natural Idea of God; it seems to me a fact given in Humanity itself, a self-evident truth of spiritual consciousness, something we discover in the Universe, not something we invent and project thereon. So, while I name the others Conceptions of God, I call this the Idea of God—the Philosophical Idea, because derived by that Method—the Natural, because it corresponds to Nature. To this men will also add conceptions of their own invention, which partake of the subjective peculiarity of John or Jane.

I. This Idea of God is adequate to the Purposes of Science. First of all things the philosopher wants an Adequate Cause for the Facts of the Universe, both the World of Matter out of him, and the World of Spirit in him. He is to explain facts by showing their mode of operation, and tracing them back to the cause—to the proximate cause first, to the ultimate cause at last. Now, as I showed before, the Ecclesiastical Conception of God furnishes no adequate cause for the Facts of the Universe. To the theologian it is cause sufficient for Noah's flood, for the ark, for the downfall of Jericho when the rams'-horns blew, for the standing still of the sun and moon while a Hebrew army slew their victims;—it explains such things as are not authenticated facts of history, but only anonymous fictions of mythology. It is no adequate cause for the earth under our feet, for the heavens over our head, and, least of all, for this earth and heaven of human consciousness within us. The ecclesiastical God is sufficient cause for the Westminster Catechism, for baptism, by sprinkling or plunging, for belief in eternal damnation, for admission to Dr. Banbaby's Church—but it does not explain a mother's love for her wicked, profligate girl; nor David's wailing over his worthless, handsome boy: "O Absalom, my son! my son Absalom! would God that I had died for thee!"—there is no fact in the ecclesiastical God's consciousness which corresponds to that. It is not

cause for such a man as Socrates, or Franklin, nor such women as Miss Dix and Miss Nightingale, and others not less noble, only less known. It explains Pharaoh's dream about fat and lean kine; the story of Elisha's cursing the children who cried after him, "Go up, thou bald head, go," and of the two she-bears out of the woods who tore two and forty of those children to atoms in Divine and bearish wrath—but it does not explain the life of such a man as Jesus of Nazareth, nor his lament, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" It does not account for that grandest of human triumphs, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To explain such characters the ecclesiastical conception of God is no more adequate cause than the penny-trumpet in a little boy's mouth is sufficient to explain the world of music which Beethoven dreamed into thought and then poured forth, gladdening the earth with such sweet melody. Read the Book of Genesis, then read Newton's Principia, Humboldt's Kosmos, nay, any college manual of chemistry, and ask if the theologic God is cause adequate to the chemic composition of a single flower! Nay, read the stories in Genesis, or the sermons in Jonathan Edwards, and then in some starry night look up to the sky, and ask if that form of Deity could have conceived the heavens? You see at once how insufficient it is.

But the God of Infinite Perfection is Adequate Cause for all the facts in the Universe. In the world of matter you find Power resident on the spot; Mind resident on the spot, a Plan everywhere, things working together in order. The world of matter is a "team of little atomies," thing yoked to thing, and skilfully are they drove afield by that Almighty One whose thoughtful road is everywhere. All is orderly—never a break in the line of continuity. In the fossil animals which perished a million of years ago you find proximate formations which point to man; nay, yet further back in the structure of the earth, the fashion of the solar system itself, do we find finger-posts which indicate the road to humanity—distinctly pointing unto man. There is Law always, a constant mode of operation, never a miracle; no chemist, geologist, astronomer, can show proof of the "intervention of God," but the Power, Mind, Law, constant mode of operation, these show the presence of God always, everywhere, ordering all things "by number and measure and weight." The chemist analyzes matter into some sixty primitive substances, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, and the rest; but of all that "team of atomies" not a single brute creature ever thinks a thought; it is in God that the Mind resides, in him is the Power and the Plan. Mr. Whewell, a theological man indeed, but yet also, I think, certainly one of the ablest and most dispassionate men of science in these days, writes a book against the Plurality of Worlds, and declares there is no conscious life analogous to man's in any planet, in sun, or moon, or star: it is a dead world up there; the sun is a dead sun, the moon is dead as brass, and there is no life in any star. Why so? It is not consistent with the Ecclesiastical Notion of God; the Book of Miraculous Revelation never gives us a hint of a living thing in sun or moon or star; the Plan of Atonement applies only to the earth, it cannot reach

an inch beyond the atmosphere, which extends about fifty-two miles from the surface! Mr. Whewell is right—a plurality of worlds is wholly inconsistent with the ecclesiastical God; there is no record that such a thought ever crossed the mind of Moses, Jesus, Paul or John, that it ever occurred to Hebrew Jehovah or Christian Trinity. But it is not inconsistent with the Infinite God, and the philosopher who believes in him will not correct the facts of Nature by the fictions of Genesis. To him, how different the World of Matter appears, one grand act of creative power, which is everywhere active at all times.

Then when this Idea is accepted no philosopher will be bid to look for a miracle, and called an “infidel” because he finds only Law—law in the botanic growth of plants, law in the chemic composition of minerals, law in the mechanic structure of the earth, the sun, the solar system, the Universe itself. Then there will be no atheistic Lagranges and La Places to deny all God, because they do not find the phantom which theologians bid them seek, and because their telescope bores through the spot where the New Jerusalem was said to be, and finds but blank celestial space! From the scheme of matter and of mind no brilliant Schelling, no cautious, erudite Von Buch, no comprehensive, magnificent, generous, and thousand-minded Von Humboldt shall ever omit the Cause and Providence of matter and of mind!

Then, too, how different will the great complex world of Human History appear! Men will study it without hindrance, asking only for facts, for the law of the facts, and the human meaning of the law. They will find no miracle in man’s religious history, but a continual development of a faculty common to all mankind, a gradual progress in religious feeling, religious thought, religious act; no savage nation without consciousness of God, a sense of dependence, obligation, gratitude—aye, and trust in him, and something of love for him “even in savage bosoms”—all this proportionate to the people’s civilization. The philosopher will find God in all human history, in the gradual elevation of mankind from the low state of the wild man, to higher and higher types of excellence.

Jehovah is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; he inspires only Jews, them not much. He hates Esau, and butchers the Canaanites. To the Gentiles he is not a loving God, but a hating Devil. The ecclesiastical God is a Redeemer only to the redeemed—a handful of men, rather mean men too, I fear, most of them. What is he to babies dying unbaptized? What to the wicked whom death cuts down in their unrepented naughtiness? He is not God, but a “consuming fire;” he is “the Devil and his angels” to such; not the God of love, but a “great and dreadful God,” who laughs when their fear cometh, and crushes Sodom and Gomorrah under his fiery hail; and, all bloody with battle, tramples populous Idumea under foot, as a Bacchanalian treads the wine-press full of purple-blooded grapes!

With the philosophical Idea, there is a God for all nations, for all men, inspiring liberal Greece and prudent Rome not less than pious Judea—a

God for babies sprinkled, and for babies all unsinooched by priestly hands; a God for Jacob and Esau, Jew and Gentile; a God to whom mankind is dear, Father and Mother to the human race! Then you can explain human history: the diverse talents of Egyptian, Hindoo, Persian, Hebrew, Greek, Teuton, Celt, American, these are various gifts, which imply no partial love on the part of him who makes yon oak a summer green, yon pine a winter green. You find the Infinite God in human history, as in the world of matter; for as the plan of material combination, mineral, vegetable, animal, did not reside in any one of the sixty primitive substances, nor in the world of minerals, plants, animals, but in God, who is the thoughtful substance to these unthinking forms—so the plan of human history is not in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; it is not in the whole world of men, but in the Infinite God, who is the Providence that shapes our ends to some grand purpose which we know not of. Thus the true idea of God is adequate to the Purposes of Science both of matter and man.

II. This Idea of God is also adequate to the Purposes of Religion. For that I want not merely a cause sufficient to my intellect, but much more. I want a God I can trust and have absolute confidence in, so that I am sure of him. Now the savage may confide in a God of blood, a partial God, who loves Jacob and hates Esau; an inconstant and irregular God, who works by fits and starts, who is absent now for a long time, and then comes in with miraculous pomp, signs, and wonders. A malignant man may be content for a moment with his vengeful Deity, who hates the wicked and will torment them forever; but soon as a man is considerably enlightened in his mind, conscience, heart and soul, soon as he comprehends the Power that is everywhere always, active and acting for good, then that savage deity is not enough for him. He wants not only infinite Ability,—power of Force to do, power of Mind to plan, and Will to execute, but also power of Conscience to will right, and the Infinite power of Affection to love all men and all things, using this energy of will, mind, force, for the welfare of each man—nay, of every mote that peoples this little leaf. That quality is not in the ecclesiastical God; here it is in the true God of earth and heaven and human consciousness. He is perfect creating Cause, making all things of the best possible material, from the best possible motives, for the best possible purpose, and as the best possible means to achieve that purpose. He is perfect conserving Providence, who is as perfectly, completely and essentially present in this little rosebud which I hold in my hand, as he was when, as the Biblical poet has it, “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,” at the creation of the earth, just springing into new-born stellar life. He administers all things by the perfect method, with the best of means, and will secure the best of ends for you and me, for each man, saint and sinner, for the poor widow who supplicates and the unjust judge who fears not God, neither regards man.

By the ecclesiastical notion there is Absolute Evil in God, a dark deep

background, out of which comes evil in the nature of things; and hence comes the total depravity of man, hence the wrath of God, enlivening forever the fire of hell, which no deluge of human tears and blood can ever quench. So the Evil in the world is eternal, not reconciled, not atoned for; it cannot be removed, neither in this life nor that to come, because it is an essential part of God. Nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand are sinners, and their sin is eternal, not to be removed; so their agony has no end. Trace it back logically to its ultimate cause, and it is all God's fault. So every sin not repented of that you and I commit, is not only perpetual wretchedness for us, but likewise an eternal blot on the character of the ecclesiastical God. Under the parlor windows of his little Heaven, where the elect loll on their couches and look out, indolently touching their harps of gold, there lies the immeasurable Sink of Hell, where the Devils, those unclean beasts of the infernal world, wallow continual, rending the souls of men, while the reek of their agony ascends up forever and ever!

But by the true and philosophic or natural Idea of God, all the Evil of the world is something incident to man's development, and no more permanent than the stumbling of a child who learns to walk, or his scrawling letters when he first essays to write. It will be outgrown, and not a particle of it or its consequences shall cleave permanent to mankind. This is true of the individual wrongs which you and I commit; and likewise of such vast wickedness as war, political oppression, and the hypocrisy of priesthoods. These are blots in mankind's writing-book, which we make in learning to copy out God's Eternal Rule of Right in fair round letters, so clear that he may read who runs. The very pain the error gives is remedial, not revengeful; it is medicine to cure and save and bless, not poison to kill and torture with eternal smart. Here then is a God you can trust—Power, Wisdom, Will, Justice also, and likewise Love. What quality is there a man can ask for that is not in the Infinite, Perfect God?

Then there will be a Form of Religion adapted to represent such an idea of God. It will conform to Man's Nature, his body and soul, doing justice to every part, for as God made man with such faculties as would best serve his own great end, so it is clear that it is man's duty to use these faculties in their natural way, for their normal purpose. God did not make man with something redundant to be cut off, or lacking something to be sought elsewhere and tied on; he gave us such faculties as are fit for our work.

1. See the effect this idea has on Piety. A natural religious instinct inclines us to love God. If we have an Idea of him which suits that faculty, then the soul loves God as the eye loves light, the ear sound, as the mind loves truth, use and beauty, the conscience justice, and the affections men and women. The hungry religious faculty seeks for itself bread, finds it, and is filled with strength and delight. If it find it not, then we are tortured by Fear, that ugly raven which preys on the dissatisfied heart of man.

Now the Infinite God is the object of entire and complete satisfaction to the Soul. You want perfect power for your reverence, perfect wisdom for your intellect, perfect justice for your conscience, perfect love for your affections, perfect integrity for your soul: and here they all are in the infinitely perfect God. So piety will be complete in all its parts, and perfect too in each. I cannot love a wicked man as a good man, nor a foolish and unjust man as one wise and just; no more can I love a foolish God, nor an unjust God, nor a hating God. In proportion as I am wise, just, humane, shall I hate such a God, and repudiate the shameful thought. But the perfect God—I cannot help loving him just in proportion to my excellence. He made me so. I put it to the consciousness of every one of you, is it not so? When God is thus presented as infinitely perfect, can you refrain from loving him with your intellect, your conscience, heart and soul? No more than the healthy eye can fail to enjoy the light; no more than the hungry, healthy appetite can help rejoicing in its natural food, the maiden in her lover, or the bridegroom in his bride!

2. Not less does this Idea of God affect Morality, the other part of religion. I find certain ideal rules of conduct writ on my body and in my spirit. By inward and outward experience gradually I learn these rules—the laws of God, enacted by him into my flesh and soul. I shall try to keep these laws; I know they are his commandment. I shall turn every faculty to its special work. My general piety, the love of God, shall come out in my normal daily work, in temperance and chastity, the piety of the body; in knowledge of the true, the useful, the beautiful, the piety of the intellect; in justice for all men, the piety of the conscience; in affection for all in their various relations to me, in love for my friend, kindred, wife and child, which is the piety of the heart; yes, it will appear in continual trust, in absolute reliance on the Infinite God, which is the great total generic piety of the soul.

Then Religion will not be away off, one side of my life, separate from my daily duty as brother, sister, son, father, mother; not apart from my work as blacksmith, governor, shoemaker, minister, nurse, seamstress, baby-tender, cook, editor, judge, or whatever I may be; but the soul of piety will make religion in all these things. It will not be an exception in my life, condensed into a single moment of morning or of evening prayer; it will be the instance of my life, spread as daylight over all my work.

One day this Idea of God will shine in human consciousness, and all the rude conceptions which now prevail will vanish as Moloch, Baal, Zeus, Jupiter, Odin, and Thor have faded out from the religion of all live mankind. To-day nobody prays to, nor swears by these names, whereunto millions of men once fell prostrate and poured out such sacrificial blood. One day the God of Infinite Perfection shall be felt and known by all mankind! Then no bigot, ignorant as a beast, shall essay to rebuke thoughtful men

where he knows nothing and they know much. No longer shall priests—ill-born to little talent, ill-bred to superstition, ignorance and bad manners—thrust their anointed stupidity in between man and God; no longer shall fanaticism pinch the forehead of the people; no longer shall it mutilate the fair body of man, nor practise yet more odious emasculation on the soul. Religion shall not mildew and rot the fruit of manhood; nor blast the bloom of youth; nor nip the baby bud: but the strongest force in our nature shall warm and electrify the whole plant of humanity, helping the baby bud swell into youthful bloom, and ripen into manly fruit, golden and glorious amid the sheltering leaves of human life. To youth, religion shall give a rosier flush of healthy joy; to maid and man shall it bring strength, more stalwart and a lovelier beauty, cheering them through their single or their married toilsome life; and it shall set its kingliest diadem, a crown of heavenly stars, on the experienced brow of age.

To-day “all Christendom is Christian.”—Why? It has the ecclesiastical method, the ecclesiastical conception of God, a mode of salvation by another man’s religion, not our own. Let me do no injustice. It has the best form of religion the world has devised yet on any large scale, which has done great service; but in all Christendom ecclesiastical Christianity hinders no war, it breaks no tyrant’s rod, it never liberates a slave, emancipates no woman, shuts up no drunkery, removes no cause of ignorance, poverty, or crime, cherishes the gallows; it is no bar to the politician’s ambition, all reckless of the natural rights of man; it never checks a pope or priest in his hypocrisy. Every monster is sure to have this ecclesiastical form of religion on his side, and when Napoleon or President Buchanan wishes to do a special wicked deed, he bends his public knees and supplicates his ecclesiastic God, the name in which all evil begins.

But the true Idea of God, the Religion which is to come of it, which is love of that God and keeping all his commandments, will work such a revolution in man’s affairs as Luther, nor Moses, nor yet mightiest Jesus ever wrought. God everywhere, Infinite Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Integrity, Religion in all life, over the anvil, in the pulpit, beside the cradle, on the throne—what a new world shall that make, when the great river of God runs in the channel he made for it, singing melodies as it runs, and sending the spray up from its bosom to fertilize whole continents, which shall break out into flowers, that ripen into fruit, the very leaves for the healing of the nations!

SERMON IV.

OF THE SOUL'S NORMAL DELIGHT IN THE INFINITE GOD.

"I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."—Ps. xvii. 15.

If a man be sure of the Infinite Perfection of God, the natural object of desire for all his nobler faculties, what tranquillity and delight is there for him; not spasmodic and violent, but equable and continuous! Then the strongest of all the human powers finds what most of all it needs; and the highest, the greatest of all human delights peoples the consciousness with this Holy Family of Love. I do not wonder that all men are not rich—it is not possible; nor famous—that, too, is beyond the reach of all save one in a million, even if each were so foolish as to wish he had a great name always rattling behind him, filling his ears with dust and silly noise. It is not to be supposed that all men will pre-eminently be wise, or witty; nay, not even learned. It does not astonish me that no more try for such things, though feeling yet their charm. But I am amazed that any one should be content to trudge along through life without a good culture of the religious faculty. I should of all things hate to be poor in Piety and Morality. Above all things I would know God and live in tranquil gladness with him.

When a little boy, I used to hear ministers preach that the natural man did not love God; but I was sure the natural Boy did. They said that Religion was something man naturally turned off from and avoided, and only the Holy Ghost could catch and bring him painful back. I confess I was filled with wonder, for to my young experience it seemed as natural for a man, at least a boy, to worship God, to love God, to trust in him, and feel a delight in him, as it was for my father's bees to get wax and honey from the yellow blossoms of the willow or the elm—the first flowers of the late Northern Spring—or to revel in the lilacs which hung over the bee-house, or rejoice in the white clover of New England, that, beautifying the fields all around, wooed those little bridegrooms to its fragrant and sweet breast. No theological education and gray-bearded experience with mankind makes me now wonder less when I hear the old calumny repeated for the thousandth time.

Look all the world over, and see how man delights in God. These roses do not unveil and disclose their fair bosoms to the sun more naturally than spontaneous man opens his soul to God and welcomes the great Star, shedding infinite daylight therein. Men with fire sacrificing their sons unto Moloch, or Jehovah, men crushed before the car of Juggernaut, men

in convents, women emaciated to nuns, crowds of men in Philadelphia, New York, Berlin, and London, thrilled with bristling horror at the terrible phantom which some bony Calvinist calls out of his dark imagination to scare them withal, these testify of the necessity man feels to turn his face towards God; and if he find not the true, then will he fasten on some cheating substitute. If there be no God that he can love, then he crouches down beneath the conception of some God of Damnation, and is horrified with fear. The Soul, like the mouth, goes ever, and must be fed, if not on what it would, then at least on the best it finds.

Mankind takes great delight in its religious consciousness. With what joy did Egypt build up its pyramids, and from a mountain Brahmanic Indians hew their rock-cut temples out! The wondrous architecture of the Ionian Greeks in many a marble town, the fantastic mosques of the Mohammedans, the arabesques of Moslem piety, the amazing churches of the mediæval Christians—all these were built with solemn joy! Not without delight did laborious men express the nation's gloomy religious consciousness in these things. Phœnicians worshipping Melkartha, Siamese prostrate before their great idol of a silver Buddha, Nootka Sound Indians all a rainy day sitting on the eaves of their god-house and drumming with the naked feet, Catholics on Easter Sunday, kneeling by thousands before St. Peter's that the Pope may say "Peace be with you!" Protestants crowding to a camp-meeting or a revival—all these are witnesses to this great religious instinct, stronger than all outward force, which moves them toward the Divine.

I think my own life has not been lacking in happiness of a high character. I have swam in clear sweet waters all my days; and if sometimes they were a little cold, and the stream ran adverse and something rough, it was never too strong to be breasted and swam through. From the days of earliest boyhood, when I went "stumbling through the grass," "as merry as a May bee," up to the gray-bearded manhood of this time, there is none but has left me honey in the hive of memory, that I now feed on for present delight. When I recall the years of boyhood, youth, early manhood, I am filled with a sense of sweetness, and wonder that such little things can make a mortal so exceeding rich! But I must confess that the chiefest of all my delights is still the religious. This is the lowest down, the inwardest of all—it is likewise highest up. What delight have I in my consciousness of God, the certainty of his protection, of his Infinite Love! There is an Infinite Father—nay, Infinite Mother is the dearer and more precious name—who takes a special care of me, and has made this world, with its vast forces, to serve and bless me, an Elias chariot on which I shall ride to heaven—nay, am riding that way all the time! God loves me as my natural mother never did, nor could, nor can even now with the added beatitudes of well-nigh two score years in heaven. I stand on the top of the world—all the stars shine for me. But he loves just as well the little boy, black as my coat, born this hour in some wigwam of South Africa, and will take just as special care thereof, and has made the

Universe a chariot of fire to translate that little black Elias to heaven withal; he also stands on the top of the world and has a life-estate in the sun and moon and every star. Nay, God takes just as good care of the mouse which gnaws the grocer's cheese to-day, nor never for a moment neglects the little aphid now sucking this leaf; nor the parasitic animalcule which feeds on the aphid, the atomy of an atomy. They also stand on the top of the world, this great Celestial Sphere whereof God is both centre and circumference. Consciousness of that God, the Cause and Providence of all the world, it fills me with such delight as all the world besides can never give! I wonder any one who ever opened half an eye inwardly, could dream that Religion is unnatural to man, that Piety is not welcome to our innermost as are these roses welcome to the Spring. For what I say of me is also true of you, if not of each, why, certainly, of most—'tis true of Man, if not of men.

In great Italian towns, all winter long, you shall see men and women, too old, perhaps, for work, yet not quite poor enough for professional beggary, wrinkled as Egyptian mummies; they crawl out of their hovels and creep through the cold darkness of the lanes they live in, and, screened from the wind under the wall of some great church, palace, or monastery, they nestle all day in the yellow sunshine of the sky, so happy in that light which gives them also necessary warmth do those venerable babies seem, blest by that great star which shines forever on them, though six and ninety million miles away! In New England or Pennsylvania, when the spring thaws out the farm-house, and, speck by speck, the dry earth appears green with healthy grass, and the fresh smell of the ground, such as you find it at no other time, comes up a wholesome breath, some pale, little tall girl, toddling about the narrow kitchen all winter long, looking thin and peaked, comes out to revel in the sunshine and the new grass. The breath of the ground is the inspiration of health to her; the eye, dim and sunken just now, ere long glows like the morning star in that young heaven, and the pale cheek has the bloom of the ruddy clover in it too. By-and-bye, the mother, careful and troubled about many things, tells the neighbors at meeting on Sunday, "O, Jinnie's quite another girl now the spring's come from what she was in February and March. The winter went hard with her, poor thing; I and her father begun to think she'd melt away before the snow did! I think she'll get along nicely now!" What the sun is to the sickly girl whom winter pent up in the narrow house, and to the lazzaroni at Naples, whose poverty allows him no nearer fire and light, that is the Religious Consciousness to you and me; yes, to all men in all lands, in every age save the rudest of all.

I do not see how any one can live without it; I think none ever does. As the body on the material world, so the soul must live on God, that universal motherly bosom to warm and feed mankind. All over the world do you find the sweet and holy flower of Piety springing out of the ground of humanity, common as grass on the earth, or stars above it. Early literature is full of religion. Man's first psalm is of God; so little babies

first of all things say Mamma, Papa. Theology is the oldest of all science —this queen mother of many knowledges. Amid all the babble of shrewd, noisy tongues, this language of heaven, spoken in a still small voice, is yet understood of all mankind. Civilized people have their Bibles, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Hebrew, Christian, Mohammedan, writ with pens, but yet thought inspired of God. The savage also has his Bible, far older, yet not writ with pens. Mr. Cartier, who went among the North American Indians in the sixteenth century, says: "A day seldom passes with an elderly Indian, or others who are esteemed wise and good, in which a blessing is not asked or thanks returned to the Giver of all life, sometimes audibly, but most generally in the devotional language of the heart." Another missionary amongst them says, when the Indian party broke up their winter encampment, they went to the spring which had furnished them water, and thanked the Great Spirit who had preserved them in health and safety, and supplied their wants. "You then witness the silent but deeply impressive communion which the unsophisticated native of the forest holds with his Creator."

"Every human heart is human,
And even in savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings,
For the good they comprehend not;
And the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened."

Do not think that God knows only such as "know Christ," or Moses. He is no respecter of persons. The footsteps of religion, you see them in the dew of the world's early morning; they are deeply set in the primeval rock of human history. How multitudinous are the conceptions of God, all meant to satisfy the soul which longs for Him! The appetite for food, the instinct for dress, how many experiments they make! Humanity could not dispense with one of them.

"The lively Grecian in a land of hills,
Rivers and fertile plains and sounding shores,"
"Could find commodious place for every God."

"In despite
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets
By wandering rhapsodists, and in contempt
Of doubt and blind denial, hourly urged
Amid the wrangling schools, a SPIRIT hung,
Beautiful vision, o'er thy towns and farms,
Statues and temples and memorial tombs;
And emanations were perceived; and acts
Of immortality, in Nature's course,
Exemplified by mysteries that were felt
As bonds on grave Philosopher imposed
And armed warrior; and in every grove
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,
When Piety more awful had relaxed."

“And doubtless sometimes a thought arose
 Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired:
 That hath been, is, and where it was and is,
 Then shall endure—existence unexposed
 To the blind walk of mortal accident;
 From diminution safe, and weakening age,
 While man grows old and dwindles and decays;
 And countless generations of Mankind
 Depart, and leave no vestige where they trod.”

Trust me, none is wholly without God in the world. Even in the wickedest of men there must be yet some line of light lying along their horizon, where the great Heavenly Sun, unseen, unknown, refracts his rays in the dense air, and, stooping down, touches with fire the edge of their little kingdom of earth; at least some little Northern Light of superstition, which is also a dawn, flickers in their cold, cloudy sky: else in their Arctic winter, even piratical murderers or manstealing dogs would go mad at feeling such Egyptian darkness, and would die outright.

But yet there are, certainly, great differences among men in respect to their internal Consciousness of Religion. In our great towns there are millionnaires; also are there paupers, beggars there. What an odds between these devotees of money! So are there likewise paupers of religious consciousness, clad with but a few rags of pious experience, rudely stitched with an oath or a momentary aspiration, pasted together here and there with religious fear—a covering all too scant—and through the loops and rents of this spiritual raiment the bitter winds of life blow in upon the smarting soul. There are also great Capitalists of Religion, Millionnaires of Piety and Morality, whose long life industriously spent in holy feeling, holy thinking, holy work, has given them a great real and personal Estate of Religion, whence they have now a daily income of spiritual delight. This triumph of the soul you often find in men of no outward distinction, sometimes furnished with but little learning—the religious their only spiritual wealth. But the highest religious delight is not found in these monsters of piety, only in well-proportioned characters, when all the faculties are fully grown and trained up well. For the religious is a mixture likewise of all other joys, and, like manna, “hath the taste of all in it.”

It is not fair to expect much religious experience in the Child. Reverence for the All-in-All, gratitude for his genial providence, the disposition to trust this Divine Mother, and to keep the laws of conscience, that is all we should commonly look for at an early age. The fair fruits of religion come only at a later day, not in April or May, but only in September and October. Nay, there are winter-fruits of religion, which are not fully ripe till the trees bloom again, and the grandfather of fourscore years, sees the little plants flowering under his shadow; not till then, perhaps, are the great rich winter pears of religion fully perfect in their luscious ripeness.

Yet the religious disposition is a blessed thing, even in childhood. How it inclines the little boy or girl to veneration and gratitude—virtues,

which in the child are what good breeding is in the full-grown gentleman, giving a certain air of noble birth and well-bred superiority. There is a Jacob's ladder for our young pilgrim, whereon he goes up from his earthly mother, who manages the little room he sleeps in, to the dear Heavenly Mother, who never slumbers nor sleeps, who is never careful and troubled about any thing, but yet cares continually for the great housekeeping of all the world, giving likewise to her beloved even in their sleep. In the child it is only the faint twilight, the beginnings of religion which you take notice of, like the voice of the bluebird, and the Phœbe, coming early in March, but only as a prelude to that whole summer of joyous song, which, when the air is delicate, will ere long gladden and beautify the procreant nest.

Painful is it to see a child whose religious culture has been neglected; the heavenly germ attempting growth, but checked by weeds, which no motherly hand plucks up or turns away. More painful to see it forced to unnatural hot-bed growth, to be succeeded by helpless imbecility at last. Worse still to find the young soul cursed with false doctrines, which film over the eye till it cannot see the Sun of Righteousness rising with such healing in his beams, and make life a Great Dark Day, hideous with fear and devils, and amazed with the roar of greedy hell! Such ill-entreated souls often grow idiotic in their religious sense, or else, therein stark mad and penned up in churches and other asylums, mope and gibber in their hideous bereavement, thinking "man is totally depraved," and God a great ugly devil, an almighty cat, who worries his living prey, tormenting them before their time, and will forever tear them to pieces in the never-ending agony of hell! It is terrible to hear the sermons, hymns, and prayers, which these unfortunates wail out in their religious folly or delirium. To cause one of these little ones to offend in that way, it were better that a millstone were hanged about the father or the mother's neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea. I say it is but the beginning of religion that we find in the tender age; twilight or sunrise, seldom more. The time of piety is not yet. Blame not the little tree; in due season it will litter the ground with purple figs.

In later years you see the flowers of religion, you taste the fruit of its gladdening consciousness of God. In early manhood there are temptations of instinctive passion, which clamors for its object, and cares but little with what its hungry maw is fed. In later manhood, there are temptations of ambition, a subtler and more deceitful peril. I know nothing but religion that is commonly able to defend us from either; this is strong enough for each, for both together.

Young Esau is hungry; the pottage is savory. Desire from within leagues with Occasion from without. "No other eye is on me," quoth he. His pulses throb; the lightning, the earthquake, the fire of passion, pass with swift tumultuous roar along his consciousness. But the nice ear of Conscience listens to the still small voice of Duty, "Remember

now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." He turns him off from her snare, charm she never so wisely, and if he fail of the pottage, he is not poisoned with the wild-gourds stirred therein; with chaste hand he keeps his birthright of integrity. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his ways?" asks young Esau, but from his religious soul the answer straightway comes: "By taking heed to the law of Duty, clearly writ and plain to read." He drinks clean water out of his own sweet spring, and thirsts no more for the tepid tanks of vice, dirty and defiling. His natural passion is directed by its natural master, and what is so often the foe of youth becomes his ally and invigorating friend.

In a later day more dangerous lusts invade the maturer man. Jonas is alone in his place of business now. It is late; all the clerks have gone home, the shutters are closed, the fire smoulders low in the grate. The gas is thriftily turned down; by the dim light I cannot see whether the counting-room opens into factory, grocery, haberdashery, warehouse, or bank. I but distinctly see the desk—symbolic furniture for all the five, with many more—and an anxious man heavy with long-continued doubt. It is the man of business in his temptation—nay, his Agony and Bloody Sweat. Not Jesus in the New Testament legend was more sorely tempted of another Devil. "Shall I attempt this plan?" quoth he. What it is appears not—importing Coolies, or African slaves, cheating the government or the people—this only is clear, he intends some great wrong to other men. "I can do it—'twill certainly succeed—no man shall find it out. Then wealth is mine—that is Nobility in a Democracy: with it comes the Power, the Respectability and the Honor it bestows." They flit before him—a great city house wheels into line; a great country house follows, flanked with wide lawns and costly gardens—a whole world of beauty. He sees such visionary entertainments, new flocks of wealthy friends, obsequious clergymen, communing at any table where Success breaks the bread and fills the cup, no matter if but shewbread and wine of iniquity. He tastes the admiration of men who worship any coin, and care not if it bear the laureled head of LIBERTY, a Northern fair-faced maid, or only a Southern Vulture swooping down upon its human prey. He anticipates the wealthy marriage of his modest girls. He sees posts of ambition close at hand, and all so easy for mounting up to if he be but winged with gold. "All this will I give thee, yea, and much more," says the tempter, "for they are mine, and where I will I bestow them. I, Mammon, dwell with honor; Glory is mine, and Respectability; my fruit is better than virtue. The love of riches is the beginning of wisdom. Money crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, How long, ye honest ones, will ye love simplicity? Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. Did any ever trust in wealth and was confounded? Look about you: how did Mr. Short-weight gain his millions? Yet what honor he lived in! Colleges named him Doctor of Laws, and not Banker. In funeral sermons ministers put him among the saints. Come thou and do likewise. Money answereth all things, and is imputed unto men for righteousness!"

“Shall I also climb that popular ladder?” asks tortured Jonas. But presently it seems as if his mother’s form bent over him. It is the same sweet face which was once so often pressed to his, as she stilled his aching flesh and kissed his little griefs away. His ear tingles warm again, as if that mouth, long silent now, breathed into it her oft-repeated word, “ONLY THE RIGHT IS ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD.” “Get you behind me, Devils all,” cries he. They vanish into the cold ashes of his grate, while the fair angel that we name Religion, disguised in his mother’s saintly shape, comes back and ministers to him. He goes home a strong man; but dreams that night that he was shipwrecked, and in the wildest storm his mother came and trod the waters under her, and brought him safe to land. Then turns he, and dreams again that he was falling, falling, falling through the dark, never so long and far away, and that same strong-winged angel swept between him and the ground, and bore him off unhurt, repeating with its sweet motherly voice:

“ONLY THE RIGHT IS ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD!”

He wakes for honest toil and manly duty, with its dear and tranquil joys; and all day long that holy Psalm keeps quiring in his heart:

“ONLY THE RIGHT IS ACCEPTABLE WITH GOD!”

How soothing is Religion in sorrow! It is her only boy: Rachel could not save him. The girls were thinned out one by one. Sickness made them only dearer. Death plucked them, flower after flower. When he shook the family bush, how sadly did those white roses cast their petals on the wind! The corner of the village grave-yard seems snowed all over with mementoes of what has been. The father, too, is gone now. In sleep her arms fold together, but only on emptiness, as Love calls up the dear figure to cheat and avoid her grasp. Poor Rachel! all alone now! and dreams add their visionary woe to the live sorrows of the waking day. Now the last one lies there, straightened after death, a red rose put in his hand. It is the room he was born in. Her bridal chamber once is his funeral chamber now—the beginning of her hopes, the end of her disappointments—a porch only to so many graves. How fair he looks, the brown hair clustered round his brow. Since death, in the dead boy she sees the father’s face come out more fair, just as he looked when she was eight and Robert ten, and they gathered chestnuts in the woods, he alone with her and she alone with him; he bearing the little sack their mutual hands had filled, when neither knew nor dreamed those little trodden paths would lead to marriage, and their mutual hand fill many a sack of joys and sorrows too. In the same face she sees her lover and her child—both dead now. That handsome bud will never be a flower. No maiden shall salute those cheeks with the first stealthy modest kiss of heavenly love. The real present and the ideal future meet there, and Rachel sits between, the point common to both; a wife without a husband, a mother with no child. Poor Rachel! Is there any consolation? She feels the Infinite Father is with her: he loves her husband better than she loved him, when

passion melted the twain to one; loves the child better than she loved her lost one, her only one—her Boy. The Infinite Father is with her. In her early love she looked to him and was not ashamed. That day-star of Piety gleamed white in the roseate flush of her maiden love; through the throbbing joy of her bridal she looked up to the Infinite One, Father of bridegroom and of bride. When one by one those little sprigs pushed out from the married boughs, Rachel remembered him who never forgets us in our heedlessness, thankful for the old life continued, the new life lent. Does she now forget the Rock whence our earthly houses be hewed out and builded up?

The neighbors look on the surface of her life—how disturbed it is, the great deep all broken up! But underneath it all, below the troubled depth of her sorrow, there is a deeper deep whereto she goes down. It is all still there, and, face to face, she communes with Him who will be with us in deep waters. In the ecstasy of grief she finds that settled joy of heart which transcends all other joys. She looks into another world and sees her white rosebuds, and the last, the red, open in the light of heaven and flower out to fairer maiden and manly beauty than earth knows of in temperate or in tropic lands! while amid those dear ones the mortal father, immortal now, who went before his boy, walks like a gardener among his plants, and makes ready also a place for her! “Thy will, not mine be done; it is well with the child.” She needs no other prayer. The Comforter has come, that same Comforter who was in the beginning and cheered the hearts of millions before the name of Jesus was ever spoke on land or sea. Poor Rachel, is it? Then who, I ask, is rich? Henceforth she has a charmed life, her smiles fewer but serener and more heartfelt. The air is cool and delicate about her; the endemics of the ground can stir no fever in that tranquil blood. Her great sorrow has seemed a great religion, which fills her with stillness. A wife without a husband, a mother without a living child, is she alone, think you? The Infinite Father is with her, in her, and she also in him. Call not that lonely which is so densely populate with God.

How the winds blow on the surface, at the human level; with what wrathful sweep tread those posters of the sea and land! Go a few furlongs up, and you have left the whirlwind behind you; you are above the thunder, and beneath your feet the harmless lightnings flash unheard away; all the noises of Sebastopol and Waterloo roll by and leave no mark on the most delicate ear. Even the earthquake is not felt in that calm deep of the upper air! On the sea, go down not many rods,

“The water is calm and still below,
 For the winds and waves are noiseless there,
 And the sands are bright as the stars that glow
 In the motionless field of upper air.
 And life, in rare and beautiful forms,
 Is sporting amid those bowers of stone,
 And is safe when the wrathful spirit of storms
 Has made the top of the wave his own.”

How old and gray-headed Mr. Grandfather is. At Boston, in 1783, he heard the bells ring for Peace, which meant also Independence. His thoughtful mother, not without prayers, watched his cradle at the beginning of the storm of Revolution. Now he is old, very old. He has been out on the sea of life and done business in its great waters. Many a proud wave has gone over him. But he got through. Children and children's children are the crown of triumph for his old age. Yet he is more religious than old. He stoops a little now, and sometimes slumbers in his chair. The mists of the valley which all must tread lie spread out before him, white with the moonlight of old age. Of a pleasant day he sallies forth, staff in hand, this *Œdipus*, who has met the *Sphinx* of time and solved the great riddle of life, and he wonders "where the old people are?" How young the world looks to his experienced eyes! He lifts his hat to some venerable man whom he saw christened in the meeting-house so long ago that the ink has turned brown on the yellow paper in the parish book. There is a funeral to-day of a white-haired woman, old, very old. Mr. Grandfather remembers her as a chubby little rosy-cheeked maiden, with black hair, and eyes so full of fun, just getting into her teens when he was but half-way there. Now he reads on the silver plate, "Aged XCIV." "Ninety-four?" quoth he, "a great age. Yes, I knew she was about that! A great age. Fourscore and fourteen! Six more, and it is a hundred." He remembers the green-gages she used to give him out of her father's great garden; now it is built all over with huge granite stores, four stories high, and the pear trees and plums which Mr. Blackstone brought over from England have followed their planter long since. He remembers her wedding—seventy-six years ago last July, boy of twelve that he was. On the plain table of those "good old times" he set a china bowl of white lilies, which he swam for in Hammond's Pond that morning, to honor his pretty cousin's marriage with. It was the first time they ever had such flowers at a Puritan wedding; but the minister liked it, so did cousin Lucy, but the *new* cousin thought only of her who made him so happy. "Now she is clad for another change," quoth Mr. Grandfather, as he lays his last gift of blossoms on her coffin; "always a little before me, never long; born seven years first, wed twelve years before me. We shall meet again before long. This is the last of earth for you; soon it will be for me. Well, I am content. 'Shock of corn fully ripe'—let the dear Father come and take of his planting, at the great Harvest Home. To die is also gain."

That night Mr. Grandfather tarries late in his sitting-room, when the rest are gone to bed. He slept a little after supper in his great arm chair, and is quite wakeful now. The old clock stands there; it tells the hours of human time; nay, with delicate hand it marks even the seconds, just as life itself will always do. It reports likewise the days of the month and of the week, the shape of the moon; on the top of all is a ship at sea, rising and falling by wheel work, as if driven by the wind and tossed. Mr. Grandfather looks into his wood fire, and then all the long voyage of

his past life comes pictured to him from his cradle to cousin Lucy's funeral. There are sad things to look on, which bring back a tear; he did not know it till it fell hot on his hand and made him start. There are joyous things also, which set his heart throbbing as when he was a bridegroom. Nay, there are wrong things which he did, repented of, and outgrew so long ago that they seem merely historical, like the sins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; yet he remembers the lesson they taught. His boyish loves return—father and mother, children—nay, children's children. The wife of his heart, reverently buried years ago, comes back in bridal garments, then sits at the new cradle. Then another funeral rushes on his sight: "Lover and friend thou puttest far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness," quoth he. "Nay, nay, not into darkness; say rather into marvellous light! My time is not far off. How long, O Lord? How soon? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." The old clock strikes twelve; the first day of another month comes into its place, and the new moon lifts its silver rim to tell below what heavenly life goes on above. "Soon shall I behold thy face in righteousness, and I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

I wonder any man can be content to live without the joyous consciousness of God; without this how any one can bear the griefs of time, I know not, nor cannot even dream. I would be certain that my little venture is insured at the Provident office of the Infinite God; then shall I fear no shipwreck, but steer my personal craft as best I may, certain of a harbor; and though it be at the bottom of the sea, I am safe landed in heaven. If I have well done my part, and where or when it may, I am sure the voyage will turn out fortunate.

O young men and young women; men and women no longer young! It is not enough to be brave and thoughtful; not enough to be moral also, and friendly each to each. You have a Faculty which makes another World for you, the World of God. There is a joy which is not in wisdom, with all its science and its art of beauty and of use; nor yet in Morality, with its grand works of justice; nay, nor yet even in the sweet felicity of loving men and being loved in turn by them; there is a life within the Veil of the Temple; it is the Life with God, the Innermost Delight of human Consciousness. Animated by that your Wisdom shall be greater, more true your Science, and more fair your Art; your Morality more firm and sure, your Love to men more joyous and abiding, your whole Character made useful, and beautiful exceedingly.

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