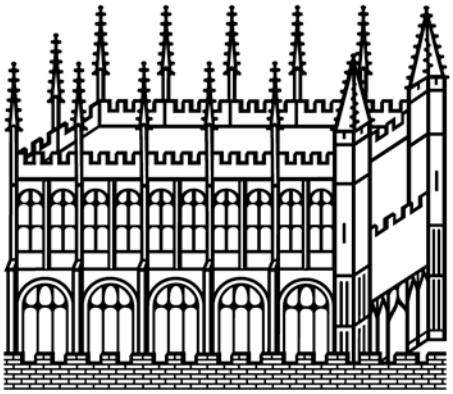

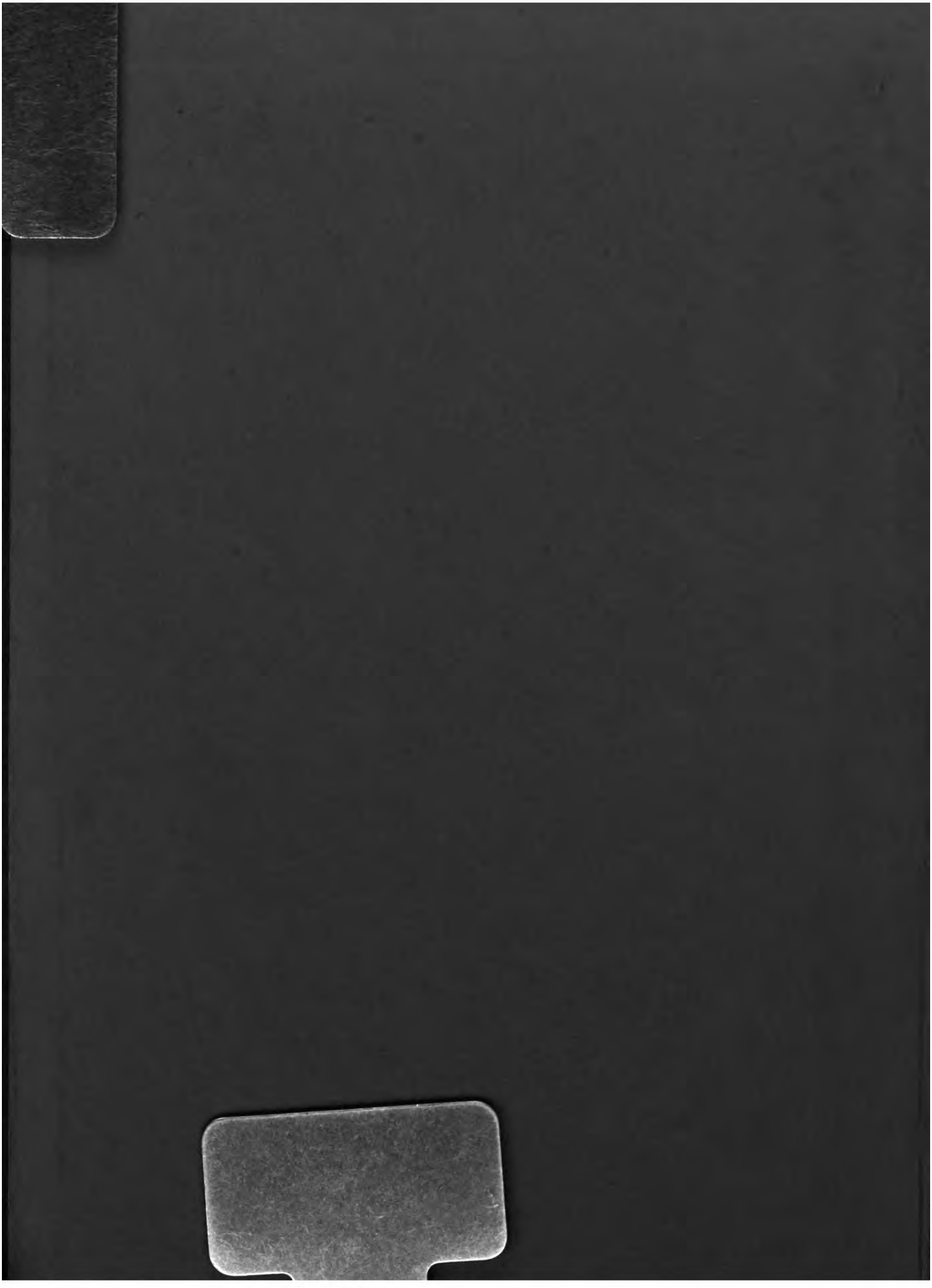

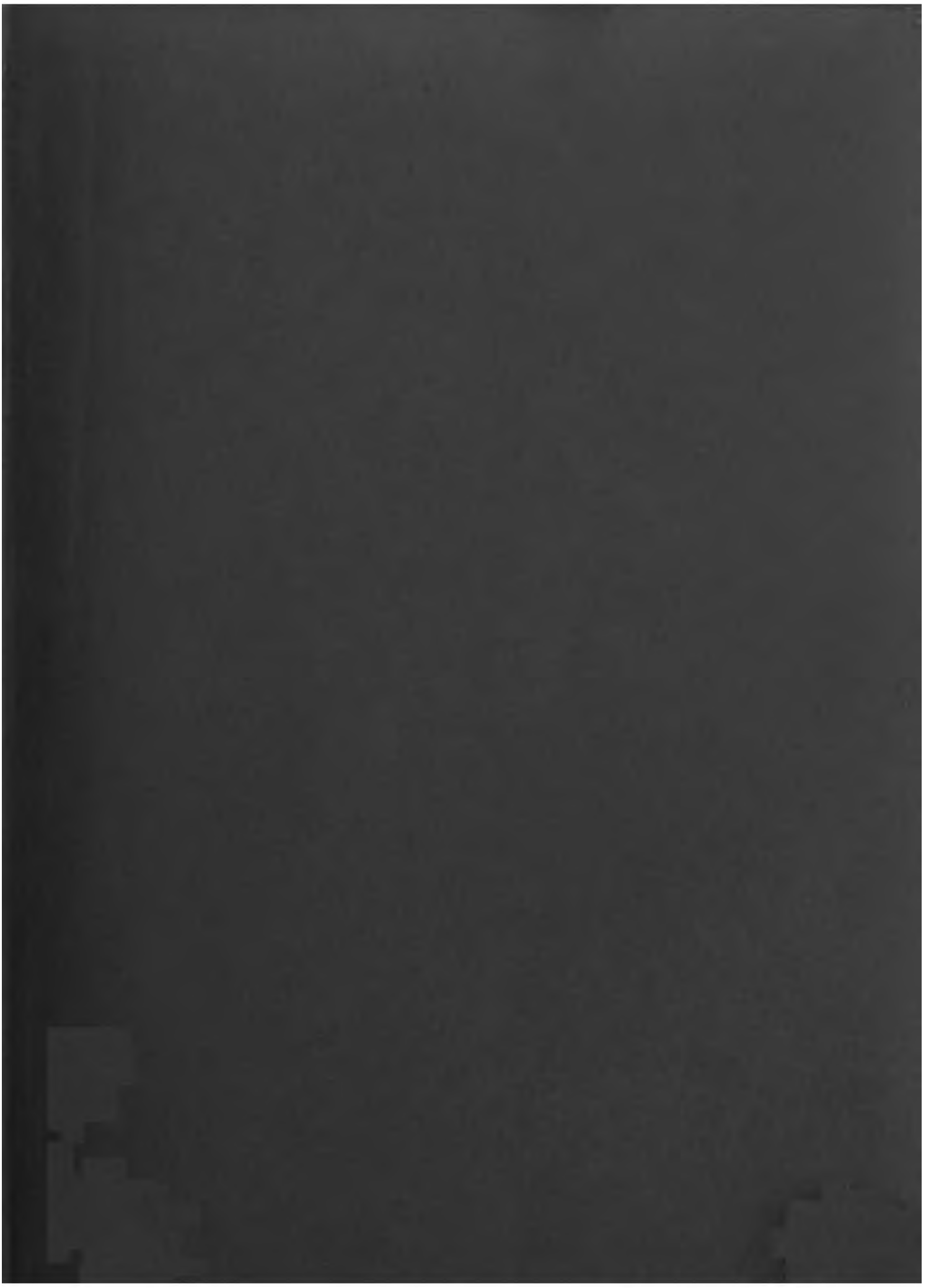

SOME MODERN RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES.

SIX SERMONS,

Preached by the request of the Christian Evidence Society,

AT

ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, PICCADILLY,

ON

SUNDAY AFTERNOONS, AFTER EASTER, 1876,

With a Preface by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

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PREFACE.

MUCH of the unbelief of the present day is based on ignorance, first of the nature of the religion assailed; secondly, of the nature of the proofs by which its truth is tested; thirdly, of the wants and weaknesses of human nature, and their antidote. I am speaking of that unbelief which supports itself by argument. Of course there is always in the world a large floating mass of unbelief, which dislikes God's truth because of its holiness, and which vents itself, not in argument, but in scoffing. With this, at present, we have nothing to do. It is maintained here, that earnest-minded and truth-loving unbelievers are very much in the dark as to the subjects on which they reason in their attacks on Christianity.

This may appear an uncourteous statement with which to commence a discussion; but truth

must not be sacrificed to courtesy, and men will never understand each other in an argument if they do not speak plainly. It is granted that the ignorance complained of is very often unconscious; sometimes, however, it is assumed for the sake of the argument, and then there can be no excuse for it. No one has a right to misrepresent the thesis of his antagonist that he may more easily confute it, or to mislead those whom he professes to guide, by affecting a right to call for proofs and arguments of which the subject under discussion does not admit. But with many, there is no such conscious darkening of counsel; they really believe the Christianity which they assail to be such as their misrepresentations paint it; they have brought themselves to think that it can have no claim to general acceptance, unless it be based on proofs, which the subject-matter does not admit of; and, having little personal acquaintance with the wants and weaknesses of which we have spoken, they ignore at once their existence and the value of their cure.

First, as to ignorance of what Christianity is. Nothing is more common than for those who assail it, to begin by misrepresenting it. It is

much more easy to knock down a man of straw than an antagonist of flesh and blood. No caricature of Christianity presented at any time by the morbid fancies of the most ignorant of its votaries is too gross to serve the turn of those who desire to disprove its divine origin. At one time we find set up for assault a distorted image of the God of the Old Testament, an unphilosophical and unfair perversion of the ancient Jewish rules of morality and polity, an interpretation of the annals and other records of God's chosen people, such as fair and enlightened criticism has never admitted. At another time we have the Gospel of the merciful and loving Redeemer interpreted according to the unsanctified and crude speculations of Oriental mystics, or of those remorseless logicians who have thought far more of establishing a clear, consistent, syllogistic system of theology, than of unfolding for the admiration of mankind that varied picture of fatherly love, tempered with fatherly justice, which, in its thousand lights and shades, appeals so powerfully to the heart and conscience in the unsystematic but most convincing teaching of the Lord and His apostles. This picture it has been the glory of the Church

of Christ to hold forth for admiration, high above all the human speculation with which its brightness has in the darkening ages been obscured.

There is similar misrepresentation as to inspiration and miracles generally. Exaggerated theories of verbal inspiration, which have never received the sanction of the Church in any of its acknowledged formularies, are assumed to be of the essence of Christianity; and the mind of the antagonist fixes on those points of resemblance which seem to assimilate the Scriptural with mere legendary ecclesiastical miracles. Our antagonists appear to forget the fact that all the great Apologists have turned to the one miracle of Christ's resurrection as the central point of the Church's teaching on the supernatural, convinced that when this great event has been fully recognized as the obvious sequel of the incarnation, men will not be curious to define with accuracy the exact limits which hem in those supernatural influences, to deny which, in the aggregate, is to say to the Omnipotence of God, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.

That the Eternal Son, out of infinite love

for suffering souls, came forth from the bosom of the Infinite, assumed a human form, and died to raise men to new powers of holiness and enjoyment; that the blessed Spirit, proceeding from the same holy source, controls and guides human thoughts amid their endless wanderings and temptations, and that the presence of these supernatural influences in this lower earth, must of necessity manifest itself in a way quite incalculable by ordinary human experience—this is the essence of the supernatural as set forth in the Gospel; and the antagonist who cannot receive these truths, and desires in a philosophical spirit either to have his own doubts solved or to win others to acquiesce in his scepticism, will direct all his efforts to a careful and simple examination of the proofs on which this doctrine rests.

But secondly, What are these proofs? What are the proofs we are entitled to require as the condition of our belief or assent?

Belief may be given without proof—the generality of the human race so assent and so believe on mere authority, without considering the weight of the authority as an argument;—

or it may be given because the truths believed are felt to be acceptable without our taking the trouble to test the grounds on which our belief rests: such an unhesitating assent or belief is not to be blamed. Man acts on it without delay in all practical matters, and does not disbelieve the maxims by which it is necessary to shape his conduct till he finds in practice some reason to doubt their accuracy. So there can be no *à priori* ground for the unbeliever to treat with scorn all those who act in matters of religion on this unsifted and untested faith. They are but doing what the law of their nature compels them to do in a thousand most important matters of their every-day conduct. Do not let us then suppose that all are giving an irrational assent to the truths of religion who have not tested them by argument. Far from it; faith, that is, religious principle, like common moral principle, and like the trust which rational beings repose in the evidence of their senses, must, as a necessity of our being, be acted on in many an instance before we can have learned to test it.

But when controversy has arisen, and the test of argument is demanded, what is the

sort of proof by which the truth of our religion is to be tried? Not by demonstration. Obviously abstract mathematics alone admit of absolute demonstrative proof. Moral evidence, probability, is the guide of life, and of knowledge. Man may desire something surer, but he cannot attain to it. In deciding questions of conduct, in scrutinizing history and weighing its lessons, in constructing our theories of moral or political science, and in our conclusions also as to material nature—the rules by which it acts, and the phenomena of which we may expect the recurrence—we must be guided by arguments, not of demonstration, but of probability. A man trusts his sensations, his conscience, his aspirations after the pure and holy on the same ground, because if he refuses to do so he has nothing else to trust—because there is the highest probability that duly tested and watched they will tell him the truth. If he cannot trust them he must cease to be a man, and abandon in despair all man's work. In these various sorts of probable arguments, on the faith of the accuracy of which man works—whether his mind be exercised on material, or

moral, or purely spiritual subjects—there is no difference, in that the tests and arguments which he uses are all founded on probability. Some of his conclusions may rest on weak, some on strong arguments of probability; but it is not in the nature but in the degree of the evidence attainable that the distinction between one and another sort of his conclusions rests. Our conclusions in material science may indeed be tested by repeated experiments; but still material like moral science rests, as we have said, on arguments of probability, and it is on grounds of probability that all conclusions, except those of pure mathematics, must be established.

Material, then, has no higher claim than metaphysical science to the name of science; and material, metaphysical, and religious theories must all be estimated, not by any peculiarity in the nature of the arguments by which they may be sustained, but by the strength or weakness of these arguments when put to the proof.

Moreover the arguments for Christianity are essentially historical. Its truth must be tested as other histories are tested. Modern philosophy has not yet arrived at the conclusion that there

is no truth in history. A wise man, starting from the fact that the Christian Church exists, with all the teachings of its doctrines formulated from its sacred books, will refuse to begin by treating its whole history as a fable: as a matter of observed fact, he finds it living; and some intelligible account must be given and accepted of its birth and life. A wise and fair antagonist, then, will fully acknowledge that he must carefully examine the Christian evidence as a matter of history, while he seeks, in testing its truth, to be guided only by those conclusions of probable and moral evidence of which he admits the force in every other field of speculation except abstract mathematics. A wise man will estimate only at their real value those claims to a higher species of evidence and proof which physical philosophers are fond of arrogating for their own favourite pursuits.

Lastly, it will not do to overlook how Christianity meets the wants of human nature. All experience shows that man cannot live in any state approaching to perfection without religion. The Christian is the best specimen of man which the world has yet seen. He is ignorant or unfair who overlooks this fact, corroborated

by the whole history of the race. Yet some men, we trust they are few, talk as if the perfection of society could be attained without poetry, without philosophy, without the teaching of history, without the knowledge of God; as if the construction of railroads and steam engines were the highest product of man's intelligence; and as if his highest knowledge were confined to the contemplation of mechanical forces at work in a dead machine which we call nature, without any thoughts of the Eternal manifesting Himself in the longings of the human soul to conform to those dictates of unchanging morality which it believes to be the expression of a Father's will.

Physical science has, indeed, before it a noble and an almost boundless field for inquiry and speculation. It would be unwise to depreciate the ennobling effects of its studies, and the marvellous additions which have been made in our time to the sphere of its observation. But he knows nothing of the real greatness of man who, in a misplaced zeal for material science, ignores the moral and spiritual principles which live and breathe within him, and which ever prompt him to rise from the contemplation of nature to the God of Nature. As in reviewing the past,

so, in anticipating the future, that is a blind and unintelligent philosophy which obliterates or overlooks those clear marks of God's superintending power, which are legibly written in every record of what man has done hitherto as a moral being endowed with a free will, and in every longing to which the noblest specimens of human intelligence have given utterance, while they yearned for communion with the Eternal above the limits of sight and sound, in regions far beyond the furthest domain of the material universe, and extending into Infinity. We charge modern infidelity, in its subserviency to a debasing materialism, with the crime or folly of neglecting the highest element in man, and, if in man, in nature.

Now, it has been in the hope of directing attention to the true issues involved in the contest with modern infidelity, and to the sort of arguments by which that contest ought to be conducted, that the following addresses have been published.

The Christian Evidence Society takes this opportunity of returning thanks to Mr. Kempe for allowing the addresses to be delivered in St. James's Church, Westminster; and to the

Christian Knowledge Society, for undertaking the publication of the present volume. These papers are submitted to the public in full consciousness that the subjects of which they treat, if adequately handled, would fill many volumes, and yet in the hope that even the few words here spoken may at this emergency subserve the cause of truth and goodness. Of course, the author of each separate paper is responsible only for what he has himself written.

A. C. CANTUAR.

LAMBETH PALACE,
June 21, 1876.

GOD A PERSONAL BEING, NOT AN IMPERSONAL FORCE.

"For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God."—HEB. iii. 4.

THE Power that brought into existence a world that seems to us full of beauty and purpose, and a race of men capable of thought and of worship, and of a law of duty, is a Power that possesses thought and wisdom, and that does not regard with indifference the actions of men. Such is the thesis of the present lecture; and I regard it as equivalent to the statement that God is a personal Being, and not an impersonal force. The word "personal" will seldom be employed, because it is desirable to avoid any term which might give rise to a verbal dispute, in the narrow limits of an address like this. The one question to which I invite your attention is this: ought we to allow our minds to connect

with the beauty of nature and with the symmetry of nature's laws, and with the dictates of conscience, the thought of a Being who has caused all these, or ought we to seek nothing beyond the facts themselves, and to dismiss all thought of a wise and loving Being whom we have not seen, as unscientific, and as belonging to the vague region of metaphysics?

All will admit that mankind has shown itself religious. Man and man alone is a religious animal. The exceptions alleged are these: that some savages are so low in condition that they do not seem capable of worship, the condition of the few who are in this plight being miserable to the last degree; and in the second place, that Buddhism, a system embracing millions of votaries, is an atheistic system. But as to the savage, it may be observed that the statement seems to be that men who have lost all the worth and dignity of men in other things have parted with religion too, and, so far, this goes to confirm the view that men are religious, if the less they are men the less they are religious. And as to the much more difficult problem of Buddhism, it may be said that Çakya-Mouni, the founder of that profound system, taught that men should die to all worldly interests—to pain and joy and love and life—and thus attain *Nirvana*,

annihilation—and that this involved a withdrawal from God also and a dying to God; since how could man hope to attain Nirvana so long as the potent motive of religion was left active in his heart? Of Buddha you must say that, in abdicating manhood and all human interests, he abdicated the thought of God: as of the savage you say that, being below the level of manhood, he had not attained to manhood's privilege of worshipping God. Neither of these exceptions prevents us from saying that man is the religious animal, and that the more vigorous the manhood of any tribe or nation the more marked is the part that religion plays in its action and destiny.

Many of the accounts of the origin of this belief are framed to detract from the marvel of this universal impression. "*Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*," says Lucretius. "But who," says Lichtenberg, "implanted this overmastering fear?" And how can fear of the gods have made the gods that it presupposes? To hide from the thunder when it seems to shake the very heavens, to keep close to the shore in tempests, and to be wary and brave against an enemy in battle, these are natural impulses or circumspect precautions; but to propitiate Jove because of thunder, or Neptune against the storm at sea, is different

in kind. It goes beyond what it sees, to some living powers supposed to produce them. That is exactly the point that constitutes a religion. To bend in terror before the lightning flash is one thing; to assign it to a potent being that no one has seen is a further step of thought. Experience does not warrant that further step; but yet the mind does not hesitate to take it. "Fear first made gods:" this cannot be exact. Fear does not *make:* it is fear of what is made. The mind conceives gods, and then fears them. Some one tells us that that which we wonder at in nature is *force:* another says it is *will,* a third calls it *nature.* But force that is not the force of something or of some person, is an incomplete conception; and we know no *will* that is not some one's will; and as for nature, the fancies of men were never content until they had peopled nature with gods. Nymphs were in every fountain; and every gentle breeze that blew breathed from the syrinx of the god Pan: and no storm swept through the woodland that did not suggest the wild hunts and dances of the Satyrs. Observe, then, the first point that appears to be gained. Man is religious, and needs no help in arriving at the belief that something divine exists. And when thinkers, believing that this kind of conception is not for man's good, invite him to sub-

stitute something else, called force, or will, or universe, we feel that these ideas must have something behind them : they are not final. The new conception which is meant to be the background of all our thoughts proves to be a thin screen through which the awful shadow appears of Him Whom we seek to know.

Another remedy has been devised to save men the trouble of believing. It is that of asking them not to deal with metaphysical problems at all. The study of facts, the facts of nature, are the sufficient and satisfactory occupation of the human mind; what lies beyond is hopeless of approach; for its study we must desert the sure rules of experience and of science, and adopt methods which are no methods. "Let us then," says Science, "do our day's work here honestly and well, and take no account of the wages, if any, nor of the honour, if any, nor of the question whether the spirit that we employ is eternal or ephemeral. The proper study of mankind is facts; and there are no means of reaching facts except through the senses. Here let us rest, seeking nothing beyond: for doubt and danger lie in the further region." The defect of this philosophy is that it is an artificial limitation of the powers and instincts of man, to which mankind can never be expected to submit. To see

on the horizon of life great realities, for the search after which some of the noblest of men have set out, leaving all other aims, is to conceive the wish that we too should essay the same problems and seek the solution of the same mysteries. Our methods may be bad; but we must employ such as we possess. Our labour may be in vain; but where would have been the thought of the world, and where would science herself have been, if a timorous apprehension of waste had kept her from research? Nor need we be reminded that when science holds her carnival in this country once every year, that time, consecrated to the exact study of laws, is usually marked by an unusual revival of metaphysical controversy, and from the chair of the president, answered by echoes from all pulpits, resounds the world-old controversy about divine truths,—

"Of fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute;"

of the purpose of God, of the power of prayer, of the boundaries of knowledge; and all the old vehemence is there, and much of the old argument which the Greeks bequeathed us. Man's nature has not altered much, and he will not accept limitations and restrictions on his knowledge. He will grapple with hard things; he will put forth vague hands into the region that

may seem darkest; and the harder the task and the darker the outlook, the more earnestly will he strive and peer.

Here let us sum up what we have gained so far. Man is prone to seek some knowledge of God; and whether this was given him as an intuition or is worked out by a course of reasoning we need not for our present purpose inquire. We see, too, that some at least of the attempts to substitute another notion for that of God, or to restrain the mind from thinking of God, fail in that they are incomplete, and only stimulate the inquiry that they are meant to restrain. Let us now proceed to examine one or two of the lines of thought in which light is thrown upon the nature of God.

I. The study of final causes has fallen lately into great disrepute, and not without some reason. All things are created with a purpose, an object; but we are not bound to know and define the purposes of everything. If science is forced upon this attempt, she is likely to fall into mistakes and absurdities. Physical science has long since broken with the doctrine of final causes on this account. Lucretius denied it;[1]

[1] iv. 835.

"Nil natum est in corpore, ut uti
Possemus, sed quod natum est, id procreat usum."

Spinoza dismisses it as a figment of the imagination;[3] Kant describes it as an argument entitled to great respect as the oldest, the clearest, and the most suitable to the human mind,[3] but he denies its cogency as a demonstration.

The world is full of facts which, in the case of any human works of like kind, would be conclusive evidence of an intelligent maker: and therefore the mind hastens to the conclusion that intelligence is at work here. Such marks of design are very numerous; they extend over long times; they are found equally in the most vast and in the minutest phenomena. For the fulfilment of these apparent purposes the wills of men and the facts of nature are bent and overruled in a wonderful degree.

If it could be shown that there is no being in existence to whom this work of wise design could be attributed, then we might be bound to mistrust our own inferences, and to seek some other hypothesis than that of an intelligent Creator. As this cannot be shown, and as no one denies that it is possible that God exists, then the attraction in our minds between the idea of God and the intelligence that presides

[2] Ethics, Part I., Appendix.

[3] Critique of Pure Reason.

in creation is so powerful, that we shall not hesitate to attribute the creation to God, and to admit that His work as Creator is a just title to our admiration and our love. But in deciphering the characters in which God has written His purpose on the ancient page of the world's history, we must be cautious not to attribute to Him our own limited views and partial fancies. With that one caution, I believe that the argument from design is just as powerful to persuade as it has ever been, and deserves a consideration as careful. That which brought it into just disrepute was, that people spoke of the creation as if it were all made for man's convenience and profit; and dreamed not that those things which man found so much to his advantage could have any other use in creation except to subserve his wants. This complacent egotism was capable of an easy answer both by argument and by ridicule: it was answered by both. If the cinchona-tree was created for the cure of men's agues and fevers, what was its use when it waved through centuries, unknown and unvalued, until the Jesuits found out its healing power, whilst the men that it might have cured continued to quake under their ailments? Fénélon in his beautiful treatise, says that the fleece of the

sheep is a superfluity that invites man to shear it every year, and notes with satisfaction that the animals which man slays for food are far more fruitful than the wild beasts which he cannot use; we kill many sheep and oxen and few lions, yet there are far more sheep and oxen than there are lions. "Man," says Göthe, "is naturally disposed to consider himself as the centre and the object of all creation, and to regard all the creatures that surround him as ordained to serve his personal profit. He gets into his possession all the animal and vegetable kingdoms; he devours them, and glorifies God whose fatherly goodness has prepared the table for his feast. He takes the milk from the cow, and the honey from the bee, and the fleece from the sheep; and because he uses these animals to his profit, he imagines that they have been created only for his use. He cannot conceive that the least blade of grass was created for any purpose but for him." The laughing comment of Montaigne on that kind of argument has had its weight; he describes a humble goose as using the same argument, and assigns to man his place in nature as that of sheltering and feeding geese.[4] Perhaps, after all, not

[4] Janet, Causes Finales. 1876

use but beauty and harmony are the chief ends of created things. We may one day understand that already one great end of creation was answered when "God saw that it was good." All created things are ends as well as means. The fragrant rose, the leaping brook, the spotted leopard *are*, because it is good that they should be; and though no man shall ever inhale the perfume of the flower, or drink of the brook in the way, or possess the flecked and glossy skin —they shall not have been made in vain.

How, then, does it stand with the argument from design at present? Science tells us that the earth was once a globe of white fire, without life upon it of plant or beast. Long ages passed over: it became a dwelling for Homer and Aristotle, for Dante and Shakspeare. As no one alleges a change of purpose in the world's upbuilding, we must assume that in that liquid ball of scathing fire all the beauty of nature, all noble deeds and great thoughts of mankind, and mankind itself, were potentially contained. That was the fiery bud, this is the expanded flower. There was in that no life of plant or animal, no wise discourse, no moral order; and yet the germ of them all must have been there undiscernible. Geology writes, as well as she can, the first chapter of the account

of that growth. Then history takes up the wondrous tale—history, which Augustine calls a beautiful poem, decked out by God's own hand for man—the most wonderful epic of creation, full of grand surprises, of patient waiting, of skilful construction, of glorious adornment. Each stage of growth was wonderful, until the next surpassed it. Each had in itself some completeness, yet each laid the foundation for higher forms of beauty and for fresh races of living beings. Of the cause of this growth there are but two opinions, to speak broadly and roughly: one of which is, that a Being of infinite wisdom contrived and effected it; and the other is, that it evolved itself with no thought or contrivance at all, and that the thought that can understand and appreciate its marvels came first into being when man appeared—that, in a word, there is no conscious thought or wisdom but in man.

Now I will ask you to give your attention and to decide between these two. Thought and all that it includes place man at the head of creation, and constitute his true nobility. A thinking man, as Pascal finely says,[5] amid the brute and senseless forces of nature, feels his superiority to those forces even whilst they

[5] Pensées, Edition of Astiè, ii. p. 177.

crush him; for he can understand them and think them. Is he, then, the only thinking being that exists? Did something or other—call it fate, call it nature, call it energy—make thought, having itself no thought? Did the blind make eyes, and the deaf ears? Were conscience and duty evolved by themselves, without assistance, out of seething slime? I am challenged to demonstrate the contrary. From this one argument of the wisdom of creation I confess I cannot demonstrate. There was Kant's success. He proved that the argument from design could not amount to a demonstration. But there, too, his success ended. We are free to decide what is probable, what is practical. Well, it is not probable that the world was prepared for life by a power that knew not life; for thought, by a power that could not think; for law and duty and love of God, by a force to which those ideas are as alien as they are to the weathered brows of the stony Memnon whose sightless balls pretend to look over the Egyptian waste.

Did I say probable? Here is one of the inconsistencies of the modern scientific method. Those who reject the conception of God sometimes accept this mechanical view of the universe, which is not only not an induction from facts, but is so strangely at variance with them

that the mind can hardly get the idea before it in a shape for judging whether it is probable or not. It requires a special metaphysical training to form a notion of life from the lifeless—conscience from mechanism—thought from that which cannot think. If experience would lend us first some facts to make this miracle conceivable; if yonder windmill, trusted with corn, would grind out diamonds and rubies; if canvas, woven in a loom, rolled forth with Raffaelle's pictures covering it; in a word, if we could be children again, and revel in fairy tales, the last new tale, that a great blind idol changed into this wonderful world, would be more easy to accept. But science is specially severe on all such tales. All new and gratuitous assumptions she holds in disesteem. She holds it matter of conscience not to go beyond the data of observation. This is not only not observed, but it is hard even to be conceived, and utterly at variance with all that we have observed.

And what would be the practical effect? If thought is the highest thing and man alone has thought, man is a god in himself. The poet, borne down by the mystery of creation, says,—

"I falter where I firmly trod,
And fall with all my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God."

Arise, oh friend, and do not consider it so seriously. The altar-stairs are but a part of the machinery; all is blind but you. Ask no counsel save of your own mind; there is no other mind to dominate, to lead, to comfort you. You — you alone — exist. Tread firmly once more. The blind clod of earth on which you stand, you may spurn it: it has nothing divine. It is only a round pedestal for your divine foot, king of creation—for so you are; ruling it with the unique sceptre of your thought. Oh misery. I cannot play the god. You have brought us round at last to that to which all misbelief does lead: Man "as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God," (2 Thess. ii. 4.)

II. Obliged by the limits of time to select and to abridge, I will only speak in detail of one other of the arguments for the personal existence of God. It is not difficult to read the general purpose that pervades the government of the world. The race of man is to be preserved, order and mutual love are to prevail, the laws of nations are to be framed for this end, arts are to be cultivated which will make the world more fit for man's habitation and will remove obstacles out of the way. A man born into this system, conceives the wish to act so

that he shall further, and not hinder, the intentions of the divine government under which he lives. This we call the law, or principle, of duty. It seems to make no difference as to the truth of this conception, that it is arrived at gradually, that it is dependent on public opinion in some measure, that it makes mistakes about what is right and wrong. I do not pretend that it needs no education, nor that it is unerring in its decisions. I only say that men in all ages try to act according to their notions of right, and thus become a law to themselves. Now the more we think about it the more we perceive, that a law coercive of our will, and regulating our life, must be something more than a mere balance of calculations. Right and wrong are so in themselves; if a heroic enterprise or a life of self-denial is right, it is right as such. A sudden change in public opinion would not make it other than it was before the change took effect. Christianity, the religion of all the highest nations of the modern world, is founded on a life, and that life was founded on the maxim, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day." We take no advantage of this at present, except to show how the world has been able to understand and revere a life devoted to the highest duty. Now

the law of duty can be no higher than the law-giver that prescribes it. If, as some say, there is no right or wrong, but what is pleasurable to the enlightened mind, or none but what is useful to the community, the standard of conduct and of aim will fluctuate with the supposed pleasure or advantage. A good man could not hold his own against the ridicule and the example of others, against the hindrances that nature opposes to him, but for the faith in something beyond him and above him, to Whose perfect nature he draws nearer by his endeavours to love and obey His will.

Thus conscience is a witness to a higher power, and that higher power must also know and observe us, otherwise it would cease to give us any motive for good; it must also be able in some way to reward us for the effort we make to draw near it: in short, that power is God, and the conscience of man bears witness by its struggles and its judgments on itself, to the truth that God exists. I do not pretend with Kant that this is a demonstration, though it is remarkable that he leaves standing this mode of proof when all the rest are laid low before his criticism. I do not like the word demonstration as applied to religion. Conscience is not a demonstration of God; it is something better

and higher—a way to God. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

It may be said of all the arguments for the existence of a living God who knows, sees, and loves us, that they are all good; but that they are not separate demonstrations. The universal consent of mankind, the need of some end of the chain of causes, the abhorrence of an infinite series, the signs of love and wisdom and goodness in creation, the law of duty, the idea in our minds of an absolute eternal being, on whom may rest all that we see that is relative and changing, all these make up the bundle of rods which no metaphysical strength can break up whilst they are united; but which never should be offered as separately indestructible. These so-called proofs are rather descriptions of what the human mind knows already about God. Even that which is called the ontological proof, the logical fault of which is so obvious, is but a too formal expression of an intuitive conviction. "Our idea of God includes all perfections, now existence is necessary for perfection—therefore God exists." Anselm and Descartes knew the formal fault of that argument as well as you and I. But it is not with this idea as with others. The mind, when it recognizes the idea, knows that it

must have its counterpart in fact. The fact that it is within us, joined to the impossibility of having learnt it from experience, persuades us that it was given for a purpose. God exists; and if so, to Him must belong the wisdom that we see in the world, and the law that is written in our conscience. God exists; and from His hand must have commenced the motion that has caused the universe. He exists; and the mind, tracing back the chain of causation, stops in its search when it reaches Him—the First Cause. Thus this idea gathers to itself the scattered lights that flash across the spirit to show it God. God exists; but Who is He, and what is His power? He must be wise and good, for He made the world and all that there is there of beauty and of love. He must be Judge of all the earth, for already, in the sphere of conscience, He judges men. He must be Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end; for in the facts that I see there are no signs that the world is eternal, but many proofs that it is tending to rest and to an end. Thus the vaunted proofs of God's existence, of the Schools, deposed from the position of demonstrations, have still an important place: they help us to think out with clearness the common-sense intuitions of mankind upon this subject.

It is sometimes made a reproach to us that these theistic ideas are only popular notions or impressions, and are unworthy to be considered on that ground. But if Science is bound to study facts, it must be a fault in her that she despises any facts: and the common-sense view of the world about religion is well entitled to be weighed, and the more so because it *is* common or general. If it were only true that the nations of the world believe in God and have some forms of worship, it would be noteworthy. But the religion that they profess reaches much deeper than that: it is inwoven with the life of the peoples, it is the strength of their strength, it is the cause of their activity. There is a short treatise by *De Laveleye*[6] on the future destiny of Catholic nations, in which the writer, a most competent witness, tries to measure the future of the peoples of the world by their religious condition, and shows how their position, not merely as to piety and internal conduct, but as to prosperity and power and influence in the commonwealth of the world, is determined by their religious life. The philosophic historian comes round at last, in other words, to the old prophetic utterance,

[6] Le Protestantisme and le Catholicisme dans leurs Rapports avec la Liberté et la Prospérité des Peuples. Brussels, 1876.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. iv. 6). And will you then pluck them out, these oldest, deepest-rooted impressions of the mind, which have been at the bottom of all great deeds, and which have lent intensity to all the fiercest struggles of our race? Will you disregard these common-sense ideas which now, in the full nineteenth century, with all material improvements and enlightenments, beat in the pulses of the people, and mix with the air they breathe, which excite when they are mentioned an interest more intense, and passions more fierce, than any other topic? I venture to tell you that this shall never be. Nay: it is answered, there is no intention to pluck them out, but to replace them with more scientific views. We have glanced over that modern armoury of scientific views; and of its weapons we make bold to say, that they offend by the very defects they were intended to remedy. They deal in ideas such as Science should not originate and cannot verify. Infinite time, illimitable space, eternal matter: "Where learnt you that heroic measure?" Science has never seen the infinite or eternal. These are not inductions; they are metaphysical idols, and Science, if true to her own principles, should have gathered up her skirts in order not to touch them. Common sense has its defects: but

surely it is not a commendation of a philosophy that we must part with the results of common sense when we approach its gates. The riddle of creation may seem hard, but the interpretations that are offered us are harder far. Change, it seems, comes from the unchangeable, corruption from the imperishable, motion from absolute rest, life from the dead, sense from the senseless, purpose from causes that act blindly, intelligence from that which has none, spirit from what is no spirit. We cannot learn these nice conceptions, nor abandon what we must resign to accept them. For the sacrifices that we must make are immense. It seemed to us that we saw God's purpose sweeping over the creation, as the wind is seen ruffling its path over some calm summer sea. Here a young man, with great powers, is bending them all to the attainment of a safe hearth and home, where he may know the sweetness of domestic love. Here a young mother, turning aside from the brilliant circle which she adorns, and unfastening the jewel from her neck and casting down the shimmering robe, sits a patient watcher at a sick babe's cradle, for indeed that little cradle holds her star of life, her hope, her deepest joy. We really thought that God had ordered this that the world might still be peopled; and we ventured to admire the loving wisdom that had adorned

with love and sweetness the hard task of rearing a fresh generation to succeed us: so that it seemed the best end of life to an ambitious youth to enclose for himself, within that sweet hedge called home, the treasure of wife and child; so that it seemed sweetest to a mature woman to focus all her powers of thought, affection, and devotion, on a helpless creature that repaid her motherly care with vague touches and some rudiments of a smile. There was no purpose at all in this. Wonderful it may be; but it is only the grist of the inexorable mill of destiny, grinding as it may. Prayer, too, must be hushed; and praise is foolish, and intercession utterly vain. Yet, in the last thirty-eight years, one English county has spent more than two millions sterling "in building fanes of fruitless prayer;" and now must learn that they are fruitless. Duty, too, must part with her best sanctions: the poor martyr, upborne at the supreme hour of torment by the vision of blessedness; the friend of men, pursuing some good object, and schooling himself for the sake of it "to scorn delights and live laborious days;" the vision and the good object are delusions. And the future life, to which we look, for which we long for the redress of this one, science refuses the seal of her sanctions to this too. The personality, the unity, will be finished at death, and what re-

mains of us will be sealed up in the earth, or blown about in dust, or fixed out of the air into fresh life and vegetation. What a sacrifice of the old for the sake of what kind of new! No worship, no religious duty, no future hope, no providence, no God! Preach this new gospel, or pass this death-sentence, on some other race of men made with different souls from ours. We have gone much astray: but we are men still, and when God drave us from His presence He did not leave Himself without a witness in us: He did not leave us quite without His law in our souls. In order to unteach us so much, you must pluck out soul and all.

Pardon us, O Lord, the preacher and the hearers, if in thinking of Thee and Thy presence we have allowed our thoughts or words to offend Thee. We know that Thou livest, and art mighty to save. In many a former age men's thoughts have wandered from Thee, and they have denied Thee or forgotten; and yet they have returned to Thee again. For the soul of man that came out from Thee never has found true peace but in returning to Thee and resting in Thee. For Thou art the Living God and steadfast for ever, and Thy Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and Thy dominion shall be even unto the end.

HINTS FOR THE SOLUTION OF RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE EXISTENCE OF PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL.

"We walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Cor. v. 7.

We are invited this afternoon to confront the darkest, the most overwhelming, of all mysteries —the existence of physical and, still worse, of moral evil in a world which we believe to have been made by an All-Good and Almighty Creator.

The difficulty is one which has been recognized and struggled with by men of every time and of every creed. Even a thoughtful child will often vex itself with wondering why God does not destroy the devil. But the difficulty must be felt with ever-increasing intensity in proportion as the sympathetic faculty in man is developed under the influence of Christianity, and as, with the progress of science, our acquaintance with

the workings of evil becomes more extensive and more profound. There is, of course, such a thing as a guilty or an indolent dwelling upon the mystery of evil. Our doubts may not be honest; they may be dishonest and interested; just as, on the other hand, the absence of doubt may proceed not from genuine faith, but from want of knowledge, or of imagination, or of sympathy. Still, speaking generally, it may be asserted with some confidence, that Christianity working upon the heart, and science upon the head, will together render each successive generation more keenly alive to, more painfully perplexed about, the presence of that terrible power of evil which has so long been working havoc in God's glorious creation.

The temptation to doubt, even to despair, will thus, it is believed, become fiercer and more widely-spread as time goes on. Our very "table" —the influences of religion and of knowledge— will in one sense become a "snare" to us. The larger our Christian love, the more thorough our acquaintance with man and with man's world, the more hateful, the more intolerable will the tyranny of evil appear. This is one side of the picture. But happily there is another. God will with the temptation make a way to escape. Doubtless He will provide new encouragements

to meet the new perplexities. He will open our eyes to behold new and blessed meanings in old truths, old Scriptures. He will from the fiery furnace of doubt bring each generation forth better prepared for the work which lies before it — more earnest, more humble, more resolute, more divinely-equipped for its tremendous wrestling, "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

But we are this afternoon specially concerned with our own generation—with *present* difficulties and with *present* resources for meeting those difficulties. And it will be well at the outset to understand clearly what we *can* and what we *cannot* hope to do.

I. We cannot hope to solve the mystery of the origin and continuance of evil. The attempt has been made again and again, but failure has been the inevitable result. Each wave of thought in turn has fallen impotently back from that iron-bound shore. He that runs can read the unchanging legend—"Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." The human understanding has obviously reached its utmost limit, and faith must take up the burden which reason can no longer sustain. Indeed, when we consider not

only the failure which has invariably attended past efforts to solve the mystery, but, on the one hand, the shortness and insufficiency of our own faculties, and, on the other, the stupendous vastness, the ineffable grandeur, of the scheme of Nature and of the sister-scheme of Grace—when we remember what we are, and again what the universe is, and still more what the Creator of ourselves and of the universe is—remembering all this, it becomes *easier* to believe that we *cannot* know the whole, that there are certain fundamental difficulties which can *never* be removed on this side of the grave, than it would be to accept any hypothesis which should claim to solve those mysteries—to offer us *sight* instead of *faith*. Harsh as the paradox may sound, we believe some doctrines *because* they are irrational. For instance, that God should be All-Good and Almighty, and yet that there should be evil in His world, seems the very climax of irrationality. But the doctrine, though it sets the teeth of mere *logic* all on edge, exercises a strange, a soothing, fascination over *ourselves*, over the real, complex self in every man which is infinitely greater, nobler, more intelligent than that part which he calls his logical faculty. In the presence of the more awful mysteries of the world the logical faculty, if well disciplined, if,

as we say, *it knows its place,* is hushed into reverent silence, and then we—our whole, true selves—yield the adoration of humble faith.

And hence it is that, with regard to the special problem of evil, we instinctively recoil from any of those theories which attempt to remove or even to tone down the great difficulty. We are convinced that we shall in the long-run thrive better on the pulse and water of Faith than on the rich meats and wines of Sight.

For instance, it is suggested that evil is not really evil; that it is a phase, a transition-stage in the development of good, a fashion, as it were, which is passing away, and will soon manifest and give place to the kernel of which it is but the husk. Attractive supposition, nay, even with a germ of truth contained in it! For is not evil often made the minister of good? Do not afflictions, bereavements, persecutions, even backslidings, often constitute the furnace in which character is refined and ennobled? But, readily granting this, Conscience stubbornly refuses to allow that evil in itself is aught but evil. She will have no concord with it. She regards it as a pestilent exotic in God's good creation—a mysterious, hateful something which needs not to be transformed, but to be extirpated or at least suppressed.

But if our Moral Sense rejects this hypothesis, she shrinks in utter abhorrence from the attempt to ease faith's burden by representing the Creator as not wholly good—from the theory which denies that God is Love, which suggests that, though He cares for His creatures, His care is but cold and listless—that He regards us as bastards rather than as sons. If this were true, the monstrous result would be that God has formed a creature nobler than Himself—that man may justly boast himself to be far better than his Father which is in heaven! Such a Creator could never retain the allegiance of His creatures: against Him the human heart would cry out, "Though He slay me, yet will I *not* put my trust in Him!" How thankfully we betake ourselves to the counter-doctrine, "There is but one *good*, that is, God."

Once more, well-meaning thinkers have sought to lighten our load by explaining that, though God is supremely Good, He is not Omnipotent. His Omnipotence must be sacrificed to His Benevolence. Now, in considering this hypothesis, it may probably be granted that religious writers have sometimes pushed the idea of God's Omnipotence to an untenable, perhaps an inconceivable, position. The subject is one, it need not be said, which almost defies the powers of human

thought and of human language. But it is acknowledged by theologians of authority that the Divine Omnipotence must be regarded as (so to speak) limited, not indeed by anything or any person external to Itself, but *ab intra*, from within, by the conditions, nature, or attributes of the Deity. With reference to the subject under discussion — and the concession, if allowed, is an important one—may it not be said, in all reverence, that even God could not create a *virtuous* being without the discipline of trial—the very idea involving a *contradiction?*

But such self-imposed limitations of the Divine Omnipotence differ totally from those *ab extra* restraints or oppositions by means of which it has been attempted to account for the flaws and evils of the world. It has been supposed that God's power has from the first been thwarted by a rival agency—by a great Bad God—a Being of whom the Satan of Scripture is but a faint and feeble shadow. Now, to such a notion we may reply that, so far as we can understand, an Infinite Evil Being *could not exist.* So far as we can comprehend the nature of evil it is *self-destructive;* corruption can beget nothing but corruption. We can understand the Creator's

retaining the fallen angels—*finite* evil beings—in existence for some mysterious purpose. What is said about Pharaoh may help us here:—the devils may be sustained in life that in them God's power may be shown—that in and through them He may be glorified. Or, again, the fallen angels may possibly retain some faint relics of goodness in their nature. But an absolutely Evil Principle—a great Bad God—such a Being is surely a self-contradiction, an impossibility of thought.

Another form of the same hypothesis is that which imagines, in the material out of which God formed the world, certain intractable properties which have thwarted His will and marred His work. The Creator could only do the best *under the circumstances;* and what we call evil is the sum of His unavoidable fallings-short of absolute perfection. To this theory it has been replied that it conflicts with the appearance of things in the world—that "there is nothing in the visible world corroborating the notion of yet incomplete conquests of the Creator over Matter. No discoverer has found an outlying tract of Chaos. . . . If Nature explains herself to us,—

> "Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
> And weave for God the garb thou seest Him by,"

that 'garb' we behold is neither unfinished in the minutest hem, nor yet torn or spotted anywhere as by an enemy's hand."[1] The advances of Science, far from suggesting the impotence, tend rather to demonstrate the Omnipotence, of the Creator, to represent Him as working not only with consummate skill, but with the calmness and facility of an absolute Master. "Hath He said, and shall He not do it? hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" To this testimony of Holy Scripture Nature seems to set her seal.

We have very briefly reviewed the leading attempts which have been made to solve, or at least to lessen the intricacy of, the great problem of evil; but none of them has commended itself to us as either adequate or tenable. Conscience has forbidden us to call evil, in any essential sense, good. Still more vehemently has she protested against the supposition that the Creator is a Being of mixed or doubtful character. Reason has declared that the notion of a Great Bad God, co-eternal though not perhaps co-equal with the Good God, is an impossibility—a monstrosity; while Nature seems, the more we know her, the more distinctly to proclaim

[1] Miss Cobbe's "Hopes of the Human Race," preface, p. xxv.

that the Wisdom and the Power of Him who formed her are unrivalled and unbounded.

We return, therefore, with increased satisfaction to the old grandly-illogical position, and are content to *believe* that, though evil is above, beneath, around, within us, yet God, even our God, is at once All-Good and Almighty. "Exiles from rigid logic," we rejoice in our discomfiture, for we feel that in our weakness is our real and invincible strength.

II. We cannot, then, solve the mystery of the origin and continuance of evil, but we may hope to solve or remove the religious difficulties which that mystery is so apt to occasion; and it is to this task that we shall now reverently address ourselves.

(*a*) In the first place, it must be noticed that the surrender of the restless longing to find out the whence and the why of evil—the frank recognition that so long as we are in the body we must walk by faith—this is in itself an unspeakable gain. Suspense is always trying. The parent, while his child is yet alive, fasts, mourns, weeps; but when the vain hope has been abandoned, rest ensues, and comfort is found at the true source of comfort. To know the worst is the first great step towards knowing the best. And so, in the present instance,

when we have made up our minds simply to accept, as a fact, the existence of evil instead of perplexing ourselves with speculations as to its origin, the mental energies, turning aside from fruitless and enervating struggles, lay hold of their true work—the wrestling with evil as it actually exists around and within ourselves. Thus, by accepting faith as our director, we not only obtain repose, but are enabled to concentrate the forces of mind and heart upon the task which has been given us to perform.

(*b*) And, next, it may be remarked that, unless the wise and good of all times and of every race have been strangely mistaken—nay, unless our own personal experience mischievously deceives us—the method I have been advocating is broadly and deeply stamped with the seal of success. It, and it only, *works well*. No man has ever yet found peace or light or holiness in discussing the problem of evil, but tens of thousands have found every comfort and blessing in contending against evil. Who ever tried patiently and humbly the experiment of obedience, and found it fail? Who ever set himself to *do the will* of God without coming to *know of the doctrine* that it is from God?

(*c*) But though God calls upon us chiefly to believe and to obey—though He has retained in

His own keeping the solution of the great mystery—He has, nevertheless, not left us wholly uninformed as to the way in which evil invaded our world, and it may be well for us to call to mind the teaching of Holy Scripture upon this subject. God, the Infinite, willed to create finite beings, that is to say, beings of limited rights and powers, apart from Himself, distinct personalities, each gifted with free-will. Of these "sons of God," angels were the first-born, men the later creation. All alike were created upright, with natures pure and perfectly-balanced; but, though upright, they were not beyond the reach of the possibility of sinning, for, where a limit has been fixed, and at the same time the limited or finite being has the power of choice, there is a possibility of *the transgression of limit*—that is to say, of *sin*. Thus a certain amount of *risk*, so to speak, was necessarily involved in the creation of men and angels. Well, trial, temptation (*how*, we know not) came first to the angels. Those who in the dark hour were "faithful found" became not only upright, but *virtuous*: their nature was now not only exquisitely-balanced, but established, immoveably set, in that exquisiteness of balance. Those who yielded underwent an irretrievable, an all-pervading,

shock; the fallen angel became a devil, according to the maxim, "Corruptio optimi cujusque pessima." The full effects of the "fall" of these first-born sons of God we cannot trace. Possibly it may have left its pernicious mark upon the lower creation—the animals. It seems an almost universal law that the inferior must suffer for the crimes of the superior; but, however this may be, we are at all events certain that, when man appeared upon the earth, there was an agency ready at hand, maliciously eager to test his constancy, to tempt him across the appointed limit, and seduce him into sin. Man, as we all know by bitter experience, yielded and fell. And what a fall was that! The originally-upright nature, instead of being improved into the character of settled virtue, was utterly unhinged, corrupted, depraved; and death, bodily and spiritual, followed, as it would seem *naturally* upon the great transgression. Moreover, Scripture appears to hint that the fatal influence of man's fall reached even the lower creation. "The creature," we read, "was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

We are here on particularly difficult ground, for Science seems to have shown incontestably that death, violent death, was in the world long before the creation and fall of man. Nay, more, that "the fundamental principle at work in the development of life was, and is, death—lavish, illimitable death." Indeed, if we suppose that the "fall" of the sons of God, angelic or human, caused or added the "sting" to the death of the lower animals, our difficulty is only enhanced; for we are induced to ask, "Wherein is the justice of the fiat? These sheep—these helpless, irresponsible animals—what had they done?" Here again, then, we are perforce driven for protection to the good shield of *faith*. Something more will be said on the subject of the sufferings of animals, but under the present head of The Fall it need only be added that in the Scripture record we have a notable instance of evil being made to minister to good—of grace superabounding where sin abounded—in the great Messianic promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; while St. Paul gives us to understand that the final victory of the woman's seed, and the manifestation of the sons of God, will involve the rescue and deliverance of the much-suffering lower creation. "*In hope* it was subjected."

(*d*) In the fourth place—waiving the question of the exact connexion between The Fall and the sufferings of animals, and keeping as far as possible to matters of fact—we will inquire what is *the extent* of the influence and empire of evil. This is a most important inquiry. There is, of course, such a thing as a light and shallow optimism, which will see only the world's bright side. But the danger of thinking men in our generation is rather from an exaggerated and paralyzing pessimism. We are so bitterly conscious of the presence of evil that we are apt to forget the more abounding and beneficent presence of good. We feel keenly the sufferings of our poorer brethren and of the lower animals, and this is well; but we go on to attribute to the sufferers our own fine sensibilities, and thus seriously magnify the sum of the world's misery.

It has been acknowledged that the sufferings of the lower creation present an insuperable difficulty. We cannot understand why a Benevolent Creator should have permitted them. But, granting this, we may thankfully remember that the life of animals is by no means all suffering. For them it is doubtless "a happy world after all." "The sum and substance of their lives under all normal conditions

is surely beyond question happy, and the anxieties and cares which in their position would be ours, and which we are apt to lend them in imagination, are by them as totally unfelt as are our miserable vanities, our sorrowful memories, and our bitter remorse. The scene which the woods and pastures present to a thoughtful eye of a summer morning is not one to 'blacken' the character of the Creator, but to lift up the soul in rapture, and prompt us to add a human voice of thanksgiving to the chirp of the happy birds, the bleating of the playful lambs, and the hum of the bees in the cowslips and the clover."[2]

But our sensitiveness about the unavoidable misery of animals, if sometimes exaggerated, promises to do a good work by the suppression of all avoidable wrongs and cruelties. Our societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, our anxiety on the score of vivisection and of field-sports, are the tokens of a growing spirit which may hereafter work wonders of mercy and love. A third thought of unspeakable consolation is that suggested by more than one passage of Scripture and endorsed by the undisguised approval of the cautious Bishop

[2] Miss Cobbe's "Hopes of the Human Race," preface p. xliv.

Butler,[3]—the thought that, for animals as for men, a future state of happiness may be in store. If we turn to the prophecies of Isaiah, or to that great utterance of St. Paul,[4] already quoted—if we consider the leadings of reason, or the demands of our sympathetic faculty—from every side grounds are afforded us for concluding, or at least for hoping,—

> "That not a worm is cloven in vain,
> That not a moth with vain desire
> Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
> Or but subserves another's gain."

As regards the lower creation, then, the prospect fairly viewed is, in spite of the dark shadow of pain and death, a prospect of beauty and gladness and, above all, of *hope*.

When we turn to the human race the scene is less encouraging. Man the sinner is also the great sufferer. His bodily sufferings are terribly intensified by the wounds which Conscience inflicts, and by the presages of future retribution. But even in this case it is possible to exaggerate; and exaggeration, though it may sometimes serve to awaken thought and stimulate energy, yet, if stereotyped into a settled pessimism, must prove fatal to effort and progress.

[3] See Analogy, Part i. ch. i. § 2, *ad finem*.

[4] Romans viii. 19—22.

In the commoner sort of minds at all events it must lead to the sullen resolve, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." In contrast with this paralyzing, even maddening, creed, we may welcome almost any form of optimism; for optimism bids us be strong and of a good courage, it supplies hope, and "we are saved by hope." But when we steadily face the dark and giant form of evil, measure its dimensions and review its history, standing aloof alike from the over-sanguineness of optimism and the despondency of pessimism, we may assuredly discern grounds for hope and encouragement. Thus we look fairly at the condition of the poor and ignorant, and we find that on the whole they are perhaps as happy as ourselves. The ragged urchin in the narrow, dirty alley has often joys as real and intense as those of the child of wealth and luxury. Again, is it not true that happiness is more nearly within the reach of *every* man than is sometimes supposed? "If one only wished to be happy, *this could be readily accomplished:* but we wish to be happier than other people; and this is almost always difficult, for we believe others to be happier than they are." And this brings us to the inspiriting, if in one sense humiliating, thought that the large majority of the evils of life are

of man's making, and are also *capable of removal.* Much has already been done. No impartial student of history can deny that the human race has on the whole gained upon evil, weakened its influence, circumscribed its sway. The remainder is of course appallingly great, but of that remainder a large part is *not a fixture.* Death indeed we cannot get rid of, and death brings in its train sorrow, bereavement, and many other ills. But premature death may be rendered far less frequent, disease may be mitigated or avoided, base pleasures may be suppressed, pure pleasures promoted, slavery and famine may be banished, war held in check, superstition dispelled, ignorance enlightened, and, in a word, life made infinitely more happy, noble, precious, than it now is or ever has been.

And thus it would appear that even for man—sinful, diseased, death-doomed man—"it is a happy world after all." "Brought to its actual limits, the problem of evil stands before us as a vast but not *immense* exception, in a rule of good."[5] And it is most inspiriting to think, as we are justified in thinking, that even that vast exception may be rendered far less vast if men will be "strong and of a good courage," and

[5] Miss Cobbe, p. xlvi.

humbly resolve to win back the territory which the black tyrant has usurped.

(*e*) A brief word must suffice as a remembrancer of the familiar, but most consoling fact that evil appears before us, in the world and in Holy Scripture, as often in the garb of a slave as of a tyrant. Evil is constantly made to subserve good. "Out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness." Death makes a prey of the weaker animals, but, we are told, the strongest and fittest survive, and the species is developed. The tempest comes, sweeps away property, destroys life, but at the same time leaves a priceless blessing behind in the shape of a purer and healthier atmosphere. Pestilence comes and slays its thousands, but the lessons it teaches and the precautions it suggests save tens of thousands. So also in the moral world. Suffering and bereavement come, and the sufferer's soul is refined as gold which has been tried in the fire. The visitation of war has often proved the regeneration of a people. Temptation comes: if resisted, the faithful soul is ennobled; even if yielded to, the fallen often rises again a wiser, humbler, tenderer, deeper-minded man. And thus bleeding yet conquering Humanity may triumphantly

exclaim, "Evil, it is thy doom to be my good! Captivity, thou art thyself led captive!"

(*f*) But we are not only men, we are Christians; and as Christians we must surely never forget that our *chief* encouragements under "the sore burden" of evil are to be found in the special teaching of our Holy Faith.

"With us," writes Dr. Arnold,[6] "the authority of Christ puts things on a different footing. I know nothing about the origin of evil, but I believe that Christ did know . . . . . And I know Christ to have been so wise and so loving to men that I am sure I may trust His word, and that what was entirely agreeable to His sense of justice and goodness cannot, unless through my own defect, be otherwise than agreeable to mine."

Christ is indeed the believer's great consolation under the oppressive mystery of evil, partly because His character is our pledge that the Ruler of the Universe is wise, just, and good, partly because His work is at present crippling, and promises eventually to crush, the power of the enemy. He is the professed and approved Champion of good against evil. We may contemplate what He has already done—how the Cross through eighteen centuries has been

[6] Dean Stanley's Life of Arnold, vol. i. p. 350.

found mighty in pulling down the strongholds of sin and injustice. Christ did not indeed supply us with detailed rules for meeting each abuse. He has not explained how we should deal with this pestilence or that famine, how to cope with slavery or with the vices of large cities, or with war, or with any other of the crying ills which beset and perplex each generation in its turn. But He did something far better. He gave His Church a principle, an abiding Spirit, which should serve as an ever-quickening *motive-power*. He left future generations to find out exactly what needed doing, but He commanded and empowered His Church to *do* that thing when found out—"Whatsoever true Science, enlightened Civilization, lofty Morality, saith unto you, *do it*." And hence Christ's Spirit is ever warring, and warring not without success, against physical and moral evil. Nor is its operation confined to the limits of the professing Church. "*Every* good and *every* perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Certainly no dweller in or about Christendom, however eagerly he may reject the Christian name, can be wholly uninfluenced by the Spirit of the Master. He must breathe that Spirit as he breathes the air in which he lives. And, on the other hand, though professing

Christians have too often been behindhand in descrying a wrong and in attempting to cope with it, yet never in the long-run has the Church —or at least the really representative branches of the Church—failed to sympathize with, to assimilate, to find room for, the honest enthusiasm or the judicious remedy. Rather has she gathered them to herself as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.

And thus, looking only at the past and the present, we have good reason to feel that in serving under Christ's banner—though we may fail to comprehend the strategy of our leader, though we may chafe at the weariness of the marchings and counter-marchings, though we may marvel that a decisive blow is not struck—we are nevertheless on the winning side, generaled by One who has been proved worthy of our heartiest allegiance and confidence.

But what of the future—the remote future, it may be, as man reckons? Does Christianity offer hope *in the end?* This is an all-important question. To some minds, and according to some interpretations of Holy Scripture, it has seemed that we have *not* hope in the end. Evil is pictured forth as retaining its hold to the end of time, yes, and through all eternity, over the larger portion of God's noblest creation. Hell

is described as a place handed over to the will of fiends, in which blasphemy, hatred, rebellion, shall for ever reign and exult. Thus evil, though it had a beginning, is found to have no end. It has in some mysterious way forced itself into God's world, and its usurpation is never to be suppressed.

But is this, when considered in all its aspects, the real doctrine of the Bible and of the Church? We must not, indeed, tone down the language of Scripture or say smooth things about the tremendous nature of the issues of this present life. We must not forget that Reason, that the natural sense of Justice, calls for a state of Retribution. We must not suppose that it can be well with the wicked—that those who have misused this time of probation can ever be as those who have used it rightly. We must not forget Christ's words about the undying worm and the unquenchable fire, nor yet that Hell is a state known to us by bitter mental experience *already*.

But, on the other hand, we must not forget those passages of Holy Scripture which tell of the *complete* victory of Divine Goodness—which reveal to us that Christ's now partial triumph shall hereafter be consummated. "*All things*

shall be subdued unto Him . . . . God shall be *all in all;*" that at "the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that *every* tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Such passages (and they do not stand alone) concur with the dictates of Reason and of the highest Morality in teaching that hereafter the authority, the goodness, the justice of God will be acknowledged everywhere and by every being; that even the lost will no longer be in a state of rebellion, but that "out of the depths of their shame there may dawn such a vision of the perfect goodness of the Most High, such a discovery of the wisdom, holiness, and love which have borne with a world of rebels; such strange and vast unfoldings of victorious goodness through the ages to come, as may become a message of real mercy to those who abide for ever under the solemn sentence of the Most High. God shall then be 'all in all,' when the depths of that fiery lake wherein death has been destroyed, as well as the heights of glory and the streets of the New Jerusalem, are lit up with the brightness of the Uncreated Light, and everywhere, in the height and in the depth,

there is the vision of patient, persevering, triumphant, and victorious Love." [7]

III. And now let us sum up as briefly as possible what has been previously said; let us endeavour to centralize those resources of light and encouragement by the help of which we may be enabled to travel hopefully and usefully to the end of this our dark earthly pilgrimage.

Evil, physical and moral, is within and on all sides of us. We cannot expect to fathom the mystery. At present we can know only in very small part. As regards the scheme of Nature, we easily recognize and acquiesce in this patent truth. We are content to be acquainted with only the mere skirts of that glorious robe of sky and sea and stars with which God has clothed Himself. We will not be less reasonable as regards His scheme of Moral Government. We will once for all settle it in our hearts that we cannot know the whole—that any theory which professes to *solve* the mystery is not for us. We will take, as our fundamental rule for life, the maxim that "we walk by *faith*, not by sight;" and, having thus resolved, we will look calmly, humbly, cheerfully round for hints and helps whereby faith may be supported. We will mea-

[7] Professor Birks, "Victory of Divine Goodness," *ad finem.*

sure, so far as we can, the *extent* of evil. We will go round about her dark strongholds, mark well her frowning bulwarks, tell her haughty palaces, neither ignoring their strength nor, like the ten faithless spies, exaggerating their terrors and invincibility. We will thus give Evil its due, *but only its due.* We will notice, too, how, by some strange but blessed law, the tyrant is often compelled to serve as a slave—to be, as it were, the minister of good—how the curse is capable of being turned into a blessing. We will further mark how, though by slow and painful steps, the empire of the enemy is being narrowed down and weakened; remembering also that the tenure by which that empire is held is not in perpetuity, but such as may, for the most part, be, even in this world, cancelled and broken. We will bethink us how the prince of that empire received his deadly wound at Calvary, where his head was fatally bruised by the heel of the woman's seed. We will contemplate the course of the Captain of our Salvation as for eighteen centuries He has gone forth "conquering and to conquer." We will learn more and more to recognize in Him a Leader whom we may serve with unquestioning, unreserved obedience. We will by faith look up to the throne of the universe, to the great white throne itself,

and behold thereon the awful yet benignant form of Justice, Equity, Truth. We will remember that the world, time, eternity, the lower and higher creations, the good, the bad, are all alike in the hands of a faithful Creator, of a Judge that will assuredly do right, of One who will never ignore the fair claims of His meanest or most sinful creature. Finally, we will remember the end. Amid the clouds and darkness of the last tremendous shock between the hosts of light and of evil—in the crisis when "Satan shall go out to gather the nations together to battle, that they may compass the camp of the saints about and the beloved city," till their insolence is avenged by the "fire which shall come down from God out of heaven and devour them" —yea, amid the ineffable terrors of the last great day—we will see the glorious promise shining steadily forth, which tells that "*all things* shall be put under His feet"—that God, even our God, the God whose mercy is over all His works, shall be "all in all."

What is left for us but to make our own in heart and life the sublime resolution of the Hebrew seer,—

"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no

meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet* I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."[8]

[8] Habakkuk iii. 17, 18.

THE WORK OF CHRIST THE EFFICIENT REMEDY FOR MORAL EVIL.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—JOHN i. 29.

To find a remedy for moral evil is a problem which every system of law and philosophy and religion has proposed to itself. More or less incompletely in design, more or less imperfectly in execution, they have all striven to effect this object. To say, then, that Christianity promises *a* remedy for moral evil is but to make for it a claim shared by every system—legal, philosophical, religious—which the world has ever known. Nor can it be said that they have been wholly unsuccessful. Laws have been imperfect or bad; philosophies and religions have been false; all these have been justly chargeable with moral faults which they have originated or ag-

gravated; and yet, perhaps, the greater number of them may claim to have done more good than harm. If, therefore, the Christian Religion would establish its superiority in this matter, it must be by the *nature* of the remedy which it has proposed, not by the mere fact that it has proposed *a* remedy; nor even by the further fact that the proposed remedy has been tried, and has attained a certain measure of success.

In making the comparison which I have indicated, I pass by the remedies for moral evil proposed by systems of law or systems of philosophy. Law is, I think, excluded from competition by the narrowness of its purpose, whole classes of moral faults being, as you know, designedly, and indeed necessarily, removed from its operation. And philosophy is equally excluded by the limited extent of its field. Those whom a philosophic remedy can reach are so few, that such a remedy, be it never so excellent, would necessarily leave the great mass of moral evil untouched.

It remains, then, that we seek to compare the remedy for moral evil proposed by Christianity with those which have come from other *religious* systems; that we may discover whether the superiority claimed for the former be real, and wherein it consists.

There is a general resemblance among the methods by which religious systems have sought to solve this problem. The agency employed has in general been hope or fear. The approval or anger of the gods—happiness or misery in this, or another, life awarded by their authority—these sanctions have been, with more or less effect, called to the aid of conscience by nearly every religion in the world.

These deities did not, indeed, always present in their own persons a very exalted type of morality. Sins, which Christianity stamps with the deepest dye, they committed quite freely; still, that which the conscience or the fashion of the age condemned, the gods were supposed to condemn too. Endowed with a moral nature no higher than the moral nature of their worshippers, they were supposed to be the guardians of morality such as it was. And if their sanctions lacked brilliancy they certainly did not lack terror. Whatever could be done—whatever deterrent effect could be exercised by mere dread of physical suffering—that many forms of heathenism were capable of effecting. To say then of Christianity that it seeks to extirpate moral evil by the agency of terror—to save or to secure men from vice by threats of the infliction of suffering, is to say no more than might be said with per-

fect truth of many a false religion. It is not here that we are to look for the superiority of the religion of Christ.

But, looking generally at the agencies by which other religions have sought to stay the growth of moral evil, we may say of the motives which they employ that they are *non-moral*. Hope and fear both terminating in self—these motives have in themselves nothing which merits moral approval; nor have they in themselves anything tending to elevate our moral nature. They may be, and indeed generally are, purely selfish. The happiness we desire, the misery we dread, are our own. Indirectly, indeed, these motives have a certain moral effect when abstinence from vice and practice of virtue are made conditions, by the observance of which the dreaded misery may be avoided or the coveted happiness obtained. And it is quite possible that virtue, practised at first only for the sake of reward, may come to be loved and followed for its own sake. But, I repeat, these motives have in themselves nothing deserving of moral approbation; and even their indirect effect should be regarded as only preparatory. No man can be regarded as truly virtuous who continues during his whole life the practice of virtue, so far as he can practise it, only that he may obtain admission to Elysium

or Paradise, ay, or Heaven. The truth is, that a religion which appeals only to hope and fear has no direct power, and may have no power at all to raise its votaries in the moral scale.

Again, and in the same direction, such a religion may be said to have been based on an imperfect analysis of human nature. At least it acts as if the analysis were imperfect. It does not address itself to the whole man. Such a religion has, in general, overlooked or disregarded one of the most powerful influences by which the human will is swayed—a motive which is often truly deserving of moral approbation—and whose presence *does* exalt the nature in which it is found. I mean the emotion of love. It is in the use made of this emotion that we see the essential superiority of the Christian Religion.

If I would bring my present subject within the compass of a sermon, I must not attempt to travel over the whole field. To give a full account of the remedies which the work of Christ applies to moral evil, would be to give a complete analysis of Christianity. Through the whole of the teaching of Christ Himself—as through the teaching of those to whom He bequeathed its completion; through all the ordinances which He or they established for the guidance of His

Church shines steadily the same purpose—the elevation of man in the moral scale.

But, on the present occasion, I pass over those agencies which, in kind at least, Christianity may be said to share with other religions, and come to those which are her monopoly—agencies to which no other religion can show a parallel; and by which the defects already noticed as existing in other religions are fully supplied. Pre-eminent among these, and distinctly pointed to in the words by which my subject is expressed, is the doctrine of the Atonement.

You will understand, my brethren, that I here speak of the work of Christ itself, not of the many theoretic edifices which men, disregarding the wise counsel of Butler, have been ready to build upon it. Theories of the Atonement have been freely proposed, so repulsive to the moral sense that their moral effect is more than questionable. When men are told that justice required *a* victim, careless apparently whether it strikes the offender or some one else, the reply is obvious. No: justice can punish only the guilty. Guilt is, like every other part of each man's identity, essentially intransferable. The suffering which guilt entails may be, and often is, endured by an innocent person; but that a just being should transfer his moral indignation

(an essential part of the idea of *punishment* as distinguished from mere *suffering*) to any one but the offender is, I do not hesitate to say, absolutely inconceivable.

However, my present purpose does not require that I should examine minutely into these theories, their truth or falsehood. Happily for man, the effect of the great work of Christ as a remedy for moral evil, depends, not upon theories of the Atonement, which have divided us widely enough, but upon the Atonement itself; upon a truth which the word itself expresses, and upon which Christians are generally agreed, namely, that the remission of human sin, and the consequent reconciliation of man with God, was procured for us by the suffering of Christ. How the suffering of Christ had the power of procuring this remission, or whether it might not have been procured in some other way—these are questions with which we have at present no concern. Enough for our present purpose—possibly for every purpose—to know that it was so procured; that He "died that we might live."

The moral effect of the doctrine of the Atonement may be regarded in two lights: as it acts in aid of the power of conscience, and as it does that which conscience cannot do.

Regarded in the first light, the doctrine of

the Atonement is free from the defect which, as we have seen, attaches to any religion which acts only by means of rewards and punishments. These supplement the power of conscience by the non-moral motives of hope and fear; this supplements the power of conscience by the essentially moral motive of gratitude. I do not of course mean to say that the Christian religion makes *no* use of the motives of hope and fear. But the use of these motives Christianity shares with other religions—it is not distinctive, and I do not therefore dwell upon it.

Gratitude of any kind has in it this morally ennobling quality that it carries man outside himself. It is, I fear, not difficult for us to be selfish at any time; but if there be a time when it is hard to live wholly for ourselves, it is when our hearts are filled with the image of one who has not lived wholly for himself. Shut your ears at such a time to the cry of misery—try to defend, and deceive, yourself by the poor excuses that "you want what you have for yourself," that "you must think of yourself first," and so on. At another time you may succeed, but *then*, will there not arise within you a whisper—a whisper which you cannot silence? What if *you* had been treated so?

But Christian gratitude—gratitude to our Divine Master for that which He has done for us—has a more distinctive effect upon the moral nature of man. When we are grateful to Him for that which He has done, can we forget what it is that He has done. He suffered and died, for what? Was it not to save us from sin—to set us free, not only from its consequences, but as much as may be from its power too. And when we are tempted to sin, and feel that our strength is giving way, what thought more preservative than—"Is this your gratitude?" You thank Him for that which He has done—you thank him for the sacrifice by which He would save you from sin. Are you now going to do what in you lies to make that sacrifice unavailing? You are grateful to One who loved you as He loved you. Are you going to grieve Him? You are grateful for that He has done. Are you going to undo it?

So far I have spoken of the doctrine of the Atonement as aiding the law of conscience, as aiding conscience to do that which, but that it is too weak, conscience might do for itself. I pass on now to a part of the field which conscience does not pretend to occupy.

We are all, I suppose, ready to admit that any conception of man which leaves out of sight

the emotional part of his nature is inadequate. Man is not a being of pure reason; neither is he a being of reason and conscience only. Both these are parts—but only parts—of human nature; and so intimately are these several parts connected with each other, that any system which neglects one will dwarf or distort the rest. Thus, if your system treat man as a purely intellectual being, ignoring the moral and emotional parts of his nature, you will not injure his nature only in those parts which you neglect; your system will make him a hard man—perhaps a bad man—but it will do more. It will dwarf his intellect too. The engine is there, but what avails it if the motive power be wanting?

So, too, if you treat man merely as a *moral* being, as one who bears a law written in his heart enjoining or forbidding certain actions; if your system aim only at the enforcement of the law of conscience, taking no thought of such emotions as love, gratitude, pity, your system will tend to produce a being imperfect, not only in the emotional part of his nature, but also in his obedience to the moral law itself.

Here, again, the superiority of the Christian system, and more especially of that part of it which we are now discussing becomes manifest; for Christianity overlooks no part of man's

nature; Christianity looks on man as a being not swayed by reason alone, nor by reason and conscience alone, but by reason and conscience, and (most powerfully) by emotion.

Christianity does not teach, as some systems have done, that it is man's duty to destroy, so far as that may be, the emotional part of his nature. She does not seek the highest type of humanity in a nature where all emotion is quenched. But the Gospel of Christ has laid hold of the greatest—the most powerful of human emotions—the emotion of love, and strives to elevate man's moral nature by giving to that emotion the noblest possible object. The Gospel of Christ, and more especially that part of it which we are now considering, tends, and not vainly, to evoke in the heart of man the deepest love, directed to One who is at the same time the most perfect moral example. I need hardly explain to you how powerful is this combination. You know that the example of one whom we esteem *and love* will often succeed in producing imitation, where the example of one whom we only esteem would wholly fail. There is, perhaps, among men no rarer combination than a being coldly good; one who passes through life obedient to a strong sense of duty; calmly considering as each case arises what he ought to do,

and as calmly doing it; taking an active part in all that concerns the welfare of his fellow-creatures, but only because it is his duty so to do; relieving distress for which he does not feel; giving to misery all he has, but not a tear. Such men there may have been, but they are rare indeed. Men have emotions, and will continue to have them; and no moral system is complete which does not propose to enlist these emotions on the side of good.

All religions do, as we have seen, avail themselves of hope and fear; and no doubt much good has been done in this way. But we have seen also that these emotions, regarded as moral agents, have this defect, that they terminate in self, and that they have no direct tendency to elevate man's moral nature. Christianity, by the life and death of Christ, has laid hold of the nobler emotion of love, and given to its power a breadth of operation which it never had before.

I do not, of course, mean that Christianity gave to the emotion of love all its moral power; much of that power is inherent in itself. The presence of this emotion is always beneficial to the mind, and there are certain active virtues which it directly stimulates.

But the work of Christ has made the moral

power of the emotion of love coextensive with the whole of man's actions.

Do right and avoid wrong in everything, says conscience, because they *are* right and wrong. Conscience gives no reasons.

Do right and avoid wrong, say all religions, that you may obtain happiness and escape misery.

Do right and avoid wrong, says Christianity alone, as you would not grieve Him who suffered as He suffered for you—as you would give for that great love the only return which you can give—as you would not undo the work for which He lived and died.

I pass to another moral power of this great doctrine.

A system of mere rewards and punishments, even a system of mere moral law, has in it this element of mischief—it is, and must be to many a heart, the death-knell of hope. "This do, and thou shalt live," is not written on its enactments more clearly than "This do, and thou shalt die." And to him who puts himself in the grasp of that sentence what avails it that you preach repentance and amendment? "Repentance!" he will answer bitterly; "will that undo the past? Amendment! will that cancel the sentence which is already registered against me?" Bid him, in the words of the apostle Paul, "Forget

those things that are behind," and can you not anticipate his answer? "Forget them! Would God I could! Would God that any power could take from me that 'fatal remembrance' which lies like ice upon my heart! Forget them! Is it not a mockery to tell me so?"

Yes, my brethren, under such a system it would be a mockery, or perhaps worse. For there *is* a way in which he *may* forget for a time, and there is but one way; and that is, the continual degradation of his moral nature. Only by plunging more deeply into sin—only by resolutely shutting his eyes and his heart against all that is good—only thus can he exorcise for a time the fearful spectre of past guilt which haunts all his past thoughts. There is no one of the powers of evil so utterly demoralizing as despair.

It is here that the doctrine of Christ's Atonement comes to the aid of the despairing sinner. It cannot, indeed, cancel the past; it cannot make that undone which has once been done; but it can and does give the otherwise despairing sinner ground to hope that his sin has been forgiven him; it can and does tell him that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin," and in that sentence it tells him that neither he nor any other need despair.

But some, perhaps, will say, To what purpose is this waste? Might not the same end have been attained at a much less cost, and in a manner, too, more consistent with the attributes of God? Does not Natural Religion teach us to expect from an All-merciful Being pardon to those who truly repent? Does not our conscience tell us that we should do so with our fellow-men? And may we not expect the same from God? In a word, Will not Natural Religion save us from despair as effectually and more simply than Christianity?

Natural Religion bids us hope for pardon conditioned only by repentance. Does it? Let me ask any one who thinks so to consider the case which I am now going to describe. Let his imagination, or it may be his memory, draw for him the picture of one who finds his conscience loaded with an irreparable sin. What if it can be said with truth that he has, so far as in him lay, destroyed a human soul? What if, through him, a brother or sister have perished? What if his conscience tell him, in tones not to be mistaken, that their blood is on his head? I do not speak wholly, or even principally, of the worst cases. The power which we have over the destinies of each other is so great that the fatal effect may be produced by a very small thing—

a trifling neglect, a careless action, perhaps a chance word. But, however produced, let a man be convinced of its reality. He knows that the effect is real, and his conscience tells him that the guilt rests with him. And then let him go to Natural Religion for comfort. Let him repent truly, bitterly, of that which he has done; let him earnestly resolve to amend his life. And when he has done all this, let him ask of Natural Religion whether he may not hope for pardon from God. What will be the answer? Natural Religion will reply by another question. What *right* has God to forgive you? The sin is not against Him; the sin is against your fellow-man. What right has He to forgive that?

That, I say without hesitation, is the answer which Natural Religion must give, and it is an answer which sends man away in despair.

It is in such a case as this that we derive comfort from the very mystery which hangs round the doctrine of the Atonement. The vastness—superfluous vastness some may think—of the means employed, becomes to us the strongest element of hope, when our eyes are opened to some of the tremendous difficulties which oppose themselves to a system of free pardon. Such a difficulty is that of which I have just now spoken. We do not see *how* these difficulties are removed

by the death of Christ, but Revelation tells us that they *are* removed, and the more inconceivably vast that sacrifice was, the more readily can we believe that no difficulty is beyond its power.

But it may be said, this view of the doctrine of the Atonement and of the purposes which it is intended to serve, is applicable at most to the case of sins against man. Does it, in the case of sins against God, contrast favourably with a system of free forgiveness? Here, at least, there can be no doubt as to the right of God to pardon. Would not the moral effect of such pardon, freely given to the repentant sinner, be higher than the moral effect of pardon which is procured by the suffering of another?

In reply to this objection, I do not dwell upon the obvious answer that, remembering Who the Sufferer was, we can say that the pardon was free. But I ask you to observe that a system of free pardon is, and especially in the case of sins against God, open to an objection regarding its moral effect, from which the doctrine of the Atonement is free. It is true that, in the case of man's forgiveness, we think that it cannot be too free. We think that not only the moral quality, but the moral effect of the act of forgiveness is enhanced by its perfect freeness. I wish to point out to you how the analogy fails.

Man pardons an injury, but his pardon does not make the injury less; that remains uncancelled, to excite remorse in the mind of the offender, and to deter him from a repetition of the offence; and therefore the mental effect of perfectly free forgiveness may quite well be beneficial not only to the mind of him who forgives, but to the mind of him who is forgiven. But if a complete divorce were effected between offence and suffering—if, by some change in the laws of nature, men were rendered absolutely incapable of injuring each other, it may reasonably be doubted whether the moral effect of a perfectly free forgiveness of offences which were necessarily harmless would be beneficial. Recollection of an offence which did no mischief, and was at once forgiven, would probably exercise little effect in checking its repetition.

Now this is obviously the case with man's offences against God. They are, necessarily, so far as He is concerned, harmless—they can do no injury to Him against whom they are committed, and if they were freely and at once forgiven, little would remain to hold back the offender from a like act. This defect in moral power, resulting from the divorce which it effects between sin and suffering, necessarily attaches to any system of absolutely free forgiveness.

It does not attach to the Christian system. The doctrine of the Atonement says, in effect, to the repentant sinner, Your sins are forgiven—freely, as far as you are concerned—but do not think that they caused no suffering. Before that pardon, freely given to you was given, suffering was undergone—suffering the most bitter—by One who died that you might live. And, before you sin again, think of the suffering which your sin has caused; and think, too, Who was the Sufferer.

The limits of a sermon have compelled me to choose a part only of the great subject to which this afternoon is devoted. I have chosen that part which may be said to be peculiar to the Christian religion not in degree, but in kind. I have made this choice (among other reasons) because there seems to be some tendency, even among some who believe the doctrine of the Atonement to be true, to keep it somewhat in the background, insisting far more upon that view of gospel truth which presents to us Christ as a moral teacher and as a moral example, than upon that which presents Him as an Atoning Sacrifice. To those who *dis*believe the doctrine I have, of course, nothing to say. No consideration of beneficial moral effect could, with any propriety, be addressed to them. But I speak

to those who, believing this doctrine to be true—believing, that is to say, that the remission of man's sin was obtained through the suffering and death of Christ—yet think it expedient to keep this doctrine, comparatively at least, in the background; and to them I say,—It is not expedient: for by so doing, as I have tried to show, you cripple the Christian religion in that which is the most important function of any religious system. You cripple its power regarded as a remedy for moral evil, for you deprive it of its distinctive power. Whatever may be done to check the power of sin by the purest moral teaching or the brightest moral example—that you leave it still. Whatever may be done by a system of rewards and punishments—that you leave it also.

But you take from Christianity the great and quite distinctive powers which the atoning work of Christ has given it—the power of enlisting man's noblest emotions against moral evil, and the power of saving the repentant sinner from the complete moral ruin caused by despair.

If you would not deprive Christianity of those great powers—if at least you would not weaken their effect, you must give a prominent place in the Christian system to the doctrine of the Atonement.

There is another error, not very uncommon, which also robs Christianity of much of its distinctive moral power. It is the error which speaks of and preaches Christianity almost wholly as a system of rewards and punishments —as a means of avoiding endless misery and obtaining endless happiness. Now Christianity is such a means, and neither reason nor Scripture permits us to ignore this as one of its great functions. But if we speak of it as no more than this—if we describe it merely as a series of conditions, by the performance of which we shall obtain eternal life—then we deprive Christianity of its distinctive moral power; making it, so far, not different in kind from many other religious systems. The hopes and fears which the Christian Religion calls forth in the mind of man are, as motives, perfectly lawful; and we are fully justified in using them to win men to Christ. But they are not the highest motives, nor does Christianity make them such. The great purpose of the Christian Religion is to evoke and ennoble—by directing it to the highest objects—the emotion of love. It is this which gives it its distinctive moral power, —it is in the full development of this emotion that Christ Himself bids us seek the complete fulfilment of Divine law; and this too is indicated

not obscurely by St. Paul when he gives to love the highest place among Christian virtues.

It is in the development of this emotion that we must seek the great power of Christianity as the remedy for moral evil. Christianity has sought that remedy by the recognition of the undoubted truth, that as sin takes its rise in the emotional part of our nature, only by an emotion can it be successfully resisted. Abandoning as hopeless, to say the least of it, the idea of making men coldly good, Christianity has sought to check the growth of moral evil by opposing to man's baser emotions an intensified and exalted love. And if you remember how and in what part of the Christian scheme this emotion is most deeply stirred, you will feel the truth of the words of the text, which, describing an approaching moral reformation, tell us,—not of the Great Teacher—not even of the Great Example,—but of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

CHRIST, THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF CHRISTIANITY.

"What think ye of Christ?"—MATT. xxii. 42.

I AM to attempt to prove here to-day that Christ Himself is the greatest miracle of Christianity; that is to say, that no act was ever done by Himself or His Apostles, which so clearly implied the exertion of supernatural power, as did the life and character of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Let us first, then, consider the form and meaning of our Lord's character. These, of course, are to be gathered from the Holy Gospels (our sole reliable authority), and although it will be necessary to consider presently the objections of Strauss and Renan to the authenticity of portions of these sacred records, I shall assume, in the first instance, that those biographies of our Saviour, which pass under the

names of the Four Evangelists, are substantially trustworthy. With those biographies I suppose that all the members of this congregation are well acquainted; and it might thus appear that any laboured effort to exhibit the character of Christ in a new or more condensed form is as needless as it must be unsatisfactory.

Since, however, all Christians do not read the Gospels with equal attention, nor the majority, perhaps, with a special endeavour to estimate the moral meaning of our Saviour's character, it may still be desirable to lay before you certain suggestive outlines, if for nothing else, at least as a guide and stimulus to thought.

No one, I think, can have read the Gospels at all without having been struck with the calmness, the breadth, the faultless proportions of our Lord's character. It is felt to present a wonderfully rich, and yet at the same time a perfectly completed and harmonious unity. No one would be inclined to describe it as presenting any prominent or peculiar quality. It bears the impress of no special nationality, creed, or temperament. Born a Jew, our Lord is yet no more specifically Jewish than He is Greek or Roman; distinguished for depth and comprehensiveness of thought, it is not less true of Him that He went about doing good; devoting

Himself to the work of redemption with an ardour so great, and a zeal so untiring, that His friends once thought of putting restraint upon His actions.

In most men (even in most *great* men), again, we recognize some preponderance, either of the intellect or of the emotions; but in the Lord Jesus there is nothing of the kind. In Him, "those two poles of the mental life, knowledge and feeling, head and heart," are in the most perfect unison. His thought is suffused and brightened by feeling; His feeling is ever commanded and regulated by thought. What words are so *touching* as those of our Saviour, and yet what words are so *far-reaching* and *sublime?* He speaks of the grandest truths so simply, with such an absence of excitement, with such a tone of ease and mastery, that, as Pascal observes, "if it were not for the clearness and precision with which everything is articulated, we might even imagine Him unconscious of what He is saying."

The same exquisite balance and proportion is observable in our Lord's *moral* nature. Whether He were more loving or more truthful, more righteous or more merciful, more meek or more majestic, more self-possessed or more enthusiastic, who shall undertake to say? He is

each by turns, and all in each: combining in Himself in perfect harmony all those moral qualities which show themselves simply or prominently in others; so that, as Professor Goldwin Smith has said,[1] "the mental eye, though strained to aching, cannot discern whether that on which it gazes be more the object of reverence or of affection."

It is this universality of our Saviour's character, this perfect embodiment therein of all that is greatest and best in humanity, which has given to it its immense and far-reaching influence, which has caused our Lord, in the words of Cardinal Wiseman,[2] "to be followed by the *Greek*, though a founder of none of his sects; revered by the *Brahmin*, though preached to him by men of the fisherman's caste, and worshipped by the red man of Canada," though belonging to that pale-faced race, which war and oppression have made hateful to his soul.

Does it seem, perhaps, to any one here, that I have spoken of our Lord's character rather in the language of an apologist than of a critic? Let me, then, set before you the recorded opinions upon this subject of some of those who,

[1] "Some Supposed Consequences of the Doctrine of Historical Progress."

[2] "Lectures on Science and Religion," Lect. iv.

not less for the power of their mind than for the freedom of their opinions, may seem best entitled to a hearing.

"I esteem the four Gospels," says Goethe, "to be thoroughly *genuine*, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity proceeding from the person of Christ, and of as divine a kind as was ever manifested upon earth."[3] "He walked over the earth," says De Wette, "like some nobler being, who scarce touched it with his feet."[4] Our inquiry concerns Him, "Who," to speak with Richter, "being holiest among the mighty, and mightiest among the holy, lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."[5] "If, again," says Rousseau, "the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."[6] And to quote no more, how remarkable are those words of the great Napoleon in his exile, "I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell

[3] Luthardt's "Fundamental Truths of Christianity," p. 298. Goethe's "Gespräche mit Eckermann," iii. 371.

[4] Ullmann's "Sinlessness of Jesus," p. 79.

[5] Luthardt, p. 283. Jean Paul Richter's Werke, vol. xxv. p. 59, Ed. 1842.

[6] "Oui, si la vie et la mort de Socrate sont d'un sage, la vie et la mort de Jésus sont d'un Dieu."

you all these (the heroes of antiquity) were men, and I am a man, but not one is like Him. Jesus Christ was more than a man."[7]

What shall we say then, my brethren, of such a *character*, of such a *personality* as this? One which has made so profound an impression upon the greatest MEMBERS and the most intelligent RACES of our common humanity; one which, so far as we can see, is without a fault or an imperfection, which presents to us so rich a union of all various greatness, so deep a harmony of all possible good? If it ever *existed*, how did it come into being? How did it succeed in escaping those common errors and vices, which we know to our cost to be natural and instinctive? How did it succeed in gathering into its own individuality all that wealth of wisdom and virtue? Is there any *natural* process by which you can account for it? Any theory of merely *human* derivation and development which can assign to such results their adequate antecedents?

Suppose that like the Apostles you had been privileged to witness the actual unfolding of such a life: that day by day you had stood in the light of that unclouded holiness, that day by day (in common conversation, or in public

[7] Luthardt, p. 330.

discourses) you had listened to the outpouring of that astonishing inexhaustible wisdom—what must have been the *impression* that it produced upon you? "Conceive," as one has strikingly put it,[8] "this voice (the voice of conscience) not merely *within* you, but *without* you, conceive it speaking to you in human tones, penetrating you with human eyes, awing you by human acts, present with you, not merely in the recesses of your souls, but as a living human companion; in one word, conceive yourself in the presence of a conscience Incarnate," and then try to realize the solemn, the perplexing impression which such a moral miracle must have produced upon your mind. Could you possibly keep away in such circumstances those deep thoughts of heart, those eager, awful questionings with which the Apostles strove to explain to themselves the meaning of what they saw; or could you receive with anything but the most grateful and reverent attention whatever explanation of *Himself* so wonderful a Person might vouchsafe?

Such a life and character *demand* some explanation, and from the very nature of the case none could be able to furnish it but He who was

[8] Wace, "Boyle Lectures," p. 254.

conscious of their secret and their source. What then, let us ask in the next place, is the nature of our Lord's testimony concerning Himself?

First in respect to His *moral character*, He declares that it is without fault. "Which of you," He demanded of His adversaries, "convinceth Me of sin?" in what part of My life can you point to the minutest indication of moral transgression? It was impossible that such signs should appear in His *life*, because they had no ground or point of departure in His *character*. "My *meat*," He says, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me,"[9] and again, "I do *always* those things that please Him."[1]

Secondly, in respect of His relation to mankind, our Lord testifies, "I am that Bread of life . . . if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."[2] "I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness."[3] "I am the True Vine . . . as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me."[4]

And lastly, the Lord bears witness in respect of His relation to God, "I and My Father are

[9] John iv. 34.
[1] John viii. 29.
[2] John vi. 48. 51.
[3] John viii. 12.
[4] John xv. 1. 4; see also John viii. 51, and ch. vii. 37, 38.

one."[5] "He that hath seen *Me*, hath seen the Father."[6] "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."[7] "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."[8]

Now what shall we say of this witness? Does it not present to us a self-assertion absolutely tremendous? Must not He who affirms Himself to be sinless be either better or worse than all men? *better*, if His testimony be true; and if it be rejected, *worse*, inasmuch as *being* sinful, His moral sensibility was too obtuse to discover it? Again, must not the Lord Jesus be great above all measure of greatness if, as He says, He be indeed the source of spiritual Light and Life to all men; or on the other hand, vain and self-presumptuous beyond all example of arrogance, if His witness be disallowed?

Or what, in fine, are we to make of His unequivocal claim to be one with God in essence and honour? Must He not either *be* that which He affirms, or as the Jews declare Him, frenzied or possessed, madman or blasphemer?

Any way, if the testimony of the Evangelists is to be believed, we are here brought face to face with the miracle of miracles. Either on the

[5] John x. 30. [6] John xiv. 9.
[7] John v. 26. [8] John viii. 58.

one hand we must bow with adoration before sinless man and Incarnate God; or on the other, we must conclude of a Person, who by His moral greatness has changed the face of the world, and commanded the homage of the greatest of mankind, that He was the blindest of self-deceivers, and the most frantic and arrogant of fanatics. I know not which were the greater miracle; but of one thing I am certain, that either is greater than the walking on the sea, or the raising of the dead.

It must not be concealed, however, that these testimonies of our Lord to His own nature and character are taken entirely from the Gospel according to St. John; and that some have sought to escape from the dilemma in which they place us, either by denying with Baur and Strauss that St. John was their author, or by affirming with Renan that they were written by the Apostle "when his mind had been bewildered by the theosophy of Asia Minor."

I must here affirm my own conviction that in face of that closer examination of St. John's Gospel, which these theories have stimulated, it is daily becoming more impossible for a reasonable man to believe them.[9]

[9] I venture to go further, and to say with Mr. Ll. Davies ("Manifestation of the Son of God," p. xxi), "I

The difficulties which they involve are strikingly suggested by the diversity of result to which they lead their ingenious authors. Thus, in sketching the scene between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Strauss declares that the author of St. John's Gospel was "as much conscious that he was inventing freely, as was Homer when he described the interview between Ulysses and Calypso;"[1] whereas, in the opinion of Renan, he was not only reporting the words of Jesus, but precisely those *sublimest* words in which our Lord founded "the absolute religion;" so that (to let Renan speak for himself) "if other planets have inhabitants gifted with reason and morality, THEIR religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed near the well of Jacob."[2]

Diversity of conclusion is no doubt to be expected when expositors start from varying hypotheses, but hardly diversity so extreme as this.

find it difficult to preserve a decent respect even for the intellect of the man who does not recognize in the writings of St. John the sublimest and yet the most human theology which has ever found expression in words, and an account of the nature and thoughts of Christ, at once the most utterly unworldly and the most profoundly and intensely consistent."

[1] "New Life of Jesus," vol. i. p. 208.

[2] "Life of Jesus," p. 176.

For what can we think of the sagacity of the extremer rationalistic criticism, when *one* of its most famous representatives sees in a certain passage, the free invention of an anonymous writer of the second century; while *another*, equally famous, recognizes therein those sublimest of the sayings of Jesus, in virtue of which He became the Founder of the absolute religion? Truly may we say with Rousseau in the face of such a contradiction, that if any one could have invented such a scene as that at the well of Jacob, "the inventor would have been a more astounding person than the hero."

It is not, however, *only*, or even *principally* by the diversity of their *results*, that the rationalistic critics of the Gospel of St. John are discredited, but rather by the necessary consequence of their admissions.

Thus Strauss admits that, "in these speeches of the Johannine Christ about Himself, there remains at last, as what may be genuine, and possible for a human being, only so much as is common to the Fourth Gospel with the three others."[3]

But how *much*, then, is common to these several authorities? Strauss presently finds

[3] "New Life of Jesus," vol. i. p. 274.

himself obliged to deal with that saying reported by St. Matthew and St. Luke: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."[4] And again, when Renan is called upon to produce the proofs of his assertion, that at a certain period of our Lord's life "the admiration of His disciples carried Him away," and led Him to attribute to Himself "the position of a superhuman being," it is principally to the Synoptics that he appeals. The following references, for instance, are all to the three first Evangelists: "His Father had given Him all power. No one knew the Father except through Him. Nature obeyed Him. He pardoned sin. He was superior to David, to Abraham, to Solomon, and to the prophets."[5]

Can it be said in the face of such references as these, that our Lord's claim to an unique Divine relationship is peculiar to the Gospel according to St. John? Is it not rather evident that the larger reports of the fourth Evangelist were necessary to give to such statements a rational ground and connexion?[6]

[4] Matt. xi. 27, and Luke x. 22.

[5] "Life of Jesus," p. 182.

[6] For a careful and candid examination of this point see

We saw that the statements in St. John's Gospel had reference not only to our Lord's Divinity, but also to His human sinlessness. Now, Strauss professes to give an account of our Lord's religious consciousness, derived from such passages of the three first Evangelists as he finds to be authentic. And what is the result of his examination? "In all those natures," he tells us, "which were not purified till they had gone through struggles and violent disruption (think only of a Paul, an Augustine, and a Luther), the shadowy *colours* of this exist for ever, and something harsh, severe and gloomy clings to them all their lives. But of this in Jesus no trace is found. Jesus appears as a beautiful nature from the first, which had only to develope itself out of itself; . . . . but not to change and begin a new life."[7]

Now let any one only recall what he knows of the outward frame and inward consciousness of the most saintly characters in human history —of those who have developed most calmly and gradually, with the least possible disturbance from sinful excitement, and then let him say whether a life without so much as the *shadow*

Mr. Sanday's "Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel." See especially pp. 106—115.

[7] "New Life of Jesus," vol. i. p. 282.

of evil upon it, must not be purer than any of those—must not, in a word, be sinless, and require for its explanation, just such a self-disclosure as we find in the Gospel according to St. John!

I am quite aware that as soon as any statement of the Synoptics becomes inconvenient Strauss has a most summary and convenient way of disposing of it. When, for instance, he finds in the Synoptical statement of our Lord's relation to the Father, an unequivocal declaration of the supernatural character of His being, —he rejects it unceremoniously, as "referring to a principle resembling that of the Fourth Gospel."[8] Certainly his rule is a very simple one. If any passage in the Gospels agrees with his theory—well; if not—so much the worse for the passage. The question however remains, whether this method of criticism be as *sound* as it is *simple;* and more especially whether it will enable him to give a satisfactory account of the evangelical phenomena with which he is confronted.

For the passages which he desires to reject as mythical (all those, viz. which affirm the working of miracles, or contain the element of

[8] "Life of Jesus," vol. i. p. 276.

prophecy, or ascribe to our Saviour properties which are superhuman) are found to harmonize so perfectly with those which rationalistic critics accept, that they describe, *together with them*, a character of perfect unity and moral beauty. How then are we to account for this fact?—that the several parts of this picture (*including* those which involve the supernatural, and where, therefore, the perils of exaggeration were greatest) blend together naturally, and make up a whole, of which it is difficult to say, whether the richness, or the unity is the more remarkable. How was this miracle of spiritual portraiture achieved? If the supernatural portions be untrustworthy;—when and by whom were they created? What consummate artist was it, who, taking the prophecies of the Old Testament and the scanty traditions of the Christian Scriptures for his materials or guides, "freely invented" a supernatural character of such perfect consistency, and unblemished moral beauty, that while his handiwork has succeeded in *imposing* upon the wisest, it has never failed to command the loving homage and adoration, of the *holiest* of mankind? Greater even than the subject of his imagination (could we only believe in his existence) were this unapproachable artist.

Will it be believed then, that Strauss requires from us a still *greater* effort of faith;—that he requires us to accept, as the creative cause of this matchless character, not any single artist, nor even the members of the Apostolic college; but a multitude of obscure and unknown believers, living in different periods of the first two centuries, and creating, each as he was able (to be afterwards modified by the popular feeling), such miraculous stories about the Lord Jesus, as the prophecies of the Old Testament seemed to him to demand or suggest? What? you may well exclaim; conceive for a moment that this glorious kingly form of the divinest man, was nothing better than an image, like that of the monarch's vision, whose head was of gold, and its feet of clay?—conceive that that simplest unity of all grand and gracious attributes was some mere mosaic of saintly thoughts, fused into a kind of unity by the fervid temper of a superstitious age? Who could believe this, that knows anything either of the popular *Messianic expectations* of that age, or of the puerile efforts of its apocryphal authors to enlarge the sacred Biography? That such a result indeed, should have been produced by such a cause, would be a greater miracle than any of the recorded acts or sayings of our

Divine Master. The former would *contradict* our experience, whereas the latter does no more than *transcend* it.

About the attempted explanation of Renan I have said but little. And little indeed at this time of day needs to be said. For his idea of a sentimental hero beginning with the *impracticable,* only to descend into the *immoral,* is so utterly contradictory of the Evangelical accounts, and so utterly repugnant to our moral instincts, that it is already generally discredited. If indeed as Renan declares "Jesus will never be surpassed"—that "a thousand times more loving and a thousand times more loved since His death than during his life, He will become to such a degree the corner-stone of humanity, that to tear His Name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations;"[9] then it must be for ever impossible to believe in that sentimental figure which is not only "carried away by the fearful progress of enthusiasm," and "degraded by contact with men to their level," but can even be conceived of, in the last agony, as dreaming of the fruits and "clear fountains of Galilee" and "of the young maidens who perhaps would have consented to love Him."

[9] "Life of Jesus," p. 291.

The imagination which could conceive such a possibility, is by that fact alone shown to be unfit to handle such a subject; and perhaps no better criticism has been pronounced upon the whole general result of Renan than that of Strauss himself. "Baur knew," he says, "as well as any one, that with a personality of such immeasurable historical effect as that of Jesus, there cannot be a *question* of *adaptation*, or of playing a part . . . . that with such a personality every item must have been conviction." [1]

But, my brethren, if we have found these, and all similar rationalistic explanations of the Gospel records to be impossible; what then shall we make of those records? If the Lord Jesus were indeed such as they represent Him; and His testimony about Himself were no other than that which they report: what, let me ask, is implied therein? If with a character so perfect and a truthfulness so simple and absolute, Jesus declared Himself to be sinless and Divine; is it possible to withhold from Him our whole undivided love and adoration—or, giving Him that, to question any longer the existence of miracle? What miracle is comparable to the Incarnation of God? or what, excepting that, to the existence of sinlessness in man?

[1] "New Life of Jesus," vol. i. p. 312.

If at the birth of Jesus, the Infinite came into bounds, should we not have esteemed it strange and even suspicious, had the Divine glory never broken through the veil of appearance, had the Divine pity never come to the succour of infirmity, nor the Divine *Power* into conflict with disorder and death? If Christ be indeed that which the Evangelists represent Him, He is beyond contradiction the greatest miracle of Christianity, and such a miracle moreover as demands and pre-supposes the existence of others.

What then, upon the whole, is your conclusion, dear brethren, upon this momentous subject? What think ye of Christ? Compel yourself to give some definite answer to this great question of our age. If you cannot believe Strauss or Renan, and yet hesitate to give your assent to St Matthew or St John, construct, I pray you, some better theory for yourself:—and do it *straightway*. For this is a matter which does not admit of delay or doubtfulness. It touches your very life.

It is not only the Lord Jesus who says, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins:"—Baur of Tübingen comes to a conclusion substantially the same. For having affirmed "it is only in Christianity that man

can feel himself lifted up into the sphere of the Spirit"[2] he tells us elsewhere:[3] "It is the fundamental and ever-recurring thought of the Apostle, that only in union with Christ can the Christian be what he is, and ought to be, as a Christian."

What then think ye of Christ? I repeat —what is the nature of that wonderful Person who realizing in Himself all the best thoughts and aspirations of the past, is thus felt to pass on as a living and quickening Principle through all the hearts and ages of the world?

Who is He? my brethren, this glorious Living Lord, who (all the armies of His faithful being witness) can dwell in myriads of hearts at the same instant, equally present to the consciousness of each, as the power of his life and the source of his happiness? Is it a mere *man* who can thus gather up into one all the ages? who can thus bind into a single body (conscious of the same Head, and quickened by the same impulse) earth and Heaven, saints militant and saints triumphant; those who are still fighting the battle, and those who have won the crown?

May God give you no rest, my brethren, till you have found for yourself a satisfactory an-

[2] "Paul and his Works," vol. ii. p. 212.
[3] Ibid. p. 176.

swer to that question :—and may He grant it to you of His mercy, that when you find it, it may be no other than that of St Thomas, "My Lord and my God," the great miracle of miracles—the one life of the world, and the one satisfying revelation of the Father.

INFIDELITY REFUTED BY ITS OWN CONCESSIONS.[1]

It is but too clear that there is one form of unbelief among us, not unlikely, if we judge of the future by the past, to become more and more

[1] The necessities of the case have compelled me to speak in this Lecture of many living writers, for whose abilities and earnestness I entertain a very true respect, as teachers or representatives of this or that form of infidelity. I have done so with some reluctance, knowing how keenly some of them resent the application of the word "infidel" to themselves, how often it has been used by ignorance and prejudice as a mere term of opprobrium. I have not so used it, and disclaim attaching to the term anything more than the meaning which makes it a convenient description of the position of those who reject the claims of the faith which all Christians—from the Romanist to the Unitarian—hold in common as having its ground in a revelation of God through Christ. I know not why those who do reject those claims should shrink from a word which thus used is the simple affirmation of a fact. Nor will they, I think, blame me for abandoning the easy task of slaying over

dominant, which does not fall within the range of the argument I have undertaken to maintain. It simply makes no concessions. Obstinate and unyielding, as seen in its most conspicuous representatives, it recognizes in the faith of Christians no claim on the respect or gratitude of mankind, no civilizing influence, no restraining power. The Bible and the Church are to Secularism, pure and simple, nothing but the inventions of kings and priests to keep in check the freedom and the passions of the people. The natural, inevitable language of mankind in shadowing forth the greatness of Him they worship in anthropomorphic speech, which, because it is such, is of the nature of the highest poetry, is to them simply the suggestion of a caricature, and incites them to the jesting which is "not convenient." They have no reverence binding them to the past, no yearnings or fears stretching beyond the grave. Their hope for the future of mankind is, at the highest, one of sharpened intellect and higher wages, free trade and free love, a good time coming when the policeman and the priest shall no longer irritate and oppress, and churches

again the dead giants of the unbelief of the past, and meeting, as far as lay in my power, that which the power and character of its living champions commend to the minds of their disciples.

and chapels shall, as the property of the nation, be turned into halls of science, where the working man of the future can exult in that autolatry which is to be his only possible religion.

I do not see what opening an infidelity such as this presents for any appeal to the admissions which it has made in the past or may make in the future. It is hard, indeed, to see from the merely critical stand-point how it is to be dealt with at all. You cannot reason in mathematics with men who reject your axioms and postulates as the inventions of pedagogues and professors. You cannot win to physical truths those who blot out the history of the past, and start, without any teaching from its experience, on new experiments and explorations of their own. You cannot lead to spiritual truth those who seem to have fallen back into the negation of its possibility. Practically, I believe, those who are brought into contact with this form of denial will be taught how to deal with it, and gain the wisdom which they will so greatly need. The rabid and rampant unbelief may give way under the most unlikely agencies. Some revivalist sermon of the Moody and Sankey type may rouse the fear of the slumbering conscience in those who have not cauterized it into actual

callousness, and make the blasphemer grasp as for very life at the assurance of personal salvation. Some ritualistic mission-service may impress even more vividly on his mind the glory and the wonder of the Cross of Christ as working for something more than that assurance, uniting in one great family the divided races and classes of mankind, that visible Church being, in all its historic greatness, but the pledge and earnest of the yet wider unity of the Church which is invisible. Some living example, such as may be found, thank God, in every community calling itself Christian, of Christ-like tolerance and sympathy and long-enduring kindness, may make its way through the outer crust of brutality to the true heart of the man, and finding there the long-buried humanity, may win it to better things by the impulsive power of a new affection, until, learning faith by virtue, or virtue by faith (God works, we find, in either way) the thick darkness is permeated with a marvellous light, and the trembling prayer of hope takes the place of the railings and ravings of despair.

Meanwhile, this extremest and almost hopeless form of unbelief may not be without its lesson. The secularist, drunk, though not with wine, mad with the *delirium tremens* that comes from over-deep draughts of wind-bag eloquence,

may serve, if the figure be not too trite, as the Helot of that Sparta which we have inherited and should seek to cherish. Here we see the issue to which, it may be, we too are drifting. That absolute negation of all that differentiates man from brute threatens to be the outcome of the philosophy calling itself "positive." To that complexion may come at last the scepticism intellectual, cultivated and refined, that looks with compassionate scorn on the prejudices of the Philistines. In this denial "pure and simple" we find at least one manifestation of that "spirit" of the age which, as such, belongs to the rhetoric of the penny papers of the provinces, and reappears, as the "*Zeit-Geist*," as the last word of philosophy. The Girondists of free thought, if history teaches anything, are but preparing the way for its Jacobins and sans-culottes, and as in the days of the Terror, the polished disciple of the Encyclopédists might be seen jostled on the same tumbril by the squalid ruffians from whom yesterday he would have shrunk with loathing; so even the apostles of sweetness and light, walking delicately, may come to be in the same condemnation with the Marat and the Hebert (whoever they may be in the present or the future) of the new Revolution.

I do not say that there are not signs of

hope that this peril may be averted, but I cannot conceal from myself or others that it exists. An abrupt break in the continuity of our national and religious life, the destruction of all influences that have hitherto civilized and restrained the passions of mankind, with nothing to take their place but charms and spells that have proved powerless before and will prove powerless again, the growth of brute life in all its strength in the masses of our people, and the denial of any higher life or wider hope by the priests of science and the prophets of culture—all these things suggest, in those moments of pessimism that at times creep over all of us, the possibility that, after all, the ultimate issue of the long process of evolution in the history of mankind may be but a relapse into the fierceness of the brute made more formidable by the subtlety of the serpent, and that the final stage of the conflict between light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, may be represented by the struggle for existence between a cohort of scientific experimentalists and the legions of the dangerous classes, half-brutalized and half-demonized, to end in the survival of the fittest for such environment as they may then find around them.

We are, however, persuaded better things, though we thus speak, both of the men of science

and the men of culture, and I trust I shall not be treading on too sacred ground in speaking of that which, when I witnessed it, seemed to me, in spite of all the sorrow and sadness that were mingled with it, as an augury for good. But a few weeks have passed since I stood, as doubtless many of you did, within the walls of that venerable abbey which takes its place as the one building in this great city that represents fully the life of the English people as a Church and as a nation, and binds together the past and present phases of the history of that life. Never, perhaps, had it witnessed a scene so unique at once in its solemnity and its pathos. There were to be seen, marching onward in slow and measured pace, the representatives of well-nigh every school of thought that men call religious or irreligious;—statesmen who cling with a filial loyalty to the Catholic traditions of the English Church, or seek to reconcile the claims of the reign of law with the supremacy of an enlightened faith—prelates of the Establishment, ministers of Nonconformist bodies of every shade of belief—artists and poets and historians and critics—the great thinker who has influenced the minds of men for well-nigh two generations — men pre-eminently of culture, men pre-eminently of science. One could not help

feeling, as they stood by that open grave, what a wonderful variety of discordant creeds or negations of creeds was gathered there, what an irreconcilable conflict, but for that "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin," there must have been in the thoughts with which they looked on the mysteries of life and death that were then pressed home on them. Had that goodly and gracious life come utterly to an end for evermore? Was it, after all, as a dream when one awaketh, passing away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day? Had it left nothing but the influence of its example and the memory of its sweetness to be cherished in the calmness of despair, as the only substitute of hope, or had the spirit passed into a fresh stage of education and of growth? Was it resting as in the calm of Paradise, waiting for the resurrection unto life, or sleeping the eternal sleep, or quickened into new activities in the service of its Father and its God? How different, according to the answer which they returned to these questions, must have been the feelings with which men listened to words of Psalmist and Apostle as bringing hope and comfort, or as mocking men with their worn-out counterfeits! At what antipodes of height and depth must men have stood as they heard the

solemn words of blessing, in tones that showed the speaker felt their reality, but which to many must have seemed only as the hollow language of a conventional religion or if of a real hope, of a hope destined to be disappointed!

Yet this at least those who stood far off, as on the extremest left, had in common with those who continue faithful to what they have inherited from their fathers, and who hope to hand it on to those that come after them—not, indeed, it may be, as they received it, but purified and brightened. They acknowledged a profound reverence for goodness, formed and fashioned upon the groundwork of Christian Truth and after the type of the Christ-like character. They felt that that goodness, widely as they were separated, many of them, from the convictions on which it rested, had not shut them out from its sympathy and esteem—and they, in their turn, paid a willing homage to the sweetness and light of which it had been an almost representative expression. That fact alone might well give a different tone from that of the mere controversialist to one who has undertaken the task—far from self-chosen—of appearing as an apologist for the faith which is dear to Christians against those who seem to most men to have attacked it. The work before

us is something more than a forensic struggle, in which one may make the most of one's own case and hit the weak points of an opponent, browbeating witnesses or declaiming against the counsel on the other side. The true tone and temper of an apologist under such conditions is rather that of the Apostle who stood on Mars' Hill and said to seekers after The Unknown God, "whom therefore ye worship, not knowing, Him declare I unto you;"[2] or that of the saint of God who was restrained in his better moments from all hard and bitter words against the heretics with whom he himself had once been identified.[3]

I say, then, that it is a hopeful sign, even though it bring with it a special peril of its own, to which I am not blind, that the leaders of the schools of thought, who at the present moment reject historical Christianity so far as it claims to have its groundwork in the will of God, acknowledge the existence and therefore the claims of that element in man's life which, for want of some better word, we call "religion;" that instinctive tendency of the soul to throw itself, in uttered or unuttered emotions of praise,

[2] Acts xvii. 23.

[3] Compare the noble words of Augustine, Epist. cont. Manich., c. 2.

or love, or trust, or hope, on some Power external to itself, or to shrink back (for the tendency has, of course, its negative as well as positive pole) from the thought of such a Power, in its infinite Righteousness and Power, with terror or dismay. The sensualism, pure and simple, of the Encyclopédists, the absence of any higher standard of life than a maximum of pleasure or of profit, the teaching of a naked utilitarianism, are no longer characteristic even of those among our men of science who are most emphatically non-Christian. They are Epicureans rather on the scientific than the ethical side of the teaching of that school; sharers in the grand despair of Lucretius amid the crash of decaying faith, and haunted by the nightmare spectres that have weighed on men's intellect and heart, rather than in the calm and joyous serenity attributed, truly or falsely, to the Athenian sage.

That this is so with most of those to whom I have referred we have, I imagine, evidence that is not far to seek. It was so certainly with the thinker whom most of them acknowledge as in some sense their teacher and their guide. You have been moved, most of you, I cannot doubt, almost to tears, by the infinite sadness of the confessions of Mr. John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography." You remember how one trained

after the straitest sect of the Pharisaism of utility, making the greater happiness of mankind his chief object in life, because in so doing he would also attain that happiness for himself, found after a while that a horror of great darkness fell on him—

"A grief without a pang, dark, void, and drear;"

how he came to look "upon the habit of endless analysis as a perpetual worm at the root both of the passions and the virtues,"[4] and asked, in the bitterness of despair, "What good shall my life do me?" The fabric of his happiness was ruined, and seeing that the happiness of others rested on the same foundations as his own, that ruin seemed to involve them also in the fatal doom. Out of that wretchedness he was led, I cannot, of course, say to the clearness of faith, but at least to one of the stepping-stones of faith, by the teaching of the poet who, above all other poets of our time, was essentially and profoundly religious. Through that teaching his mind was opened to take in the sweet influences of the beauty and the mystery of Nature. He learnt to sympathize with the reverence, the purity, the fellowship

[4] Mill, "Autobiography," pp. 134—149.

with the "common feelings and the common destiny of human beings," of which Wordsworth was the exponent. If the scholar did not follow the master of the new school on the path on which he had himself travelled from a Pantheistic sense of fellowship with Nature as

> "Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting sun,
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things"—

to that trust in God as One who wills and knows, who judges and who loves, to the faith in God as revealed in Christ, which came as the worthy crown and consummation of the poet's noble life, we who believe that our life on earth is an education begun but not completed may well make allowances for the fetters which bound his spirit with the influences of early training, and rejoice that he was led so far out of the thick darkness, where there was no voice, nor answer, nor any that regarded, into the twilight, through which there came some echoes, however faint or feeble, of Eternal Truth. In the posthumous writings which contain the fullest confession of his creed we may trace the further workings of that better leaven, waking in him a yearning after life and immortality as the only adequate satisfaction for man's reli-

gious aspirations which was altogether foreign to the mood and temper in which his life began. That he was compelled even then to relegate that satisfaction to the dreamland of imagination—that he was, as it were, constrained to narcotize his intellect and blindfold his eyes in order that he might taste even that hope and the joy which it brought with it—was, of course, a proof that he had not accepted the belief which brings hope to others. The apparent outcome of his life was that he had sought and had not found. There is no evidence that I know of that he had ever seriously weighed the claims which the religion of Christ has upon the intellect and heart of man. He had been trained to look on it as an obsolescent superstition, the instrument of the tyranny of kings and priests, and as such he continued to regard it to the end. He identified it with the errors which have grown round it in its progress through the ages. With a noble defiance, he would endure anything, even hell itself, rather than accept such of those errors as seemed to him to obscure the goodness of the Eternal God and make Him like unto man in injustice and in cruelty.[5] But the last lesson which his wisdom bequeathed to mankind was, after all, this:—

[5] Mill, "Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy p. 183.

"Religion is essential to your happiness, and belongs to the imagination; therefore cultivate your imagination and try to be religious." It may be questioned whether that will be accepted as an evangel by the millions who toil and suffer, or by the few who think and struggle.

The same witness to the indestructibility of the religious instinct of man, the same effort to satisfy that instinct, are found in the system of the French thinker at whose feet Mill was content at one period to sit as an admiring though not an unquestioning disciple. Comte, too, after assigning the religions of mankind to the earliest and most rudimentary stage of human progress, having no higher source than the fetich-worship of the savage, found himself constrained at last, in the Positive System which was to satisfy all elements of man's nature, to offer men a religion of some kind, and he found the object of that religion in the abstract idea of humanity. Around that idea were to be organized a dominant hierarchy and an elaborate ritual. Extremes meet; and if the insanity of the founder were to take root in the credulity of the disciples we might have a calendar of Positivism as complicated as that of Latin or Greek Christendom, and a relic-worship as senseless as that of the most degraded

forms of Christianity. It is, I suppose, true that this ritual exists in some form even among ourselves, and that the priests of humanity conduct worship and preach sermons. There are followers of Auguste Comte, as there are, or were till recently, followers of Joanna Southcote, but we can hardly look in that quarter for the religion of the future. All that we can do is to claim Comte also as a witness that the future must have its religion.

The two master-minds of English science (if I exaggerate their prominence above their fellows you must pardon the admiration which springs from ignorance) tell us in their turns what that religion is to be. One of the twin prophets resents the charge of "material atheism," and must be supposed, therefore, to accept the position of a theist believing in some non-material power. He could only take refuge in the Atheism which has been falsely imputed to him, if for him, as for Lucretius, there were no other refuge from the dark and debasing aspects which Christianity has at times presented. To him "the facts of religious feeling are as certain as the facts of physics."[6] He, too, like Mill, has felt the power of Words-

[6] Tyndall, "Belfast Address," p. vi.

worth's spiritualizing view of Nature. "It is not in hours of clearness and of vigour that the doctrine of Material Atheism commends itself to his mind. In the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution of the mystery in which we dwell."[7] He quotes with manifest sympathy the confession of another great thinker that "unless he could believe that there was an Intelligence at the heart of things, his life on earth would be intolerable."[8] True it is that he cannot bring himself to clothe that Intelligence with the attributes of personality. He sees in it "not a creative power, but a cosmical life,"[9] and yet he feels that the understanding is not all in man, nor the culture of the understanding sufficient for his perfection. "There is a region for the creative as well as for the knowing faculties of man."[10] All that is needed is "an enlightened recognition that ultimate fixity of conception is here unattainable." How far the too famous words which spoke of teacher and hearers alike "melting away, like streaks of morning cloud, in the infinite azure of the past"[1] implied the negation of any continued

[7] Tyndall, "Belfast Address," p. vii.
[8] Tyndall, *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[9] Tyndall, *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[10] Tyndall, *Ibid.*, p. 68.
[1] Tyndall, *Ibid.*, p. 65.

being after the body in which we live and move is resolved into its elements, I dare not undertake to judge. It sounds like the funeral knell of hope; it may be only a paraphrase of familiar words, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of," or even of sacred words which certainly coexisted with hope and faith: "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep; in the morning they are like grass that groweth up."

From the other representative of scientific thought we have a more distinct statement as to the form of the religion of the future. He, too, feels that a religion of some kind there must be, and he has too deep a sense of the great work that has been done by the books which Christendom holds sacred, to wish to break off at once the continuity of their influence. He is content with "breaking in pieces the idols built up of books and traditions and fine-spun ecclesiastical cobwebs," and cherishing "the noblest and most human of man's emotions, by worship, 'for the most part of the silent sort,' at the altar of the Unknown and Unknowable."[2] I do not complain of this language as wanting in reverence for the past

[2] Huxley's "Lay Sermons," p. 20.

of Christendom. There are idols of the market-place and of the den which it is well that we should sweep away, and this confession of the limits of man's knowledge is at any rate infinitely better than the shallow omniscience which characterized the Deism of the last century. The most devout of all Christian thinkers has taught us that "our soundest knowledge of God is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him, and that our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence." [3] But it is, to say the least, a sad outcome of the victories of Science, that we should now once more be erecting altars to the Unknown God, to the God who never can be known in His purpose, His character, His relation to the noblest of man's emotions. Such words imply the negation of any revelation of this Divine Will not only in books or traditions, but in the works of Nature, or the reason and conscience of mankind. They assume that there has been no witness borne from without or from within, in the rain from Heaven and fruitful seasons, or in the laws of duty written on the hearts of men. And the worship they suggest as sufficient for the wants

[3] Hooker, Book i. chap. ii. sect. 3.

of men, as the ultimate goal of all other worship, is one which is at once sadly and ludicrously insufficient for those emotions which it is meant to satisfy. What kind of ritual can we imagine in which the suffering and working millions of the world can join, constructed on the plan of a silent adoration of the Unknown and Unknowable. If that is all you have to offer them we may be sure, if History is more than an old almanack, that they will fall back upon the most debasing fetich-worship rather than bear their part in that liturgy of Agnosticism compared with which a Quakers' meeting would be impressive and inspiriting. It can hardly surprise us that the tendency of mind which this proposal betrays should carry it yet further to the doubt whether, after all, even "human nature possesses any truly anthropomorphic element."[4] The question, how far it is legitimate to think of God as in any sense even such an one as ourselves, is of course open to discussion, and I have endeavoured elsewhere[5] to express my own convictions on it; but the question, whether *man* is anthropomorphic might surely have seemed superfluous, if the writer who propounds it had not added his belief that to the end of

[4] Huxley, "Lay Sermons," p. 180.

[5] The "Expositor," i. p. 44.

time it will be a drawn battle whether man is more than the cunningest of Nature's clocks. The noblest emotions, the worship of the silent sort—these after all are but functions of a mechanism. We hear the ticking of the clock and can, in part, explain the action of its wheels and springs; but we cannot know who wound it up. We think of it as self-evolved, showing no trace of a designing mind, and we abandon the attempt to regulate it so as to make it keep time in harmony with the motion of the heavens.

Yet another prophet of our own appears to offer his guidance through the labyrinth of crumbling systems. He recognizes the ludicrous inadequacy of such attempts as these to meet the wants of that element in men's nature which they yet look upon as the noblest. He sees that men can only worship what in some sense they know—that clearness of thought, if it keeps within the limits which check an "insane licence of affirmation," is an indispensable condition of the reality of worship. And he goes further than the others have done in the way of concession to the thoughts or feelings of Christendom. To him the Bible is the most precious of all books, or rather the noblest of all literatures. He has spoken true and noble

words of the sweet reasonableness of the human character of Jesus, of the secret of His power over the hearts of men and the destinies of the race, as found in His perpetual recognition of the law of sacrifice. He tears to pieces the theories of the Tubingen school as to the late origin of the Gospel records. He puts forth all his mastery of scorn against the vulgarity of secularism and the Philistinism of dissent. He rebukes with a righteous indignation the senseless clamour which indicts Christianity for having destroyed two such civilizations as those which were decaying into a putrescent foulness, at the time when it won its first victories and took its place as a power in the history of the world.[6] He offers sympathy, approval, counsel to the Church of England as a great society for the organization of goodness, doing a work which the nation cannot afford to lose, and which no non-established society can do half so well.[7] We are almost tempted to welcome such an one as a new defender of the faith, and to make an anthology of edifying extracts from his writings for the use of schools, did not the

[6] Arnold M., "Literature and Dogma—God and the Bible," *passim*.

[7] Arnold, M., "Lecture on the Church of England."—*MacMillan's Magazine* for April, 1876.

thought cross our minds that the architect who offers his assistance to strengthen the buttresses of the fabric in which we dwell, and tells us to use paint and whitewash freely so as not to offend the culture of the Time-spirit, is at the same time undermining our foundations.

For that which he offers us as the groundwork of faith and worship, adequate as a law of conduct, is after all, to use again a phrase which we may thank him for having taught us, "comically insufficient." I do not complain of his warnings against that wild licence of affirmation of which he accuses popular religion, for the indictment, as every Christian community will acknowledge as regards all other communities, is in part, at least, true. I am willing to accept his protest against the anthropomorphism that prevails among us as conveying a warning which we cannot afford to slight, though the protest has too often assumed the form of a railing accusation, and needs to be traversed by the question whether man's thoughts of the Divine Nature must not necessarily be in some measure evolved from his consciousness of his own. Even the word "righteousness," as the subtlest thinker of our time has pointed out, is as unmeaning as an algebraic symbol unless we assume that it

connotes what we admire as righteous and just in man, unless i. e. it is an anthropomorphic righteousness.[8] That which makes the weakness of his system is that he offers to men a new thought of God, of which it must be said that more than all thoughts of God that have been offered to mankind it has no form or comeliness, and that when we see it there is no beauty that we should desire it. The "Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness" sounds noble and sublime, until we hear that it is a Power which neither wills, nor thinks, nor plans, nor governs, which neither hears nor answers, neither loves nor punishes. The worship of "a drift or tendency of things" is at least as impossible to represent to our thoughts, as embodied in articulate speech or symbolic act, as that of the Unknown and Unknowable —is as certain to drift into the limbo of vanities as the phantasy of an individual mind, as any cultus or superstition of the dreamers of the past. Nothing in the history of thought or religion answers to it but the picture which Milton has drawn :—

"Of that other shape,
If shape it might be called, that shape had none

[8] Mill, "Essay on Sir W. Hamilton," *ut supra.*

Distinguishable in member, joint or limb,
Or substance might be call'd, that shadow seem'd,
And each seem'd either."

And the name of that shape was Death, and from its embraces with Sin there sprang a foul and loathsome brood of howling monsters. So far as one can forecast the future, the apostle of culture has put weapons into the hands of the howling savages whom he scorns, and furnishes them with new war-cries; but they are not likely to look to him as the Orpheus who is to tame their wildness with the harmony of sweet music.

There remains for us, however, over and above the assertion that men must have a religion, and that of all books the world has seen the Bible is the best, perhaps the only possible foundation for it, the further concession made by this thinker, as by others,—rather, I would say, the witness freely borne by them, as in contrast with the more vulgar forms of denials,—as to the unsurpassed glory and greatness, the sweetness and beauty, of the character of Christ. So Mill is impressed with it as something absolutely unique in the history of the world, beyond the power of any such writers as the Evangelists to have imagined for themselves, perfect in its truthfulness, and

devotion, and self-sacrificing love.[9] So Renan, followed almost verbally by the Author of "Supernatural Religion,"[1] when he passes from the faith that had satisfied his childhood, and the negations that had not satisfied his manhood, to the study of the actual life of Christ, declares his conviction that there has never been child of man (with the possible exception of the founder of Buddhism) who has exhibited so noble a heroism of will, who has so trampled under foot all worldly joys, all temporal cares. "Before such a demi-god as this, we, in our feebleness, may well fall down and worship." "Whatever may be the unlooked-for phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed." So the thoughtful and reverential seeker after truth, who had laid before us the Enigmas of Life, in all their mystery, owns that He was "the first and noblest of all the sons of men whom God has raised up with special gifts and for a special work."[2] Even Strauss, after sweeping away, as it would seem, every element of credibility from the records of His life, speaks of the Jesus of history as He in whom "the

[9] Mill, "Essays on Religion," pp. 253-4.

[1] Renan, "Vie de Jésus," chap. xxvii. ad fin. "Supernatural Religion," ii. p. 487.

[2] Greg, "Enigmas of Life," p. 202.

deeper consciousness of humanity, the Divine wisdom, first developed itself as a power determining his whole life and being," in whose character were found a charity, a sweetness, and an all-embracing love which have been as the germ out of which all that we now call humanity has been developed.[3]

Here, then, we have this admitted, that the books which we call Gospels do present us, in adequate distinctness, a character that we can reverence and love. Amid all the Babel discord of theories as to origin and date, and sources and tendencies, they are received so far as credible witnesses. Their very poverty of culture and assumed mistakes and mythical additions are made to enhance the greatness of the character which so impressed them that, in spite of their weakness, they were compelled to give a fairly adequate representation of it. They were neither willing to mock the world with the ideal portrait of such a character, nor able, if they had been willing. But then these records also testify that the teacher whom they call Lord and Master claimed for Himself an exceptional greatness—spoke of His Father in Heaven in another sense than that in which all men may call God their Father—spoke of His own Being in the far-off past, of His own work

[3] Strauss, "Leben Jesu," ed. 1864, p. 625.

as King and Judge in the far-off future. They testify, one and all of them, whatever differences you discern and imagine as to tendencies and schools of thought, that He wrought signs and wonders that others could not work, and that these, though He did not appeal to them as the only grounds of belief in Him, were yet accepted as evidence that He was indeed what He thus claimed to be. They are at least incomplete, if not altogether inexplicable, if this supernatural element be excluded. But it is precisely that supernatural element which the thinkers of whom I have spoken, following what they believe to be the informing spirit of the age, reject, as with one consent. Here, therefore, the treatment of the witnesses is altered for the worse. They were capable of recording faithfully what their Master did and said so as to leave an image on the mind that has power to draw to it the hearts of all men, but now they are put out of court as credulous or fraudulent, in any case as unworthy of belief; and we are told, after much victorious analysis, that we see "legend in the making" and have myths and not facts to deal with. Words are cited as spoken by the great Teacher, or as the additions of later superstition, according to a law of inner consciousness which leaves on one's mind the impression that the

critic's standard was simply this: "So would I have spoken, or not have spoken, had I been Christ." Or the preacher of the Gospel of despair takes, with Renan, a bolder line, and the perfect ideal of humanity becomes a teacher who plays upon the credulity of his followers, condescends to poor deceits, assumes deliberately the character of a thaumaturgist.[4] The Prophet of Nazareth becomes as the sorcerer of Samaria giving out that He himself is some great one, even the Great Power of God.

Such is the lame and impotent conclusion to which they are drifting, who endeavour to unite their admiration and reverence for the character of the Lord Jesus, with their denial of anything outside the adamantine limits of evolution and the succession of phenomena. The author of "Supernatural Religion" has, in this respect, taken up a safer and more consistent position. To him it is a very small matter whether men lose an ideal of humanity, or a character they have adored and loved. He is content to destroy without caring to build up, and instead of seeking to provide for the religious element of man's nature seeks to lead it, as Lucretius of old, to the serenity of the clearer region from which the panic-stricken religions of the world have been

[4] Renan, "Vie de Jésus," chaps. xvi. and xxii.

driven in flight. Yet even he makes, consciously or unconsciously, an admission which implies that he feels he is only partially successful. He conducts his assault on the faith of Christendom by attacks from opposite quarters, each of which implies a lurking suspicion of the insufficiency of the other. He will not avowedly postulate the impossibility of the supernatural as seen in miracles; for in that he would be going beyond the scepticism even of Hume and Mill.[5] He will simply contend that, admitting the possibility, we have no sufficient evidence of those which Christendom has accepted. With that view the greater part of his somewhat bulky work is occupied with a discussion of the old questions as to the date of the Gospels, the testimony borne to them by early Christian or non-Christian writers; their internal discrepancies, and the like. I do not now enter into the field of inquiry in which one of our great scholars and theologians has done good service in detecting grave inaccuracies, under the show of elaborate completeness. What I wish to point out is first, the feeling that never leaves one as one reads on and on, through pages bristling with references and quotations, that, after all, the writer is only making that argument the super-

[5] "Supernatural Religion," i. p. 93.

structure, and that the foundation is found in tacitly assuming the negation of the supernatural,[6] and second, the practical admission which the form of his argument implies, that in proportion as we prove that we have in the Gospels the evidence of contemporary witnesses, we are establishing the credibility of facts admitted to be supernatural. That we have such evidence, though not in equal measure, for the four Gospels, that it is an arbitrary and groundless assertion to say, that there are "no notes by which the identity of their writers may be established,"[7] is a conviction which, though I cannot now enter into the grounds on which it rests, grows with me stronger and stronger every day. Lastly, I am bold to ask what the upshot of the great argument is, even on the assumption that it proves its point. The writer takes, let us say, a writer like Justin,[8] who overflows with quotations from the teaching and references to the works of Christ, to His passion, resurrection, and ascension. He dwells on verbal variations as showing, not that the quotations were made from memory, as we may quote Shakspeare or the Bible, which would seem a natural expla-

[6] "Supernatural Religion," ii. p. 480.
[7] *Ibid.*, ii. p. 481.
[8] *Ibid.*, Part ii. c. 3.

nation of them, but as proving that the Gospels which we recognize were not Justin's Gospels; that he either did not know them, or preferred to follow the guidance of another. But if this were so, what follows but the conclusion, that the critic has in this way disinterred from the obscurity of the past yet a fifth Gospel, identical in substance and harmonious in its details with those we call canonical. If such a Gospel, indisputably earlier than Justin's, had been discovered in the recesses of some monastic library in Syria or Egypt, we should welcome it, I suppose, as an additional element of evidence, instead of dreading it as a weapon of attack. Why should we think of it as other than this, even when it meets us as developed only out of the inner consciousness of a controversialist? May we not welcome the opponent who subpœnas a fifth witness, and brings him into court to confirm the testimony of the four whom he attacks? [9]

It would be easy to carry this line of inquiry further, and to name some of those who, being by general acknowledgment among the freest and boldest of critics, have acknowledged, in

[9] Since I wrote the above the same line of argument has, I find, been taken by the Rev. M. F. Sadler in his "Lost Gospel."

direct antagonism to the Tubingen school, now practically obsolescent in its influence on German thought, and the author of "Supernatual Religion," who follows it, that our Gospels, as they are, belong to the first century and not the second. Thus Ewald and Renan maintain the Apostolic authorship of the Gospel of St. John, and Keim fixes the date of St. Matthew, in its present form, at A.D. 60—70. Keim, again, with Renan, assigns the Gospel that bears St. Luke's name to the beloved physician who was the companion of St. Paul; and though he does not admit the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel, assigns it to the *first* decade of the second century; and Ewald and Schenkel look to St. Mark's record as the most primitive of all the Gospels. Even the most extreme of the Tubingen School admit, that at least four or five Epistles that bear St. Paul's name —and these, those in which we find the fullest testimony to the great central facts of the Gospel—were really written by him. Each writer has, of course, his own idiosyncrasies of denial; but it is the idlest of all boasts to say, that there is anything like a consensus of criticism unfavourable to the genuineness of the records which are to us the chief, though not the sole, ground-work of the faith which we profess.

I am not able now, even if I had the inclination, to gather more completely the votes of that company of critics in whose presence the inquirer finds himself. I prefer to end with the expression of the hope that the partial truth which each holds may germinate and grow; that the yearning after truth and righteousness, which are common to most of them, may here or hereafter find its full satisfaction; that the admiration which all alike profess for the human character of the Prophet of Nazareth may pass into the adoration of the Son of God. This hope is already not without its partial fulfilments, the earnest of a more abundant future. Some, at least, of those commonly reckoned among the opponents of the faith of Christians have gone further, and have been led to speak with almost prophetic clearness of the things that lie behind the veil, with no "insane licence of affirmation," but in words of reverential truth and soberness. Let those who see in the doubts and denials, the discords and divisions of our time, a reason for levity and indifference, for licence and self-indulgence, listen to the teaching of one on whom the Enigmas of Life weighed heavily, and who has been led as—

"On the world's great altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God."

To him the judgment of the future is a thing which it is impossible to disbelieve, if we admit existence after death at all; for that judgment is found in no superadded arbitrary torments, but in the necessary consequence of the things that we have formed on earth. Then we "shall see all things as they really are—ourselves and our sins among the number." Then, all sensual desires and appetites utterly extinct, we shall look with loathing on the sins of sense which, it may be, passed into sins of malice and brutalized and debased us. We shall judge ourselves as God has always judged us." "The secrets of our souls will be revealed to those from whose loving breasts we have sought to hide them, and whom we have succeeded in deceiving. We shall watch them receding to a bright distance, where they may indeed mourn over us, yet will not need us; and then we shall turn inward and downward, and realize our lot, and feel our desolation, and reflect that we have earned it." No picture that Theology or Poetry has ever drawn could compare with the misery of that Gehenna; no discipline could be more effectively penal or purgatorial.

Not less clear and vivid are the outlines which the same hand has sketched of that brighter future which awaits those who have

hungered and thirsted after righteousness. Our childish conceptions and popular imagery fade, as into a dim obscurity, when we turn to that clearer vision. "Not a dead uniformity of beatitude, suppressing all individualities of thought or character; but a house in which there are many abiding-places, each prepared for its inmate. And that world can scarcely be pictured as an idle one. Work for the just not yet made perfect, for the hero, the prophet, the priests of Nature and the martyrs of Knowledge, the thousands of pious and perplexed inquirers, the loving and the tender—this will be one element of happiness." And above all and for all, there will be the beatific vision of those who see God. In that glory which shall be revealed, there will be the satisfaction of all desires and hopes. "In a true sense, if not in our sense, Heaven will be a scene of serene felicity, the end of evil, the end of strife, the end of grief, the end of doubt: a Temple, a Haven, and a Home." [1]

"That strain we heard was of a higher mood."

I dare not place this among the concessions which Infidelity has made, and by which it is to be confuted. I welcome it rather as the witness borne by one who has passed from the

[1] Greg, "Enigmas of Life," pp. 260—287.

dreariness and darkness of negation within the borderland of faith, and is not far from the Kingdom of God, and I cherish the hope that one who has advanced thus far may be but as the forerunner of others who at present lag behind, but who are animated, I venture to believe, by the same earnestness, the same sincerity, in some measure, at least, by the same reverence. That hope holds out a brighter and nobler prospect even than that of confuting Infidelity. It reminds the teachers of Christendom that they, too, have something to learn from those whom they regard as champions of the armies of the aliens—even as the Jewish king of old would have done wisely to listen to the words which were spoken by Pharaoh, yet came as from the mouth of God.[2] They, also, have to confess that they have too often been wise above that which is written, and added imaginations of their own to the Truth of God, and made sad the hearts of those whom He has not made sad. In that temper of willingness to learn, and sympathy with the wanderings or doubts, even of those who have strayed furthest from the fold of which they are shepherds, there may yet be found the last and greatest triumph of the Faith that overcomes the world.

[2] 2 Chron. xxxv. 22.

THE HOPE OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE DESPAIR OF UNBELIEF.

"Having no hope and without God in the world."—EPH. ii. 12.

EIGHTEEN hundred years and more have passed away since these sad words were used to describe the general aspect of the then heathen world.[1] Eighteen hundred years have passed away. Christianity has been preached; its message of hope has been borne to all lands; its glad-tidings of a Redeemer and a Saviour have become for ages the blessed heritage of the

[1] The words in the original seem studiously designed to enhance the darkness of the sad picture. Those of whom the Apostle is speaking had hope in no form whatever (ἐλπίδα, without any article); they were ἄθεοι, not merely disbelieving in God, but without Him ("sine Deo," Vulg.) and apart from Him, and that ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, in the dark heathen world, whither no ray of heavenly light had yet penetrated. See Meyer *in loc.*

nations that now stand in the fore-front of humanity—and yet, here in civilized Europe, here in Christian England, here in this centre of the world's cultivation and intelligence, the sad text remains no inapt description of the state of many, it may be even of very many among us, who at this time are taking no small share in guiding the thoughts and opinions of their fellow-men.[2]

But the text will be much more to us than a merely apt description of those forms and phases of unbelief which are now disclosing themselves in this and in other Christian countries. It is not only descriptively apt, but, in reference to the subject which I have the responsibility of bringing before you, especially instructive and

[2] It is always difficult to estimate correctly, at any given time, the exact amount of the prevalence of any graver form of non-Christian thought. This, however, may be said, that if our periodical literature can be accepted in any degree as either reflecting or helping to form current opinion in reference to the highest questions, the conclusion seems forced upon us that modern science, and especially the doctrine of Evolution, is now strongly pressed by many intelligent thinkers in a manner distinctly hostile to the Christian doctrine of a Personal God. A generation ago the current was towards Pantheism; now it is as plainly towards Materialism. Religion is banished to the changeful realm of the Emotions. Comp. Voigt, "Fundamentaldogmatik," p. 65 sq. Gotha, 1874.

suggestive. It indicates that with which hopelessness is ever found associated, and points to a truth which is of the deepest moment for our own times—this vital truth, that true hope dies out in the human heart exactly in proportion to the waning of the belief in the personality and fatherhood of God.[3]

Let this, then, be our guiding thread in the contrast which my subject now requires me to place before you—"the contrast between Christianity as the Hope of the World, and the despair of Unbelief." This contrast let us endeavour thus to bring out and to substantiate.

[3] The God in whom and on whom Christian Hope rests is a living, and so personal, God; ἠλπίκαμεν ἐπὶ Θεῷ ζῶντι, 1 Tim. iv. 10. "Personality," says Van Oosterzee, "is the highest form of existence, truly spiritual, and at the same time concrete; no mere force, or law, or life, is a being; and only a God who is truly a being can be prayerfully approached. True religion is possible only in connexion with a supra-naturalistic Theistic conception."—*Christian Dogmatics*, § 45, p. 246 (Transl.); see also Rothe, "Dogmatik," Part i. § 9, p. 24 sq. The perpetual objection that the two ideas of "absoluteness" and "personality" contradict each other, may be always fairly met with this brief answer,—that the thought that God, for love's sake, has vouchsafed to limit His own power by calling into existence a world of created beings, is not only thinkable, but reasonable. As Martensen truly says, "Self-limitation is inseparable from a perfect nature."—*Christian Dogmatics*, § 42, p. 81 (Transl.).

Let us endeavour first, by the general teaching of Holy Scripture and by the inner feelings and experiences of our own souls, to make out clearly what that hope is which is the very soul of Christianity, and which gives to Christianity the title which our subject claims for it. Then, in the second place, let us carefully analyze the principles of the three prevalent forms of infidelity, and see if the melancholy characteristic which our subject declares to be the characteristic of Unbelief is not fully brought out, and if the sequel be not hopelessness and despair.

I. 1. We begin, then, with the broad question —What is the true nature of Christian hope, both considered extensively and intensively? What first, is it in its extensive aspects? What is the full amplitude of that "living hope" to which the Apostle St. Peter declares that we have been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ?[4] Is it simply that vague hope in personal immortality, that languid expectation of continuance after death, which is to thousands the sole sum and substance of their whole Christian eschatology? Is Christian hope only something that concerns ourselves and our own future, or does it claim to embrace in its blessed

[4] See 1 Pet. i. 3.

inclusiveness the whole moral and material world, the very earth we tread on, and the varied realms of creation that are now longing for the mystic revelation of the sons of God?

What Christian heart among us can pause in its answer? Does not hope widen with our sympathies, and deepen with our deepening love? As we more fully realize the sins, the sorrows, and the sufferings of those around us—as we mark the vanity and fruitlessness that mar the results of the noblest efforts, traverse, as with lines of confusion, the most disinterested counsels, and countervail the bravest endeavours—as we contemplate the fading loveliness of all earthly things—the strange ruthlessness of nature, the waste of life, the mystery of pain—in one word, all the dread shadows which the Christian knows have been flung by sin over the whole of a once fair creation—does not Christian hope claim to extend itself to the furthest bound of all that is capable of restoration, to the totality of all that now, in the language of the Apostle,[5] is groaning in travail and suffering.

2. But, if hope be thus inclusive, if the deeper feeling of every nobler heart confirms us

[5] See Rom. viii. 20—22.

in this extension of the bounds of our Christian sympathy—if all vital Christianity looks not only to the perfection of the individual man, but of the whole Militant Church, yea, and through the Church, by blessed agencies as yet only dimly revealed to us, of all the families of redeemed humanity[6]—if the very material creation, this world in which we sin and suffer, is itself a mute sharer in that universal longing—if this be Christian hope considered extensively, what is it when we come to consider it *intensively?* What is it that forms the ultimate object of this hope whether in the race or in the individual?

If we feel a difficulty in at once formulating an answer in reference to Christian humanity generally, we can hardly find much difficulty in answering it in reference to each individual believer.[7] What, for example, dear brethren, does each one of you who truly loves the Lord's appearing now feel to be the real sum and sub-

[6] See Martensen, "Christian Dogmatics," § 273, p. 451 (Transl.).

[7] The doctrine of Christian Hope, in its reference to the individual, seems to hold a far more prominent place in the Eastern Church than in the Western Church. In the general teaching of the former Church it is regarded as the sort of bond between faith and works, and as that which quickens the believer to action. See Gass, "Symbolik der Griechischen Kirche," § 128, p. 350 sq.

stance of all the hope that is bound up with that blessed manifestation? Is it simply a happy immortality, a place in the white-robed company, an abode in the heavenly Jerusalem? The soul seems to tell us that it is more, ay, even far more than that. Self, and the happiness of self, even under these more sublimated aspects, is not, cannot be, the ultimate object of our holiest hopes. Is it then redemption? Nay, not redemption in its simplest and most general sense; for redemption has relation more to the present than to that blissful future into which we are now presuming to gaze. Is it everlasting life? Nay, verily, it is even more than everlasting life. It is that which makes up the whole blessedness of that life, and without which even that life would be weary and joyless. Is it not that which the Lord Himself has declared shall be the blessedness of those who have most conformed themselves to His image, and "purified themselves even as He is pure"? Is it not that which the Apostle of love has plainly set forth as the highest blessedness that the soul can conceive[8]—seeing the face of God, seeing

[8] See 1 John iii. 2. There may be some little doubt as to the reference of αὐτὸν in this passage. The fact that Θεὸς is clearly the subject that immediately precedes, and that in ver. 3 another pronoun (ἐκεῖνος) is used in connexion

Him as He is, and knowing even as we are known; or, in other words, restoration to God, and conscious union with Him for evermore? Personal union with a personal Father and God, through Him who took upon Him the nature of man, is alike the highest motive, the deepest quietive, and the holiest and most perfected hope that can be conceived by the soul of man. This is the ultimate hope of redeemed humanity.[9] This is the weight of glory that is reserved for those that love and wait for the Lord's appearing; and when He does appear, and this hope passes into fruition, then verily will the light that is inaccessible be streaming around us, and God becoming all in all.

And here I will not pause to meet the objection that such a hope is really beyond the realm of the thinkable; or, if thinkable, is but a mere

with the Second Person, seems to justify the reference of *αὐτὸν* to the First Person.

[9] The teaching of the Eastern Church on this point is very explicit, and finds a place in the concluding section of the second part of the *Confessio Orthodoxa*. The exact words are,—*Ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ ἀγαλλίασις δὲν θέλει εἶναι ἄλλη παρὰ ἡ θεωρία τῆς μακαρίας Τριάδος καὶ ὁ πνευματικὸς χορὸς μαζὶ μὲ τοὺς ἀγγέλους, καθὼς λέγει ὁ Ἀπόστολος· βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι' ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον.*—Kimmel, "Monumenta Eccl. Orientalis," vol. i. p. 202.

translation into Christian language of the purer aspirations of Oriental pantheism, or, on the other hand, a materialized and anthropomorphic adumbration of the truth that is really involved in the Nirvâna of Buddhist futurity,—this objection I will not pause here formally to answer, as it would lead us too far away from the contrast which is the subject of this present address. Yet, in passing, I may properly specify these two momentous considerations which go far to meet the objection I have alluded to, and seem also to set in clearer and sharper light the ultimate aspect of Christian hope which we are here seeking to formulate. First, that the holy and eternal mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Word becoming flesh, does at once seem to dispose of the first objection, viz. that to a Christian such a hope as we have shadowed forth can ever be logically unthinkable. That miracle of infinite love and infinite condescension does at once seem, incidentally, yet no less substantially, to open out to our view the limitless capabilities of our nature, especially when that nature becomes sublimated and glorified, and this body of humiliation is made like unto the body of the glory of the Lord.[1] If God could

[1] See Phil. iii. 21.

tabernacle with men, then no such thoughts of personal union and communion as are now before us can possibly be regarded as inconceivable. If the Incarnation be true, if our nature be verily such that it could be taken by Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; if the two natures could be united in one visible personality,—then, not only is a future union with God a thought that is legitimately thinkable, but it is one to which the whole mystery of Emmanuel, the whole earthly life of our Redeemer, leads us as by a natural development of consistent expectation, and of reasoned hope.

It has been most justly observed by a great modern thinker,[2] that our estimate of human nature is ever one-sided and deficient, when we simply regard it as involving moral productivity. The aspect of by far the greatest practical and teleological importance is that of its *receptivity*. It is on the power of human nature to receive God that the possibility rests of God becoming Man, and of man becoming united with God. The very idea of the Kingdom of God is ever that of a kingdom of individuals in whom He dwells, and whom He fills with the fulness of His presence.

[2] Martensen, "Christian Ethics," § 78, p. 257 (Transl.).

Secondly, we may confidently appeal to that inner witness,—the ultimate testimony of the highest consciously-felt aspiration of our own individual souls. My brethren, suppose for a moment,—I pray God there may not be ought of passing irreverence in such a thought,—suppose that to any one of us this choice were offered:—on the one side, an eternity of happy days, accompanied with the condition that we should never behold the face of God, never realize the beatific vision,—and, on the other side, our own individual future, as it will be when this life comes to its close. Suppose that such a choice could be offered, Is there one higher spirit in this church who would hesitate for one moment as to the decision? What would that proffered eternity be to us, endowed though it might be with joys unnumbered, if the one crowning hope and joy were to be absent? Should we not put it away from us, with all its certainty of happiness, almost without a second thought, and cling to our own undecided future, because that future would not be bereft of the one hope which we thus experientially find to be the radiance of our very being and existence.

Most truly has a modern Christian writer defined Evangelical hope really to be yearning

love,[3]—and as such we may regard it in our present contrast; the yearning love of the soul that clings to the one unchanging belief that it will return to a Father and a God; yea, see Him and adore Him, and live in His presence for evermore. Poor fallen and suffering humanity—fallen so low, suffering so much, yet endowed with this one hope, that, like the prodigal in the parable, it may yet arise and return; that there yet may be a welcome, that fatherly hands may yet receive, that the words of a father's forgiveness may yet be uttered, and that angels and archangels may yet hear, as each redeemed member of the race is added to the heavenly company, words that will never cease to vibrate in each soul through all the ages of eternity,—"This your brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found."

II. When we turn from these high and holy conceptions of Christian hope, this blessed and radiant world which Christianity points to as the true home of humanity, when we turn from this, and let our thoughts bear us into the joyless gloom of even the highest realms of non-Christian thought, how vivid, how vast, nay, how infinite, is the contrast. If we take,

[3] Harless, "Christian Ethics," § 20, p. 176 (Transl.).

in their highest aspects, the three systems, under one or other of which modern unbelief is now arraying itself,—Materialism, Pantheism, and Antitheism (I know no better word; it is not just to call it Atheism,[4]—that denial of a personal, but acknowledgment of an impersonal, Omnipotence, apart from the world of phenomena, which is now occupying the foreground of non-Christian thought),—if we take these three systems at the hands of their best and most thoughful exponents, and endeavour to estimate, with all fairness and impartiality, the nature of the hopes or expectations which they hold out to suffering humanity, can we possibly arrive at any other results than these?

First, that though all these systems admit, equally with Christianity, the presence not only of the sorrows and shadows of human life, but even of those sad and startling manifestations of vanity, fruitlessness, and frustration of moral

[4] The more exact word would, perhaps, be Paratheism, *i. e.* a perverted Theism,—a system which cannot properly be denied to be in a certain sense theistic, but which is really contrary to Theism in its generally received sense, viz. as implying personality in God. Nothing is more calculated to antagonize those whom it should be our object to convince than the careless and sweeping use of such terms as Atheism. Compare Fiske, "Cosmic Philosophy," vol. ii. p. 469.

purpose, which ever seem so mysterious and inexplicable,[5]—though they admit all this, and though the religion of well-nigh one half of the whole non-Christian world is based upon the recognition of it, yet not one of these systems presents the faintest indication of any attempt to solve the apparently insoluble riddle. The presence of these saddening shadows, be it clearly observed, is admitted by non-Christian thinkers of every school of modern thought. It is not merely the adherents of a cheerless positivism—that positivism that would trample down men further and further into the morass of matter, and stifle every higher hope—it is not merely the joyless disciples of that bleak pessimism which is now stealing everywhere into modern philosophic thought—it is not merely such men as these who dwell upon the sad frustrations and baffled hopes of mortal life. Men who stand forth as the highest exponents of naturalistic optimism, and of the bright and joyous life ot the world, all either distinctly avow, or indirectly admit an aimlessness, vanity, and dissonance in human life, which sometimes finds an expression

[5] Some considerations which may, perhaps, in some degree, aid the Christian thinker in reference to these moral mysteries will be found in "Credentials of Christianity," Lect. vi. p. 255 sq. (Hodder, Lond. 1875).

in language more melancholy even than that of the sad outpourings of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Even the great modern poet, who may be properly regarded as the very mouthpiece of naturalistic optimism, even he can tell us, in reference to his own favoured and lengthened life, that its whole course had been but labour and trouble,[6] and that in his seventy-five years he had not had four weeks in which he could enjoy a life which to those outside would have seemed to have been, so far as this world was concerned, one of golden and poetic sunshine.

But if so, why so? Why are the fairest flowers of humanity often the first to fade? How can the pessimist thinker say, with any semblance of truth, that we can hardly think of a really noble nature without some tinge of melancholy?[7] Why do the loveliest scenes of the material world often awaken in the soul a pensive and idyllic sadness which has been again and again alluded to by all the truest observers of nature?[8] Why is it that—

[6] Goethe, "Conversations with Eckermann," quoted by Martensen, "Christian Ethics," p. 172.

[7] Schopenhauer, "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," 3rd ed., vol. i. p. 468.

[8] See Humboldt, "Cosmos," vol. ii. p. 80 (Sabine).

"The mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
The stream that falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,—
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice"? [9]

Why is this so? What *can* be the meaning of all these apparent indications of some sad and inexplicable mystery? Why in the realm of morality itself, in the living and breathing world of humanity around us, is "the present distribution of moral forces" (to use the words of a modern thinker) thus "hopelessly chaotic"? We ask these questions, and we have a right to ask them, for Christianity has its answers; but not one of the three systems professes or even attempts to give even the most partial reply. Neither the system that says there is no God, save Matter and Force, nor the system that identifies Him with the Universe, nor that system which denies Him a personal existence though it separates Him from phenomena,—not one of these systems, nor any combination of them, has ever yet even hinted at an answer to any one of the deeper questions which, be it observed, are absolutely irrepressible—questions with which every present and future hope is

[9] Matthew Arnold, "Poems" ("Resignation").

entwined—questions which emerge from the very depths of our personality, and which never could have arisen in the soul, if they were to remain unanswered for all eternity.

Secondly, and further,—not only is every one of these systems thus absolutely silent as to questions which are inseparable from our very being and existence, but more than this,—not one of them has ever suggested any ultimate considerations which could supply in any degree even a transitory quietive. No deeper questions answered, and no quietive to still the bitterness of the silence. No quietive! O, how passionately has the poor human soul, in every age of the world's history, sought for some Nepenthe for its inscrutable sorrows. How passionately and how hopelessly! It has plunged itself in idealism, it has drawn contrasts between man under the cold pressure of the moral law, and man when in artistic harmony with the eternal laws of nature,[1] it has bathed in the golden light of art, and sought in the realms of imagination that union of the good and the beautiful, of the pure and the perennial, which may have seemed to bear with it some passing solace amid the

[1] Compare Schiller's poem, entitled "Das Ideal und das Leben," and the comments of Merivale, "Minor Poems of Schiller," p. 48.

grinding misery of mortal life; but all has, at last, been felt to be, and even avowed to be, both transitory and unsatisfying. The true quietive has never been realized, the true Nepenthe never found.

Nay, even that attempt "to attain the full altitude of the Knowable," which a modern opponent of Christianity[2] has declared to be enough for the bounded thought of our humanity, that Truth which he tells us is the only thing absolutely necessary for man—even that search for truth has never been found by experience sufficient to still all the cravings of our moral consciousness, or to prevent the soul lapsing either into that dull realism, or that creedless resignation, which is so often the sequel to dissipated illusions, and the precursor of a spiritual apathy that rarely fails to deepen into moral corruption and death. What practical truth there is in Schiller's exquisite poem that holds out employment as one of the substitutes for the glory of lost ideals![3] what suggestive teaching there is in the drama of his great contemporary, in which the Faust who is first presented to us as having pursued after knowledge

[2] "Supernatural Religion," 3rd edit., vol. ii. p. 491.

[3] The title is "Die Ideale;" and the thought referred to will be found in the closing stanza.

"like a sinking star," breathes out his last breath, aged and outworn, amid the homely realism of well-planned public works, and the details of a beneficent but prosaic industry![4] The restless plunging into mere employment is often sadly symptomatic. Yet this is not the last state. When all such quietives are found, as they are ever found, ultimately to fail, one refuge alone remains, a refuge which it seems impossible for the mind to dwell upon without instinctive abhorrence, and yet a refuge to which one form of modern philosophy is now actually pointing, the Oriental Nirvâna, the state of final renunciation of that principle which is the very life of Christianity, the principle of personality,—the state in which all willing must be converted into non-willing, and in which we must learn to die to the very desire to live.[5]

Strange and even monstrous as are such

[4] "Faust," Part II., Act v. (Goethe, "Sämmtliche Werke," vol. xii. p. 435. Stuttg. 1851).

[5] This amazing and really monstrous conception forms the leading practical thought of Schopenhauer's remarkable though repulsive work, "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," and is adopted and expounded by his follower, Hartmann, "Philosophie des Unbewussten," p. 762 sq. For further comments on the system of the last-mentioned writer, see the notes to "Credentials of Christianity," Lecture vi. p. 266, 269 (Hodder, Lond. 1875).

dreadful illustrations of the hopelessness alluded to in the text, yet they are not unknown to current speculation. It is but the melancholy *in pejus ruere* of all non-Christian thought. The draught of Nepenthe becomes at last the draught of Lethe; the resignation which once had some nobler moral features, and was often found in alliance with patience and self-denial, loses at last every trace of its higher manifestations, and is merged silently into despair.

Thirdly, and lastly, if the non-Christian systems which we are now considering, not only give no answer to the soul's deepest questions, but even minister no quietive save that which ultimately leads to despair, it seems almost superfluous to add that they as utterly fail to supply any really motive principle in life and morality. If the future is a rayless void—if the continuance of the personality rests only on presumptions which we are told are at best only opinionable [6]—if there is no rest that remaineth for the weary and heavy-laden save in the cessation of all conscious or separate existence—then why should man listen to the voice of duty? Is not that voice an illusion? To whom is the duty due? To God? But mate-

[6] See Mill, "Three Essays on Religion," p. 118.

rialism tells us that He is not.[7] "I swept the heavens with my telescope," says Lalande, "but He was not there." "I have looked for Him on earth" is the practical summary of the modern philosopher,[8] "amid the promises and potencies of terrestrial life, but I find Him not." To whom, then, is my duty due? To Nature? But Pantheism tells me of no voice, either of moral prohibition or of moral command, that breaks the silence of the rhythmic movement of that *natura naturans* which animates, and which itself is, the Universe. But if not to Nature, still may not duty be due to a Power of which Nature is the manifestation? If modern philosophy tells me not only that duty may be due, but that the intensest devotion may be offered to the Deity of Nature,[9] without any perversion of the moral sentiments, may I not pay my homage and my duty to this Inscrutable and Unknown? May not moral

[7] The fruitlessness of the attempt of Moleschott and others to found any system of higher morality on Materialism has been briefly but satisfactorily proved by Ebrard, "Apologetik," Part i. § 179, p. 411 sq.; compare also the popular and lucidly-written treatise of Janet, "Le Matérialisme Contemporain," p. 162 sq. Paris, 1875.

[8] Cp. Tyndall, "Address delivered before the British Association at Belfast," pp. 57, 58.

[9] Mill, "Three Essays on Religion," p. 115.

motive be at last found here? Nay, not even here. The system that bows before the Unknown tells me of no link that connects the personal and the impersonal, no bond that connects the atoms of a localized existence with an unknown and unknowable God.

Is there, then, absolutely no answer? Is this "ought" owed to nothing? "Far from it" is the united voice of all the higher forms of modern unbelief. It is due to the ever-advancing interests of the race. It is due to that moral development of humanity which is to be the ever-growing glory of the future. It is the contribution of each passing and transitory existence to that final evolution of virtue and morality which is to approach nearer and ever nearer to the still unattainable ideal of perfection.[1]

O baseless, O worse than baseless dream! What! this endless moral progress in a material world that bears in its very bosom the elements

[1] See Fiske, "Cosmic Philosophy," vol. ii. p. 498, sq. The end of Evolution, according to Mr. Spencer, is to be "the establishment of the greatest perfection and the greatest happiness."—*First Principles*, Part ii. ch. 22, p. 517. It is difficult, however, to conceive how such an assertion can be considered to be compatible with the admission that the processes everywhere going on are bearing all things towards "omnipresent death;" see p. 514.

of its own dissolution! This eternal approximation to the perfect under a sun that can only pour on us its heat and light for a certain number of almost calculable ages![2] When the race will have perished with its perishing environments, when the continuity of the survival of the fittest is closed by material and elemental change, when evolution will have dug its own grave, for what will morality have been developed? Whom will it ultimately profit? Whither will it be wafted when the race through which it was being perfected has sunk amid the ruins of a disintegrating world?[3] But we need not further pursue such questions. The thoughts they call up are unthinkable. The difficulties they involve are insuperable. The contradictions they disclose are irresolvable. We have exhausted all possi-

[2] The duration of the efficiency of the Sun is, according to Helmholtz, consolingly vast; still even this philosopher tells us that to our own race "a long, but not an endless existence" is all that is to be looked for, and that "as each one of us singly must endure the thought of his death, the race must endure the same."—*Popular Scientific Lectures*, p. 191 (Transl.) London, 1873. See also Lange, "Geschichte des Materialismus," vol. ii. p. 226, and comp. Spencer, "First Principles," Part ii. ch. 22, p. 494, sq.

[3] "The earth as a whole," says Mr. Spencer, "must, at some period beyond the utmost stretch of imagination, be subject to forces sufficient to cause its complete disintegration."—*First Principles*, Part ii. ch. 23, p. 527.

bilities. We have given a hearing to all answers. We have heard what is the hope of Christianity; and we have analyzed, what we now at length make bold to call, the hopelessness of Unbelief. The contrast is now completed—and this is the result. On the one side, the blessed hope of restoration, and of a return to a Father and a God; on the other side, neither answer nor expectation, neither motive nor quietive,—nothing, absolutely nothing whereon the soul can rest, save a moral progress that is purposeless, and a resignation that is only a thinly veiled despair.

Let me now at once close this necessarily lengthened address with a few, a very few, parting comments. Little needs to be added. Sermons like these bear with them their own application. Subjects such as we have meditated on supply in themselves a teaching far more persuasive than the counsels of any peroration. One warning word is all that I will presume to speak, and it is this—Remember there is something sadder than anything which we have yet contemplated—something more utterly hopeless—something more morally ruinous, and that is, believing nothing, not even unbelief itself. This is the real danger to the young, in the perilous times in which we now are living. Better anything than such a state. Better, I

had almost said, a heartwhole adherence even to one of the dreary creeds on which we have been meditating, than the dull apathetic indifference to all belief and to all higher thought that is fast becoming the characteristic of our own times, and is, for the moralist no less than for the divine, of the gloomiest augury for the future. All higher systems even of unbelief, if fairly thought out, may, by the very contradictions they may be found to involve, or by the very despair to which they may be observed to gravitate, bring about reactions; and these, in the boundless mercies of the Holy Ghost, may at last lead back again to God.[4] But the dead heart of indifference,—the scepticism of mere worldliness,—the disbelief that neither knows nor cares what it disbelieves—that has no ideal, however illusory, bends to no divinity, however unreal—this verily is a deeper depth than even our text points to. To have no hope is frightful; but not to heed it is

[4] As yet verifications of this implied hope are not very numerous. Still, even at the present time, there is ground for thinking that, in much of the higher philosophy of our own days, there are indications of a better attitude towards Christianity than there was even five years ago. See, for example, the concluding chapter of Fiske, "Cosmic Philosophy," vol. ii. p. 499 sq. (Lond. 1874). The writer of this able work is an earnest disciple and follower of Mr. Herbert Spencer. Compare the remarks of Mivart, "Contemporary Evolution," p. 161, sq. (Lond. 1876).

still more appalling. To be without God is death; but to live in a state of utter indifference as to whether He is, or is not, is verily, in the most inclusive sense of the words, not death only but corruption.

O Lord of love and mercy, for Christ's sake, give us faith, give us hope, but above all things give us that love which realizes Thee, and realizing, adores.

THE END.

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