

AN OLD RELIGION

A STUDY

BY

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J. C. F. GRUMBINE

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of
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TO

CLARA E. STOWELL

whose interest in my life and work has been a source

of joy, this book is lovingly dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION.

Mathew Arnold remarked that we cannot do without Christianity and yet we cannot endure it as it is. The Pauline, Calvinistic and anti-rational interpretations of Christianity are not as popular to-day as some are apt to imagine, yet they form a large percentage of what is commonly called Christian thought and Christian teaching. The author of this essay seeks to disarm tradition of authority and so far as it is possible to rescue Christianity from the perils to which it has for 1800 years been exposed. No method of exegesis or no new rationale of interpretation is employed. Supernatural Christianity has lost its hold upon thoughtful minds and everywhere, by the testimony of human experience, the proof is positive that the church as the palladium of anti-Christian doctrine or as the exponent of fetish revelations is her own destroyer.

We have had enough of the God that books have killed. We need and will have a God that theology cannot caricature, a moral law that cannot be relaxed, a church that will be

humanitarian. I have much sympathy for the so-called masses of our population who curse the church for her infidelity and perjury and who run after false gods, bend the knee to the mogul of finance, revel in sin, and, enthroning satan in their lives, sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. And I have much sympathy for that so-called select society to whose cold embrace so many worthy people clamor for privilege, that adores God as one may admire a painting, that libels him in life, and, like Fedora in Balzac's charming story, "The Magic Skin," gloats over broken hearts and ruined lives. They all are fulfilling their fate. Nor ought I to pass upon them any judgment. Let those who use theatrical piety, as spurious and common an article of trade as commercial and social etiquette, speak of its wearing qualities. Although, like the night, it hides many sins and crimes, it wears a dress most decolette at the heart and a mask most thin and transparent. I do not vindicate the action of that big majority of whom I spoke who, estranging themselves from religious organizations, bring up their children to shun the church as if she were a scorpion. Worldly as the church may be she is not altogether a blind leader of the blind nor does she seal her lips and close her eyes to the sufferings of society. She would do many things if she dared, and I

look anxiously for the hour when the church will disentangle herself from the world into whose meshes she has fallen as to champion anew man's inalienable rights and seek to do God's will and not her own.

The alarm is given for the old but ever new, the original or the natural religion which will vindicate itself, not by miracle or the gag law but by the reasonableness of its doctrine and the immaculate truthfulness of its requirements. The salvation of the church depends much upon the kind of religion she teaches. Her decay is assured when she loses confidence in God, respect for man's reason and ceases to be "the light of the world."

J. C. F. GRUMBINE.



PART I.

It is a significant proof of the widespread and far-reaching effects of free-thinking and liberal culture in America, England and Germany to find liberal Christianity winning favor among a people where false faiths and preternatural religious beliefs have found many enthusiastic apologists. Indeed, it may be taken as a startling announcement of the timeliness if not feasibility of the adoption of either a new Christianity or a rational generic religion by a people among whose institutions and in whose very civilization supernaturalism and the Christian mythology has nestled, when we find, as is actually the case, by statistics compiled by the New York Independent (Feb. 1888) that nearly three-fourths or 55,000,000 of the entire population of the United States is unchurched and in the doctrinal use of the word, unchristian, and but 19,000,000 of the possible 65,000,000 are

members of or attendants upon the regular services of the church. It is not, therefore, an encouraging sign of the success of the church, if her strength is to be estimated by numbers, to find after twenty centuries of experimental Christianity that so large a proportion of the people in the United States alone should seem and be so indifferent to the organized and working Christian church. And when it is remembered that there are less than 100,000,000 of alleged Christians in the world and 700,000,000 of believers in other and apparent equally supernatural religions, such as Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Brahmanism, Confucianism, Sintoism and Judaism, we are, on the one hand, more than alarmed over the future of the present church and, on the other hand, more convinced of the steady growth and practicability of natural religion. Perhaps the reason why such a book as "Robert Elsmere" was attacked on the one side of the Atlantic by Mr. Gladstone and on this side by Rev. Dr. McCosh, ex-president of Princeton College, is because through it Mrs. Humphrey Ward seeks to

show that Christianity is not all there is to religion, that it is local and exclusive and that at best it is but a feeble expression of the Eternal. "I see," says Robert Elsmere, "God's purposes in quite other proportions, as it were. Christianity seems to me something small and local. Behind it, around it, including it, I see the great drama of the world, sweeping on, led by God, from change to change, from act to act. It is not that Christianity is false but that it is only an imperfect reflection of a part of truth. Truth has never been, can never be, contained in any one creed or system." And to show how deeply rooted liberalism is in modern thought I need but instance the fact that despite the rather inadequate criticisms of these two eminent scholars this book has been swept on to popularity, its doctrine has everywhere been studied and accepted while the author has been received with joy as a voice crying in the wilderness "Prepare ye the way of the Eternal."

I shall give the reasons why I believe that the present faith is decaying and why the age

is ripe for the construction and reception of an old but new religious cult. In speaking of the decay of the present faith I shall confine myself to a brief discussion of first, the decay of ecclesiastical imperialism and second, the decay of biblical authority.

Relative to the Reformation ecclesiastical imperialism was a dominant factor in civilization. Literature was compelled to submit her manuscripts, science her knowledge, art her products and industry her triumphs to arrogant and petulant church rulers. During these periods blind credulity nestled in the church. Law stood for despotism, privilege for indulgence, heresy for persecution and martyrdom. Yoking herself to the state, the better by the union to gain universal prestige and authority, the church became an octopus, stifling civilization in the cradle, and smothering all fresh kindled reforms. With the audacity of Nero she cut her way into power by rapine, cruelty and murder, and with an alleged piety unparalleled for its hypocrisy and proverbial for its disimulation, she posed before

the world as the bride of Christ. At times weakened by internal dissensions or overwhelmed in peril by the signal victories of science, she whined at the feet of monarchs and made overtures to princes, the better by their influence to advance her kingdom. Failing to win power by intrigue she desperately warred against all opposers, and, in many instances where defeat threatened her purposes, she would play Iago to an emperor as treacherous and mercenary as herself. It was during the reign of Frederick II. (A. D. 1218-1250) that the papacy seated at Avignon in France received its first fatal blow. Schooled in the wisdom of the Arabians and favorably disposed toward Islam he sought to rationalize the government by essaying to abolish the temporal power of the pope and the dominance of the church. And he paved the way for the more successful attempts at reform, both in civil and religious affairs, which in the year A. D. 1384 were made by Wickliff and Huss, when the bible was first translated into English and the nefarious doctrines of absolution, monachism auricular

confession, celibacy, worship of saints and transubstantiation were vigorously opposed. Protected by military upstarts the church sought by means of the excommunication, the interdict and a crusade, to suppress heresy, to impeach and punish sovereigns and thus retain and fortify her power. With a grasping avarice unknown in the history of the most brutal and self-seeking kings, she confiscated property, seized vast estates, reared for her priesthood magnificent residences and overawed the world by the wonderful architecture and gorgeous appointments of her cathedrals. After lifting herself to an equality with kings she revelled in an extravagance and corruption which hastened her ruin. Irreligion among the mendicant orders, the carnival of immorality which characterized the life of the papacy at Avignon, the publication of heretical books, the effort made at the Council at Constance to convert the papal autocracy into a constitutional monarchy, which led to the brutal murder of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, the disorganization of the papacy itself, the infi-

delity of the Templars, all hastened the doom of the intellectual influence of the Italian system upon Europe. And despite the fact that supernaturalism, adulterated by all manner of of chimerical imagery, spread as a belief over credulous Europe, the intellectual impulse from the West and the reassertion of the moral influence from the North irresistably undermined and effectually crippled the Romish church. When at last experimental philosophy, like a frightened child, emerged from the darkness of this age of faith and maritime discoveries awoke continental Europe from its nightmare of religious folly, when the study of Greek literature and philosophy was resumed in Italy, and the rise of criticism threatened Latin ideas, when printing was invented and the pulpit was made secondary to knowledge as an authority, then the Reformation, like some crashing avalanche, came thundering down from the North upon the boastful and tottering institutions of mediaeval Europe.

As Protestantism swept over the continent ecclesiastical imperialism was weakened and

the authority of the church was abridged. Desperate but futile efforts to destroy the Reformation were made by the Jesuits, a fanatical order founded by Ignatius Layola A. D. 1540. The spirit of what seemed like freedom brooded over the monarchies of Europe and everywhere the Reformation became a flaming torch blazing in the midst of decaying institutions, a degenerating church and a demoralized humanity. Pale-faced skepticism stole forth from its hiding place and the angel of learning, like the sun, transfigured the world.

New forms of the old grievance and new methods of gaining power obtained even among the leaders of the Protestant movement. But its spirit was moderation, its aim was lofty and humanitarian. Whatever can be said against the Reformation it cannot be denied that it rescued the Western world from an ignominious death. Science slowly but steadily gained a foothold, multiplying her forces and becoming an acknowledged authority among dissenters. Yet she was suspiciously regarded by both the two church fac-

tions. Still she persevered, and at last, in the nineteenth century, after a long and bitter conflict with the church she was given the throne of sovereignty—at least she so thoroughly revolutionized the methods of religious thinking that she became a forcible and influential arbiter of truth. When science became the test of all knowledge and the state refused to be dictated to by the church ecclesiastical imperialism was at an end.

When the church lost her power over the world as the sole arbiter of human life then followed rapidly the impotency of all her important functions. All eyes were turned to the bible and it was read and studied with more than exceptional interest. As a result new creeds were formulated and a sturdy impetus was given to denominational Christianity. The old feud was now fought along new lines. As long as humanity was willing to be guided by a sectarian interpretation of the bible, or to accept without investigation the popular creed of Christendom, so long did the bible continue to be the undisputed word of God. But there came a crisis, to even the Protestant religion,

induced partly by polemical controversies, partly by idiotic adherence to false interpretations of the bible or pet presuppositions, and partly by a scathing denunciation of and an unbridled contempt for science and literary criticism.

The same irreconcilable differences which drove M. Renan from the Church of Rome led many others to repudiate all forms of organized Christianity and setting up cults of their own to indulge in all manner of speculation. True to reason, man has at last learned to seek God not in any single event of past history, as Mrs. Ward says, but in one's soul, in the constant verifications of experience, in the life of love. "All things change," she adds, "creeds, philosophies and outward systems but God remains." Inconsistencies of creed, unscientific views of religion, super-tendent or supernatural aspects of Christianity have long since proven to be inefficient in saving the world. Man seems to believe that much of the teaching of the church in contrary to nature, experience and to all rational ideas of religion. He has seen how through

an evolution of hardly 2000 the church has so multiplied her cults, so diversified her forms of organization, so complicated her methods of work and so deviated from primitive Christianity, that Jesus in the first and Christ in the nineteenth century stand for different ideas. Unwilling to become a doctrinarian without first investigating the grounds for belief in this or that form of the Christian religion man has pondered Christian evidences and Christian polemics to find that the text itself was so incomprehensible, the evidence so untrustworthy and polemical discussion so tempered by bias that a positive definition of Christianity could hardly be constructed. He must either accept the miracles and declare Jesus God, the supernatural and declare Christianity the revealed religion, or, repudiating the evidence of the supernatural as the data of the imagination or the incoherent testimony of tradition and excluding it from the forum of legitimate evidence, he must construct a new religion upon the basis of natural law, or accepting the human side of Christianity, he must be content with its mor-

als as its characteristic and worthy feature. In matters of intellect, says Professor Huxley, man should ever follow his reason as far as it will take him, without regard to any other consideration and further, that he should never declare conclusions certain which are not demonstrated or demonstrable. A religion which cannot stand this test or that must be studied by a set of mental faculties wholly different from those employed in all other provinces of intellect is a religion that is intangible to human nature, impracticable in experience and an imposition upon society. The *odium theologicum* and the general protest which accompanied the rise and progress of natural religion, even while all forms of supernaturalism swayed and enslaved human nature, was but the consequence of independent research, the declaration of the sovereignty of natural law and a fearless effort on the part of a few men, not to make Jesus anything less than what he was, or Christianity anything less than his work, or the work of man, but to emphasize all truth as scriptural, all knowledge as revelation, all morality as authoritative. It

was but the reaffirmation of the fact which was often forgotten and which can well account for the mythological character of much of Christianity, that all along the line of human life, as Darwin has somewhere hinted, and Draper has beautifully illustrated in his work on "The Intellectual Development of Europe," man has given to the world a constitution like himself. In a period of intellectual infancy his tendency was to superstition, in a period of experience, dimly guided by reason, it was to fetichism, polytheism or anthropomorphism, and in a period of life, in which man governs his human nature in accordance to the will of God, it is to theism. Granted, that all that there is for us to have as moral data or as ethics to guide us safely in this life, is as Robert Elsemere said to the workingmen of London, a belief in God, in conscience and in experience, a moral compass upon whose face the needle of the moral law vibrates in the direction of truth, love and justice, we shall not be left without what may be termed an authoritative religion. Through and by human nature comes the infallible code of moral laws,

as obligatory as any sinaitic revelation or the Christian beatitudes. This is a code of morality which man can use, a revelation which he needs to the exclusion and abandonment of what are the mere trappings of theology or the inarticulate utterances of a fetich past. We undervalue no experience of man, we extort from the past no false guarantees that what we think is truth. We demand of history no vindication of its own testimony, but we rightfully declare that we too can think, we too are receptive of divine truth, we too can frame our religion and declare a faith in God. Only say let *the dead past bury its dead*. A Buddhist or a Mohammedan, a Jewish or a Gentile bible is only valuable as it asserts, embodies or emphasizes divine law. We look upon all bibles as books of human experience whose testimony is only valuable to us as it voices the laws of our being and whose literature is no more sacred than the writings of Plato or the essays of Emerson. There will always be men idolatrous or ignorant enough to believe in mythology or in miracles in spite of the evidence of nature of the uniformity of her own

laws of causation. To such all reasoning is in vain. Our duty is not to distort history nor to disbelieve the past because past. It is not to put new wine into old bottles or reconstruct and revivify the dramatis personæ of bibles in accordance to the *Psarter Resartus* of society, but to call a spade a spade, and to show that the infallible bible of the universe is God's immutable laws. The error of the Church, which to some entent, has proven to be the error of mankind, is the thought that the revelation of our duty to one another and to God can only come through bibles or by the special fiat of God and when once given cannot be amended or revised. Like water, which is a composition of hydrogen and oxygen it will never change its constitution, but remain the immaculate word of God as water ever remains water. And as the procession of cause and effect moved down the ages there would be nothing new under the sun which might or could contradict or even supercede as authority what was or is revealed to man in bibles. Whereas on the contrary, the universe has heard from time immemorial the revelation of God and man

from infancy has been granted audience to his maker.

The doctrine of the verbal inspiration or the infallibility or the absolute completeness of the bible has long since been discarded as the puerile conception of half-witted Christian apologists and to-day when it said that the authority of the bible is decaying, it is to be understood that the bible is no longer the only record of experience. It is not meant that the book is immaculately truthful as a whole, but that in connection with much heterogeneous matter, it contains hints of the correct interpretation of our duty, of the moral law and of God's nature, so far as it goes and so far as it is possible for us to understand it. As in the Sierra Nevada Mountains much gold lies imbedded in the metamorphosed granitic rocks, so in the bible we can trace a vein of truth. We are realizing as never before that it is unnecessary for us to ask this man or that man what right is, or to go back two or five thousand years to Arabia, China, India and Palestine for our moral code, but that, following the law of our conscience and experience we will transcend

sin, and, with Jesus, receive upon our face the transfiguring light of the Over Soul. Thus is God near to man, always about him and God's law, the very condition of his safety. Although the authority of the bible decays he still discerns truth, he still feels the omnipresence of God, he still realizes the grandeur and use of the moral law and he understands with Emerson that the "Ought," that Duty is one thing with science, with beauty and with joy. Religion becomes to him not unimportant but as necessary as the very air he breathes or the food he eats or the water he drinks. No longer will man become a slave to a metaphysical word as Saint Augustine did—such as trinity, personality, God—but he will read the law of the universe in his experience, whatever it may be and find an authority for duty in reason and in conscience.

PART II.

The decay of biblical authority is so pronounced to-day that the Church is struggling hard to emphasize the authenticity and genuineness of supernatural Christianity by marshalling the best evidence of her apologists. She is seeking to destroy the effects of rational scholarship and scientific research by the re-assertion of her traditions. I have long since abandoned the idea that the present Church as organized, absorbed as she is in self aggrandizement, will ever accommodate herself to the spirit of the rising generation, because already in the civilized world the young life is becoming estranged from religious institutions and is attaching itself to the wild but very fascinating doctrines of materialism, utilitarianism and agnosticism. The Protestant and Catholic Church is pushing denominational propagandism into the regions of insanity, by advertising themselves to be most successful institutions, whereas in reality they have lost

their hold upon the masses and as Macaulay has well said, they, as special religious movements, reached their growth in the centuries in which they were born. I am not a pessimist, nor do I exaggerate facts. I believe in the office and work of the Church, the Church that is truly representative of the will of God, and it is on this account that I refuse to blind my eyes to the peril which besets her path. When so large a number of our American population, fully three-fourths, are unchurched, where we naturally expect to find but one-fourth, and where the latest year books of all denominations show a gain in membership by no means commensurate with the local and general increase in emigrant and native population, we have fears that something in the Church is wrong and ought to be remedied. And when the fact is added to this that not only idiocy, * insanity, * poverty, † drunkenness, ‡ mendicity and pauperism, but also crime§ and prostitution,§ are on the in-

*New York *Sun*.

†"Progress and Poverty," by Henry George.

‡The *Voice*.

§New York *Press*.

crease, and that the more intelligent classes produce the most cunning criminals, a terrible blow to our present system of education, and also that the carnival of sin now rampant in our great cities is receiving fresh recruits daily from the smaller towns and villages, it may well be asked what will the ministry say and the Church do.¶ And further, when it is known that the masses of our people are sinking deeper into the social sty by the curse of industrial slavery and into conditions and tendencies of living, from which there seems to be little hope of escape, and by which generations unborn will carry in their lives the evils of these dark days, we ought to be sufficiently alarmed over the grim evils, which breed like

¶Not long since I had occasion to make the following statement in the *Twentieth Century*: "With a population of about 75,000,000 in the United States hardly 20,000,000 are church members. Perhaps I should overstate the truth were I to put the actual number of church members in the United States at 15,000,000, for church reports as given in the year books of all denominations are, above all things, I fear, most misleading and unreliable. When arrogant church members become aware of the fact that hardly one-sixth of the reputed population of the civilized Western world is *churched*, and that the perils which beset the Church are not confined to the city, and that the Christianity of the Protestant and Catholic Church bears little if any resemblance to the religion of Jesus, whose appellation she assumes and whose doctrine she professes to accept and teach, then and not till, then will they awaken from their indifference to all alarm and be willing to accept some feasible remedy."

vermin in our midst.* I admit that the Church is not altogether to blame for this discouraging condition of things, yet I believe that crime could be checked, poverty and drunkenness abolished, insanity decreased, mendicity destroyed, and all other sins and wrongs modified, if not obliterated by the help of the Church. It is not that the Church is incapable

*[The following is authenticated and published by the *London Star*, and its unsuspected facts are but the echo of a similar condition of things in New York city, where, upon excellent authority, there are 32,390 tenements with a total population of 1,079,728 persons, of whom 142,519 are under five years of age]:

“There are three hundred thousand of the very poor in London. That is a normal state. These people are never properly housed, never properly fed, never properly rested. After they leave childhood they have no leisure. In the bad times they suffer actual starvation, relieved by the charity of their neighbors. Out of the half-million inhabitants of the Tower Hamlets nearly ninety thousand are too poor to live. Twenty shillings a week is an average wage. A fourth of this is spent in rent. At least 16s. 4d., as Mrs. Barnett shows, ought at the lowest figure to be spent on food. But if all that is spent, there is only 3s. 8d. for the rent, instead of 5s., and there is nothing—positively nothing—for coals, clothes, boots, club money, schooling, illnesseses. That is the normal condition, but loss of employment is always a factor with the unskilled laborer, who has often to fight a daily battle for his daily bread, and who—because there are more people in London every year, and the landlords take care that there shall be no more land—must, before he can even begin that struggle, pay a twenty-five per cent. premium to the land monopolist. This is the London of to-day. What may the London of to-morrow be—in a war, under new commercial conditions, such as may arise in the attempt to diminish the cost of production and enhance the price of the product—with less work for the laborer and more for him to pay for his bread, his salt and his coal? What a prospect is this that civilization offers its children!”

of doing this very thing, but seemingly unwilling—not that she lacks resources and backbone—but refuses to be guided by the right method of procedure.

The present Church, seeking to save man by saving his soul for the next world, is killing her influence in modern society. As an institution whose chief concern is the salvation of man through an ecclesiastical Christ, it is a failure. And as long as she continues to bolt against the natural method of living by trying to remake society after the plan of some hot headed theologian, she will accelerate her doom. Heaven and hell are no longer motives for right living among intelligent humanity. Vicarious atonement as a doctrine of Christianity is impotent and impracticable. The biblical cosmogony of the universe as a theory has long since been discarded as fallacious and unnatural. Biblical theology as a conglomeratıon of Christian and Judaistic apologetics is not the potent factor in the modern religious life of mankind. About historical Christianity as about the *Times'* building of New York city has been placed a

new structure of thought. The old forms, however, are lost in the new disguises and everywhere in the Church, a religion not of creed but of life, is gaining power and claiming attention. The Church is dangerously imperilled by platforms of belief, which among communicants and professing Christians, have become essential tests of character. A skepticism, more treacherous than the kiss of Judas, is betraying the church to the world, and, in the pew and pulpit, is carrying her immaculate Savior to a new crucifixion. Under false colors and, intrenched behind the preaching of the gospel of misunderstanding, the Church is rushing on like maddened Ophelia to her doom. Refusing to alter the doctrine, which, by the consensus of mankind is futile, and desperately bidding for notoriety and cheap favors to keep herself intact, the Church is playing the part of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with much brilliance but with no success. A grand ideal is rising up in the midst of what seems to be the Church's degeneration, and the age is boldly rewriting upon the walls of the temples her inevitable fate.

Truly the warning is pertinent, "Mene-mene-tekkel-upharsin."

The Church has reached the crisis in her history. As long as she refuses to be guided by reason, as long as she slights the claims and spirit of humanity and rejects the impulse and facts of modern science, as long as she fortifies herself by a testimony of history both traditionary and irrational, circumscribes her path by corrupt and unhallowed intrigues or maintains her authority by audacious claims upon society and by terrible declarations of her divine commission, as long as she refuses to believe and teach that God has ordered all things wisely, so long will she paralyze her activities, kill her influence in the world and fritter away her prestige. All effort to keep her intact as thus constituted, with heart gone and her whole nervous system paralyzed, will prove to be as useless a labor as trying to revive a corpse by applying an electrical battery. Many, in view of this fact have conscientiously sought to revalidate the office of the Church—at least they have labored to evolve a plan by which the Church might regain

the power she has lost and become what the founder intended, the palladium of humanity's rights—the custodian of justice and truth. They have courageously acknowledged that something must be done if the Church is to hold her own among the leading and legitimate institutions of the world, and, with no little care, they have advocated reforms and innovations, the object of which is the centralization of the religious forces, either about some present ecclesiastical organization, some common unit of belief or life, or some new cult. Whatever might be done in this direction would, it is said, prove to be helpful to the Church and result in her general acceptance by mankind. It is conceded that the Church is unchristian and aristocratic, exclusive and unpopular. To be a success is it necessary that the Church should be Christian, democratic, inclusive, popular? Is the Church a failure because she is neither Christian, democratic, inclusive, popular, or is she a failure because she has so diversified her forces and so divided her work that she has fostered sects and denominations at the risk of the vir-

tues; has thus condemned herself to the inevitable effects of bad management; has sacrificed life for creed and the end for which she was organized for denominational or sectarian supremacy? Or has she outgrown Christianity? Perhaps all these questions strike at the very root of the grievance. At any rate they involve the difficulties and touch upon the perils which circumscribe the life and work of the church.

Three theories are advanced by able churchmen as remedies for the existing state of things. I shall consider each theory in order and show how as remedies they are not only inefficient but inadequate.

CURRENT INEFFICIENT REMEDIES.

I. [Doctor Dix's theory of unity]. Rev. Doctor Morgan Dix, the eloquent rector of Trinity parish, New York city, in a recent sermon on the "Apostolic Succession" (and I call it Doctor Dix's theory simply because it is a representative one) maintained that the long-hoped-for reunion of the different sects of Protestantism was only possible by an acceptance of the doctrines of the Episcopal Com-

munion. And to illustrate how absolutely sectarian such a unified organization might be allow me to quote Doctor Dix's own words: "We believe that reunion is simply impossible except upon the apostolic platform, (which is a belief in the eternal God head of Christ, in the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the return to Judgment and the Apostolic order.) To come together after a denial of the fact and the doctrine of Apostolic succession would amount to a rejection of historic Christianity and the substitution of a modern system having for its chief feature complete indifference to positive truth and entire independence of authority, human and divine." His chief reason for believing that a Protestant union will be brought about in and by the Episcopal church is that she alone has the commission, she alone is the historic Christian church. Without entering into any discussion as to which church received the commission or which church is the Christian church let it be simply said in answer to Doctor Dix that there is every reason to believe that in the first place the apostolic

creed which he so ably magnifies as authoritative Christian teaching is ungentine as Mosheim proves and that the Christian church is not to be determined by any apostolic succession or commission, but by her works as Jesus said. It would be folly to ever expect a union of all the churches on a basis which he advances. For on the same ground one might seek to make an orange by combining, if possible, the characteristic parts of all other kinds of fruit.

What is here strongly urged and presented might in some form be made the plea of all Christian sects and denominations — the one having the most power standing the first chance of becoming the absorbent of all other religious organizations. For each denomination might, with considerable display of biblical evidence and by a presentation of proof texts, demonstrate that its doctrines are taught in the Bible;* or further, it might show by skillful interpretation of parts of the synoptics, by a distortion of the meaning of a chapter through a perversion of the mean-

*I here refer to any sect extant.

ing of passages, or by an allegorical and rationalistic † explanation of the miracles, that its creed is paralled in and vindicated by the Bible. And we may realize the force of this when we reflect that the various divisions of the Protestant and Catholic church all declare that what they teach as doctrine is really genuine Christianity, or has for its best apologist the Bible itself. Of the three hundred or more doctrines which seem to be described by the word Christian, few, if any, it is alleged, are foreign to the Bible. The question as to whether these doctrines are found in the Bible may be of little importance to one who rationalizes his experiences, and who attaches no more weight to the biblical books as testimony than he does to all literary memorials, yet the answer is of weight to those who still believe that the Bible is the immaculate word of God. For my own part, I am satisfied to know that even if the books of the Bible can be authenticated, and the writers ascribed proven to be the very ones

† This is done chiefly by the Unitarians, who follow Strauss and M. Renan in their views.

whose names they bear, yet we shall not have settled the fact of their genuineness, nor shall we have removed the most colossal difficulties in the way of their acceptance. Granted that it can be proved that the gospels were written either at the close of the first or the beginning of the second century, how much nearer are we by that fact to proving that the authors of the gospels were true historians, men unmoved by prejudice or influenced by circumstance? And hence it would be necessary to re-testify testimony. Indeed, in order to get at history proper, a testimony of testimony would have to be prepared. To settle this would have much to do with confirming any testimony man may have given, and, from an external point of view, of strengthening the evidence of the early fathers, concerning whom it is sometimes declared, and falsely, that they were unanimous in bearing witness to the authenticity and genuineness of the four gospels. It would indeed be the most exact, satisfactory, comprehensive vindication of all contemporaneous testimony. I do not say that

criticism grants us the right to allege that the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are unreliable, or that their qualifications were such as to unfit them for the work they performed. What I have no hesitancy in saying is that until evidence is marshalled to deny the above position, I have a right to refuse to accept the synoptics as the veritable life and work of Jesus. So far a man may be reasonable. Yet he may be reasonable in going still farther. He may, on the same ground, dismiss all doctrines of the Bible that appear to him to be inconsistent with any fair *rationale* of criticism, or that seem irrelevant to the natural explanation of the life of Jesus as incorrect historical testimony. Such a position is defended by the fact that the very material which the rationalist would exclude from legitimate evidence, aside from its being the mere mythology of the age or the prejudice of the writer, is extraordinary and supersensit datum, having no bearing in the laws of natural causation and being in reality a palpable trespass upon the uniformity of the order of the world's history. Aside from all this,

it is admitted by the most advanced schools of thought, in fact by such a critic as Mathew Arnold, that miracles or supernaturalism are no part of Christianity, and that if either once served as evidence, which is very doubtful, of a superhuman, supersentient and purely divine religion, they certainly are not valuable as evidence to-day, as Gregg admits in his "Creeds of Christendom." Even if such evidence were called for it would be useless in view of the fact that the very religion it seeks to define defines itself and is valid without it. So that all doctrines based upon that element of the Bible will not only receive no authority, but appeal to improbability or imagination.

Hence Doctor Dix' theory becomes of no value, not through any support it may obtain from the Bible, but altogether because other denominations, exclusive of his own, make claims upon the Bible as valid as those which he champions. And they refuse to sacrifice name, distinctive sectarianism and other characteristics for what might easily be termed a "difference without a distinction."

2. [Rev. James Wasson's theory.] We come now to a more telling question which, if rightly answered, will define the attitude of the church toward the world and her relation to her sister organizations when we inquire whether a Protestant union is possible and practical on an evangelical basis.

A writer (Rev. James B. Wasson) in the May number of the *Andover Review* of 1888 in his article, "Is Protestant Union Possible," while he courageously affirms that "The folly and uselessness of sectarianism are becoming more apparent every day," and that "almost unconsciously to themselves the churches are finding the least common multiple of their dogmatic creeds, and are exhibiting this common multiple instead of their own special creed as the highest outlook of modern Christianity"—he yet seems to believe that "If the whole of Protestantism to-day, by some strange revolution of thought, were suddenly to become Episcopal, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Congregational, Protestantism itself as a whole would

not be essentially different in character, aim and spirit from what it is now." Protestantism as representative orthodoxy might be as he says. And yet by a rare inconsistency native to those who attempt to reconcile the opposite poles of religious thought, and make Calvinism appear on friendly philosophical terms with a broad and inclusive creed, he says in criticism of the recent scheme proposed by the Episcopal House of Bishops to bring about unity in the church, that every effort put forth by a division of the Christian church to monopolize Christianity will result in failure, and that the future church will not be the exact pattern of any church of to-day but will be the orderly and natural development of its aggregate Christianity, and will be built more upon the good that each may now possess and less upon the bad features which are so universally cherished. I declare frankly that in my judgment to unite the Protestant denominations and yet not materially change the character, aim and spirit of Protestantism is to foster a pious fraud and uphold what would prove to be as

imperial an institution as was ever contemplated in the archives of mediæval Catholicism. It would give to one organization an unbridled privilege not only to coerce a majority of constituents to become the tool and sceptre of denominational infallibility, but to bring about a corruption perhaps only second to that which preceded the decline of the Romish Church in the Sixteenth century. But this we have not to fear for such an alliance although possible will not be feasible, and, if not practical, the movement toward the institution of such an alliance will never be popular or aggressive.

The question is not whether the church ought to be Baptist, Unitarian, Episcopal or Congregational, but whether it should be what its founder designed, or if not that, whether it should not be humanitarian, emphasizing the deed more than the word and life rather than creed. It is not whether the Bible says this or that, but whether man is not more important than a theological controversy, and whether his salvation or happiness is not more needful than the discussion of

Christian polemics. If the churches of the kind we spoke cannot Christianize the very world over which its creed dominates and its denomination rules, a world in which the arts, sciences and industries flourish while the souls of men are largely lost, if as organized they do not raise their voice against the wholesale legalized sins of society, what will we expect when all are arrayed under one evangelical head, having the same creed and the same aims? I do not seek to discourage any efforts that other denominations may make in this direction, but I simply give it as my opinion that unity is not what the evangelical church needs so much as a more rational creed and a crushing of the spirit of caste which is common in all churches of every denomination. If an alliance could be organized where truth would be sought and advocated, and where no dogmatic tests would be applied to condition or define man's character, then a great work could be done which would make the new results of church labor when compared with the present appear as "ossa to a

wart." I sometimes fear that the effort which will be made to unite churches and amalgamate denominations will be in its nature a compromise, by no means acceptable to a large and worthy class of ethical leaders. For then we shall have in a unit what now we have in parts with no especial advance toward the reign of love and fraternity in society. Instead of having many enemies in the household, we shall have a few whose strength will be increased by accumulation, as Samson's strength was increased by the profuse growth of his locks.

Under this head there is still another difficulty in the way of Protestant unity, viz., denominational propagandism. The church seems more anxious that man should accept her creed than live the simple life of honesty, more anxious that he should subscribe to her social organization than act the law of love. Each denomination seems to be alert and working for prejudices, and hence so much pride and egotism is wrapped up in religious organizations that truth must go abegging for disciples. Then, again, the

church seeks to popularize the doctrine that although virtue is its own reward, yet a moral life alone is not a Christian life, that a man may be honest and just here, but yet may be lost so far as the hereafter is concerned, that God is not omnipresent or imminent in the every act of his children. Hence false lives, like false faces, are seen everywhere in society. Hence a great many, like Catherine Leyburn in Mrs. Ward's famous novel, are conscientious wives, sympathetic neighbors, dutiful parents for Christ's sake or the reward of heaven. The Pharasaic life of Newcome, which has in it much of the pulse of modern Christianity, made Robert Elsmere affirm that could he but see life and God for one hour as Newcome saw them, he would cease to be a Christian in the next. It is true that much of the Christian ministry is broad-spirited and humanitarian, but it is compelled to abide within the limitations of a fossilized creed and is not, always, in fact is rarely at liberty to preach the gospel of the order of the universe.

3. [The Liberal's theory.] Since it

is impossible to get the church as a corporate body to unite upon an intellectual platform of belief, why, says the liberal, could she not unite in emphasizing the moral side to the religion of Jesus? Lyman Abbott, in a terse and forcible article on the "Unsettled Questions of Theology," maintains that the great religious question centres about three words, the "Bible, redemption and God." While I believe this to be true in part, I yet believe that the great religious question should centre about the word *happiness*.* It is the most plausible feature of this theory that on *a priori* grounds it seems very feasible. For in its defense it may be argued that a man might believe in fetichism, polytheism, mythology, theism, with or without anthropomorphic habiliment, or the most ultra atheism, and yet act morally—live the doctrine of the moral law—and although refusing to accept what Dean Stanley said of the Sinaitic revelation †

*Note 5.

† In speaking of the old stone tables of law, he said, they "represent to us the granite foundation on which the world is built up, without which all theories of religion are but as shifting and fleeting clouds; they give us two homely

he may in his life incorporate as a law of conduct its essential commandments; or a man may disbelieve the miracles of the Bible, thus denying and repudiating all forms of supernaturalism, and yet so far as his character is concerned live a happy life. It is, indeed, one of the stupid and most audacious claims of the religious pedant that a profession of faith of some sort is absolutely essential to the life of mankind. In one sense, indeed, this is true, yet the church is rather justifying the man who leads a natural life, whether he believes or disbelieves her doctrines, and is specifying those who are usually classified as agnostics, infidels and atheists as exemplary Christians by their life. In the church, as well as in the world, the parable of the good Samaritan is becoming a fact of common occurrence, thus illustrating the relation of Christian to Christian, in spite of belief, and the contact and co-operation of all classes of people on a common basis of morals. It is, therefore, asserted that the

fundamental laws which all subsequent revelation has but confirmed and sanctified—the law of our duty toward God and the law of our duty toward our neighbor.”

Christian church may become a unit on the moral side of Christianity, if she were willing to discard what may seem to be the present cause of her multiplicity and division of organization. Perhaps no union, if effected, would bring about more beneficent results to the world than the unity of the church upon the basis proposed by the liberal. It certainly would divert the eye of man from what is of the future or the next world to what is here of this world, and it would make man's life not only expressive of the Golden Rule, and an illustration of the fact that while we are on this earth our duty is here, but give religion the *laissez-faire* of growth, and allow all things to take their place and have their way as God designed.

Beautiful and efficient as this theory is, it must be dismissed as impracticable. The question is, will the church allow her distinctive doctrinal differences to be thrown aside for the formation of an ecclesiastical fusion by which the ethical side to Christianity alone will receive emphasis? Will she consent to abolish name and polity for spirit and aim?

Will she be ready to teach pure morals free of Christian dogmatism? It is becoming to be one of the most common yet serious facts of the closing years of this Nineteenth century that the principle of centralization which this very theory points to, which a denomination illustrates, and which has ever proven in the Greek and Latin church to be a mighty power for the operation of ecclesiastical law, especially during the periods of reconstruction, when the new faith and the old came into bitter antagonism, and when, as is natural, man will make significant departures from old beliefs and do what his conscience or his genius will direct him to do, has made and is making the body appear more important than the spirit, the organization more valuable than the principle, and a denomination more useful than the life it represented or represents. Every effort made in the direction of a unity of the church upon an ethical Christian basis will be thwarted as long as the Bible continues to be a fetich, and Christianity is neither accepted nor rejected as a fact of nature. A unity of all Protestant evangelical churches

might more easily be effected on this basis than a unity of Protestant liberal with Catholic and Protestant evangelical churches, and yet even such a unity might hardly survive its birth. For methods of work would involve changes in the whole structure of the unified church which would result in the abandonment of the scheme before it had become an applied experiment. Even if it should be allowed that the church as organized might so remain as long as she combined her foci of energies upon the purification of the world by an emphasis of the morals of Christianity, it would be more than doubtful whether the world would really be the happier for such a union. It would, as a movement, exhibit on its very face an hypocrisy of character that would handicap the work, jeopardize the cause and make the church less popular than she is. It would forcibly illustrate the unwillingness of the church to drop names, all sectarian spirit and that detestable egotism by which men are judged, and come out boldly as one body and one life for the end in view. And whatever might be said in defense of such

a union this one terrible defect would tend to make the church a laughing stock before the world.

To effect such a unity it would not only require an immediate and miraculous education of those who compose the church, but a shifting of modes and motives of living which, if attempted, would precipitate the church into worse perils than those which she seeks to avoid. It would compel her to abandon Christianity as a religion and accept what it now vigorously opposes — natural religion. The ethical theory presupposes an almost ideal or highly cultivated state of man — a state in which man's egotism shrinks into nothingness — which, by some, is said to account for the partial unpopularity of the theory. It savors, it is alleged, too strongly of rationalism ! It tends to abolish all that goes to make Christianity a superior and an exceptional religion, and it rushes man into positions where a belief in supernaturalism become the *coup de grace* of human folly. To be sure it would put an end to the polemical controversies which for 1800 years have eclipsed religion, yet many

believe that it is a dangerous expedient — a compromise which may jeopardize the usefulness of the Christian church.

The fact is plainly this, the church is unwilling to surrender what she considers an essential feature of her mission — the saving of the world by a word or a proposition, or what not — by anything except God's method.

PART III.

What can or will be done? Obviously nothing by those whose prejudice exalts ignorance into some peculiar kind of a cultus! Nor will anything be done by those who glorify their own judgments and deify their own egotism. It is not my place to utter a prophesy, which, like that of Cassandre, will have the benefit of disbelief. The question, however, may here be asked, might not a church arise that will go the full circle of truth, that will convince men of the fact that the universe is right, that will revivify what will yet be considered the chief and humble attitude of man to man, the attitude which was so beautifully exhibited in Jesus, "the judge not at all," and that will show that love, and love alone is the highest and most divine quality of life? From the lower to the higher types of being, the growth in the direction of love is most manifest. Where true wisdom predominates there love altogether abounds.

What is Christianity but an attempt to explain the *method* of the universe? Can the church — can man himself have a higher destiny than that which is the incarnation of this method? And is not this method altogether described and limited by the word love? In terms which are easily understood, might one not hope that the hour is drawing near when man will be called “God intoxicated,” as Spinoza was defined, when no one will judge his brother, when the life of humanity will be ameliorated by the idea that the universe is right, when the thought of Sterne, that “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” will have an equal application to all life because God is all in all. A church then that will explain to man the method of the universe at all events that will show how all of man’s experiences, whether of pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, are ordered of God,* and that he can, because God so wills it, move in the direction of least resistance and greatest pleasure or in the way of great resistance and bitter pain, and that whether he be in hell or

*Note 3.

heaven, so called, it is the advantage of life, that will not exalt her egotism into a standard of morality by which man is accounted good or bad, but leave the vilest sinner to the mercy of God or be God to him, such a church will draw all men to her because no one could resist such ravishing love, no one could withdraw from such divine presence. So far as our knowledge of human nature goes we learn that no one is free willed and yet we know that we act always in the direction of what we think is our highest happiness.† For example were I to offer to a thousand people the choice of taking a five or ten cent piece from my hand I could easily determine which one they would take. It would most certainly be the ten cent piece. Nor is this what is commonly called selfishness. Rather is it the law of God—a part of our mechanism. And yet the taking of the five cents might have brought to them all the very happiness which they missed by taking the ten cents. Nor is this strange. We vibrate between ideas that bring us pain and pleasure, (which by some, chiefly Hegelians,

†Note 4.

is considered one and the same thing), and we act when moved by wisdom and love in a manner that results in joy. Why is it, I may ask for the sake of argument, hypothetical as it may be, that I go to one church rather than to another—prefer to choose certain men and women for friends and reject others—eat a sour apple rather than a sweet one—elect an agitated, social to a quiet, solitary and dreary life? It is because I think, or rather because I know, that my fate or my highest happiness is thus assured. When I see a blind man on the street why is it that I unconsciously am moved to pity, and to benevolence? Mainly and altogether because if I did not seem to help him by my pity or money I should be very miserable, and yet, as I have often afterward discovered, my pity and money were put to the worst possible use. Yet I could not at the time help myself. This experience was as much an integral part of my life as the lily of the valley is a part of the universe. What the Church or what ethical philosophers have usually called interested and disinterested affection are produced by one and the same

motive. Having abundance I cannot understand, or I am not made so that I can understand that giving a dollar to a needy person will bring me pleasure, so I keep my money for my own enjoyment. On the other hand, having money I can see, or I am made so that I can see, how giving a dollar to a needy person will make me happy, so I send forth my money for my own enjoyment. The one is called interested, the other disinterested affection, and yet they are prompted by self-interest, or the desire to procure happiness. The man who practices the one may not be as helpful to his fellowmen as the one who practises the other, yet the latter should not sit in judgment upon the former. Perhaps, some one right here might say: "If this is true then why not use all of our money upon self? By charity we thought that we were practising religion. The thought is but a play upon words as empty of substance as a shadow. If such actions are not built upon the facts of the universe, if they are not the result of man's mechanism, then wisdom is a blind leader of the blind. We act as we are made

and we can no more choose to do otherwise than can a negro elect to become white. Nor does a man give charity for any other reason, if he will stop to consider, than for his happiness. If he were not charitably disposed he would be most miserable, and he loves to assist the unfortunate because he cannot help himself.* Here it would not be impertinent to remark that ideas are the breeders of sentiments and sentiments are the precursors of all manner of calamity. True ideas are what we are all in need of—at least some of us—whereby our harmony with God can be restored or acquired.

The old religion then of which I speak is the religion which, although old, is ever new, although ancient is ever modern, although natural is yet revealed, although past is yet present. It is the light that dispels the darkness. It is the compass whose needle points us to God. It is that which outlives dogmatism, sectarianism, sophistry, egotism, theology and which no one mind can exhaust nor monopolize, as no one brook can mirror all the

*Note 5.

stars, and which is the very substance of what is commonly defined as Christianity. I lay no especial emphasis upon the name. Names are at best but feeble expressions of realities. What is gravity but a name of something we cannot describe? Religion as here used is thus but a name for the same thing which gravity fails to define. The thing itself is God, so much we know. God is the alpha and the omega.

How, it may be asked, will one go to work reforming the world? What can or should we do? It must be said in answer to these inquiries that the world does not need reforming. The universe is all right. *Our egotism makes it wrong.* If as it can be shown man's greatest happiness lies in the direction of broadest love—in the very gravity of love itself, then unconsciously and irresistibly he will seek to give his brother the harmony he possesses. It will be his greatest pleasure, indeed, his only aim in life to help man to be happy. What the Church has been teaching for nearly 1800 years is the gospel of misunderstanding, by which each man is trying to

mould the other into one or the same type of being, to make other men get happiness as he gets it. The universe, yes, God himself is for the time eclipsed by human egotism.

Four things the Church may well afford to emphasize and they are briefly these:

1. The universe is right.
2. Trust in God.
3. The Gospel of love.
4. Judge not at all.

It is needless to say that such doctrine would bring harmony more completely to men, and if lived give men the happiness they covet. For if it be true, as I have no hesitancy in believing that love always brings us our deepest joy, then our fate must be in the acceptance of love, for God is love. Love and the issue of things always go together. "It is so," said Mathew Arnold, "and this is what makes the spectacle of human affairs so edifying and so sublime. The world goes on, nations and men arrive and depart with varying fortune, as it appears, with time and chance happening unto all. Look a little deeper, and you will see that one strain

runs through it all; nations and men, whoever is shipwrecked is shipwrecked on *conduct*. It is the God of Israel steadily and irresistibly asserting himself,—*the Eternal that loveth righteousness.*"

If a religion or system of morals had never been formulated man would not be without a method of life. We ourselves are our best and most efficient bibles. No evidence of historical testimony about the way of life is quite as important as our own experience. Given a universe in which man is destined to acquire his highest good, how can anything be a better means to the end than conduct or experience? Man is seeking his highest enjoyment so far as he dares and whether he takes the path of least or greatest resistance he will always tend toward his own harmony and gravitate toward his highest good. How may we know our highest good is a question which can easily be answered. Our highest good is always determined by our perfect happiness. For both are interdependent. The person who moves in the path of greatest pain knows that another path if obtainable would

be more satisfying. And so he will tend toward the path of greatest happiness forever and ever, until unconsciously, perhaps, the highest good or supreme love or grace or wisdom will be to him the way of his destiny. That men will persuade each other to come where full and perfect enjoyment can be found is possible, because their sympathetic relation bids them to alleviate suffering and ameliorate the condition of those who have been led into the path of misery. And they would be unhappy would they not do this. It is their mechanism. It is, therefore, of indifferent interest whether society or the Church exalts into a cultus the mechanism or gravity of the members and declare it to be the infallible creed of conduct provided the members obtain thereby their highest happiness, cease to judge the motives of their neighbor, announce that the universe is right.

A man may disbelieve the bible as the Church interprets it, he may repudiate the idea of redemption, he may know nothing of God except the fact that he is his child, or that which he may reason out by his faculties in

the work of self-apprehension, but he can and must have complete confidence in God in spite of himself. The Church is or should be organized to benefit man, to elevate society, to purify the state, to adorn a civilization along the line of love and fraternity. She was not founded, as I understand it, to be a constructive civil power, organized to build a kingdom within a kingdom or to become a great and powerful autocracy as she undoubtedly became in the middle ages, nor to become what might easily be termed a separate institution whose sole object of existence might be parasitic, although all these experiences have seemed to be a part of her destiny, but she was founded to persuade man to God's will. It should have been regarded as a matter of little concern whether year after year she counted her spoils as a pious nun counts her beads, or as a merchant figures up his profits, and it should have been considered a sure indication of her usefulness if year after year, not by statistics alone, but by the reign of wisdom, man was shown to be no longer a slave to his baser nature.

In view of the fact that I seek to build a church upon this method, or effect a union of the Church upon what may be called a strictly natural basis, the question will be asked—"If this method is to be our guide what authority will we have for our morals?" What matters it whether we have any demonstrative authority whatever, so long as the method is imperial and God sovereign. Men said that Jesus discovered a new religion in the sense that one discovers a continent or a star. He simply discovered the method of the universe—a method by which we perform God's will. He saw how we were as fated as a tree, blessed with the idea of doing what we like, while all the while we were fulfilling the order of his providence. And it was on this account that he seemed to be a great philosopher in that he refused to ascribe to himself a glory for self-righteousness and condemn another for what the Church has ignorantly called a sin. To God we do what we cannot help—we love or hate, if you please, because either act proves to be a part of our fate. If a man's sympathetic relation is so strong that he irresist-

ibly rushes into acts of benevolence, why should he say "I am thereby better than the man whose malevolence is his mechanism?" Neither of them are accountable so to speak! Hence the egotism of the Church, of moralists and theologians, in popularizing the doctrine that some men are holier than others. I am not here defending a man who commits crime. I am simply not judging him. Who knows but that the criminal by his crime has apprehended the method of the universe? I agree with my critic that the end seems to cruelly justify the means but in what other way, pray, and by what other means could the end have been reached? It might have been reached in other ways, perhaps, but the man who is wild enough to commit crime can reach God in no other way. This is so because it *is* so. It may seem to some that God is cruel to allow men to plunge headlong into peril, drink deep of the bitterness of sophistry, go as did the prodigal to the very depth of misery and despair and yet if men must be led aright by no other means, if they are so constituted as to reject grace or refuse wisdom what other alternative

can there be? Just such experiences are the wisest provisions for bringing man to himself. They point

“Towards some infinite depth of love and sweetness,
Bearing onward man's reluctant soul.”

It was ignorance that led Byron to exalt wantonness into an horrible cultus by which he frittered away his life; and it was ignorance which not only led Paracelsus to die a drunkard on a tavern floor, but Napoleon Bonaparte to leap from the edge of a sword into a fool's paradise. And yet I have confidence in the order of the universe by which love is vindicated and God's law glorified even by the depth of misery into which genius plunges or the terrible catastrophe of a planet. Such events may seem inexplicable, but can the issue be a matter of conjecture?

But, says one, we should do right because the bible says so. It is reasonable to suppose that many men will be influenced by books. If you discard the bible I fear says another that we shall have no authority for the very method of which you speak. Let us see. Without entering into any logical extensions, I might answer this last statement by saying

we cannot escape our limitations, we cannot do altogether as we sometimes might like, we cannot essay to control God. "Who by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature," said Jesus. There may, on the other hand, be two reasons why a thing is right. One is because it is right—that is because it is the law of God. The other is because it is rational. It is rational to obey the law of God, and whatever is rational is right. The moral law (and by this I refer exactly to the method of which I spoke) the law by which we measure our highest joy, and not the law by which I have a right to impute anyone in sin is a part of the law of our being. It is that part of the gravity of the universe by which men have been able to discern their limitations. But as popularly interpreted it is the yard-stick of character. Could we conceive of anything as more ridiculous than this? Could we devise a more shocking travesty on the goodness of God?

Were the church to work along the four lines already mentioned it could no longer be

said by C. M. Morse, as was said in the *Forum** It is one of the most deplorable facts of modern history that the church should have fallen so far from its purpose that a prominent clergyman could say without fear of contradiction that Christianity bears no particular relation to the religion of Jesus, that doctrinally it is of Paul and the other theologians and that socially it is of the earth, earthly. It is true that the fashionable church is a natural product of the present social system as in the mission chapel, the pawn shop, the palace and the tenement. The reason why in our city churches we often find the rich absent when the poor predominate and the poor absent when the rich predominate is because social caste tyrannizes over American society. Christianity ought to be "a furnace to fuse all elements into a homogeneous mass," to make a reality the fact that we are all children of the same God, to certify by law as well as in character that we are the sovereigns of the earth. The church that will work along this

* "We have a moneyed aristocracy, a political dictatorship, landed proprietors, a rapidly increasing tenant population, the 'working man' and the tramp."

line will bring the great mass of the people up into the law of love and God.* N. P. Gilman in his recent work on "Profit Sharing" believes that the brightest day man may ever see will break over the world when the spirit of the gospel enlightens economic science and when pure Christianity to which Leclaire gave expression in his last will and testament is the strongest force making for industrial and social progress. When man discovers and puts in practice, as Macauley wrote of Fénélon, "those principles which it now seems impossible to miss—that the many are not made for the use of one; that the truly good government is not that which concentrates magnificence in a court, but that which diffuses happiness among a people," then the pulpit can well afford to be missed. In 1840, when William E. Channing gave his famous lectures to the mechanics of Boston on "The Elevation of the Laboring Classes," he said that the very first object of society is to give incitement and means of progress to all its members—to bring about

* Note 6.

the triumph of men's spiritual over their outward and material interests. "What avails it," he asks, "that a man has studied ever so minutely the histories of Greece and Rome, if the great ideas of freedom and beauty and valor and spiritual energy have not been kindled by these records into living fires in his soul." And likewise the question may be asked what avails it if while the church prospers in our midst man continues to be lost to himself and society to be honey-combed with all manner of misery. It might easily be conceived that such ideas tend to deepen rather than lessen the discontent in our midst, that they smack of revolution, that they deal with difficulties too deeply rooted in the common interests and laws of mankind to ever be removed. Be this as it may, the time is ripe for action. We have had enough of political effervescence, of rosewater religion, of politico-economic diletteism, of wide-mouthed ranting over the falsehood that the American government is one "of the people, for the people and by the people" when it is a fact, (which, as Bishop Potter recently remarked

is so wide-known that it seems grotesque even to speak of it), that since the dawn of our freedom as a nation we have drifted politically into all manner of corruptions, have generated senates of millionaires who purchase their seats and legislate for the interest of the favored class, have done away altogether with Jeffersonian democracy, have made government a machine operative in the interest of a growing aristocracy, have made elections subserve the base designs of office-seekers and the system of spoliation, and have introduced to the world a condition of things in which it could be said that the courts, the police, the army, the church, all exist to defend and justify a system of living where the many are the slaves of the mighty and where oppression, poverty and crime threaten to destroy the commonwealth. Such a condition of things would disappear before the love of God if men would cease to be moved by false judgments and act so far as it is possible in the direction of fraternity. Such misery as infests the world would no longer exist if man would not allow his egotism to lead

him into the very hell of conduct. In this age who of the Platonic school that mused over the dream of their master's Republic or who of the disciples of Jesus that hung upon the ravishing beauty of that kingdom which was to develop in the earth by the fraternal spirit of God's children, would ever have thought that an era in civilization would come when men's prejudice would turn a paradise into an hell and distort for self-aggrandizement the richest heritage of morals that man may ever possess—the law of love? We may be better circumstanced than the generations of the past and blest beyond the prophesies of the bible and yet men are not fraternal. And after 1800 years of experimental religion it is but an insult to the founder of Chistianity to say that we have lived and we do live the golden rule. To our regret, and in justice to Jesus, it must be said that the golden rule has not been applied to government, nor has it been carried very far into what are termed the morals of society.

The silence of the church in view of this fact is her own reprobation. She must speak

the truth or like many other corporate institutions be buried in the grave dug by her own hands and sink into moral obloquy and oblivion.

Man asks for or needs at this hour no other religion than Christianity naturalized or one in which truth is glorified. Indeed the church should not attempt the hard task of serving God and Mammon, but accepting wisdom as her most trustworthy revelation she should strike out upon a track worthy of her aims. The church should make no compromise with the world to gain its support, an error of which the present church is guilty, nor should she appeal to sensationalism to fill the pews or popularize the pulpit, although to do so in this age seems to be a means of carrying truth home to the masses. She should accept as her cult a creed more inclusive than Galilean and historical Christianity, never, however, outgrowing the ideal example of the Nazarene. She should not be Christian in the very exclusive sense but Christian if the method of Jesus accords with God's law. She should emphasize truth wherever found and

preach it free of denominational fetters. She should work not only with the eddies of the great sea of trouble but, as one of our own writers has aptly said, she should cause the storms, though grand to cease, that the sea might show the stars. She should be catholic in the broadest sense and foremost in all righteous movements. She should not, necessarily, labor to have all the religious forces centre into one common institution, becoming thereby an ecclesiastical octopus, crushing and destroying the liberties of man, yet she should be comprehensive, positive, aggressive and democratic. The church might be denominational but only so to perpetuate her independence and liberty and not to become boastful and imperial. She ought to give a scholarly and rational interpretation of the manifold bibles of the world and seek to impress upon men the fact that human life is broader than any creed, religion more inclusive than any "ism," that it is the very will of God. I know that an immense amount of good is being done by the church to-day, but as Emile de Laveleye has well said, "There

is in human affairs one order which is the best; that order is not always the one which exists; but it is the order which should exist for the greatest good of humanity," and I believe that our duty is to establish the church which shall exist for the greatest good of humanity. The time was never more opportune—the need was never more pressing. To use the allegorical language of John, the church of which we speak, emblematic of the beautiful woman clothed with the sun that retreated into the wilderness to escape the ravages of the monster dragon whose slimy tail drew the third part of the heaven, will receive the help of the earth, and recovering strength will blot from out the face of time the scourge and leprosy of egotism.

The old faith has long ago decayed and, like some weather-beaten and dead tree, it stands as a useless monument of a great religious past. At the base of this tree are the feeble yet promising sprouts of a more glorious faith. The very elements and conditions which killed the old are the elements and conditions which feed the new. And by-

and-bye in its own season will this new faith mark man's triumphant unity with his God and his complete mastery of himself. In this new faith Jesus is restored to the world as he was before "credulous love, Jewish tradition and Greek subtlety had at once dimmed and glorified the truth." Religion has been made natural. It has been placed upon the "rock" and not upon the ever-shifting sand, upon the law of the universe, and not upon what is and will yet come to be preposterous and stupendous imagery. The church will do well if she accepts as her alternative this religious cult as the means to the end for which she was instituted, work courageously to elevate man by natural methods, rely wholly upon a *rationale* of judgment which wisdom gives and not seek the living among the dead. So the torch of God will pass on its way, hand reaching out to hand.



NOTE I.

The following forcible utterance appeared in the *New York Sun* of March 4, 1889. It is well worth reading as showing how a Bishop of the American Episcopal Church speaks of the peril which besets the Church:

“Bishop Huntington to-day was asked by a *SUN* correspondent for an elaboration of his views on this subject.

‘My views,’ he said, ‘have never been concealed, and I am entirely willing to state them to the public at any time and in any form. That commercial forces are pushing their way into the Church is very obvious. This is seen repeatedly in the election of vestrymen. Spirituality seems often no longer the test of a church official; business success, high social position, shrewdness in the conduct of affairs are coming to be considered the more important qualifications for a good vestryman or trustee. I do not refer to the Episcopal Church alone, but to churches in general. The man poor in spirit, but rich commercially, is preferred as a church officer to the man poor in worldly goods though rich spiritually. There are numerous instances daily before our eyes of men holding high places as church officials who would not hold such high position were spirituality the test of office.

This commercial tendency is also obvious in the pew renting. The rich occupy the choice places, while the poor must sit in the obscure, out-of-the-way corners. The Church becomes a club house, and this amounts in cases to the exclusion of the poor. If the Church was to be merely a means of providing comfortable incomes for Sunday orators and cozy seats for wealthy listeners, the pew-renting system might be a success. But as the Church is for a common salvation of rich and poor alike, no system that shuts out the poor or puts the rich into a fashionable house, with a saint’s name, at one end of the

town and the poor into a bare chapel by themselves at the other end, can ever be a system that God will prosper. There is all that class of persons who in this generation are servants and laborers, but whose children in the next generation will be the lords and ladies of the land, all of whom, under the pew system, are just as completely and effectually excluded from the house of God as though it were written upon the door, 'No admittance for servants and laborers here.' The system virtually cuts off from the sound of the gospel and from all heavenly helps of the Church a portion of every population. It is well nigh impossible, with the commercial influence to the front, with property as the controlling element, that the spiritual interest should not suffer. The question how costly a pew or how high a tax the parishioner can afford will obscure very often those simple merits of a meek and lowly heart. If it could be known openly in how many parishes at this moment some influential and managing men are secretly discussing the question of how they shall contrive to get rid of the minister they have, because he is not paying well in pew rents, or how they shall find one that will do that, an appeal of alarm would arise to the ears of God.

I have long been an advocate of the free church system. I don't believe men should own the Church at all. It should be as free as the winds of heaven. The Church is not here on sale. It is a gift. It should be such that people of every nationality, every race, every color, every condition, would be welcome. The doors should be open wide. No one should be excluded by class or social distinctions.

Cathedrals built as an investment in real estate or to give distinction to the city, instead of being built for the worshippers, is another instance of the commercial influence. Another commercial intrusion is the elaborate and costly church or ecclesiastical singing.

The intrusion of politics into the Church is not seen perhaps in any rivalry of the opposite political parties to gain control of the Church, but I know of cases where rich parishioners have endeavored to influence the politics of their cler-

gymen, and, not only that, but when displeased would even by withdrawing some of their customary support render the situation most embarrassing. I fear it is true, too, that rich parishioners do not disdain to influence the political course of their employees, operatives, or clerks, and even the poorer members of the church.

Contributions to high and sacred undertakings are not meant to be wrung out of people's fingers by rhetoric and declamation, by agents, by fairs and lotteries, by a sense of respectability, or by amiable deference to the pastor's expostulations. The commercial influence shows its predominance in this direction also. In prosperous times like ours, and in affluent communities, antichrist goes himself to church, patronizes preaching, buys a pew, gets himself elected to the vestry, and takes a hand in shaping the policy of the establishment, and, by blandishment or bluster, in pitching the keys of the pulpit. All that you may hear said of the mischief of this secular corruption in disordering Christ's family, vitiating doctrine, emasculating the manhood of the ministry, and lowering the standard of personal righteousness, rather understates than exaggerates the fact. It is not scientific doubt, not atheism, not pantheism, not agnosticism, that in our day and in this land is likely to quench the light of the gospel. It is a proud, sensuous, selfish, luxurious, church-going, hollow-hearted prosperity. The door by which this has gained official entrance is the pew-renting system. Coming in by that door it would intrench itself about the very altar and debase the clergy itself.' "

NOTE 2.

Said C. M. Morse in the February *Forum*, in the summing up of the whole matter:

"The time was when in our land there was no recognized antagonism between the working classes and the churches. It is a new problem in our civilization. The cause should be

easily discovered by unclouded eyes. Fifty years ago, aristocratic pretensions were looked upon as vagaries and treated with contempt. In the churches people felt nothing of the chill of caste. A glance at the centers of population must convince us that now all is changed. There is an evident rivalry in the erection of splendid edifices and in the social and oratorical qualifications of the ministry. The poverty of the workingman's home is accentuated by comparison with the richness of the sanctuary. The chief seats are vivid with purple and fine linen. Outside the house of God exists a social aristocracy, bulwarked by inferior cliques, and governed by unwritten rules, marking distinctions between man and man. We have a moneyed aristocracy, a political dictatorship, landed proprietors, a rapidly-increasing tenant population, the 'workingman' and the 'tramp.' With the vast augmentation of wealth in the possession of the few and the increasing pressure of poverty in the many, the time is at hand when there will exist between classes gulfs as impassable as that between Dives and Lazarus. Intensifying social struggles are working a transformation in the character of the Church, as is manifest from the new terminology coming into general use, such as 'star preachers,' 'wealthy congregations,' and 'our poor charges.' The obverse of this is found in the expressions of the workingmen: 'We can't dress well enough to go to church;' 'your leading members don't notice us on the street;' 'your preachers run after the rich;' 'the ministers side against us in the matter of strike.' If present social conditions can be justified, these phrases, caught from the lips of the toilers, are simply excuses inspired of the devil for non-attendance upon religious services. The discontent has, however, a basis in fact; but they who give utterance to it do not understand the underlying principle, and hence cannot formulate it. With social inequality among members outside the Church, there cannot be religio-social equality within it. The great human heart of the people comprehends in some measure the fact that Christianity is not a cement to hold a rich veneer to a body of inferior materials,

but a furnace to fuse all elements into one homogeneous mass. Under present conditions it is sheer folly to talk about the rich and the poor meeting together in the house of God; the poor decline the invitation. How can the Church regain influence with the workingmen? By teaching God's will concerning social questions while insisting upon purely spiritual matters. By presenting Christ as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. By preaching morality along with religion. For what purpose did God fill the storehouses of nature? Are toil and poverty the outcome of God's intention, or are they the results of violations of divine laws? Has religion anything to do with business, social and political questions? Does God design the bounties of nature for the benefit of a favored few, or to satisfy the natural craving of all men? Did Christ intend that his doctrines should burn selfishness out of the human heart, secure justice for all, and abolish involuntary poverty from the world? Are present conditions just, and if not, where does the injustice inhere? Shall the Church be supported by a 'better class,' and be constituted the protector of the rights of property, or shall it be the friend and champion of the poor and helpless? The Church is thought to have given exclusive attention to spiritual truths, and to be positive in its denunciation of only such evils as are prohibited by civil statutes. It has insisted upon the command, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul,' apparently in the belief that the enforcement of this doctrine would result in the abolition of all the evils that afflict society; while the equally important and binding injunction, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' has been reiterated, but never thoroughly defined and explained. If a small percentage of the volumes in our theological libraries had been devoted to a discussion of man's duty to his fellow-man, the thought and investigation essential to such a consummation would have brought light to great realms of present darkness. The Church has been reaching down into a sin-polluted pool to rescue individuals, but has given little attention to the causes which render the pool im-

pure. Why do covetousness and class distinctions prevail? Manifestly because the rewards of society—ease, pleasure, popularity—are heaped upon those who possess wealth. How does it happen that the bounty God has provided for all men is enjoyed by a class to the exclusion of the masses? The solution of this problem involves the examination of an industrial system which produces such results, and a comparison of it with the spirit of the teachings of our Savior. Such a procedure would soon array all the forces of righteousness against the rulers of the darkness of this world, work the purification of society, and bring about the reign of universal peace. Such are some of the questions that must be investigated, answered or ignored. Evils are not righted by bulwarking those who profit by them, but by listening to the clamor of the oppressed. If they are ignored, the laboring men will resolutely spurn the invitations of a gospel that has a promise of eternity, but that does not compel justice in the conduct of its professors here. If an honest and impartial investigation be made; if the toilers see that the Church is sincerely anxious to protect them from the rich men who keep back their hire, to condemn the usury that devours widows' houses, to stand as a mountain cliff in the way of oppression and injustice, then they will flock to it as doves to the windows, and be loyal to it in the ultimate result. The social problem must be worked out by the followers of the peasant philosopher in whose doctrines the weary and heavy-laden find rest. The saints will again have charge of Cæsar's household, and men will no longer hate the name of God."

NOTE 3.

Speaking of the prevalence of evil in the world—a condition of things which will remain inexplicable as long as man is controlled by certain egotistic ideas of morals, John Fiske, in "*The Idea of God*," remarks: "If the Creator of such a

world is omnipotent he cannot be actuated solely by a desire for the welfare of his creatures, but must have other ends in view to which this is in some measure subordinated. Or if he is absolutely benevolent, then he cannot be omnipotent, but there is something in the nature of things which sets limits to his creative power."

Fichte touches upon a suggestive thought when he says, "Nothing individual can live in itself or for itself; but all live in the whole, and this whole unceasingly dies for itself in unspeakable love, that it may rise again in new life. This is the spiritual law; all that comes into being falls a sacrifice to an eternally increasing and ascending life; and this law constantly rules over all, without waiting for the consent of any. Here alone lies the distinction,—whether man allow himself to be led, with the halter round his neck, like a beast to the slaughter, or freely and nobly brings his life a gift to the altar of the eternal life, in the full fore-enjoyment of the life which is to arise from its ashes."

NOTE 4.

Rev. Doctor E. G. Robinson, President of Brown University maintains in his recent work on Ethics that, "He alone is, therefore, in the highest and fullest sense free who conforms himself most completely to the conditioning laws of his own moral being—to the laws grounded in the inexorable demands of his own moral nature. Obedience and freedom always coexist and other things being equal they are always commutual. He is the freest moral being who is most punctiliously obedient to all moral laws; just as the freest civil community is where all just laws are most completely obeyed. And hence the truth of the following paradoxes:—The highest freedom is the completest subjection to law; the freest beings are morally the most necessitated to do right; perfect moral freedom is identical with moral necessity; the absolute freedom of an infinite supreme will is one with the inexorable necessities of an infinite and consequently unchangeable nature."

NOTE 5.

Says M. J. Savage: "If all the time and money and enthusiasm and effort had been spent in co-working with the real God in delivering the real man from his real evils, long before this the world might have been the Eden that never was, and that never will be until men intelligently combine to save man here and now from the ills that all can see and feel." And Rev. Doctor Gladden declares that the Church is beginning to see "as it never saw before that Christianity is not exclusively a scheme for the transportation of a portion of the human race away from this world to a more congenial home beyond the skies, but a plan for the reorganization of life upon this planet; a plan that includes every department of human action—business, politics, society, art, education, amusement, all the interests of life."

NOTE 5.

(For second reference to Note 5 see Note 6.)

The object and end of life is nothing if not happiness. For anything other than this is incompatible with any rational idea of God's benevolence. I think we are more justified in asserting that God is benevolent (that he is conditioned by the same circumstances which, in a measure, exhibit themselves upon the stage of human life), than that he is omnipotent. If, as many believe, he is all love, and that there enters into his nature no element of injustice or malevolence, then we have a right in affirming that whatever is right. It is true that this reasoning does not appeal to the logical faculty, yet it may for all that be consistent with truth.

NOTE 6.

This doctrine of the universe formed the most conspicuous feature of Christ's teaching, and it entered into and became a working idea of his remarkable career. It more than any other thing defined his morals and went far toward the construction of a doctrine of fatalism in which the sovereignty of God and free will of man became no longer the dreadful nightmare of the brain. It contrasted most remarkably in his day with the self-righteousness and egotism of dominant sects, and as a doctrine it cut into the human pride and vanity of the Pharisees, Saducees and Rabbis, who became notorious in history as judges of men's lives. Jesus was always mindful of a differentiated humanity. He, perhaps more than any other moralist, understood the method of the universe. No one in later years, not excepting Spinoza and Hegel, expressed in so short a life a more glorious and complete philosophy of conduct or a view of the universe that will forever stand the test of experience. It is to be remarked that after all has been said for or against Christianity as a supernatural religion, the one great and comprehensive fact remains—the fact which Mathew emphasized in the last of the sixth and all of the seventh chapter of his gospel, the fact which distinguished Christianity from all ethnic religions, viz., God's complete and sovereign control of the universe as the only possible basis for the construction of a philosophy of life. That this view has not received the prominence it deserves among the clergy is due partly to the fact that as a doctrine it has but recently been received. Like all truth it has suffered by the exaltation of man's egotism.

It is indeed to be deplored that man in our day has exalted into authoritative morals a standard of life which is the corrolary of his own mechanism. That which God has seen fit to make the means of each one's happiness man has projected into some kind of a code of laws by which the majority are able to condemn the few, or vice versa. In other words,

what distinguishes each one of us many have made the basis for a religion by which one class of individuals is declared to be holier than another class. Take for an illustration the parable of the good Samaritan. No story of contemporaneous life better illustrates the condition of human nature. It strikes at the very root of the evil which in the day of Jesus, as well as in our own made egotism, the most popular cult of humanity. It shows vividly and forcibly the unalterable and diversified state of human nature by which one man is most happy where love is potent, and another presumably happy where the sympathetic relation is far from normal. A certain Jew in passing from Jerusalem to Jericho—a journey which was surrounded by hardships and involved in peril—fell unfortunately among thieves who plundered him of his wealth and left him half dead along the road side. A priest and Levite with little, if any altruism, when they saw him in passing went by on the other side, while a Samaritan, who from birth and by education was taught to be prejudiced against the Jew, was so moved with compassion that he went to him and helped him. The question Jesus now asks is, "Who proved a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" And the lawyer to whom the question was addressed answered by saying, "He that showed mercy on him." Jesus did not judge the motives either of those who passed the man by or the one who helped him. On the contrary, he realized that the one was no more accountable for his conduct than the others were for theirs, and that both acted from motives of self interest. For the Samaritan who rendered the Jew assistance would no more have been happy by passing him by as did the priest or Levite than you or I would be in allowing some child to lie wounded and crying on the pavement before us. By nature our mechanism would impel us into loving conduct, because it would not only be the way of least resistance, but the way of happiness. We are not constituted to choose any other alternative, and to act contrary to our mechanism is not only impossible, but is the precursor and cause of misery. Did the Samaritan debate

the fact with himself that he was taught to hate the Jew, to treat him with unfraternal relation, to ignore him when in danger and allow him to sink helplessly and cruelly into an untimely grave? It was impossible for him under any circumstance to do otherwise than he did, because God made him sympathetic, because a certain amount of grace, which was lacking in the priest and Levite, impelled him into loving conduct, because he, like Jesus, not only delighted in acts of charity, but preferred to love his fellow man, because he felt most happy in doing so. To glorify their own egotism and pass judgment upon their fellowmen is what might easily have been expected from the priest and Levite. In this Jesus was right in advising the lawyer to become charitable and sympathetic to his fellow men, for in no other way could he prove his love to God. The lawyer, we must remember, professed to accept the law of Moses, and yet he was unfraternal—he refused to accept every man as his brother—he loved his money more than he did his God. It would not be impertinent to say that on one occasion Jesus fully illustrated the point I wish to make. A certain lawyer asked him which was the great commandment in the law. And Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This was the great and first commandment. And the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In what was this second commandment similar to the first? In this—it was its application—its proof—the test of belief in the first. In no other respect could they be similar. To love one another is to love God, or to love God is to love one another. This is the whole of the law and the prophets, said Jesus, this is religion—this is the way into paradise.

How easily could we conceive of two lines of duty emanating from the general mechanism of the parties in the parable! The Samaritan might be so influenced as to consider himself by his act of mercy holier than the Levite or priest who passed his brother by on the roadside. And by a similar egotism the Levite or the priest might be led to exalt his own

mechanism into a moral cultus. Both by missionary zeal and proselyeting could be able to build up organizations—for what human nature is in one man it may be in other men—and hence in defense of certain beliefs many would give their labor, money and influence. And so two sects might co-exist, both for the purpose of human happiness, and yet both using their own mechanism as the basis of their creeds. It could easily be seen that the one would have no dealings whatever with the other sect—that fraternity between them would be impossible. How prone one religious denomination or some very sectarian member of it is in asserting egotism may be recognized in the Chinese walls which are built up between sects and individuals. How unchristian a church is, may be seen in the judgments which she passes upon a sister church, seen in the ecclesiastical and social caste, seen in the unwillingness of members to patronize the store of a heretic, seen in the refusal of a minister to recognize all the ministry as brethren and all men as the beloved children of God. Judge not at all, said Jesus.

We, in this modern world, have yet to learn that altruism is the only way of love and light. Not that God is not bringing all His children up into grace by devious paths, but that perfect joy can only come where perfect love prevails. We have, I fear, exalted our prejudices into all manner of creeds by which we try not only to bring about a uniformity of religious type, to make all men believe as we do, as if this were possible, but by which we measure the moral worth of people, judge of their actions and thus become the apparent arbiters of their lives. Hence one of the most amusing things in the church is the easy disposition of members to seek everywhere for praise for doing what is generally conceded to be a good act, which is in reality but the result of their mechanism. To boast of a good act which we perform, as if it were miraculous or extraordinary, is foolish enough; but to grow insolent, abusive and misanthropic because the world refuses to canonize us is the depth of folly. Society

with the absence of grace is not only a travesty upon the benevolence of God, but is a most palpable exhibition of egotism. What are called popular moral standards are not only the reflections and exhibitions of man's peculiar vanities, but the pitiful and futile attempts of man to right the universe! One man is judged bad or good if he conforms with our special codes of moral law, while in the main we by our judgments make evil possible. W. H. Mallock, in "Is Life Worth Living?" states the case very clearly when he writes, "The right path is right because it leads to the highest kind of happiness—the wrong paths are wrong because they lead to lower kinds of happiness." In either choice happiness is the end to be attained, and yet none would argue that the one path is, while the other is not, in conformity with God's will. Nor are we—nor have we the right to sit in judgment against our brother who by sophistry elects the path of lesser happiness or misery. Herein lies the calamity of modern social and religious precedents and herein is the church her own assassin. The fatal error of all our thinking is, I fear, the authority we exhibit over the lives of our fellow men—the tendency we show to sift the character of humanity through our sieves of egotism—the audacity we manifest in measuring everybody by what appears to be curbstone law, and the moral standard popularized by the consensus of mankind. What we call evil is indeed but the method of the universe, and it is certainly both grotesque and amusing to hear men speak of God's law as separable from his will, or attribute to natural causes what is easily interpreted by God's benevolence or omnipotence. Can anything be conceived of as more absurd than the judgment men pass upon each other's characters? Can anything indeed be farther from grace than the habitual judgment which is passed upon the apparent sins or shortcomings of man? What right have I, because forsooth I love to go to a certain church, delight in certain habits, take pleasure in the society of certain friends, or enjoy certain food, to condemn or judge my brother because he is amused by other things?

What right have I, to go still deeper in the problem, because some brother is being led to the path of least resistance or greatest pleasure, by means of the path of greatest resistance and deepest pain, is being impelled into grace and love by means of murder, theft, impiety, lust, vice (the so-called sins of the morals), to say that I am holier than he because I naturally tend to the path of least resistance while he, by his mechanism, can be led to God in no other way? The fact is that in spite of all we can do, for we will act one way or another as long as we live, God is sure to lead us up to where he wishes. What we call sin is made sin because it is action which disturbs the sympathetic relation of the universe—it brings pain, misery, suffering into the world. And yet it is not the act which proves the *absence* of God. On the contrary, God is in sin so-called as He is in everything else. Sin is not so much the violation of a law, but the doing or execution of the law. The same motive—love of happiness—which as altruism makes some sigh for lives to help and love and bless—as egotism makes others rave for lives to curse and maltreat. God leads all men safely from pain and misery, transforming the vilest wretches finally into the angels of heaven. Some will not murder, steal, covet, bear false witness, commit vice, do any of the acts which bring men into pain and misery because they prefer to move in the path of least resistance, they delight to love their fellowmen, they are so constituted that it would be impossible for them to be unkind, unjust, unlovely. They are, I may say, so full of grace or love or God that they must and cannot help loving the universe just as a star cannot help shining, the wind blowing, the flowers blooming.

Indeed, when we sift the fine moral discriminations of actions to their ultimatum, you will find that enjoyment is the object and end of all our toil. This is exactly why God made us, and this is why we act as we do. The fact is, there are too many in the world who take too small a view of God and His universe, man and his destiny. They construct

expedient paths rather than discover right ways into supreme joy. They are fearful that man will miss paradise, and so they labor to win him to their methods of thinking. They have what might consistently be called Ptolemaic views of life. They revolve, or, are apt to revolve, everything about their own mechanism. The fact is, they have really no confidence in God, are certain that the universe is wrong, and that man is sinking into sure annihilation. It is well for man to be interested in the welfare and happiness of others—this he can neither avoid nor escape, because it is the means to the highest possible happiness. To judge people insane or foolish, or even vicious, who are neither able nor constituted to understand life as we do, who are unlike ourselves, is making our egotism our wantonness, is putting a false construction upon God's providence and beneficence, is perverting the beautiful significance of the universe. From such people come, I fear, the judgments which breed so much evil in our midst, which build up caste, which alienate family from family, which make religion subserve the interests of each one's mechanism, and which grow and popularize the idea that one man who is a Doctor Jekyll is better than one who unfortunately is a Mr. Hyde. Is it not true, as Shakespeare has said, that

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players ;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts."

And although one man may have power to be Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo, Macbeth, Richard the Third, or even Shylock, he is what he is by the same inexorable law which makes one star differ from another star in glory, or one man like the firm beach and another like the ever-tossing wave. Peculiarity and difference, versatility and variety make this universe interesting, dramatic and spectacular, and God has so wisely ordered our lives that what seems to be accident, misfortune, sin, violence and abuse, are steps by which

"We mount from the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,"
and attain our greatest happiness.

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