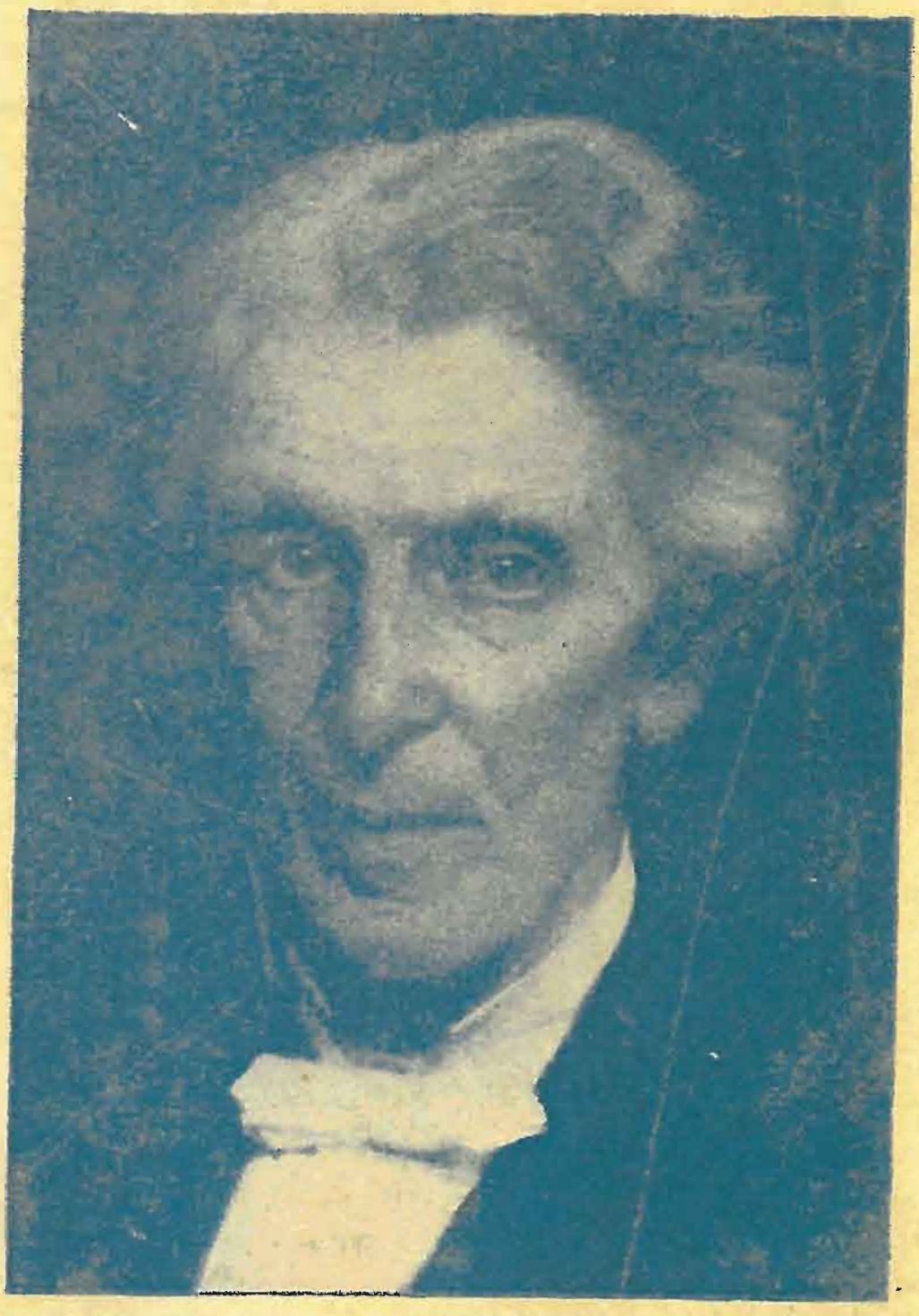
# JAMES MARTINEAU

## Selections

*by* Alfred Hall

M.A., D.D.



**The nineteenth century had no more reverent thinker than Martineau: the awe of the Eternal was the very atmosphere he breathed, and he looked at man with the compassion of one whose thoughts were full of God.**

**DR. A. M. FAIRBAIRN**

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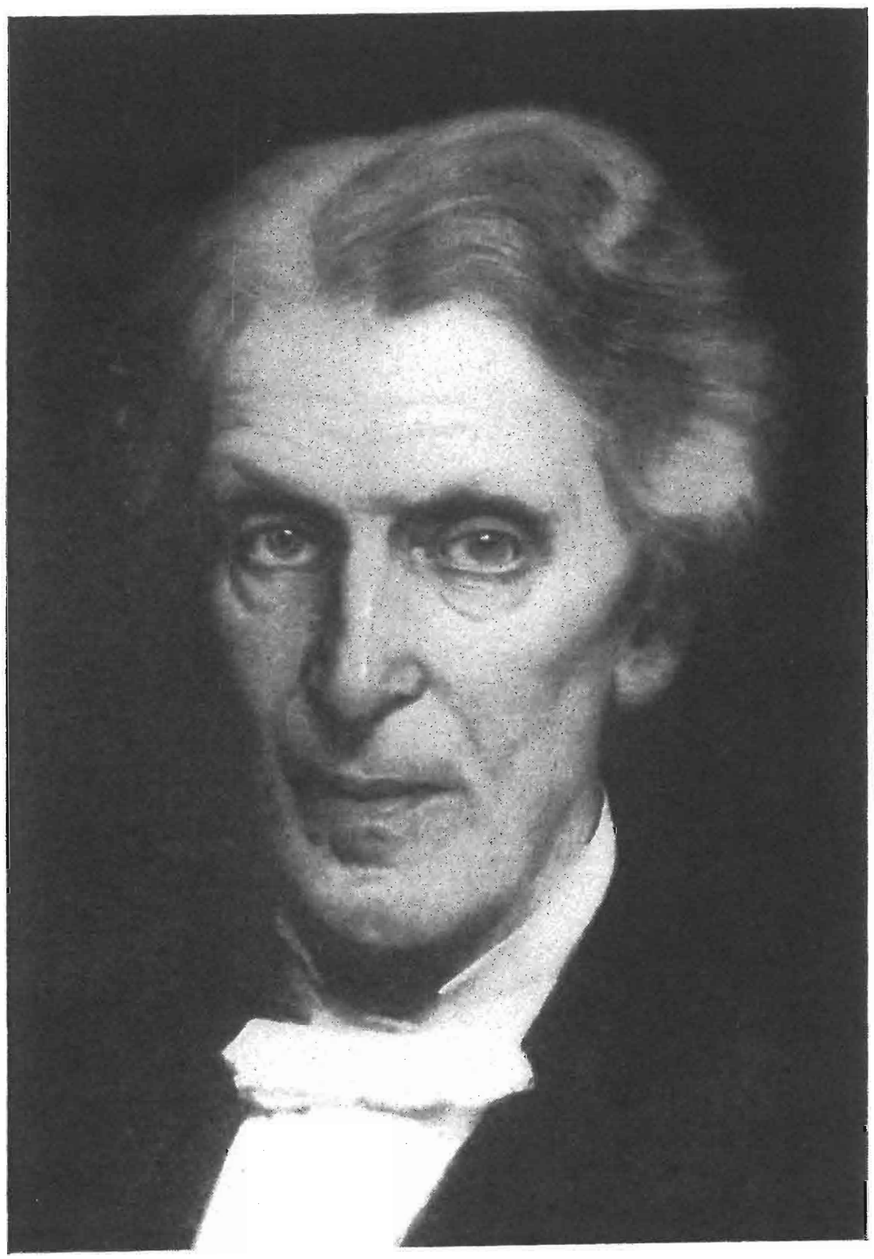

JAMES MARTINEAU
1888

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## SELECTIONS

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The nineteenth century had no more reverent thinker than Martineau: the awe of the Eternal was the very atmosphere he breathed, and he looked at man with the compassion of one whose thoughts were full of God.

DR. A. M. FAIRBAIRN

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# PREFACE

THE following selections have been made in the hope that interest may be revived in the man of whom Gladstone said, " There is no doubt that Mr. Martineau is the greatest of living thinkers." In the Victorian Age, when the conflict between science and religion was at its height, he stood forth as the protagonist on behalf of Ethical Theism. A man of exceptional mental qualities and argumentative power, he was recognized at once by the opponents of theism as a foeman worthy of their steel. " At critical moments ", wrote Dr. Fairbairn, " the name of James Martineau was a tower of strength to the feeble, and his words, like Luther's, were not only half battles, but equal to whole victories." Yet in recent discussions dealing with that controversy and in volumes treating of the Philosophy of Religion, his work and thought have received scant attention. Even those who have been proud to regard him as their leader have been neglectful of his writings. It may be that his influence has waned, because, owing to the disturbed state of the world during the last two generations, little opportunity has been afforded for the serious contemplation of the high themes of the ultimate truths of God and the soul.

The subjects with which he deals demand more than a passing glance, and he was not a man who could skim the surface of any great idea, but had to probe it to the

uttermost. He was versatile in his intellectual activities. He lectured on political economy, but his ideas on politics and economics would not be considered progressive in these days. In his *Types of Ethical Theory* his critical expositions are instructive and penetrating. He stated the position of each moral theorist with fairness and clarity, and he elucidated its strength and its weakness. He had a definite theory of his own, which he termed "Idio-psychological Ethics". Although he was alive to the dangers of the faculty hypothesis, his system is impaired by a too rigid separation of human qualities, and he did not make adequate allowance for the fact that moral decision is based not on any one spring of action as opposed to another, but on groups of qualities as opposed to other groups. Though his ethical theory had this weakness, his analysis of the various springs of action and his judgment of their relative worth are illuminating and worthy of close study. The selections will make evident how clear was the insight he showed into moral problems and ideals. His philosophical theism is a contribution of permanent worth, and no later writer has surpassed him in this field. But his nature was intensely devotional; a devotional quality pervades his philosophy, and his philosophy permeates his sermons.

A few definite principles governed his study of morals and religion and they influenced all his thinking. They are manifest in his essays, treatises, sermons, and prayers, and they reveal that he was a man with a definite message.

(1) He believed in the Personality of God, "in an



Ever-Living God, that is, a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding Moral relations with mankind", and he found "the innermost seat of this belief in the constitution of human nature". This conviction was the direct result of his own spiritual experience and his outlook on the world. It was not derived from any external source. It has been said that many people are theists because they are Christians, but Martineau was a Christian because he was a theist.

(2) He believed, in opposition to the materialists of his time, that our knowledge of Causation is gained not from our observation that one event invariably follows another but from the conscious effort of our Will to resistance, and that "at bottom *Cause* and *Will* are the same thing". "Such phrases as 'inanimate power'," he declared, "involve a contradiction", and all the laws of the unreflecting universe are evidence of the action of the Divine Mind. Thus in the outward universe the Divine Mind is eternally present, and "its laws are but one function of thought in a Mind that transcends them in every way".

(3) He believed that the spiritual world is one and undivided, that there is a living union between God and man and that the spiritual difference not only between Jesus and man but also between God and man is not one of kind but of degree. "The Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of Man universally, and God everlastingly."

(4) He believed in the Freedom of the Human Will, that man is endowed with a power of moral choice

between his motives or springs of action, so that when two motives are present simultaneously to his will, he recognizes the higher on which he ought to act. " Either free-will is a fact or moral judgment is a delusion."

(5) He believed in Personal Immortality and regarded " this world as a fitting forecourt to that sanctuary not made with hands ". For him the meaning of our life in time can be read only in the light of eternity. Man is built on a larger scale than three score years and ten.

(6) He believed that worship should be the bond of fellowship in Church life and found the continuity of Christianity in the unity of aspiring souls throughout the centuries. He spoke of " the Living Church through changing Creeds " and said:

> " If there is one persuasion which has sunk deeper than another into the heart of this age, it is that God and man find each other somewhere else than in theology, that the religion of opinion is superficial, and that to rise into unity of faith we must transcend the life of the creeds."

In that spirit he stated plainly his indebtedness to the thinkers, poets, and saints outside the communion in which he had been educated. He defined the Church as " the fraternity of disciples devoted to universal religion ".

Fifty years ago Martineau was often spoken of as " the preachers' preacher ", and preachers may find in some of these selections the inspiration for discourses. His interpretations of the Scriptures are valuable, though many of his sermons were composed before any great advance had been made in Biblical research and



criticism. I would especially call attention to the four volumes of *Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, which are rarely read in these days, though they contain his chief contributions to theology.

I have to thank the Rev. T. Brett Davies of Pudsey for allowing me to see a selection of short passages or " gems " he had made from the *Endeavours After the Christian Life* and the *Hours of Thought*, the Rev. Basil Viney of Swansea for suggestions of passages from *A Study of Religion*, and Dr. S. H. Mellone for pointing out the importance of letters in the *Life and Letters* by Dr. J. Drummond and Prof. C. B. Upton. These were welcome, as I did not wish to be guided exclusively by my own individual choice; but I am responsible for the selections made. Grateful acknowledgment is also due to Prof. Dorothy Tarrant, for valuable assistance in seeing the work through the press.

ALFRED HALL

1950.

## LIST OF REFERENCES

The source of each passage is indicated at its end. The following are the works from which the selections are taken, abbreviated titles being used in some instances:—

*Endeavours After the Christian Life*, First and Second Series. (" Endeavours ").

*Essays, Reviews and Addresses*, Vols. I–IV. (" Essays ").

*Faith and Self-Surrender.*

*Hours of Thought on Sacred Things*, 2 vols. (" Hours ").

*Life and Letters of James Martineau*, by Drummond and Upton, 2 vols. (" Life ").

*The Rationale of Religious Enquiry.* (" Rationale ").

*The Seat of Authority in Religion.* (" Seat of Authority ").

*Studies of Christianity.*

*A Study of Religion*, 2 vols. (" Study ").

*Types of Ethical Theory*, 2 vols. (" Types ").



## CONTENTS

# I

# THE NATURE OF RELIGION

## WHAT IS RELIGION?

I UNDERSTAND by "Religion" belief in an Ever-living God, that is, a Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding Moral relations with mankind. . . . In the soul of Religion the apprehension of truth and the enthusiasm of devotion inseparably blend: and in proportion as either is deserted by the other, the conditions of right judgment fail. The state of mind in which they co-exist may present itself under either of two forms, sharply distinguished in the language of our older writers. If it be reached by reflection on the order of the physical and moral world, it is called "*Natural* Religion"; if it arises without conscious elaboration of thought, and is assigned to immediate communication from the Divine Spirit to the human, it is called "*Supernatural* Religion".

Rightly enough are the man of science and the true artist called ministering priests of nature: but this they could not be, unless nature were a temple filled with God. If there be no sanctuary and no Shekinah there, there is no inner meaning for them to interpret; and the account of it is complete in the measure of its proportions and the inventory of its contents. If you place me face to face, not with an infinite living spirit, but only with what is called "*the Great Necessity*", what "enthusiasm" do you expect the vision to excite? Can there be a more paralysing spectacle? and shall I

fling myself with passionate devotion into the arms of that ghastly physical giant? It is impossible: homage to an automation-universe is no better than mummy-worship would be to one who has known what it is to love and trust, and embrace the living friend. In short, a human soul so placed would itself be higher than aught it knows within the immensity, and could worship nothing there without idolatry. Even if it turns its gaze within instead of without, and, conscious of its littleness, forms the preconception of more knowledge, of purer beauty, of larger and deeper goodness, still, though it looks up to these, it is but as possibilities for itself, and not as the eternal realities of the universe, the law of its laws, the light of its loveliness, the pledge of its ends; and, amid all the sickly talk about "ideals" which has become the commonplace of our age, it is well to remember that, so long as they are dreams of future possibility, and not faiths in present realities, so long as they are a mere self-painting of the yearning spirit, and not its personal surrender to immediate communion with an Infinite Perfection, they have no more solidity or steadiness than floating air-bubbles, gay in the sunshine, and broken by the passing wind. You do not so much as touch the threshold of religion, so long as you are detained by the phantoms of your thoughts: the very gate of entrance to it, the moment of its new birth, is the discovery that your gleaming ideal is the everlasting Real, no transient brush of a fancied angel wing, but the abiding presence and persuasion of the Soul of souls: short of this there is *no object* given you, and you have not even reached the specified point of "*admiration*". Within the limits of pure sincerity, no one can *worship* either a nature beneath him or an idea within him: however big may be the one, though it comprise



all forces and all stars, if that be all, it will be venerable to no spirit that can comprehend it; and however fine may be the other, if it be but a dreamer's image, a phenomenon of perishable consciousness, it can never be more than the personality that has it, so as to make him its suppliant.

*Study*, I. Introduction.

## FROM THE KNOWN TO THE UNKNOWN

What the objects are that constitute the scene around man, may be expressed in two words, Nature and God; understanding by the former the totality of perceptible phenomena; and by the latter, the eternal ground and cause whose essence they express. These two are the companions that no one can ever quit, change as he may his place, his age, his society: they fill the very path of time on which he travels, and the fields of space into which he looks; and the questions what they are, and what exactly they have to do with him, cannot but affect the decision of what he ought to be. Whether you will first address yourselves to *them*, or will rather make your commencement with *him*, may seem a matter of small moment, inasmuch as all three must be relatively surveyed; but in fact it makes the greatest difference—the whole difference between the most opposite schools of opinion, between an objective and subjective genesis of doctrine, between ancient and modern philosophy. If you give priority to the study of nature and God, and resort to them as your nearest given objects, you are certain to regard them as the better known, and to carry the conceptions you gain about them into the remaining field as your interpreters and guides: you will explain the human mind by their

analogy, and expect in it a mere extension of their being. If, on the other hand, you permit the human mind to take the lead of these objects in your inquiry, the order of inference will naturally be reversed; and with the feeling that it is the better known, you will rather believe what the soul says of them, than what they have to say about the soul. In both instances, no doubt, they stand related to man as macrocosm to microcosm; and we may be asked, "what matters it whether we think of man as a finite epitome of the universe, or of the universe as the infinite counterpart of man?" In the last resort, the difference, I believe, will be found to consist in this: that when self-consciousness is resorted to as the primary oracle, an assurance is obtained and is carried out into the scheme of things, of a free preferential power; but when the external whole is the first interrogated, it affords no means of detecting such a power, but, exhibiting to the eye of observation a course of necessary evolution, tempts our thought to force the same type of development upon the human soul. In the one case we obtain a volitional theory of nature; in the other, a naturalistic theory of volition; and on the resulting schemes of morals the great difference is impressed, that according to the respective modes of procedure, the doctrine of proper responsibility is admitted or denied.

*Types*, I. Introduction.

## WHAT A MAN'S RELIGION IS

If you ask, in these days, what a man's *religion* is, you are told something about the place he goes to on a Sunday, or the preacher he objects to least; of his likings and dislikings, his habits and opinions, his



conventional professions. But who, from all this, would draw any inference as to his *character*? You know *where to find him*, and *how he looks*; but have obtained no insight *into what he is*. Yet, can it be doubted that if we knew his *religion* in the true and ancient sense, we should understand him perfectly?—should see him, as God alone can see him now, stripped of the disguises that hide him even from himself, and with the vital pulse itself of thought and act laid bare to view? The divine Omniscience, in relation to our nature, may be said to consist in nothing else than a discernment of our several religions. Not indeed that in his infinite Reason he knows anything about Churchmen, and Methodists, and Quakers; or distinguishes the silent meeting from the organ's pomp; or takes account of vestments black or white. These things only denote what a man will *call himself when he is asked*: they refer, even when most sincere, to nothing that has necessarily any deep seat within the character; only to certain emblems, either in conception or outward habit, adopted for the expression of affections the most varying in direction and intensity. But whoever can so look into my heart as to tell *whether there is anything which I revere*: and, if there be, *what thing* it is; he may read me through and through, and there is no darkness wherein I may hide myself. This is the master-key to the whole moral nature; what does a man secretly admire and worship? What haunts him with the deepest wonder? What fills him with most earnest aspiration? What should we overhear in the soliloquies of his unguarded mind? This it is which, in the truth of things, constitutes his *religion*; this, which determines his precise place in the scale of spiritual ranks; this, which allies him to Hell or to Heaven; this, which makes him the

outcast or the accepted of the moral affections of the Holiest. Every man's *highest*, nameless though it be, is his "*living God*": while, oftener than we can tell, the being on whom he seems to call, whose history he learned in the catechism, of whom he hears at Church —with open ear perhaps, but with thick, deaf soul—is his *dead God*.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, I.

## THE IMMENSITY OF GOD

By the law of our mind, the natural perfections of God seem to elude our distinct conception. For we are obliged to assign to all objects a position in time and space: we cannot speak of the Divine existence without assigning to it a when and a where; yet are assured by reflection that this is an illusion of our own; that these relations belong only to our perception, not to him whom we perceive; before whom duration and dimension are nought; and in whose Absolute Being dwell all things in a universal *Here*, and all events in the everlasting *Now*.

Nor is it in mere *magnitude of scale* that the immensity of God consists. We cannot coldly satisfy ourselves with the mere physical belief which diffuses his being among the stars, and perpetuates it through the courses of eternity. In this kind of sublimity there is nothing truly divine: the atheist's mechanic force, or dead dumb nothingness, might have the same; and it were heathenish thus to confound the gigantesque with the godlike. God is a Spirit: and, besides this boundlessness of dimension, is infinite also in moral intensity; not, if we may say so, in quantity merely, but in quality too. Wisdom, beauty, holiness, are immeasurable



things, which are appreciable by pure perceptions, but which no rule can gauge, and no argument demonstrate. That the blush of morning is fair, that the quietude of grief is sacred, that the heroism of conscience is noble—who will undertake to *prove* to one that does not see it? Nor can you say in terms of measurement *how* good and right it is to pity the wretched, and maintain fidelity and truth. In everything which we profoundly revere and love, there appears a certain infinitude which fills us with untiring wonder and draws us into perpetual aspiration.

*Hours*, I, XXI.

## TRUST IN FIXED REALITIES

It is just the deepest, the most solemn, and the holiest objects of thought, that are apprehended by this path of trust; and when you perversely verge to either side, and will have either more or less than this, they swoon away from the dazed or the darkened eye. Those who tell me too much about God; who speak as if they knew his motive and his plan in everything; who are never at a loss to name the reason of every structure and show the tender mercy of every event; who praise the cleverness of the Eternal economy and patronize it as a masterpiece of forensic ingenuity; who carry themselves through the solemn glades of Providence with the springy step and jaunty air of a familiar; do but drive me by the very definiteness of their assurance into an indefinite agony of doubt, and impel me to cry, "Ask of me less, and I shall give you all." And, on the other hand, when I commune with those who have nothing to tell me about God, who treat the transient as the only real, and dismiss the

Eternal as a negation and a dream; who pretend to lift the veil from nature and show us that there is No One there; who see on the brow of heaven no trace of thought, and in the beauty of a saint only the working of a vital chemistry, and in the historical development of humanity a mere frondescence from the circulating sap of civilization; when, without once appealing to my faith, they account for everything *except this clinging faith itself*; this little residual exception spoils all their work; and, in proportion to their success in bewildering my understanding, plunges me into the mood of enthusiasm as an escape from an empty despair. Trust is the natural attitude of the soul towards things diviner than herself; and cannot be pushed aside by the rude pretensions either of knowledge or of ignorance, without the loss of her balance and the subversion of her peace.

Trust can be exercised only towards a *person*. A person is higher than a thing; and if, while we are persons, the ultimate power of the universe is not, it is then *we* that are supreme; and if reverence be possible to us at all, it must seek its object, not in nature without, but in the self-conscious spirit within. This, however, is simply impossible; no man can venerate himself; and the mere fact that the human heart instinctively cries aloud for leave to worship and to trust, yet cannot do so without an outer and higher being, irresistibly postulates the personal and living God.

*Hours*, II, 1.

## THE INWARDNESS OF RELIGION

Religion, with the progress of moral experience and intellectual gifts, assumes more and more *inwardness*



and spirituality; and *this*, not as a mere escape from the outer world which science disenchants, but by an involuntary change of taste and feeling inseparable from all higher culture, and affecting poetry, philosophy, morals, not less than religion. *All* our life as it reaches its higher stages—as it speaks a more refined language and exchanges richer thought—necessarily becomes more *reflective*, communes more with itself, and takes the external Universe more into the colours of the atmosphere within. God, in short, who is ever at the summit of our thought, occupies at all times whatever sphere seems at the moment to be highest; and as the education of man begins with the senses and ends with the conscience and affections, it is certain that divine intimations must first be seen and heard without, and only at last be felt and read within. Accordingly, it is acknowledged by everyone that a ritual worship, addressing itself chiefly to the senses, is naturally prior to a faith that appeals to the will by hope and fear; as this again gives way to the pure piety of love and trust. So far is this from being a mere imaginary progress, that its stages are broadly marked on the history of the world. Every religion seeks for something that may be *offered to God* and be acceptable to him, and may set the worshippers at one with him; and according as our offering is more or less an external thing do we find our place in one of three great classes that divide mankind. To give him something that we *have* is *Heathen*; to offer him what we *do* is *Jewish*; to surrender to him what we *are*, is *Christian*. "Take my goods and cease to be angry with my sin," was the cry of the first; "Accept my righteousness, and remember thy promise, for I have served thee," speaks the character of the second; "I am not my own but thine, O Lord; live thou in me,

or else I die," is the prayer of the third. To buy off displeasure by sacrifice; to deserve favour by obedience; to attain similitude and communion by loving self-abandonment; are the three aims that make the ascending scale of faith. As we pass up from step to step, God draws nearer and nearer to close relation with us; first, asking for some of our *possessions*, and leaving us still owners of the rest; next, imposing his Law upon our *will*, and appearing within us as a *restraint* and negation on something which else would be; finally, coalescing with our highest nature to subdue and mould it all into sympathy with his own perfectness.

*Hours*, II, v.

## RELIGION IMPERISHABLE

Religion is reproached with not being *progressive*; it makes amends by being *imperishable*. The enduring element in our humanity is not in the doctrines which we consciously elaborate, but in the faiths which unconsciously dispose of us, and never slumber but to wake again. What treatise on sin, what philosophy of retribution, is as fresh as the fifty-first Psalm? What scientific theory has lasted like the Lord's Prayer? If it is an evidence of *movement* that, in a library, no books become sooner obsolete than books of science, it is no less a mark of *stability* that poetry and religious literature survive, and even ultimate philosophies seldom die but to rise again. These, and with them the kindred services of devotion, are the expression of aspirations and faiths which for ever cry out for interpreters and guides. And in proportion as you carry your appeal to these deepest seats of our nature, you



not only reach the firmest ground, but also touch accordant notes in every heart; so that the response turns out a harmony. Say what we may about the dissensions of Christendom, yet I affirm that Religion in its very essence, and the religion of Christ in the most absolute degree, is a bond of human union tenacious in itself, and increasing the tenacity of every other. It is always the self-assertion of intellect and will that divides us: it is the self-forgetfulness of love and reverence that unites us: and never can we *so* pass out of our own hands as when we lose ourselves in God: to be one with him is to be one with each other. There are two sides to human life; one towards the kingdom of nature, the other towards the kingdom of God. To the former belong all the secular competitions, the strife of opinion, the self-regarding efforts, the passions of party, the conflicts of war, which keep the world in a ferment of ambitions, and make it the prize of victorious capacity. To the latter belong all the blending affections, the common admirations, the subduing pieties, the enthusiasms for the true, the just, the holy, by which life is sweetened and purified, and healing brought to its sorrows and peace to its storms.

*Essays*, IV, XIII.

## THE RELIGION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Nothing has been nearer to my heart than *to substitute among you the Religion of Consciousness for the Religion of Custom.* It is quite true, and it is a truth too plain to miss, that it is the business of religion to preside over our inner world—to rule the thoughts, to quiet the passions, to elevate the will. It is also true, and it is a truth far less understood, that the condition of that

inner world itself determines our religion;—that, precisely in proportion as the affections are pure and deep, the conscience clear and strong, and the imagination familiar with great and beautiful examples—are heavenly realities discerned, and the windows of Reason thrown open to the empyrean light. In the mind barren with selfishness, the very root is withered from which the blossom and the shade of holy hope must spring. To one who dishonours himself by sloth and excess, God becomes invisible and incredible. From him who quickens his business, or hurries in his talk, in order to push aside the whispers of a smaller but a truer voice, the awful form of Duty sorrowfully retires, and lets him believe that life is given to play his own game, and not to serve another's will. From such men, the very power of perception itself is absent: they look through no transparent medium, but through a glass clouded with earthly steams: so that, demonstrate as you will the realities beyond, they *cannot* see. Moral and emotional disorder as effectually excludes religious truth, as intellectual mania vitiates ordinary judgment; and the best schooling will teach nothing, till the wounded nature is healed, and the fever of the soul abates. Both the theoretical doubts, and the practical deadness of religion will remain, I believe, untouched, till they are dealt with by this rule. They are but symptoms, which it is useless directly to attack, and which can vanish only with an altered mind. Till the soul attains some loftiness, by the free and faithful activity of its best powers, faith is not really possible to it: and when it has assumed this temper, misgivings will trouble it no more.

*Essays*, IV, "Pause and Retrospect."



## MYSTERY AND RELIGION

Far be it from us to deal lightly with the sense of Mystery. It mingles largely with all devout apprehension, and is the great redeeming power that purifies the intellect of its egotism and the heart of its pride. But you cannot constitute a Religion out of mystery alone, any more than out of knowledge alone: nor can you measure the relation of doctrines to humility and piety by the mere amount of conscious darkness which they leave. All worship, being directed on what is *above* us and transcends our comprehension, stands in presence of a mystery. But not all that stands before a mystery is worship. The abyss must not be one of total gloom—of neutral possibilities—of hidden glories or hidden horrors, we know not which—of perhaps the secure order of perfect Thought, or, equally perhaps, the seething forces of a universe fatefully and blindly born. Such a pit of indeterminate contingencies will bend no head, and melt no eye, that may turn to it. Some rays of clear light must escape from it, some visions of solemn beauty gleam within it, ere the darkness itself can be "visible" enough to deliver its awfulness upon the soul. Without positive apprehensions of a better than our best—of a Real that dwarfs our Ideal; of a Life, a Thought, a Righteousness, a Love, that are the Infinite to our Finite—there is nothing to revere, nothing to decide between despair and trust. To fling us into bottomless negation is to drown us in mystery and leave us dead. True reverence can breathe and see only on condition of some mingling and alternation of light and darkness, of inner silence and a stir of

upper air. Nor do we believe that any of the appropriate effects of "true Religion" can outlive the simple trust in a Personal Ruler of the universe and human life.

*Essays*, III, VI.

# II

# THE EVER-PRESENT GOD

## THE BESETTING GOD

We sometimes complain of the conditions of our being, as unfavourable to the discernment and the love of God; we speak of him as veiled from us by our senses, and of the world as the outer region of exile from which he is peculiarly hid. In imagining what is holy and divine we take flight to other worlds, and conceive that there the film must fall away, and all adorable realities burst upon the sight. Alas! what reason have we to think any other station in the universe more sanctifying than our own? There is none, so far as we can tell, under the more immediate touch of God; none whence sublimer deeps are open to adoration; none murmuring the whisper of more thrilling affections, or ennobled as the theatre of more glorious duties. The dimness we deplore, no travelling would cure; the most perfect of observatories will not serve the blind; we carry our darkness with us; and instead of wandering to fresh scenes, and blaming our planetary atmosphere, and flying over creation for a purer air, it behoves us, in simple faith, to sit by our own wayside and cry, "Lord, that we may receive our sight." The Psalmist found no fault with this world as setting God beyond his reach; but having the full eye of his affections opened in perpetual vigil, he rather was haunted by the Omniscient more awfully than he could well bear, and would fain have found some

shade, though it were in darkness or the grave, from a presence so piercing and a light so clear. Those to whom the earth is not consecrated, will find their heaven profane.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, II.

## GOD PRESENT IN THE MORAL LIFE

There is yet another sense in which we must confess that God "besets us behind and before." His physical agency in all places is a great and solemn certainty; his ceaseless energy through all time presents us with sublimer thoughts; but there is a *moral* presence of his Spirit to our minds which places us in relations to him more intimate and sacred. Surely there occur to every uncorrupted heart some stirrings of a diviner life; some consciousness, obscure and transient it may be, but deep and authoritative, of a nobler calling than we have yet obeyed; a rooted dissatisfaction with self, a suspicion of some poison in the will, a helpless veneration for somewhat that is gazed at with a sigh as out of reach. It is the touch of God upon us; his heavy hand laid upon our conscience, and felt by all who are not numb with the paralytic twist of sin. Even the languid mind of self-indulgence, drowsy with too much sense, complacent with too much self, scarcely escapes the sacred warning. For though it is quite possible that such a one may have no compunctions in the retrospect which he takes from the observatory not of conscience but of comfort, though he may even have lapsed from all knowledge of remorse, so that God has ceased to "beset him *from behind*"; yet the future is not securely shut against contingencies; and a moment of alarm, a shock of death, a night of misery, may burst



the guilty slumber and wake the poor mortal, as on a morning breaking in tempest, with the flash of conviction, Behold! 'tis God! To most, I believe, there comes at least the casual misgiving that there is a destiny in reserve for them to which no justice of the heart has yet been done; and to each, there is the anticipated crumbling away of all his solid ground in death; which even to the sternest unbelief is a lapsing into the dark grasp of an annihilating God. So that the Almighty Spirit besets even these most lonely of his children "*from before*". And as for minds that are awake and at all in quest of him, he haunts them every way. O that we could but know how false it is that "the good man is satisfied from himself"! When was there ever one of us who did not feel his recollections full of shame and grief, and find in the past the cup that overflowed with tears? When, one that did not look into the future with resolves made timid and anxious by the failures of experience, and distrust that breaks the high young courage of the heart, and prayers that in utterance half expect refusal?

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, II.

## THE ETERNAL PRESENCE

Let any true man go into silence; strip himself of all pretence, and selfishness, and sensuality and sluggishness of soul; lift off thought after thought, passion after passion, till he reaches the inmost depth of all; remember how short a time, and he was not at all; how short a time again, and he will not be here; open his window and look upon the night, how still its breath, how solemn its march, how deep its perspective, how ancient its forms of light; and think how little he knows except

the perpetuity of God, and the mysteriousness of life;—and it will be strange if he does not feel the Eternal Presence as close upon his soul, as the breeze upon his brow; if he does not say "O Lord, art thou ever near as this, and have I not known thee?"—if the true proportions and the genuine spirit of life do not open on his heart with infinite clearness, and show him the littleness of his temptations, and the grandeur of his trust. He is ashamed to have found weariness in toil so light, and tears where there was no trial to the brave. He discovers with astonishment how small the dust that has blinded him, and from the height of a quiet and holy love looks down with incredulous sorrow on the jealousies and fears and irritations that have vexed his life. A mighty wind of Resolution sets in strong upon him and freshens the whole atmosphere of his soul; sweeping down before it the light flakes of difficulty, till they vanish like snow upon the sea. He is imprisoned no more in a small compartment of time, but belongs to an eternity which is now and here. The isolation of his separate spirit passes away; and with the countless multitude of souls akin to God, he is but as a wave of his unbounded deep. He is at one with Heaven, and hath found the secret place of the Almighty.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XVII.

## GOD EVERYWHERE PRESENT

It is thought incredible that a Being infinite as God should reveal himself through anything so small as the person of a man, or become in any way identified with one particular created soul. And so it would be, if his special *presence with Christ* involved his *absence* from any corner of the universe—if his light were fainter in other



minds for being so rich and full in Christ's—and he were less with remote worlds, for being more with ours. Whoever conceives that *God in person* came and lived the human life, and so dwelt in the villages of Galilee and the courts of Jerusalem, as to be in the least withdrawn from Thessaly and Rome, from the planets or the Pleiades, has a faith worthy of the Lycaonian peasants, who took Barnabas for Jupiter and Paul for Mercury. The Infinite cannot become finite, the Eternal retire into time, the ocean of everlasting power turn into one of its own mountain streams. But what hinders a limited nature being filled throughout and pervaded by the unlimited? a human soul from so absorbing the Divine spirit as to leave no room for anything of lower grade? In excluding all but himself from the spirit of Christ, and permitting neither shade nor flaw in the clearness of his image there, God did not vacate any other medium of expression, or prejudice his living agency in any portion of space or thought. No star throughout the firmament missed him the more, that he so purely shone in that fair life. No sorrowing heart cried to him in vain, because the angel of consolation was watching in Gethsemane. No guilty will was left without his warning look, because he was in the desert, strengthening his holy one to triumph over temptation. It is not as though the grace and power of God were a quantity that could be used up. From not a place, not a moment, not a creature, did the divine tide ebb to make the flood that rose within the soul of Christ. Nay, were there not a sacred effluence abroad, there could be no concentration on a point. The lens which brings the sunbeams to a focus makes no darkness in the air; and a mind which gathers into it the rays of holy love and goodness, not only leaves all else bright as

it was before, but shows of what a pure and brilliant essence the shadiest of visible humanities still have a share.

*Hours*, II, xv.

## THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

I often wonder whence can arise the marvellous incredulity of hard-minded men as to this permanent life of God in the soul of man? They do not, I presume, think of him as asleep, with *no* living action, no movement of affection, no whisper of righteousness anywhere, nothing, in short, to distinguish his being from his non-being. They mean his perfections to be regarded as awake, and having their functions in *some* sphere. *Where else*, then, can they suppose his life, his love, his grace, to be? where, if not in the most living, the most loving, the most gracious quickenings of the spiritual world? where, if not in the abodes of sin and sorrow, breathing on the embers, lest the spark of purer fires should die? Would you have him present, through blank space, sleeping in the frosts of the midnight infinitude, and folded round the pointed stars? or interfused through the solid earth, or dissolved through the waters of the sea, or woven into the texture of the light?—would you own him amid these physical conditions, *doing* nothing, it may be, even there—a mere *presence* and not a *life*? and will you deny him entrance to spirits that can respond to his, where like meets like, and the look of pity is answered by the eye of trust? Is there then no meaning in the promise, "We will come to him and *make our abode with him*"? Strange delusion! that we should see a dwelling for him in the lower—the fabric of his material manufacture, and



none in the higher—the spirits that are the image of himself. How much simpler and more true to our inmost experience, to own that though we may *mar* we do not *make* our own best inspirations; that they steal upon us like the dawning light, which the wakeful is the first to see and the faithful most quick to use, but which neither can command to break in storm or glory. Yes; God is the ground of all our good; and all that we inadequately call our *ideals*, the inner experience that looks at us through the symbols of the universe, the better possibilities that seem ever to struggle through the material conditions of life, the contrite longing to be free from self and at peace with God—these, while they are in us, yet are not of us; they are not ours, but his; nay, they are his very self; first, standing at the door to knock, and then, if the latch be lifted by a hospitable hand, entering to abide and dwell, and turning the bread and wine of life into a sacrament.

*Hours*, II, xix.

## THE NEARNESS OF GOD

The same temper which leads us to search for Deity only in distant times, causes us to banish him also into distant space; and persuades us that he is not *here*, but *there*. He is thought to dwell above, beneath, around the earth; but who ever thinks of meeting him on its very dust? Awfully he shrouds the abyss; and benignly he gazes on us from the stars: but in the field and the street, no trace of him is felt to be. Under the ocean, and in the desert, and on the mountain-top, he is believed to rest; but into the nearer haunts of town and village we rarely conceive him to penetrate. Yet where better could wisdom desire his presence, than in the

common homes of men—in the thick cares, and heavy toils, and grievous sorrows, of humanity? For, surely, if Nature needs him much in her solitudes, life requires him more in the places of passion and of sin. And in truth, if we cannot feel him near us in this world, we could approach him, it is greatly to be feared, in no other. Could a wish remove us bodily to any distant sphere supposed to be divine, the heavenly presence would flit away as we arrived; would occupy rather the very earth we had been eager to quit; and would leave us still amid the same material elements, that seem to hide the Infinite vision from our eyes. Go where we may, we seem mysteriously to carry our own circumference of darkness with us: for who can quit his own centre, or escape the point of view—or of blindness—which belongs to his own identity? He who is not with God already, can by no path of space find the least approach: in vain would you lend him the wing of an angel, or the speed of light; in vain plant him here or there, on this side of death or that; he is in the outer darkness still; having that inner blindness which would leave him in pitchy night, though, like the angel of the Apocalypse, he were standing in the sun.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, v.

## WHEREVER GOD'S HAND IS, THERE IS MIRACLE

For my own part, I venerate not less than others the birth-hour of Christianity, and the creative origin of worlds. But I do not believe that God lived then and there alone; or that if we could be transplanted to those times, we should find any such difference as would melt down the coldness of our hearts, or leave us more



without excuse than we are now. There is no chronology in the evidence, any more than in the presence, of Deity. Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning—or rather the *un*-beginning—of creation. The universe, open to the eye to-day, looks as it did a thousand years ago: and the morning hymn of Milton does but tell the beauty with which our own familiar sun dressed the earliest fields and gardens of the world. We see what all our fathers saw. And if we cannot find God in your house and mine, upon the roadside or the margin of the sea; in the bursting seed or opening flower; in the day-duty and the night-musing; in the genial laugh and the secret grief; in the procession of life, ever entering afresh, and solemnly passing by and dropping off; I do not think we should discern him any more on the grass of Eden, or beneath the moonlight of Gethsemane. Depend upon it, it is not the want of greater miracles, but of the soul to perceive such as are allowed us still, that makes us push all the sanctities into the far spaces we cannot reach. The devout feel that wherever God's hand is, *there* is miracle: and it is simply an indevoutness which imagines that only where miracle is, can there be the real hand of God. The customs of Heaven ought surely to be more sacred in our eyes than its anomalies; the dear old ways, of which the Most High is never tired, than the strange things which he does not love well enough ever to repeat. And he who will but discern beneath the sun, as he rises any morning, the supporting finger of the Almighty, may recover the sweet and reverent surprise with which Adam gazed on the first dawn in Paradise. It is no outward change, no shifting in time or place, but only the loving meditation of the pure in heart, that can re-awaken the

Eternal from the sleep within our souls; that can render him a reality again, and vindicate for him once more his ancient Name of " THE LIVING GOD ".

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, VIII.

## THE DIVINE SENTINEL

In evil days, when just men strive in vain to beat back the hosts of wrong, and mad tyrannies gall the heart with shouts of triumph, the Sentinel of every world is on his sleepless watch, and knows how to protect it from surprise. He is the continuous thread of all our years, and his love throws in each pattern of beauty woven into their texture: and when the images of the past, the distant fields, the dear abode, the gracious forms, the vivid hopes, the earnest heroisms of our young days, gleam with a fairer light through the sorrows and failures of maturity, it is his breathing spirit that dissipates the cloud of time, and sends his reviving sunshine through. Only let us be at one with him, and our life gathers down upon it the strength of his infinite serenity. The simple thought, that " God is here "—that the august Ordainer of our trust and supporter of our faithfulness is present in the very hiding-places of the soul—contains within it the most powerful agencies of religion. Warning, sympathy and rest are treasured in it to inexhaustible amount. Amid the fatigues of life's incessant struggle, under the sense that we can never sleep or all things will go wrong, refreshment is instantly gained when we ascend to the fountain of all affection, and touch the parching lips with the draught of life. In temptations to unfaithfulness witnessed by no human eye, let us but say, " Ah! Lord, but thou art here ", and the failing purpose springs to its feet



again. And under the encroachments of fretfulness or despondency from the frequent perverseness of men, what can so soon check the hasty thought, soothe the unquiet passion, and put a music of patience into the soul, as the look of that pure and loving eye from its depth of infinite calm? In the trembling of age and the stealthy approaches of the last sleep, the dear presence of an Almighty Guardian, to whom age is as childhood and who unites the future with the past, fills the deepening shadows with a mild and holy light. Let him only be near; and the obscuring veil of mortal ill that sometimes seems to shut us in, and tempts us to believe in nothing but the sad rain, is soon withdrawn, like the cloud lifting itself from out the glen; and the sunshine first glorifies, then dissipates the haze; leaving the mountain-range of immovable goodness and beauty clear against the everlasting sky. So pass the storms away, so deepens the heavenly view, to the soul that will but " rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him ".

*Hours*, I, XXV.

## GOD IS THE SPIRIT IN ALL

If you believe that God exists, and understand your words when you call him " infinite " and " eternal ", you cannot expect to find him as *one object among many*, but as *a Spirit in all*; the living reality of all appearance; the firmament of thought that holds the stars; the omnipresent deep that throws up the tides of history and the ripplings of private care; the sole power of the universe without; the archetype of the free soul within; and the secret source of the meaning that dwells in everything. Were he at all away, we might step forth to seek him; did he ever slumber, we might

watch for the date of his waking times. But living for ever in us and around us, he does not enable us to compare his presence with his absence: if we miss him, it is from his perpetuity and nearness; if we meet him, it is not by feeling after him abroad, but by dropping inwards and returning home. The differences by which he is revealed are in us and not in him; in our faculty of recognition, by no means in his constancy of action. His light is alive in the very hearts that neglect or deny him; and in those that most own him is latent a thousand times for once that it flashes on their conscious eye. But there are moments when the beauty of the universe looks in at us with a meaning quite divine; or the crises of history shake us as the visible drama of Providence; or the eye of appealing misery burns into the place of pity in our souls and we know it to be *his* sympathy as well as *ours*; or a new insight of duty opens a path which he alone could show. In these instances, we strain no ingenuity to discover him; it is he who comes to us and finds us; his presence rises of itself, and the revelation is spontaneous. Our sole concern is to accept it, to revere it, to follow it, to live by it.

*Hours*, I, IX.

# III

# GOD AND NATURE

## THE UNIFORMITY OF NATURE

WHAT Science calls the uniformity of nature, Faith accepts as the fidelity of God. They are but the settled ways of his sole causation, the programme of his everlasting work, the dial-plate which the index of human expectation is to traverse age by age. When we speak of their unerring regularity, we do but attest his truth, which keeps the timepiece steady for us, and warns us how the shadows lie. He that framed these rules might have made others in their stead, and at any moment change them by a thought. But once he has announced them, an eternal Word has gone forth, and shall not be made void. It is a promise made alike to just and unjust, and must be punctually kept with both. Without a reliable Universe and a trustworthy God, no moral character could grow. A fickle world admits only of a lawless race: no obedience could be required from those who are planted among shifting conditions, to whom foresight is denied, and whose wisdom is as likely to go astray as their folly. As well might you attempt to build upon the restless sea, or to steer by shooting stars, or keep time by the leaves dancing in the wind, as shape a mind or train a character amid a scene whose courses were unsteady and where action was a lottery. All human habits are formed by a mutual understanding between man and nature. Who could be temperate, if the food that simply

nourishes today were to intoxicate tomorrow? Who would put away sloth to be in his field betimes, but in faith that the sun would not forget to rise? Who build his observatory, were not the heavens still the same that Kepler and Galileo scanned? Thus the constancy of creation is the direct expression of the good faith of God; of his regard not only for our security, but for the culture of our reason and the insight of our conscience. He disciplines us thus to his own love of beauty and order. His eternal patience takes away our excuses of surprise, and rebukes our pleas of disobedience.

*Hours*, I, vi.

## NATURAL SELECTION AND CHANCE

It is true that in the hands of Darwin and Herbert Spencer, the theory of chances is placed under some reasonable restraints which were absent from the ancient philosophy; the tentatives open to the organic world are not indefinite; nor in their origin are they regarded as without determinate cause. But still, the unstable ones are immensely more numerous than the stable; and as they arise we know not how, they are, relatively to us, fortuitous. Indeed the very candour and consciousness of Darwin have led him to leave more to chance in this sense than previous naturalists who had attempted the same problem. Lamarck was ambitious of more fully explaining the course of organic development than is now deemed honestly possible; not indeed dispensing with an *internal power*, which he could only describe as a tendency of life to increasing complexity; but vesting in the external medium a large control over the form and extent of its results, and



attributing to the *needs* of the animal a moulding action, and to its *habits* a conservative or stereotyping force, which observation does not confirm: and so, whatever fails to be thus accounted for has to be taken back into Darwin's category of " accidental variation ". Hence, the range given to chance appears to me to be quite inadmissible; so large indeed as to amount to an abandonment of the problem as a philosophical whole. The known species of organisms are the residue preserved in the competition of life by some casual advantage accruing to them by natural selection. This advantage is a prize turned up by the wheel of a vast lottery, with the peculiarity that its ticket was not made out and deposited there before, preordained to be drawn by some one; but formed and inscribed itself by the molecular experiments of the machine. No one can deny that the beneficial feature *might* thus arise, any more than that a basket of compositor's types emptied often enough upon the floor might tumble them at last into the text of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. But the number of trials prior to such an event scares the imagination by its prodigious amount; and it is the measure of the field allotted to accident. Nor is it only in the first appearance of an advantageous variation that the overstraining of fortuity occurs. In order to preserve and transmit the advantage, it must accidentally arise twice over, once in each parent of the future stock. Even then the novel feature is far from being secured; if it reappear in one or more of the offspring, it is still a family peculiarity, almost certain to disappear among new mates in the next generation.

*Study*, I, Book II, § 6.

## MISTAKEN ESTIMATES OF NATURE

Complaint is made of several *useless and unmeaning* arrangements. Even in the inorganic world, faults have been freely pointed out by scientific critics from the time of Empedocles to that of Comte and Mill—on our earth, the surrender of the polar regions to ice that never melts and of the equatorial to heats that never cease to parch; and of enormous areas between, to barren deserts and inhospitable seas; the recurring desolation of fertile lands by earthquakes, volcanoes, and hurricanes; in the moon, the absence of atmosphere and water, its one-sided gaze upon the earth, its awkward periodic time, tantalizing us with scanty glimpses of its face; in the solar system, the great gap between Mars and Jupiter, given up to petty asteroids, of which you could survey a sample in a day's walk, and half-a-dozen, if they were worth anything, might be sold in an auction room in a single lot.

Facts of this kind may fairly enough be called *unmeaning*, if no more is intended by the phrase than that we do not know their *raison d'etre*; and *useless*, if, in order to try them, a purpose is assumed which they fail to serve. On the supposition that the arctic and antarctic latitudes, that the Sahara, that the Pacific regions, were intended for the residence of man, no doubt the ice, the sand and the salt flood are so many blunders. If the laws of heat which determine the currents of the atmosphere and work in subterranean depths, have no end but to secure the tiller of the soil in his dwelling and his crops, they certainly incur a failure in every outburst of Etna or Boreas. Are the satellites to be criticized as lamps alone? then, it must



be admitted, they might, by dispensing with their phases, have given more light. But by what right do we judge a solar system from a mere geocentric, nay, from a purely humanistic point of view? Look at its age, its scope, its history, its relations to innumerable systems vaster than itself; and say whether the last comer on one of its planets is entitled to measure the ends which it embraces by his particular needs. Included though they be in the whole, what part of it are they likely to occupy? If it be anthropomorphic to admire an arrangement of Nature because it is useful to man, is it less anthropomorphic to condemn one because it is useless to him? No considerate Theist imagines Man to be the central object of the universe, by the standard of whose requirements all things are to be judged.

*Study*, I, Book II, ch. I.

## NATURE AND GOD

It cannot be denied that the architects of science have raised over us a nobler temple, and the hierophants of Nature introduced us to a sublimer worship. I do not say that they alone could ever find for us, if else we knew it not, *who* it is that fills that temple, and what is the inner meaning of its sacred things; for it is not, I believe, through any physical aspect of things, if that were all, but through the human experiences of the conscience and affections, that the living God comes to apprehension and communion with us. But when once he has been found of us—or rather, we of him—it is of no small moment that in our mental picture of the universe, an abode should be prepared worthy of a Presence so dear and so august.

Christianity, engaged in establishing immediate

relations between Man and God, takes little notice of Nature; which might in fact be absent altogether without material injury to a scheme pervadingly *super*natural; and which was actually to vanish in order to the final realization of the Divine purpose for Humanity. The defining lines of the religion run, so to speak, overhead of Nature, and pass direct from spirit to Spirit: Given, the human consciousness of sinful need and the sigh for holy life; given also, the Divine response of forgiveness, rescue, and communion; and the essential idea is constituted. The circle of thought and feeling which collects around it has only a negative relation to the outward Cosmos, and finds Nature rather in its way. Still, when compelled to look the visible world in the face and recognize it as the depository of some permanent meaning, Christianity, like all pure and spiritual Theism, can only regard the universe as the manifestation and abode of a Free Mind, like our own; embodying his personal thought in its adjustments, realizing his own ideal in its phenomena, just as we express our inner faculty and character through the natural language of an external life. In this view, we interpret Nature by Humanity; we find the key to her aspects in such purposes and affections as our own consciousness enables us to conceive; we look everywhere for physical signals of an ever-living Will; and decipher the universe as the autobiography of an Infinite Spirit, repeating itself in miniature within our finite spirit. The grandest natural agencies are thus but servitors of a grander than themselves; " the winds are his messengers; and flaming fire his minister ". Using Nature as his organ, he transcends it: the act in which he does so is the exercise of his own Free Volition, rendering determinate what was indeterminate before:



it is thus the characteristic of such act to be *supernatural*: and Man, so far as he shares a like prerogative, occupies a like position; standing to that extent outside and above the realm of necessary law, and endowing with existence either side of an alternative possibility. At both ends therefore of the scheme of Cosmical order, are beings that go beyond it: all that is natural lies enclosed within the supernatural, and is the medium through which the Divine mind descends into expression and the Human ascends into interpreting recognition.

*Seat of Authority*, I, 1 *and Essays*, III, v.

## THE TRANSIENT AND THE REAL

If we are not strangely self-ignorant, we must be conscious of two natures blended in us, each carrying a separate order of beliefs and trusts, which may assert themselves with the least possible notice of the other. There is the nature which lies open to the play of the finite world, gathers its experience, measures everything by its standard, adapts itself to its rules, and discharges as fictitious whatever its appearances fail to show. And underlying this, in strata far below, there is the nature which stands related to things Infinite, and heaves and stirs beneath their solemn pressure, and is so engaged with them as hardly to feel above it the swaying ripple of the transitory tides. Living by the one, we find our place in nature; by the other, we lose ourselves in God. By the first, we have our science, our skill, our prudence; by the second, our philosophy, our poetry, our reverence for duty. The one computes its way by foresight; the other is self-luminous for insight. In short, the one puts us into communication

with the order of appearances; the other, with eternal realities. It is a shallow mind which can see to the bottom of its own beliefs, and is conscious of nothing but what it can measure in evidence and state in words; which feels in its own guilt no depth it cannot fathom, and in another's holiness no beauty it can only pine to seize; which reads on the face of things—on the glory of the earth and sky, on human joy and grief, on birth and death, in pity and heroic sacrifice, in the eyes of a trusting child and the composure of a saintly countenance—no meanings that cannot be printed; and which is never drawn, alone and in silence, into prayer exceeding speech. Things infinite and divine lie too near to our own centre, and mingle in too close communion, to be looked at as if they were there instead of here: they are given, not so much for definition, as for trust; are less the objects we think of, than the very tone and colour of our thought, the tension of our love, the unappeasable thirst of grief and reverence. Till we surrender ourselves not less freely to the implicit faiths folded up in the interior Reason, Conscience and Affection, than to the explicit beliefs which embody in words the laws of the outward world, we shall be but one-eyed children of Nature, and utterly blind prophets of God.

*Hours*, II, xxiv.

# IV

# GOD AND MAN

## MAN'S SUPERNATURAL ENDOWMENTS

The Divine Life in relation to us presents itself to me as twofold, like our humanity; *Natural*, so far as we are creatures subjected to necessary laws and part of a determinate order; *Supernatural*, so far as God has endowed us with spiritual capacities and affections, open to his free appeal, and to our own responsive insight and direction under it. From this immediate communion of Spirit with spirit, in which the initiative is with him and the answer with us, no soul is shut out; in the struggles of conscience, in the silent dawning of higher ideals, and in countless experiences of faithful and saintly lives, as well as in the awful warnings of shame and remorse, the pleading of the Divine Love is felt directly addressed to the individual's need, and following all the windings of his will. As it is on this side of our divine relations that all Religion lies, all Religion is Supernatural, and there is a Revealing Presence of God in every Soul that is not sunk in slavery to the mere "natural man". But the closeness and intensity of this union between the human spirit and the Divine may vary in indefinite degrees; and the saints and prophets in whom its higher measures appear are the great instruments for clearing and opening the darkened windows of unawakened natures. Supreme in the hierarchy of inspiration, standing unique at its culminating point, identical in filial will with the Infinite Father's Per-

fection, is Jesus Christ, the moral incarnation of the Love of God. This affirmation of Supernaturalism in Christianity would gain nothing by birth "of a virgin"; and loses nothing, to my feeling, by an immortality that dispenses with a bodily ascension. Instead of stripping the Supernatural elements away from the life of Christ, I make it inward instead of outward, and by extending it in minor measures to his brethren of humanity, render them homogeneous with him, and through this harmony at one with God.

*Life*, II, p. 80.

## FAITH IN THOUGHT AND CONSCIENCE

Faith in our own faculties, as God has given them, is at the very basis of all knowledge and belief, on things human or divine—an act of primitive religion, so inevitable that without it scepticism itself cannot even begin, but wanders about through the inane, in fruitless search for a point on which to hang its first sophistic thread. And each one of our natural powers is to be implicitly trusted within its own sphere, and not beyond it: the senses, as reporters of the outward world; the understanding, in the ascertainment of laws and the interpretation of nature; the reason and conscience, in the ordering of life, the discernment of God, and the following of religion. Whoever tries to shake their authority, as the ultimate appeal in their several concerns, though he may think himself a saint, is in fact an infidel. Whoever pretends that anything can be above them—be it a book or a church—is secretly cutting up all belief by the roots. Whoever tells me that prophet or apostle set himself above them, and contradicted, instead of reverently interpreting and rendering audible,



the whispers of the highest soul, is chargeable with fixing on the messengers of God the sure sign of imposture or of wildness. To tell me, with warnings against my erring faculties, that a thing is divine which offends my devoutest perception of the true and holy; as well might you persuade me to admire the sweetness of a discord by abusing my sense of hearing, or to prefer a signboard to a Raffaelle by enumerating optical illusions and preaching on the imperfections of sight. Amid the clamour of dissonant theologies, let us sit then, with a composed love, at the feet of him who pointed the way—which no doubt can darken and no knowledge close—*of seeing God through purity of heart.* That clear and single eye, filling the soul with light; what is it but the open Thought and Conscience by which the truth of heaven streams in? And does not Jesus appeal to this as our only rescue from utter darkness and spiritual eclipse? If so, then men can see for themselves in things divine. They are not required to take on trust a rule of life and faith, in which they would discern no authority and feel no confidence, were it not for the seal it professes to carry, and the affidavit with which it is superscribed. A system, indeed, befriended on the mere strength of its letters of recommendation misses everything divine.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, XVIII.

## THE BASIS OF MORAL LIFE

The great Creative Spirit is ever ready to touch the merest grain of manna in the heart, and make it numerous to shine on all the ground. He to whom space is the seed-plot of stars has in the human soul a tillage more lustrous in the sowing and more enduring

in the fruits. When he flings a handful of moral endowments into the furrows of our nature, he never withholds the mellowing winds and dews; and the germs will not perish unless we deny them root. Within the smallest genuine grace he has wrapped up boundless possibilities; and whoever will but believe in it and apply it faithfully shall never fail of more. There is no one so miscreated or misplaced as to have within him no germs of good, from which a fruitful circle may be made to spread. Just as in the Pacific Ocean, if once a coral rock is built up to the level of the tide and feels the caresses of the wind, some little speck of life appears, and as the island rises, widens till it dips into the salt waves; so in the most desolate mind, born farthest from the mainland of hope and power, there is never wanting some point of native green, that may creep, as it were, from stone to stone, till it fairly drive the barrenness away. If you will but find God's living gift within you, and simply trust it when it presses into growth, there is not a waste place of your nature that shall not become habitable, and even glorious with a wild beauty. Whatever you may doubt, *something* there is which you deem true; however much is common and unclean, you have your gleams of what is surely holy; wherever you are weak, there is some matter on which your secret eye is clear, and your foot is firm. *Here* then is the ground on which your moral life is to be raised. Whithersoever others may lead you, here is your native well-spring of faith and love; whatsoever others may teach, this is the divine oracle to you. Sink deeply into this, and be at one with it, worship in it, live from it, ere you even try to know or undertake to do aught else. Till you get down to the foundations of your natural piety and touch sacred ground, you



cannot raise the superstructure of either your knowledge or your action. Heed not what is dark, play not with what is perplexed, believe not your unbelief, till you have flung yourself into your real faith, and done the thing you most revere.

*Hours*, I, XIII.

## THE WITNESS OF GOD WITH OUR SPIRIT

The scepticism which men affect towards their higher inspirations is often not an honest doubt, but a guilty negligence; and is always a sign of narrow mind and defective wisdom. Whoever found that the heavy mood in which he could admire nothing, be touched by nothing, sanctify nothing, permanently proved the true one? Who, when once he has escaped it, does not know this leaden look and solid air upon the surface of life to be the brooding cloud of his own heart? And how often do the more luminous perceptions of other souls reveal to us, in nature, in art, in character, a beauty we had not discerned before, but which is no sooner shown than it startles us by its reality out of all denial! Left to ourselves to peer about from the dull prison of our grosser mind—unaided by the mighty spirits of our race, who emancipate us by their greatness and snatch us by their genius into the free light—how little should we see of the sanctity and glory of this world! What a dim and subterranean life we should live! Yet the instant we are taken aloft we find that the darkness was the dream and the splendour is come true! If you will believe only in the perceptions of sense and distrust the intimations of the spirit, it is a question how low you will descend for your test of certainty. Will you depend upon your own faculties in proportion as

they are simply animal, and deny them in proportion as they are divine?—confide in your eyesight and give the lie to the conscience and affections? The herds that low amid the Alpine echoes have, no less than you, the outline of the everlasting hills, and the verdure of the pine-cleared slope, painted on their vision, and the chant of the distant torrent swelling and fainting on their ear: is their perception truer—are they nearer to reality, because they cannot, with you, meet the sublime gaze of nature and see through to the eternity of God? The grandeur and the glory that you behold, are they not *there*? the divine expressiveness, the speaking appeal to your silent worship, the mingling of something secret with your spirit, as if unseen thought were flowing from the mountains and the sky, to meet the answering radiation of your soul—are these, which are the human privilege, a phantom of unreality—a delusion which the fortunate brutes escape? It is impossible! Call it imagination, call it wonder, call it love, whatever it be that shows us the deeper significance of the world and humanity and makes the difference between the surface-light of sagacity and the interpenetrating glow of worship, we owe to it whatever highest truth, whatever trustiest guidance we have. Wherever there is anything beautiful to read, anything holy, anything tender and profound, this alone avails and commands the key of true interpretation.

*Hours*, I, iv.



## THE LIVING UNION OF GOD AND MAN

(Parting words to his Liverpool Congregation)

The one deep faith which has determined my whole word and work among you is in *The Living Union of God with our Humanity*. Long did this faith pine obscurely within me, ere it could find its way to any clear joy. It was not enough for us that God should—as they say—"*exist*"; it was needful to have assurance that he *lives*. It was a poor thought that he was the *beginning* of all, if he stood aloof from it in its *constancy*. It withered the inmost heart to believe that he dwelt and never stirred in the universal space, and delegated all to inexorable "Laws"; laws that could never hear the most piercing shriek, and looked with stony eyes upon the upturned face of agony. It seemed to stain the very heaven to charge him with the origin of human guilt, and represents him as first moulding men into sin, and then punishing them out of it. A mere constructing and legislating God, satisfied to adjust "co-existencies" and establish "successions"; who filled the cold sky, and brooded over the waste sea, and watched on the mountain-head, and embraced the waxing and waning moon, and suffered the tide of history to sweep through him without heeding its most passionate and surging waves; a God who wrung from us a thousand sighs that never touched him, who broke us in remorse for ills that are not ours; who drew to him, day and night, without ceasing, moans of prayer he never answered; such a one it was a vain attempt really to trust and love. . . . We pine as prisoners, till we burst into the air of that *supernatural life which he lives eternally*: we are parched with a holy thirst, till we find contact with the running waters of his quick affection. Him

*immediately*; him in person; him in whispers of the day, and eye to eye by night; him for a close refuge in temptation, not as a large thought of ours but as an Almightiness in himself; him ready with his moistening dews for the dry heart, and his breathings of hope for the sorrowing; him always and everywhere living for our holy trust, do we absolutely need for our repose, and wildly wander till we find.

*Essays*, IV, " Parting Words ".

## THE PEACE OF GOD

The first impulse of " the natural man " is to seek peace by mending his external condition; to quiet desire by increase of ease, to banish anxiety by increase of wealth, to guard against hostility by making himself too strong for it; to build up his life into a fortress of security and a palace of comfort, where he may softly lie though tempests beat and rain descends. The spirit of Christianity casts away at once this whole theory of peace; declares it the most chimerical of dreams; and proclaims it impossible ever to make this kind of reconciliation between the soul and the life wherein it acts. As well might the athlete demand a victory without a foe. To the noblest faculties of soul, rest is disease and torture. The understanding is commissioned to grapple with ignorance, the conscience to confront the powers of moral evil, the affections to labour for the wretched and oppressed; nor shall any peace be found till these, which reproach and fret us in our most elaborate ease, put forth an incessant and satisfying energy; till instead of conciliating the world, we vanquish it; and rather than sit still, in the sickness of luxury, for it to amuse our perceptions, we precipitate ourselves upon it to mould it into a new



creation. Attempt to make all smooth and pleasant without, and you thereby create the most corroding of anxieties and stimulate the most insatiable of appetites within. But let there be harmony within, let no clamours of self drown the voice which is entitled to authority there, let us set forth on the mission of duty, resolved to live for it alone, to close with every resistance that obstructs it, and march through every peril that awaits it; and in the consciousness of immortal power, the sense of mortal ill will vanish; and the peace of God will nigh extinguish the sufferings of the man.

Whoever then would have the peace of Christ, let him seek first the spirit of Christ. Let him not fret against the conditions which God assigns to his being, but reverently conform himself to them, and do and enjoy the good which they allow. Let him cast himself freely on the career to which the secret persuasion of duty points, without reservation of happiness or self; and in the exercise which its difficulties give to his understanding, its conflicts to his will, its humanities to his affections, he shall find that united action of his whole and best nature, that inward harmony, that moral order, which emancipates from the anxieties of self, and unconsciously yields the divinest repose. The shadows of darkest affliction cannot blot out the inner radiance of such a mind; the most tedious years move lightly and with briefest step across its history; for it is conscious of its immortality, and hastening to its heaven. And *there* shall its peace be consummated at length; its griefs transmuted into delicious retrospects; its affections fresh and ready for a new and nobler career; and its praise confessing that this final " peace of God " doth indeed " surpass its understanding ".

*Endeavours*, 1st series, VI.

### THE STRENGTH OF THE LONELY

There are within the range of every man's life, processes of mind which must be solitary; passages of duty which throw him absolutely upon his individual moral forces, and admit of no aid whatever from another. Alone we must stand sometimes; and if our better nature is not to shrink into weakness, we must take with us the thought which was the strength of Christ: "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." Jesus was evidently susceptible, in a singular degree, to the influence of human attachments; he was the type of that form of character. Such indeed it behoved one to be who was to be regarded as the perfect model of humanity; for while the self-relying and solitary temper rarely, if ever, acquires the grace and bloom of human sympathies, the mind, originally affectionate, often, by efforts of moral principle, rises to independent strength; the sense of right can more readily indurate the tender, than melt the rocky soul. And that is the most finished character which begins in beauty, and ends in power; which wins its way to loftiness through a host of angelic humanities that would sometimes hold it back; that leans on the love of kindred while it may, and when it may not, can stand erect in the love of God; that shelters itself amid the domesticities of life, while duty wills, and when it forbids, can go forth under the expanse of immortality, and face any storm that beats, and traverse any wilderness that lies, beneath that canopy.

*Endeavours*, 1st series, xv.

## V

## SCRIPTURE, REASON AND FAITH

### REASON AND THE SCRIPTURES

THE business of the understanding in the interpretation of scripture is the same as in the case of any other book, to furnish itself well with all such knowledge of language, of history, of localities, of the sentiments of the age and nation, as may have any bearing upon the writings; and then to give itself freely up to the impression which they convey, without any attempt to modify it by any notions, whether derived from an ecclesiastical creed or an individual theory, previously in the mind.

I am prepared to maintain that if they (the doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement and everlasting torments) were in the Bible, they would still be incredible; that the intrinsic evidence against a doctrine may be such, as to baffle all the powers of external proof; and that, in every case, the natural improbability of a tenet is not to be set aside, as a forbidden topic, but to be weighed as an essential part of the evidence which must determine its acceptance or rejection. . . . Let the case be put in this form. Suppose the strongest conceivable probability to have been established that a man is inspired; suppose that, with this probability in your mind, you discover in his writings what appears to you to be absurd. The question is this: are you to receive the absurdity, because it is an inspiration; or to discard the inspiration, because it is an absurdity?

The question is intricate; but I will endeavour to make it clear, that no apparent inspiration whatever can establish any thing contrary to reason; that reason is the ultimate appeal, the supreme tribunal, to the test of which even scripture must be brought.

*Rationale.*

## THE NEED FOR CRITICISM

No doubt it is a tender reverence which clings to each long-consecrated Scripture; but the piety which dominates evidence, and must have it so, is less noble than the piety which submits to it and lives with it as it is. When, in discussing such a question as the origin of the Fourth Gospel, a theologian becomes pathetic about "robbing the Christian of his treasure", and drops into commonplaces about "destructive criticism", we see at once, beneath that saintly perturbation, the inner heart of unbelief, the absence of repose upon realities, the secret purpose to remain within some nimbus of coloured dreams. Cleared vision can "rob" us of nothing, except as daylight "robs" the night of ghosts. "Criticism" can "destroy" nothing but illusions; the disappearance of which either restores the substituted truth, or at least leaves its place duly "swept and garnished" for its return. Criticism can "construct" nothing but hypotheses; which are not divine facts, but mere human representations, and at best can only fill the chasms of knowledge with ideal shadows of probability. The reproach of "negative", the boast of "positive" theology, are alike intrusions, under disguise, of personal desires on the very field consecrated to self-sacrifice. Nothing is "positive" or "negative" except in relation to *our preconceptions*, according as they are affirmed or contradicted; and to use such words as tests of merit and expressions of what "we need", is tacitly to stipulate with the nature of things to let our dreams alone. This is the very idol-worship and pride of intellect; and we have yet to learn our first lesson in the religion of thought till we feel that it is not ours to choose where the light shall fall or how much of it there shall be; still less to play tricks with it, and fling its images hither and thither with the mirrors and lenses of our own desires; but to watch it as the dawn, and let it steal in where it will, and show the solid forms of things, though it turn the dark hollow into a nest of beauty, and melt our visionary mountains into clouds.

*Life*, I, p. 402.



## THE NEED FOR AN INQUIRING MIND

Though narrow feelings and selfish desires, intruding on the province of the understanding, prevent its judgments from being just, it is not true that their simple absence constitutes the best state for speculative research. It is sometimes said, that, were it possible, the inquirer's mind should be absolutely emptied of every desire, and be exposed, in entire passiveness, to the action of evidence brought before its tribunal; that a being incapable of emotion, a mere machine for performing logical operations, would be the most efficient discoverer. But surely his impartiality, however perfect, would accomplish nothing without an impulse: intensity of intellectual action is needed, as well as clearness of intellectual view. And this will be most certainly found, not in one who follows the light without deep love of it; not in one who simply finds it a

personal convenience, and desires it for its use; not even in one who has simply a relish for mental occupations, and prolongs them from pure taste; but in him who traverses the realm of thought, as if "seeking the will of One that sent him"; who reverently looks on the features of truth as on the face of God, and listens to its accents as to his whispered oracle; who trusts it with a "love that casteth out fear", and feels on him the blessed light of Heaven, when bigots pronounce him in a dreadful gloom.

*On questions of practical morals*, yet more emphatically than on subjects of speculative research, is it true that pure sympathies produce a clear intellect, and that *his* judgments are most likely to be just, who most habitually seeks the will of the eternal Father. The moral habits and tastes of men form their opinions, much more frequently than their opinions form their habits: so that often their theoretical sentiments are little more than a systematic self-defence after the act, and afford an approximate index to the character of themselves and the society in which they live. The positions they assume having been taken up first, the reasons for maintaining them are discovered afterwards: and it is surprising to observe the confidence with which questions of morals are discussed, as if on grounds of absolute philosophy, when every quiet observer perceives that the alleged premises would appear ridiculous except to persons already possessed of the conclusion.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, VII.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF ANALYSIS

God is related to his works and ways, just as genius to the creations of poetry or art that issue from it: and



both must be apprehended in the same manner—by the softened gaze of reverence, not by the dry sharp-sightedness of knowledge. All our acute study of such things is but a delusion and a flattery, if we suppose it really to open to us the sources from which they come. You may analyse, if you will, the dramas of Shakespeare, the paintings of Raffaelle, the music of Beethoven; you may disengage for separate inspection, action, character, sentiment and costume; grouping and colours; theme and treatment; and you may thus know each composition at every turn; discern its structure; recognize its proportions; lay your finger on its happiest lights. But do you reproduce the state of mind that first created it? Do you get upon the traces of the author's way of work? Are your values and laws, when you have drawn them out, a faithful representation of the soul from whose expression you have deduced them? Can they spread, beneath any other view, the many-clustered plain of life, as it lay beneath the player's large and genial eye: or fill the world again with the rich tints and noble forms that reflected their repose upon the painter's face: or send through any second heart the wild night-winds that sighed and sung through the deaf musician's soul? This, you will own, your criticism cannot do. At best, it does but sketch an artificial method, which, if it could be perfectly obeyed, might be a substitute for the natural one. Only it cannot be obeyed, and when the attempt is made, it produces not a living likeness, but a dead imitation; human nature turned into wax, and the heavens flattened to the canvas, and the passion of melody reduced to an uneasiness among the strings. The canons of taste, so far from being an approach to the mind of the artist, are the extreme point of departure from it;

being the expression of a dissecting self-consciousness, the intrusion of which would have been fatal to his work.

*Endeavours*, 2nd series, XXI.

## THE MORAL QUALITY OF FAITH

Our devout beliefs are not built as we suppose, upon the dry strand of reason, but ride upon the flood of our affections; safe and joyous, bounding over its waves, when its surface only plays with the sweet breeze of heaven; but engulfed when it rages in the storm of passion, or fixed in stiff death, when its flow is stopped by the winter of an Arctic intellect. We do not simply learn from experience what we are to think; but we carry into experience feelings and preconceptions by which we read and interpret experience. Faith is the natural hypothesis of a pure and good heart, whence it looks on the face of nature and of life, and deciphers and welcomes their diviner lineaments. Want of faith is the hypothesis of a low and uninspiring heart, which feels the presumption to be *against* whatever is high and glorious, and gives the benefit of every doubt to the side of the flat and mean. In some men there is surely a visible openness of impression to what is excellent and noble in character—a readiness to believe in goodness—a willingness to take for granted that all is right till proof arises of something wrong—a manifest assurance that at the bottom of all things lie the foundations of eternal truth and holiness, so that whatever is faithfully and lovingly done has God and Nature, and therefore hope and promise on its side. This presumption in favour of all beauty and sanctity in human life, and in the universe, is *faith*. It has a *moral* character, because it



implies a personal knowledge of the higher principles and affections of our nature as able to rule the lower; they have been listened to as oracles; they have vindicated themselves as realities: they have submitted to no fatal insult, but have kept upon their lawful throne. No man can believe in a rule over creation which is powerless over himself; or see in other souls a goodness traceless in his own.

*Hours*, I, VII.

# VI

# WORSHIP AND PRAYER

## DEVOTION UNITES MAN WITH GOD

WORSHIP is the free offering of our selves to God; ever renewed because ever imperfect. It expresses the consciousness that we are his by right, yet have not duly passed into his hand; that the soul has no true rest but in him, yet has wandered in strange flights until her wing is tired. It is her effort to return home, the surrender again of her narrow self-will, her prayer to be merged in a life diviner than her own. It is at once the lowliest and loftiest attitude of her nature: we never hide ourselves in ravines so deep; yet overhead we never see the stars so clear and high. The sense of saddest estrangement, yet the sense also of eternal affinity between us and God meet and mingle in the act; breaking into the strains, now penitential and now jubilant, that, to the critic's reason, may sound at variance but melt into harmony in the ear of a higher love. This twofold aspect devotion must ever have, pale with weeping, flushed with joy; deploring the past, trusting for the future; ashamed of what it is, kindled by what it is meant to be; shadow behind, and light before. Were we haunted by no presence of sin and want, we should only browse on the pasture of nature; were we stirred by no instinct of a holier kindred, we should not be drawn towards the life of God. In Christian worship, through all its confessions of estrangement, there runs the undertone of near





communion between the human spirit and the Divine. And if communion, then sympathy and resemblance too: for like can only commune with like: when eye meets eye and knows it, there is the same fire alive in both: when affection answers to affection, there is a common language of intelligence between them; and *something* in us there must be—some possible love or thought of goodness—akin to the Infinite Perfection and flowing forth to meet it. *This* it is—this best element of us—which asserts its rights and struggles to its place in every expression of religion. Devotion instinctively tries to lay down whatever separates from God, and to pass wholly into what unites with him. It takes its stand on the felt common ground, the points of meeting, between the human and the Divine.

*Hours*, II, XXIII.

## INDIRECT WORSHIP

Direct worship is a *conscious* conformity to a pattern in the Heavens. But *all* life, so far as it is good and holy, is still an approximation of the mind, even though it be by unconscious instinct, to a Divine image. There are men of whom you cannot speak as being conspicuously religious; who even present a nature hard and unimpressible to the appeals of devout sentiment and doctrine; whom a sluggish imagination and a genius too much entangled in practical affairs may embarrass with doubts and perplexities in positive religion: but whose cheek burns at a tale of injustice; who turn away with loathing from meanness and cruelty; whose word is a rock, rooted in the very substance of the world; who are stirred to their inmost depths by

the spectacle of heroic honour and incorruptible fidelity; and who themselves win from others, if not noisy admiration, yet the silent trust and steady dependence which are yielded only to moral strength and wisdom. Are these men then without religion? Is there nothing which prevails over them with truly godlike power? Deficient as their creed may be, and little as they may kindle at the name of God, they too are not without their worship, though you may deny it the name and they themselves would be the last to call it so. They follow through life an unspeakable image of justice and veracity, which shines upon them as entirely divine; which subdues them with silent admiration; commands the current of their blood and the fountain of their tears; and makes their firm-knit manhood pliant and tender as a child before the appeal of injured right or generous sacrifice. They may *say* nothing of the viewless ideal that draws them hither and thither by the beckoning finger of the Right and Good: they may not even put it before them, so as to know that it is there: they may seem to be engaged only with worldly transactions, to have no taste or capacity for spiritual concerns, and spend themselves wholly on their home, their business, or the council-chamber of affairs; but all the while there is a secret worship of their heart, that directs the labour of their hands and the very courses of their thought; and which shows itself in the order of their house, the stability of their concerns, the rectitude of their administration, and their willingness, notwithstanding an economic taste, to sacrifice in the State material to moral ends.

*Essays*, IV, "Life according to the Pattern in the Heavens".



## PRAYER FOR TEMPORAL GOOD

Petitions for purely physical events other than those which are already on their way—*e.g.*, for the arrest of a heavenly body, the diverting of a storm, the omission of a tide, must be condemned, as at variance with the known method of Providential rule. But a large proportion of temporal events are not like these, dealt out to us from the mere physical elements; they come to us with a mixed origin, from the natural world indeed, yet through lines of human life, and as affected by the human will. The diseases from which we suffer visit us in conformity with the order of nature, yet are often self-incurred. The shipwreck that makes desolate five hundred homes is due to forces which may be named and reckoned; yet also, it may be, to the negligence which failed to take account of them in time. Wherever these elements of *character* enter the result, so that it will differ according to the moral agent's attitude of mind, it is plainly not beyond the reach of a purely spiritual influence to modify a temporal event. The cry of entreaty from the bedside of fever will not reduce the patient's temperature or banish his delirium; but if there be human treatment on which the crisis hangs, may so illuminate the mind and temper the heart and sweeten the whole scene around, as to alight upon the healing change, and turn the shadow of death aside. The prayer of Cromwell's troopers kneeling on the field could not lessen the numbers or blunt the weapons of the cavaliers; but might give such fire of zeal and coolness of thought as to turn each man into an organ of almighty justice, and carry the victory which he implored. Wherever the living contact between the

human spirit and the Divine can set in operation our very considerable control over the combinations and processes of the natural world, there is still left a scope, practically indefinite, for prayer that the bitter cup of outward suffering may pass away; only never without the trustful relapse, "Not my will, but thine be done".

*Hours*, II, XVI.

# VII

# THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

## THE TIDES OF THE SPIRIT

In the *Occasionalism* of piety, I see not its shame, but its distinctive glory; and would lay stress on the *intermittency* of the devout affections, as the sign, not of poverty or weakness, but specifically of their grandeur in themselves, and their accurate accordance with what is highest in God's realities.

For, whether you stay at home, and look in upon the composition of our own nature; or go out into the universe and Providence of God, you will find this law: that, of his agencies and manifestations, it is the lowest that are the least mutable, and must remain the same from first to last; whilst the highest have ever a tidal ebb and flow—moving in waves of time, and surprising hidden inlets of space with their flood.

Mind is more fitful than strength, less under steady control of the will, faster and further in its ebb, in proportion as it is fuller and grander in its flood. The day-labourer with his limbs can bear longer hours than the man of letters with his pen; and can produce more even work. And precisely as the faculties which he tasks are above the level of intellectual routine, is the thinker dependent on moods which he cannot command or prolong: to learn, to criticize, to judge, to arrange, being usually in his power; but to combine, to discover, to create, being the free gifts of happy moments not his own. Is he a compiler and fabricator of mental

products? his process, like any other manufacture, may go on, wherever the machinery of industry is set in motion. Is he poet or inventor? then he seems to be the organ of another will, and to be now lifted into clear achievement, now sunk into deep humiliation. At times a murky atmosphere appears to close in upon his soul and damp down its very flame to smoke; and all his faithfulness and patience are unavailing to perforate the gloom, and end only in the dripping of the sad rain. At another time he seems to be planted high in a pure and lustrous air; to look on nothing that does not shine with a self-light: the quick streaming thoughts flow upon him like a morning wind; every darkening cloud swings off to the far horizon and melts into bars of indigo and gold: turn his interpreting eye where he will, he mingles with the meanings of things; and his feet are on the mountains, and his heart with God.

*Hours*, I, 1.

## THE INTERMITTENT VISION

Who will venture to say that the highest insight of the spirit is even half as constant as the highest action of the mind? Ask the saintliest men and women of this world, whether their holy watch was continuous, and their faith and love as reliable as their thought; and they will tell you how long, even when they went up to be with the Saviour on the mount, have been the slumbers of unconsciousness, compared with the priceless instants when they were awake and beheld his glory. In every earnest life, there are weary flats to tread, with the heavens out of sight—no sun, no moon—and not a tint of light upon the path below; when the only guidance



is the faith of brighter hours, and the secret Hand we are too numb and dark to feel. But to the meek and faithful it is not always so. Now and then, something touches the dull dream of sense and custom, and the desolation vanishes away: the spirit leaves its witness with us: the divine realities come up from the past and straightway enter the present: the ear into which we poured our prayer is not deaf; the infinite eye to which we turned is not blind, but looks in with answering mercy on us. The mystery of life and the grievousness of death are gone: we know now the little from the great, the transient from the eternal: we can possess our souls in patience; and neither the waving palms and scattered flowers of triumph can elate us, nor the weight of any cross appear too hard to bear. Tell me not that these undulations of the soul are the mere instability of enthusiasm and infirmity. Are they not found characteristically in the greatest and deepest men—Augustine, Tauler, Luther? Nay, did not the Son of God himself, the very type of our humanity, experience them more than all? Did he not quit the daily path, now for a Transfiguration, and now for a Gethsemane? did not his voice burst into the exclamation, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven", yet also confess, "Now is my soul troubled"? And had he not his hours on mountain all night? And what, think you, passed beneath those stars? Ah no! those intermittent movements are the sign of divine gifts, not of human weakness. God has so arranged the chronometry of our spirits that there shall be thousands of silent moments between the striking hours.

*Hours*, I, 1.

# VIII
# INSPIRATION

## THE INSPIRATION OF GENIUS

In literature, the productions thrown off as a bid for gain or fame have never enjoyed an influence comparable, in durability and extent, with the power won by the spontaneity of genius, and the fervid simplicity of conviction disinterestedly surrendered to free creation. Does anyone suppose that a hireling pen could have indited Milton's immortal pleas for purity in the Church and just liberty of speech and action in the State? Or that the cynical exaggerations and stormy grandeur of Byron will endure and rule as long as the pure truth of Wordsworth—the growth, not of the hotbed of passion, but of the sunny slopes and forest walks of love and meditation? No; all that is most permanent in our intellectual wealth issues from the interior and disinterested realm of our nature. Only in the rarest souls, at best, are forces lodged adequate to produce lasting effects of good upon a world little penetrable by individual effort; and nothing less intense than the central fires of the heart can open clefts in the rocky structure of society, and project the precious metals of true sentiment through its mass; the convulsions, it may be, of one age, but the riches of all others.

The same truth is found to hold in every other department of human agency. In every effort at persuasion, how puny are the ingenuities of art compared





with the majesty of simple conviction and earnest purpose! In every attempt at social reformation, the power which begins with selfish expediency goes over in the end to the faithful few who refuse to cure one wrong by recourse to another. The assertion is not true, which we often hear, that the most remarkable triumphs won by decision of character are to be found among the bad; the most numerous successes may be theirs, but by far the grandest prodigies of human volition are recorded of the champions of the right; with the magnitude of whose achievements even in the field not the love of glory itself can contend.

*Faith and Self-Surrender*, III.

## THE INSPIRATION OF THE FUTURE

The animating spring of all improvement, in individuals and in societies, is not their knowledge of the actual but their conception of the possible. To the personal conscience there is ever present a higher than it has reached, a light beyond which throws a perpetual shadow on the track behind. And if the social reformer who takes his vow against some public sin, successfully defies the cold cautions of experience, it is because the vision of a purified future steadies his eye and nerves his arm. And when a nation, after being parcelled out and crushed for generations beneath cruel and stupid tyrannies, rises in an hour, shakes off not its fetters only, but its jealousies, vindictiveness, and lassitude, and proclaims its genius to be one, generous and free—this is no mere revulsion from a degraded past: it is that some noble leader's dream of hope has fixed before the people's mind an image glorious in its

simplicity, which is their guiding star through the wilds and dangers they must pass. But for this irrepressible idea, sleeping or waking at the heart of our humanity, we should have no standard by which to try the present and measure its deformities and sins; and until it emerges from an idea into a *faith*, till it stands with us not for a prismatic semblance, but for the only real—not for a dream of our own, but for a thought of God—it can only breathe a sadness into life, and touch it with the flush of a hectic beauty: it may shape itself into creations of Art; it may speak in tones of Poetry; but it will lay no powerful hold upon the springs of the Will, inspire no sacrifice, dare no conflict. This is the very function of Morals and Religion—this conversion of ideal thoughts into spiritual realities and solemn duties; and wherever there speaks to us a true interpreter, able to withdraw the veil of our inmost conscience, it is always to discover a divine substance under the form of some human dream, to detect an everlasting authority in some flitting surmise, to snatch us from the idle pathos of our poetic soliloquies, and set us abashed before them as tones from the living Word of God.

*Essays*, IV, v.

## THE SPHERE OF SILENCE

When the right is clearly *seen*, meditation is needed to collect our powers to *do* it. It is the great store-house of our spiritual dynamics, where divine energies lie hid for any enterprise, and the hero is strengthened for his field. All great things are born of silence. True, the fury of destructive passion may start up in the hot conflict of life, and go forth with tumultuous desolation. But all beneficent and creative power gathers itself together in silence, ere it issues out in might. Force itself indeed is naturally silent, and only makes itself heard, if at all, when it strikes upon obstructions to bear them away as it returns to equilibrium again. The very hurricane that roars over land and ocean, flits noiselessly through spaces where nothing meets it. The blessed sunshine says nothing, as it warms the vernal earth, tempts out the tender grass, and decks the field and forest in their glory. Silence came before creation, and the heavens were spread without a word. Christ was born at the dead of night; and though there has been no power like his, " He did not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets ". Nowhere can you find any beautiful work, any noble design, any durable endeavour, that was not matured in long and patient silence, ere it spake out in its accomplishment. *There* it is that we accumulate the inward power which we distribute and spend in action; put the smallest duty before us in dignified and holy aspects, and reduce the severest hardships beneath the foot of our self-denial. There it is that the soul, enlarging all its dimensions at once, acquires a greater and more vigorous being, and gathers up its collective forces to bear down upon the piecemeal difficulties of life, and scatter them to dust. There alone can we enter into that spirit of self-abandonment by which we take up the cross of duty, however heavy, and tread the dolorous way with feet however worn and bleeding. And thither shall we return again, only into higher peace and more triumphant power, when the labour is over and the victory won, and we are called by death into God's loftiest watch-tower of Contemplation.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XVII.

## SUDDEN CONVERSION

It is quite true that such a change cannot be expected, that to calculate on it is inexpressibly perilous; for the deeper movements of the soul shrink back from our computations, refuse to be made the tools of our prudence, and insist on coming unobserved or coming never; and he that reckons on them sends them into banishment, and only shows that they are and must be strangers to his barren heart. It is quite true that self-cure is of all things the most arduous; but that which is impossible *to the man within us*, may be altogether possible *to the God*. In truth, the denial of such changes, under the affectation of great knowledge of men, shows an incredible ignorance of men. Why, the history of every great religious revolution, such as the spread of Methodism, is made up of nothing else; the instances occurring in such number and variety, as to transform the character of whole districts and vast populations, and to put all scepticism at utter defiance. And if some more philosophic authority is needed for the fact, we may be content with the sanction of Lord Bacon, who observed that a man reforms his habits either all together or not at all. Deterioration of mind is indeed always gradual; recovery usually sudden; for God, by a mystery of mercy, has established this distinction in our secret nature—that while we cannot, by one dark plunge, sympathize with guilt far beneath us, but gaze at it with recoil till intermediate shades have rendered the degradation tolerable, we are yet capable of sympathizing with moral excellence and beauty infinitely above us; so that while the debased may shudder and sicken at even the true picture of themselves, they



can feel the silent majesty of self-denying and disinterested duty. With a demon can no man feel complacency, though the demon be himself; but God can all spirits reverence, though his holiness be an infinite deep. And thus the soul, privately uneasy at its insincere state, is prepared, when vividly presented with some sublime object veiled before, to be pierced as with a flash from Heaven with an instant veneration, sometimes intense enough to fuse the fetters of habit and drop them to the earth whence they were forged. The mind is ready, like a liquid on the eve of crystallization, to yield up its state on the touch of the first sharp point, and dart, over its surface and in its depths, into brilliant and beautiful forms, and from being turbid and weak as water, to become clear as crystal, and solid as the rock.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, IX.

# IX

# JESUS

## THE INCARNATION

THE Incarnation is true, not of Christ exclusively, but of Man universally, and God everlastingly. He bends into the human to dwell there; and humanity is the susceptible organ of the divine. . . .

When the incrustations on the original picture are cleared from the canvas, the dress of mythological pretensions, the attitude of self-glorification, which are nowhere less at home than in the divinest nature, will disappear: and the figure will come out, grand in its simplicity, of the true Son of Man, standing in the light of a new consciousness that just for that very reason he is also Son of God, and must draw others to be so too. The Incarnation, taken in the Church sense, as predicable exclusively of his personality, is not only unsustained by proof, supernatural or natural, but an absolute reversal of the animating principle of his life and faith. The Church makes it the most stupendous of miracles that he individually was at once human and divine: to him it was an every-day fact that all men are mingled of human and divine. The Church sets the two natures in such contrariety that the rules of the universe must be set aside to blend them in a single instance: to him it was revealed—and the revelation bathed the world in a sanctity constant as the daylight—that they were in the closest kindred, living together, whether the consciousness was mutual or not, in every soul, and





incapable, without sorrowful breach and unfulfilled perfection, of parting from one another. To set him up on a pedestal alone—the unique form in which God's essence has entered the limits of our humanity—is to frustrate the very aim and prayer of his life, by appropriating to him the consecration for which he cared only so far as it was universal. Not till we say of all men what the creed says of him exclusively, that two natures go to make one person, both that which is born after its kind, and that which is " of one substance with the Father "—the blended conditions of the *creature* and the *Son* of God—do we make any confession which he would own: and the truth of the Incarnation first comes out, when, in virtue of it, he represents us all, and by exhibiting it on the level of our life, makes us aware that our humanity is human only, but, beyond the sphere of self, has fellowship and rest in God.

*Essays*, II, XI, XII.

## THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS REAL

If all that is transcendent in Christ's sinless character is due to an exceptional provision in his favour, it can impose no obligation because it represents no possibility for us. It is not an exhibition of human but of super-human excellence, and may be beautiful in our eyes, like the image of an angel-nature, but not binding to our conscience. Nor is it properly *moral* excellence at all, but rather constitutional symmetry and grace of soul, as little imitable by us as a clear complexion or a fine form. The doctrine appears to me eminently unscriptural also. The fact that " he was without sin " would have lost all its wonder, in the eyes of the early disciples, but for its connection with the ante-

cedent, that " he was tempted in all points as we are ". And again his *exaltation* is uniformly treated by the apostles—especially Paul—as the *reward* of his obedience. But what a mockery to represent God as first taking care (by supernatural outfit or protection) that he should not sin, and then rewarding him for his immaculateness! I confess myself, moreover, quite unable to discover any tendency, in a hyperphysical nature or miraculous powers, to produce moral perfection. Such advantages would alter, for their possessor, the problem of duty, surround him with new conditions, lift him to a higher level of responsibility; but would leave it just as possible to abuse this larger trust as for us to abuse our smaller. We deceive ourselves by talking of *human* frailty as if it were an attribute of our race exclusively, and would be escaped by going out into higher natures. Surely *liability to sin* must attach to all beings capable of a moral life, and invested with a holy trust at all; and a bad angel must be just as possible as a wicked man. The possibilities of unfaithfulness can never be shut out so long as you remain in that realm of Free-will, beyond which faithfulness and unfaithfulness alike disappear. Either Christ's preternatural gifts rendered his obligations proportionally larger and more intense; and then they were no *moral* gain, for force and difficulty were increased together. Or else he was allowed, with superhuman powers, to restrict his aims to the human problem; and then *his* work was set on easier conditions than *ours*. The only way to preserve the application of Christ's Ideal to our Actual—so, at least, it has always seemed to me—is to identify the moral conditions of his life and ours, and to consider his inspiration as an enlargement instead of a relief to his trust, conceded to his prior and pre-eminent fidelity.



In this light it becomes, not an exceptional and anomalous phenomenon, but only a conspicuous example of the universal Law of God's communion with the human soul—viz., that whoever uses a little grace well shall be endowed with more; and if he be true again to this greater, his spiritual light shall still increase; and so on without end. I see no sufficient reason for supposing that there was any particular *date* to which his inspiration should be assigned as a new event, though doubtless his inner life was not without its *crises*. Rather do I think of it as an ever growing quantity, blending more and more of the Divine with the Human in him as his history deepened. Christ is thus the concrete exhibition of what God means by human nature; of his sympathy with its fidelity; of his destination of it to immortality.

*Life*, I, p. 348.

## JESUS AND HIS AGE

The longer I study the literary genesis and comparative contents of our Gospels, the more does the *securely historical nucleus* of their reports respecting the Person and Sayings of Jesus shrink and become overlaid with a diluting admixture of spoiling comments betraying the work of erroneous expectation or a later time; yet the more profound is my reverent reliance on that divine " Logos " as the pure expression of the Human Soul in its revealing experience of God. Lighted by inward affection and outward self-sacrifice into realization of the highest Theism, Jesus had to remain true to the lower conditions of his country and his time, if he were to speak home to the hearts of his people. And so would come to pass an inevitable and unholy blending of popular tradition and transcendent sanctity of truth.

The Synoptic Gospels, apart from their differences *inter se*, plainly contain, in each case, examples of an incongruous mixture of Israelitish mythology with the genuine oracles of eternal life; and it is only by spiritual analysis that the permanent Divine essence can be disengaged from its perishable historical appendages. This is but the old distinction between " the letter " and " the spirit "—never yet effectively carried out except by the Society of Friends; the Catholics' vow of allegiance being taken to " the Church ", the Protestants' to " the letter of Scripture ", the Friends' to the *inward " Spirit of God "* in the responding Conscience.

*Life*, II, p. 208.

## MESSIANIC IDEAS AND UNIVERSAL RELIGION

It is no wonder that the religion of Christ, now that its genius has distinctly opened itself out, should appear to us to make quite a new beginning in the world; should stand detached, as a sudden apparition, from the common history even of the nation in which it arose, and seem scarcely to touch the earth except as the theatre of its manifestation. This illusion, due to our distance, could not be shared by the first witnesses who lived across the dividing time of the old world and the new, and occupied the very scene of the transition. They, accordingly, linked their fresh allegiance closely with their national birth-right; if they accepted the gospel it was in obedience to the law: they followed Jesus of Nazareth, because the prophecies must be fulfilled; nor were they surprised at his call, for they were looking for some such " consolation to Israel ". In its earliest aspect Christianity was no new or universal religion; Judaism had found the person of its



Messiah, but else remained the same. Had the first two gospels and the book of Revelation been the only monuments of the primitive age, no other view than this, which makes the New Testament simply the last chapter of the Old, would have been represented in our Scriptures: and it is by no means clear that, within the first generation, " the Twelve " and their disciples ever withdrew from the synagogue, or regarded the church as more than its supplement and ally. It was impossible, however, permanently to shut up and paralyse the spiritual power of Christ's personality within the narrow formulas of Jewish tradition and expectation. His words contained the germs, his life the image, his entrance into a higher world the consummation of the purest and widest human faith; and could not fail to speak home to many a spirit already sighing for such deliverance and repose.

*Essays*, III, VII.

## THE ANCIENT AND MODERN CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK

For the first disciples, themselves on earth, and constantly looking for Christ's return hither, it was only natural to imagine two spheres of being, with the wilderness of clouds and space between; the one, the scene of God's local presence, where Jesus " sat at the right hand of God ": the other, this world of waiting and of exile, which had nothing divine but as an express emanation from that upper sphere. Filled with the fancy of a physical distance between heavenly and human things, they fitly spoke of *Messengers* and *Ambassadors* of God, as we should of visitants from a foreign potentate. To treat the miracles as *Credentials* was a suitable thing, when such acts, though out of

nature upon this lower earth and among ordinary men, were regarded as the established ways of the upper world to which Messiah belonged, and accepted as the overflow of his diviner nature upon his mortal career. And there was something in the way of positive information, startling enough to be described as a *Message* from God, to those who thought themselves apprised of the speedy Advent and approaching end of the world. This was to them a notice of an historic event, which would affect their whole course of action in the meanwhile. But all this is incapable of harmonizing with our altered state. Our outward universe, our personal expectations, are totally different from theirs. Their one world, storehouse of heavenly things, has burst into ten thousand spheres, not one of which is nearer to the awful presence than our own. We are not remote from our Father, that he should have to *send* to us; there is no interval between. Nor are the universal principles of Faith and Duty, which constitute the essence of Christianity, so strange to our nature, that we should treat them as a communication from foreign parts. There is no going and coming, no telegraph, or embassage, no interposition and retreat, no divine sleeping and waking, in pure religion. The human race is for ever at home with God; and his Inspiration, intensest in the soul of the Galilean, is fresh and open for every age.

*Essays*, I, IV.

## THE CHEERFULNESS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

Throughout the decorative emblems and inscriptions in the early Christian cemeteries, it has been remarked, one uniform character may be observed—their spirit of



cheerfulness and hope. By some fresh breath, the gloom seems all swept out from the chamber of so many griefs; and a sweet and placid light to fill the place, other than the glare of earthly day, and like an enclosure of starlight from the skies. The images and pictures on the walls exclude all the horrors, and present only the sanctity, of death; assuring us that survivors kept over it a secure and quiet vigil, invested it with peaceful thoughts, and looked through it to a holy and passionless existence. There, the evergreen leaf protests, in sculptured silence, that the winter of the grave cannot touch the saintly soul: the blossoming branch speaks of vernal suns beyond the snows of this chill world: the good Shepherd shows, from his benign looks, that the mortal way, so terrible to nature, had become to those Christians as the meadow path, between the grassy slopes and beside the still waters. Yet were these mausoleums peopled by no favoured race. They were the last asylum of the persecuted; they opened the first shelter to the weary and despised: side by side with those who had fallen asleep on the pillow of domestic care, were many who had died the martyr's death, and mingled their last sigh, not with the sobs of affection, but with the fiendish shouts of the amphitheatre. When this is borne in mind, the impress of cheerfulness on the symbolic memorials of the place cannot fail to strike us as remarkable. That the victims pelted hither by the storms of a merciless world should be laid down upon the earth without a mark of anger or a burst of mourning, but only with the mild farewell of affection and of hope, attests the power of the new faith to still with its word the fiercest tempest of grief and passion.

*Hours*, I, XII.

# X

# THE FUNCTION OF A MEDIATOR

## NO MEDIATOR CAN DISCHARGE NATURAL PENALTIES

A MEDIATOR may do much indeed to reconcile my alienated mind to God. He may personally rise before me with a purity and greatness so unique as to give me faith in diviner things than I had known before, and by his higher image turn my eye towards the Highest of all. He may show me how, in the sublimest natures, sanctity and tenderness ever blend, and so touch the springs of inward reverence that, in my returning sympathy with goodness, all abject and deterring fears are swept away. He may direct upon me, from the hall of trial or the cross of self-sacrifice, the loving look that prostrates the impulses of passion and the power of self, and awakens the repentant enthusiasm of nobler affections. He may renew my future; but he cannot change my past. He may sprinkle my immediate soul with the wave of regeneration; but he cannot drown the deeds that are gone. From *present sinfulness* he may recover me; but the *perpetrated* sins—though he be God himself in power, unless he be other than God in holiness—he cannot redeem. These have become realized facts; and none can cut off the entail of their consequences: whatever the Divine Law has avowedly annexed to them will develop itself from them with infallible certainty. The outward sufferings by which God has stamped into the nature of things his dis-





approbation of sin, and made it grievous here and hereafter, stand irrevocably fast, clinging to guilt as shadow to body, as effect to cause. This debt of natural penalty is one that must be paid to the utmost farthing; by penitent and impenitent, by the reconciled and the unreconciled alike; miracle cannot cancel, nor mediator discharge it. In this sense—of rescue from the penal laws of God—I know of no remission of sins; nor would Christians have retained so heathenish a notion, had they not frightfully exaggerated, in the first instance, the retributions of God by making them an *eternal vengeance*; and so created a necessity for again rescinding the fierce enactments of their fancy, that hope and return might not be quite shut out. It is only in man, however, and not in God, thus to do and undo. His word, whether of warning or of promise, is Yea and Amen; and his great realities will march serenely on, and, heedless of our passionate deprecations and fictitious triumphs, rebuke our unbelief of his veracity.

*Studies of Christianity :* "Sin."

# XI

# THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

## INSPIRATION INWARD AND OPEN TO ALL MEN

THAT the "authority" of Christ should require his cold isolation from men, so that, in his particular characteristics as our guide, he should be extrinsic to our race, is perfectly inconceivable to us. Why, God himself has no "authority" over us, but in virtue of attributes which he has made common to our nature with his own, and in which we are separated from him in degree and not in kind. And where, after all, is the "ultimate authority" of our religion to be found? Who will show us the real seat of the "primitive Christianity" of which all disciples are in quest? Shall we take the first four centuries, and interpret the concurrent tones of their voices into the certain oracle of God? Not so, you say; for the writers of that period were full of the errors prevailing around them; and they themselves refer us to an anterior generation, as imparting legitimacy to the doctrines which they teach. Shall we go, then, to that earlier generation, and abide by the words of the Apostolic age? Scarcely this either, you will say; for the marks are too plain that there is no unerring certainty here: the Apostles themselves are not without their differences; and even their unanimity could mistake, for they confessedly taught the near approach of the end of the world. They, too, still refer us upward, and take everything from Christ. To Christ, then, let us go. Wherein





resides the "authority" in him which we are to accept as "final"? Shall we say: in his reported *words* wherever found; his statements are conclusive, and exempt from doubt? Impossible! Who can affirm that he had, and that he uttered, no ideas imbibed from his age, and obsolete when that age was gone; that he grew up to manhood in the Galilean province without a sentiment, an expectation, native to place and time; or that he disrobed himself of his whole natural mind from the instant of his baptism; that he did not discern evil spirits in the poor patients that came to him, and so misinterpret his own miracles; that he raised no hopes in others of sitting on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; of drinking with him of the fruit of the vine at his table in the kingdom; and of his own return to fulfil all these things "within that generation"? Will any one plainly say, with these things before him, that Jesus was infallible, and that in his spoken language we have a standard of doctrinal truth? And if error was possible, who will give us an *external* test by which we may know the region of its absence and of its presence? for, without this, to talk of his words being "a rule of faith" is a delusion or a pretence. . . . It will not be questioned that the Inspiration of Jesus was *within* the soul: by the powers that dwelt there, he knew the thoughts to be divine and holy as they dropped on his meditations; and the authorizing point of all his treasures of heavenly truth and grace dwelt in his Reason, Conscience, and Faith. Here, then, is the fountain of all, the primitive seat of inspiration, and the true *religion of Christ*—that which he *felt and followed*, not that which he *spake and led*. And those are the most genuine disciples, who stand with him at the same spring; who are ready for the same

trust; and can disengage themselves from tradition, pretence, and fear, at the bidding of the same source of Inspiration.

*Essays*, I, IV.

## NO MATERIAL EQUIVALENT FOR HUMAN QUALITIES

In comparing the several forms of power, there are two dimensions of value which you have to estimate; not their *quantity only*, but *their quality too*; and of the latter no system of equivalents, no gauge of "foot-pounds", or other standard, takes any notice or gives any account. Having measured, *e.g.*, the dose of light and heat expended in growing a definite portion of your food, suppose that you could further find the equivalent chemical action which reduced the food into the material of blood; and then the measure of vital force for assimilating the blood, and turning some of it into brain; and finally the store of nervous power laid out thence in the service of thought; these quantities, by the rule, must be all equal in amount; but they leave the several stages, in their other dimensions of quality, wholly incommensurable and inconvertible. What degree of the thermometer can be the equivalent of a stanza of "In Memoriam", or of a happy stroke of philosophical genius? What photometric scale can give the value of a moral act of self-denial, or a glad sacrifice of love? How many grains of the protoids or the fats are tantamount to a penitential psalm, or to the agony of Gethsemane? Among your forces, then, equate and proportionate them as you may, there remains, besides the measure of their material media, an indestructible difference of dignity, which ranges



them on an ascending scale, and forbids you to read them indifferently backwards or forwards, though their scientific numbers may be equivalent.

*Seat of Authority*, Book I, ch. I.

## ONE MIND HAS NO NATURAL AUTHORITY OVER ANOTHER

It was never meant that in this world, or any other where responsible minds are found, the pleasure of one should be the law for all; and wherever that pretension is set up, we all turn rebels on the instant, and the push begins of will against will; and, submit as we may, it is with protest, and keen watching to slip the tyranny. In the armed pleasure of one mind there is no natural authority over the unarmed of another; and if the helpless yields, it will be as the captive, to work in chains, and plan revenge in tears. It is not stronger Will, but higher Right, that bears the title to rule in the societies of men; and only he who visibly forgets himself, and becomes the organ of a law he did not make and cannot alter, whose will is firm because it is *not* his own, but is backed by a divine adamant that cannot yield, can win a loyal and glad obedience. He is not enforcing his personal preferences, but vindicating the just and good, which he at once embodies and obeys. This total retreat of self, this advance to the front of an august and invisible moral necessity, is the secret of that quiet dignity with which effective authority is invariably exercised. Rebuke itself acquires a solemn weight where it falls with impersonal gentleness, spoiled by no heats of fluttered egotism, and tinged only with the sorrow of disappointed trust. Whoever lives out of any inward faith in good, is involuntarily disposed to

presume it in others even while it is yet latent, and is the first to see it when its incipient expression comes; and in dealing with them he addresses himself to it, and confides in the response. The very light of his eye kindles into life the spot on which it falls: he looks for the conscience, and it is there. All who come into his presence learn to feel that they have more than justice done to them; that the best they have is seen in them, and the best they can is expected from them; and under this warmth of appreciation every promise of good hastens its growth, opens into the upper air, and is nourished into strength.

*Hours*, I, XIX.

## PROFESSIONAL RELIGION AND THE LIVING WITNESS

No man can serve two masters. Either scientific theology, or else doctrinal fixity; but not both. If you are bound to a confession, you are not free as a scholar; and your attainments, not reverently serving God's hidden ends, but skilfully securing your own preconceptions, sink to the rank of unconsecrated personal adornments. The erudition of a clergy pledged to certain critical and dogmatic results can have no judicial balance and breadth: it will be full of disproportion, empty and silent in one part, noisy and browbeating in another; ever tending to rabbinical trifling and antiquarian punctiliousness; and will want the fresh, manly, hopeful, and believing voice which makes you feel the difference between patched-up conviction and unreserved faith. The poor results of the clerical teaching-function in this country can surprise no one who considers the restraints under which



the whole professional mind lies. How can a man in the stocks rise up and show you the way?

At best, however, were the exposition of the records and history of our faith ever so well achieved, the result would only be a *Theology*—a knowledge or intelligent scheme of Divine things; not *Religion*—the inward consciousness of God and reverent acceptance of his guiding will. Theology, as the critique of Religion, always stands at one remove from its reality and essence; and no more involves it than Scientific Ethics involve personal conscientiousness. Take away every hindrance from the free development of biblical, historical and philosophical studies, suppose even a clerisy, such as Coleridge imagined, at the head of all liberal knowledge, still they would thus far only form a body like the Divinity Professors of Germany; from whom indeed, as prevailingly *lay* teachers, theological literature receives all its richest accessions, but who are in no closer contact with the moral life of their nation than the jurists or the physicians. By learning from the best-equipped instructors the truest doctrines in the most demonstrative forms, no single soul was ever saved. There is need, therefore, of a yet higher function; which we have described as the interpretation of the *unwritten Word*, the appeal to the *Living Witness* of God in our humanity. That Witness is present in every movement of Conscience, every pure admiration, every secret reverence—holy and gentle leadings that pass from us as a transient mood, unless some true diviner's voice finds their authority for us and awes us by what they are.

*Essays*, II, IX.

# XII

# CHURCH LIFE

## THE CHURCH COMPREHENSIVE

No genuine disciple can be sceptical as to the existence, or fastidious in the acknowledgment, of any true worthiness. We owe it largely to the Author of our faith, that we cannot encounter the great and good in the generations of the past, without affectionate curiosity, and even strong friendship. Christ, himself the discerner of the Samaritan's goodness and the alien's faith, has called the noble dead of history to a better life than they had before, even in this world: their memory is dearer; their example, more productive; their spirit, more profoundly understood. Thus is there a fraternity formed that disowns the restrictions of place and time; a Church of Christ that passes the bounds of Christendom: and though, in the general chorus of great souls, disciples only can well apprehend the theme and put in the words, yet the glorious voices of Socrates and Plato, of Alcæus and Pindar, of Aristides and Scipio, of Antoninus and Boethius, richly mingle as preluding or supporting instruments, filling the melody, though scarce interpreting the thought. Nor is this brotherhood confined even by historic bounds: it spreads beyond this sphere and makes one family in heaven and earth. The very faith that the honoured men of old still live, and carry on elsewhere the appointed work of faithful minds, unspeakably deepens our interest in them; forbids us to





sigh after them as irrecoverable images of the past; enrols them among our contemporaries; and from the lights of memory transfers them to the glories of hope.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, XVII.

## THE LIVING PAST

All that is noble in the world's past history, and especially the minds of the great and good, are, in like manner, never lost.

The true records of mankind, the human annals of the earth, are not to be found in the changes of geographical names, in the shifting boundaries of dominion, in the travels and adventures of the baubles of royalty, or even in the undulations of the greater and lesser waves of population. We have learned nothing, till we have penetrated far beyond these casual and external changes, which are of interest only as the effect and symptoms of the great mental vicissitudes of our race. History is an account of the past experience of humanity; and this, like the life of the individual, consists in the ideas and sentiments, the deeds and passions, the truths and toils, the virtues and the guilt, of the mind and heart within. We have a deep concern in preserving from destruction the *thoughts* of the past, the leading conceptions of all remarkable forms of civilization; the achievements of genius, of virtue, and of high faith. And in this, nothing can disappoint us: for though these things may be individually forgotten, collectively they survive, and are in action still. All the past ages of the world were necessary to the formation of the present; they are essential ingredients in the events that occur daily before our eyes. There is no period so ancient, no country so remote, that it could be cancelled

without producing a present shock upon the earth. One layer of time has Providence piled up upon another for immemorial ages: we that live stand now upon this "great mountain of the Lord"; were the strata below removed, the fabric and ourselves would fall in ruins. Had Greece, or Rome, or Palestine, been other than they were, Christianity could not have been what it is: had Romanism been different, Protestantism could not have been the same, and we might not have been here this day. The separate civilizations of past centuries may be of colours singly indiscernible; but in truth, they are the prismatic rays which, united, form our present light.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XXII.

## UNORGANIZED RELIGION OF ARTISANS

It is very natural for preachers to measure the faith and piety of their time by the numbers in habitual attendances on churches and chapels, or giving support to connected institutions. Such a standard, we are convinced, is entirely delusive. Disaffection towards the organized worship of the country is not so groundless as to stand in evidence of a mere godless insensibility. The classes in whom it is strongest, and who have most completely passed out of clerical influence—viz., the artisans on the one hand, and the academical and professional laity on the other—are certainly not the least impressionable; but, on the contrary, show in other directions a ready susceptibility of enthusiasm and reverence. It it not amongst them that you chiefly find contempt for poetry, stupidity as to art, disbelief of nobleness, sordid Phœnician politics, or distrust of unprofitable truth. Would you bring together an



audience where Burns's verse would strike most home, where Ruskin would have most believing hearers, where Miss Nightingale's name would be greeted with deepest honour, where patriotic sacrifices would be demanded least in vain, it is precisely from these classes that you would do well to draw it. And is it to be supposed that those who are quickest in response to these lesser religions of life, can be hardened against the infinite reverence that comprehends them all? Where genius, beauty, goodness, in their human apparition, are so willingly believed and welcomed with so pure a joy, depend upon it there is an eye of recognition ready for their auguster and diviner form. Antecedently to experience, who would say that the elements of religious character existed with any distinctive force in the social ranks that are found around the pulpits of the land? With all their intelligence and worth, the trading middle-class and the upper circle just beyond are of all their contemporaries, the most inaccessible by habit and education to any self-forgetful fervours, the most conventional and cautious in their judgments, the most disposed to bow down before wealth and station, and the most anxiously studious of decorum. Many virtues may doubtless be interwoven with such a staple of character. But these are prosaic qualities, closer by far to the actual than to any ideal world, betraying an admiration and secret homage not very free to aspire beyond the near and visible, and tending, in any endeavour after higher ascent, to a religion of mere longer prudence. The administration of Christianity, adapted to such temperament and capacity, cannot be taken to exhaust its power, or to justify an ungenial despair of those to whom it does not speak. Traces abound of an unorganized religion

sleeping or struggling in men's hearts beyond the circle of the organized. The most powerful literature of our age, even when heretical and rebellious, merciless to parsons and disrespectful to creeds, is in its essence anything but irreligious; its hold on the time is not through the bitterness and scorns, but through the wonder, the veracities, and the tenderness of our nature.

*Essays*, II, ix.

## THE FEDERAL UNION OF CHURCHES

The Episcopalian body of Christians I cannot admit to be " the historical Church of England ", any more than the Independents or the Baptists or the Presbyterians are, who no less legitimately arose out of the development of Catholic Christendom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than the Anglican type of the Reformed Religion.

They belonged to English history, and have to this day continued to make English history, just as much as the worshippers in the parish churches. And the Episcopalians, by excommunicating them, broke with " historical conditions ", and forfeited all claim to be themselves anything more than one ascendant sect among several.

The " Act of Uniformity " was an act of schism; and ever since, we have been forced to live as two nations on one territory; slowly indeed acquiring considerable community of civil rights, but so alienated in religious life that neither knows anything of the traditions, the heroes, the saints, the literature, or the inner social characteristics of the other. The " Puritans " have had quite as important a share as the " Prelatists " in



making England what it is; and as truly belonged to the *Church of Christ in England*; and the Episcopalians owe their exclusive title to the name " Church of England " to nothing better than an arbitrary appropriation of temporalities and privilege secured at a crisis of party triumph.

It is this breach of " historical conditions " that I would fain see repaired, by replacing within the recognized limits of our national Christendom the excommunicated half of the worshipping population. The expectation that the Anglican community should ever, by leaving it alone, " expand from within ", is precluded by the fact that it is stereotyped in its present form by law, and has no power of self-government or self-modification. And, on the other hand, the hope that it may, while remaining essentially what it is, draw and absorb into itself the bodies of English Christians which it has forced into separate organization is too chimerical for the most sanguine optimist. The only way of avoiding checkmate by these alternative impossibilities is, (1) to release the Anglicans from their legal restrictions, and set them free for self-development and self-regulation, like the several voluntary bodies; (2) to recognize the legitimacy of these voluntary bodies, as having each its own *raison d'être*, and its own congenial portion of the population under its charge; (3) to gather all these co-equal self-governed bodies into a *Federal union*, empowered to confer and act together in the numerous matters of common Christian duty and enterprise—social, moral, missionary, charitable—which gain so much both in spirit and in range, by a wise economy of energy.

*Life*. II, p. 126.

## THE UNITARIAN POSITION

In every Christian congregation there must be, as the ground of its internal and external action, a fundamental agreement for the time being,—among themselves and with their minister,—as to the main features of Christian doctrine, as well as the essentials of Christian life; and the unreserved teaching of these is no less obligatory upon the society than the private profession of them upon the individual. Still further, it is incumbent on the wider aggregates of persons scattered over the area of a province or a country, and, united in earnest theological conviction, to combine together for the teaching and vindication of what they believe to be true, by the press, the pulpit, the missionary, and all similar agencies. On these points I have never heard of any one who entertained a doubt; nor am I aware of a single sentence ever uttered or written by any one of our ministers or laymen which gives even the faintest colour to the imputation of indifference to definite thought, unreserved expression, and public union in relation to theological opinion.

The real question is this: whether Theological combinations and Church combinations should be identical or distinct? If the sympathies and admirations and persuasions which make men of one school of theology are, in the long run, the same which group them into one church fellowship and constitute their historical unity, then undoubtedly the intellectual theory and the spiritual bond coalesce. And in all churches whose very "scheme of redemption" is dogmatic, in which the salvation of mankind from a pre-existent curse and certain perdition, and their



actual deliverance from the power of sin, are made conditional on belief in a given system of doctrines, there is a hopeless inter-weaving of theology with the spiritual life. With *them* it is quite true that if you alter the doctrine you alter the church; and to them it seems absurd to recognize as of the same communion a believer not holding their distinctive characteristics. The logical classification and the spiritual classification are with them necessarily the same.

This, however, is the consequence of precisely that notion of *orthodoxy* which we are in the habit of regarding with just dislike, and for which we substitute the more generous recognition of a *Progressive Theology amid sameness of Spiritual Relations*. The consequence is simple and obvious. It is the conscious sameness of spiritual relations that constitutes *a Church*; it is the temporary concurrence in theological opinion that embodies itself in a creed and makes *a Sect* in the proper sense. The very life and soul of the former, so far as we are concerned, is in the feeling and proclamation of unity in spite of difference. The essence of the latter is in the accentuation of difference amid unity—in the imitative acceptance of the very principle and mode of thought whence other sects arise. We are bound, I must think, to hold our particular form of *personal opinion* on a different tenure from the *spiritual affections* which bring successive generations to kneel in our churches; to treat the former as a life interest, and the latter as a freehold in perpetuity; and to beware of fixing upon worshipping assemblies and an ecclesiastical body whose life runs on through centuries, the mutable types of thought special to our own time.

*Essays*, II, x.

## THE LOOSENING OF ANCIENT BELIEF

It cannot be pretended that the Priesthood and the Papacy have any fresh title to show, or can make good their supernatural claims better than before. Nor can it be said that Nature and Humanity, more deeply known, look less Divine; since it is the very pride of science to have won more room for them in space and time, and to have found them grander, older, more progressive, than anyone had dreamed. So far as the intrinsic merits of their own case go, Priest and Atheist never had less excuse than now. But weakness in the intermediate faiths is tantamount to strength in them. The Reformation did the work of its time, but not of all time. It shifted the authority without essentially remodelling the inherited theory of Christianity; and embodied the old scheme of theological thought in its new ecclesiastical constitutions. Nay, in its recoil from shameless laxities, and its jealousy for Divine holiness, it increased the rigour of the older definitions; it deepened the chasm between man and God, and cast into the abyss every bridge of approach except its own hair-line of transit. Its doctrine of human nature announced a ruin more absolute, and its provision of supernatural grace promised a rescue more precarious and arbitrary, than could permanently accord with the experience and conscience of mankind. Deep as are Augustine's occasional glances into the passionate depths of the soul, scarcely are his reasonings against the possibility of antipodes more out of place in the present age, than his theory of the moral and spiritual universe, which was crystallized in the creeds of the Reformed Churches. It may be doubted whether, if it



rested on an unimpeachable authority, it could retain its life in the open air of modern sympathies and relations. But, dependent as it is on the legends of the Creation and the Fall, and on the Pauline reasonings which proceed upon them, it has been weakened, by the progress of Biblical criticism, in its external supports, whilst losing its internal credibility. The result is too notorious to be concealed, and too serious to be let alone. There is an extensive loosening of belief in the "schemes of salvation", which Protestant Churches are constructed to administer; an uneasiness in preachers who cannot enforce them without consciously refining them away, and in hearers to whom they bring no real conviction; a mutual understanding to lower the standard of religious veracity, and not ask too much sincerity in profession or in prayer.

*Essays*, II, XIII.

## FAITH AND DOGMA

The organization of dogma is symptomatic of the dissolution of faith; it is an unwholesome mushroom growth from the rotting leaves now fallen from the tree of life. That blessed foliage feeds it no doubt; only not from the vital sap, but from the juices of decay. It is bad enough that the Church should have inherited her chief formulas of belief from such an age and such a reign as that of Constantine; a reign hideous with guilt; an age so surrendered to depraved morals and misdirected intellect, that, if ever there could be in Christendom an incapacity for discerning spiritual truth, it must have been then. But to make such a time the rule for all others—to dignify by the name of "the Catholic faith" the propositions which emerged

from its wranglings, by outvoting or outreaching the rest; to scorn, in comparison, the right of recent thought, and to constrain the modern Englishman to put back the index of his Christian consciousness to the hour when Athanasius triumphed—is a weak rebellion against providential tendencies, and an irreligious scepticism of God's perpetual inspiration. If, by a liberal interpretation, or, better, a complete revision of the technical phraseology of doctrine, the bands of creed be not relaxed, the church must either descend to the rank of a sect, or become a vast hypocrisy; pretending to unity, yet torn by divisions; representing the faith of the country, yet sheltering its unbelief; the symbol of piety, yet a storehouse of unveracity; the nominal head of all our culture, yet sworn to the words of an age that had none of it. How long will educated Englishmen bear patiently the injurious decree of ecclesiastics—"you shall not be religious, except on conditions impossible to the understanding"?

*Essays*, II, II.

## THE CHILD AND RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE

A reform in the nursery will change the creed of Christendom; no hierarchy can stand against it; and the pinafore of the child will be more than a match for the frock of the bishop and the surplice of the priest. If it be romance to look with something of reverent affection at the being not yet remote from God, it is at least a romance that has come to us on a voice full of grace and truth: it breathes fresh from the hills of Nazareth; and its emblem is that wondering infant in the arms of Christ, visible thence over all the earth, as the chosen watch at the gate of heaven. Whatever be



thought of this doctrine, it cannot be denied that there is, in early years, an openness to habit, which, while it quickly punishes our neglect, as quickly answers to our care. No ready-made obstruction, no ruined work, is given us to undo. Wise direction alone is needed; and such frame-work and moulding for the life as we may advisedly construct, will receive the growing nature as its silent occupant.

Through the susceptibility of the religious principle, you may make the child *believe in* any God, from the Egyptian cat to the inspirer of Christ. But there is only one God that can really possess him with an awful love; namely, such a one as seems to him the highest and the best. And of this there can be no constant conception through life; it changes as experience deepens, and affections open and die away. Yours cannot be the same as his: and if you speak without sympathy, if you forget your different latitude of mind, you may repel rather than instruct, and give root to a choking thorn of hatred, instead of to a fruitful seed of love. If the name of God is to be sweet and solemn to young hearts, it must stand for *their* highest, not for *ours*: and many a phrase rich and deep in tone to us, must be shunned as sure to jar on spirits differently attuned.

It is, I am persuaded, a fatal thing, when we men and women, who make all the catechisms and shape all the doctrines, and invent all the language of Christian faith, force our adult religion, with its meditative depth, upon the heart of childhood, not yet capacious enough to take it in. Puritanism—fit faith for the stalwart devotion of earnest manhood in grim times—cannot be adapted to the childish mind; and the attempt to do so will inevitably produce distaste, and occasion re-

action. This indeed we can hardly doubt is one great and permanent cause of the alternations observable from age to age in the faith and spirit of communities; alternations from enthusiasm to indifference, from scepticism to mysticism, from the anxieties of moral law to the fervour of devout love, from a religion of excessive inwardness to one of outward rites or daily work.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, XIV.

### SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE TRANSMITTED

Transmitted influence from soul to soul, whether among contemporaries, or down the course of time, is not only as *natural*, but as *spiritual*, as the direct relation of each worshipper to God. . . . The whole world is held together by forces of natural reverence, grouping men in ten thousand clusters around centres diviner and more luminous than themselves. And if every family, every tribe, every sect, may have its head and representative, transcendent in the essential attributes that constitute the group, what hinders this law from spreading to a larger compass, and giving to *mankind* their highest realization, superlative in whatever is imitable and binding?

*Essays*, III, I. II.

## XIII
## MORAL OBLIGATION

### NO LIMITS TO DUTY

EVERY man, in proportion as he is a true son of the Highest, feels that he *cannot* stand by, seeing misery and guilt within his reach, and say, "it is no concern of mine"; he knows himself responsible for all the wrong *he might prevent*, as well as for all he may *positively do*. Obligation cannot, from its nature, exhaust itself, and come to an end; writing its "Finis", shutting itself up, and standing thenceforth compact and unsuggestive on the shelf. It has no measure but possibility itself, and thus lies ever open for fresh lines of thought and love. Whosoever has received of heaven the suggestion of some practicable deed of goodness or sacrifice of mercy, bears a burthen which he never can lay down, and which will be asked at his hands when he knocks at the everlasting gate. It is the holy trust committed to him; and how is he straitened till it be accomplished! Thus do the special evils of the guilty world make room enough for the special fidelity of saintly minds, and the vast amount of neglected obligation swell the work of faithful men. Nay, not even should we wait for the direct and audible call of God within us. *Without sacrifice* no man will really maintain the spirit of a noble and devout life. And it is well for each to go out deliberately beyond the circle of his apparent personal obligations, and choose for himself some work, just for God's sake alone—some work to which no inclination,

no necessity, invites him, but which he takes in pure offering to God. It will help his self-knowledge; it will check his presumption; it will exercise his patience; it will test his fidelity. It is not that such works *constitute* his main duty, and accumulate any gains of merit. They are but like the *timepiece*, which does not *make* our hours, but only *marks* them; yet, by the false measurements it thus prevents, and the self-deceptions it corrects, is a priceless economist of life. So is there no such measurer of the way eternal as the daily sacrifice. As its silent index comes round, the steadiness or trembling of our spirits shows how our reckoning stands with God; and when we feel not its return, save by the passage across our heart of a clearer peace and brighter love, it is no slight indication that our course is ready to be finished, and the hour come that we should be glorified.

*Faith and Self Surrender*, IV.

## THE LAW OF OBLIGATION

Strictly speaking, very little in relation to man's duty depends on the diminishing quantity of his time to come. Whether it be a day or a half-century makes no difference in the nature or the intensity of his moral obligation, though it must doubtless affect the external actions on which it may be rational for him to enter. Nay, if there were no such thing as death for him at all; if he had the early Christian's expectation of immortality on earth; the sentence of reprieve for his animal nature would bring no release from the glorious bonds that are laid upon the spiritual. Every hour would retain its priceless worth, notwithstanding the most copious supply; nor could eternity itself cheapen the



moments entrusted to his will. When Paul gained the conviction that he was raised above the touch of mortality; when he first looked into the opening avenue of ages and saw himself, with living feet, securely passing through; when he felt that he could defy the perils of shipwreck and the sword of persecution, did it abate his earnestness, and whisper to him that he had time enough? Did it turn his eager haste into an easy stroll? Did it fill him with moral indifference to the world that slumbered above the elements of explosion? Far otherwise. It cooled his personal interests, and made him so far of quiet heart; but it set his conscience on fire, and he spake the truth, he soothed the sorrows, he warned the sins, which would have been the objects of his care had he beheld that age of Providence as we look back upon it now. "What would you wish to be doing," was the question once put to a wise man, "if you knew that you were going to die the next minute?" "Just what I am doing now," was his reply, though he was neither repeating the creed nor telling his religious experience; but for aught I know, posting his accounts, or talking merry nonsense with his children round the fire. Nothing that is worthy of a living man can be unworthy of a dying one; and whatever is shocking in the last moment would be disgraceful in every other. The most trivial things in their order and season, lose their moral incongruity and manners; the most lofty, when misplaced, are deprived of all their greatness. He who is snatched from the world at his prayers when his work is overdue may well pass with culprit heart away; while the punctual Christian need not be scared to find himself brushing his hat within a minute's reach of the saints in heaven. . . . Our true opportunities come but once;

they are sufficient but not redundant; we have time enough for the longest duty, but not for the shortest sin.

*Faith and Self-Surrender*, II.

## OUR MEASURE OF RIGHT

From its very nature, social law asks no more than men of all sorts agree to demand of one another; and lets off with impunity the follies it is prudent to wink at, and the sins it is not convenient to forego; and if *this* is to be our measure of right—to uphold us where we are—low indeed must be our moral position, and precarious our standing even there. If you have only your little share in the public conscience, all that dignifies existence is at the mercy of the veering winds, and all that consecrates it retires behind the cloud: not the goodness only, but the beauty and true adornment of life, oscillate into senseless distortions; and you will deck yourself, under Cromwell, in the winding-sheet of Puritanism, and in the next age in the lascivious robes of the Restoration, and will helplessly deliver yourself in our time to those outrages on taste which bespeak vacuity or shamelessness of character. Unless you have some selecting principle within, the native affinity, the incorruptible reverence of a pure and modest nature, you have nothing to steady you under the swaying movements of custom; nothing to protect you from any favourite folly; nothing to hinder your captivity to the false admirations that for ever lie in wait for the idle and the faithless of mankind. It is by looking up beyond the actual, not by looking down into it, by seeking God within, not consulting man without, that you will truly measure the divine claims upon you, and



find your duty clear and calm and sacred. Commune with him, the All-holy, and it will become a secret understanding between his spirit and your own—a trust from him, answered by assent and love from you; an escape from the poor twilight of human mediocrity into the precincts of a lustre which can never fade. A soul that goes apart with this divine vision of goodness has that to feed on which others think not of.

*Hours*, I, XI.

# XIV
# THE FREEDOM OF THE HUMAN WILL

## WHO IS THE FREE MAN?

THERE are two governing ideas that, without material error, may be said to rule the actions of mankind, and share between them the dominion of all human souls; the idea of *pleasure and pain*; and the idea of the *noble and ignoble*. Every one, in every deed, follows either what he enjoys, or what he reveres. Now he and he only is *free* who implicitly submits to that which he deeply venerates; who takes part, offensive and defensive, with the just and holy against the encroachments of evil; who feels his self-denials to be his privilege, not his loss; a victory that he has won, not a spoil that he has been obliged to forego. Such a one is free, because he is ruled by no power which he feels to be unrightful and usurping, but maintains in ascendancy the divine spirit that has an eternal title to the monarchy of all souls; because he is never driven to do that which he knows to be beneath him; because he is conscious no longer of severe internal conflict, or it issues in secure enfranchisement; because self-contempt and fear and restlessness, and all the feelings peculiar to a state of thraldom, are entirely unknown. And *they* all are slaves, liable to the peculiar sins and miseries of the servile state—to its meanness, its cowardice, its treachery; who either have nothing which they revere, or, having it, insult its authority and trample it under the Bacchanalian feet of pleasure.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, x.





## MORAL AUTHORITY NOT MERELY INDIVIDUAL

If the authority which claims us were of a merely subjective nature, if it were the aspect which one part of the self bore towards another, it would lie within the interior relations of the individual: and so it would belong to him, though he were in solitude; and, though he were in society, it would be valid for him alone. But neither of these things is true. Though the essence of our nature, as responsible and religious beings, is in the shrine of its self-conscious and reflective powers, it does not wake up there spontaneously to pay its secret worship; but if left alone in silence, will fall back into the sleep of animal existence. It needs the school of sympathy and society, the appeal of objective character, the play of the like and the different, to fling into the soul the sweeping winds at which its chords speak out. We learn ourselves and others together; it is the reciprocities of life that deepen and enrich its solitudes; and in every age the ferment of the city has rolled around the closet of the sublimest prayer. The acted drama of life, unless witnessed with mere callous criticism, reaches the springs of secret poetry in the heart, and the real startles the ideal from its repose. The moment we see a nobleness which is above us, we recognize it and own its claim, and are fired with possibilities we never guessed before. What does this bespeak—this flashing of conscience from mind to mind, this consent of each to the moral life of all, this answering look of the outward and the inward, but that the authority which claims us, whatever it be, is something far beyond the personal nature, wide as the

compass of humanity, embracing all in one moral organism—a universal righteousness which reaches through time, and suffers no individual to escape?

*Seat of Authority*, Bk. I, ch. 11.

## A CASKET OF NECESSITIES

Our whole existence, all its energy of virtue and of passion, is, in truth, but the struggle of free will against the chains that bind us; happy he, that by implicit submission to the law of duty escapes the severity of every other! Our nature is but a casket of impatient necessities; urgencies of instinct, of affection, of reason, of faith; the pressure of which against the inertia of the present determines the living movements, and sustains the permanent unrest, of life. To take the prescribed steps is difficult; to decline them and stand still, impossible. We can no more preserve a stationary attitude in the moral world, than we can refuse to accompany the physical earth in its rotation. The will may be reluctant to stir; but it is speedily overtaken by provocatives that scorn the terms of ease, and take no heed of its expostulations. Driven by the recurring claims of the bodily nature, or drawn by the permanent objects of the spiritual, all men are impelled to effort by the energy of some want, that cannot have spontaneous satisfaction. The labourer that earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, is chased by the hindmost of all necessities—animal hunger. The prophet and the saint, moved by the supreme of human aspirations—the hunger and thirst after righteousness—embrace a life of no less privation and of severer conflict. And between these extremes are other ends of various kinds—renown for the ambitious, art for the



perceptive, knowledge for the sage—given to us to graduate and allow in fair proportion. All these are conscious powers, but all imply a conscious resistance. Each separately precipitates the will upon a thousand obstacles; and all together demand the ceaseless vigilance of conscience to preserve their order, and prevent the encroachments of usurpation. Thus, all action implies the presence of some necessity.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, x.

# XV

# THE SELF-LIMITATION OF GOD

## THE SELF-ABNEGATION OF GOD AND HUMAN FREEDOM

THE *personality* of God consists, we have seen, in his voluntary agency as free cause in an unpledged sphere, that is, a sphere transcending that of immanent law. But precisely this also it is, that constitutes his *Infinity*; extending his sway, after it has filled the actual, over all the possible, and giving command over indefinite alternatives. Hence, it is plain, his personality and his infinity are so far inseparable concomitants that, though you might deny his infinitude without prejudice to his personality, you cannot deny his personality without sacrificing his infinitude: for there is a mode of action—the *preferential* the very mode which distinguishes rational beings—from which you exclude him. Yet we are constantly told that a personal being is necessarily finite; that he is an individual, not a universal; restricted to a definite centre of consciousness and activity, into which and from which influences flow that make up his life. In short, *a Self* implies an *Other-than-Self*, and so gives two spheres of being, only one of which would be God, while the other was his negative. According to the division which we have been defending, this second and antithetic term is the aggregate of rational and moral beings, represented in our world by Man. Confining our attention to him, we have actually treated him as a separate cause, and so have apparently accepted a limit to the infinitude of God. Is there any





reconciliation of these contradictory aspects of personality? There is none, if you assume that infinite Will can never abstain from appropriating all its causality, or divest itself of a portion, in order to fit up another and resembling nature. But surely one who assumes this has already committed the fault which he charges, and discovered something to which his "rigorous infinitude" is incompetent! If we drop this assumption, then our allowance of independence is itself the result of our dependence: it is *conceded* to us by the author of our being, and, though entrusted for a while with a certain free play of causality, is referable in the ultimate resort to the Supreme cause: it is included in what he *has caused*, though excepted from what he *is causing*. It takes therefore nothing from his infinitude, but what he himself renounces; and what is thus relinquished is potentially retained. The self-abnegation of infinity is but a form of self-assertion, and the only form in which it can reveal itself. Whether by setting up other minds with a range of command over alternatives, or by instituting a universe under law without alternative, the Infinite Cause foregoes something of his absolute freedom; in the one case admitting partners of his liberty; in the other, establishing for himself a sphere of necessity: and in the latter case, the more comprehensive the sphere, the vaster is the renunciation: and if it extends to the All, so as to leave no margin of transcendency, the limitation reaches its maximum, no possibility but one being anywhere left open. If therefore there be any force in this objection, the Pantheist who brings it is himself exposed to it in a superlative degree. What greater contradiction can there be than to say, in one and the same breath, that a being is infinite and omnipotent, yet cannot put forth

preferential power? And if we are jealous for his infinitude, which shall we be more afraid to grant—that he lends to a derivative being a little preferential power; or that he is for ever incapable of exercising it himself?

*Study*, II, Bk. III, ch. I

### THE PREVISION AND SELF-LIMITATION OF GOD

An infinite Mind, with provision thus extended beyond all that is to all that can be, is lifted above surprise or disappointment, and able to provide for all events and combinations; yet, instead of being shut up in a closed and mechanized universe, lives amid the free play of variable character and contingent history, into which there is room for approval, pity, and love to flow. Is this a *limitation* of God's foresight, that he cannot read all volitions that are to be? Yes: but it is a *self-limitation*, just like his abstinence from causing them: lending us a portion of his causation, he refrains from covering all with his omniscience. Foreknowledge of the contingent is not a perfection; and if, rather than have a reign of universal necessity and stereotyped futurity, he willed, in order to prepare scope for a gift of moral freedom, to set up a range of alternative possibilities, he could but render some knowledge conditional for the sake of making any righteousness attainable; leaving enough that is determinate, for science; and enough that is indeterminate, for character. "There is no absurdity in supposing," says Dugald Stewart, "that the Deity may, for wise purposes, have chosen to open a source of contingency in the voluntary actions of his creatures, to which no prescience can possibly extend."

*Study*, II, Bk. III, ch. II.

## XVI

## THE RULE OF RIGHT, DIVINE AND UNIVERSAL

### THE RULE OF RIGHT UNIVERSAL

THE rule of right, the symmetries of character, the requirements of perfection, are no provincialisms of this planet; they are known among the stars: they reign beyond Orion and the Southern Cross: they are wherever the universal Spirit is; and no subject mind, though it fly on one track for ever, can escape beyond their bounds. Just as the arrival of light from deeps that extinguish parallax bears witness to the same ether there that vibrates here, and its spectrum reports that one chemistry spans the interval, so does the law of righteousness spring from its earthly base and embrace the empire of the heavens, the moment it becomes a communion between the heart of man and the life of God. Not only does it thus pass, as already pointed out, from our "ideal" to the veritable real, but the reality it wins is stupendous in its scale, planted in the seats and following in the paths of all self-conscious spirits, coextensive with the Divine free agency. By such identification with the all-originating mind, it no less declares itself eternal than omnipresent: inherent in his essence, and therefore objectively put forth and instituted by his Will, for the assimilation of dependent and growing spirits to his own. The emergence of the dutiful relations into these dimensions is surely no slight change: it makes a difference whether the conscience

is listened to as the wayside notice of a village oracle, or as a living voice from the sacrarium of the universe. And only when the true hierarchy of the affections has set into this sublimer form will the character cease to be fluid, and show the steadfastness of the martyr, with a stature more than human and a sweetness like that of Christ. Is there any enthusiasm of goodness that can be excessive or unnatural in those who realize what it is to be, in very truth, " Children of God "? If, as a native of Tarsus, the Apostle could not help saying with a glow of pride that he was " a citizen of no mean city ", how is it possible, without a flush of higher joy, for anyone to know himself a denizen of the city and commonwealth of God?—a community whose service is simple righteousness, and whose patriotism an inextinguishable love of perfection.

*Study*, I, Introduction.

## THE MORAL IMPERATIVE

The moral order is not arbitrary, in the sense of being a personal accident, an individual prejudice, got up by the subject himself and alterable fortuitously or at will. When you read of a tyrant who, travelling in winter and afraid of frost-bite, cut open a horse to warm his feet in him, your abhorrence of the wretch for preferring his comfort to his humanity is not a matter of taste, like your preference of pheasants' feathers to peacocks' or of peaches to pineapple: it is neither, like these, contingent in yourself on sensible conditions, nor reversed or absent in others' minds: it exists irremovably in each, and with consensus in all; attended by the feeling, which belongs to no personal judgment, that to think otherwise would involve an unspeakable shame, the guilt of



taking sides against an everlasting Right. It is the peculiarity of all properly moral verdicts, that they are not the expression of individual opinions which we work out for ourselves by sifting of evidence; but the enunciation of what is given us ready-made and has only to pass through us into speech. We may indeed debate within ourselves the claims presented in this or that example of outward conduct, because the choice of action has to be determined not only by the principle that issues it, but by the effects that follow it: these are amenable to the calculus of the understanding, without resort to which the action cannot be *rational*; but so long as the prior problem is before us, of securing the right spring of conduct, we have nothing to seek by logical process, but only to give forth what we find. Here, where alone truly *moral* judgment resides, we are but organs of what is deposited with us; to pretend that we are concerned with its fabrication and must speak diffidently of its probability, is quite out of place: the real arrogance lies in mixing ourselves up with it and delivering it as *our* opinion; the true humility, in simply repeating the sentence which it has been given us to know. In other words, the Moral Law (for such is the " Canon of principles " taken as a whole) is *imposed by an authority foreign to our personality*, and is open, not to be canvassed, but only to be obeyed or disobeyed.

*Study*, II, Bk. II, ch. II.

## CONSCIENCE HAS DIVINE AUTHORITY

If the sense of authority means anything, it means the discernment of something *higher than we*, having claims on our *self*, therefore no mere part of it; hovering

over and transcending our personality, though also mingling with our consciousness and manifested through its intimations. If I rightly interpret this sentiment, I cannot therefore stop within my own limits, but am irresistibly carried on to the recognition of another than I. Nor does that "other" remain without further witness: the predicate "higher than I" takes me yet a step beyond; for what am I? a *person*: "higher" than whom no "*thing*" assuredly—no mere *phenomenon*—can be; but only *another Person*, greater and higher and of deeper insight. In the absence of society or human companionship, we are thus still held in the presence of One having moral affinity with us, yet solemn rights over us: by retiring into ourselves, we find that we are transported out of ourselves, and placed beneath the light of a diviner countenance. If it be true that over a free and living person nothing short of a free and living person can have higher authority, then it is certain that a "subjective" conscience is impossible. The faculty is more than part and parcel of myself; it is the communion of God's life and guiding love entering and abiding with an apprehensive capacity in myself. Here we encounter an "objective" authority, without quitting our own centre of consciousness; an authority which at once sweeps into the widest generality without asking a question of our fellow-men; for an excellence and sanctity which God recognizes and reports has its seat in eternal reality, and is not contingent on our accidental apprehension: it holds its quality wherever found, and the revelation of its authority to one mind is valid for all. Each of us is permitted to learn, in the penetralia of his own consciousness, that which at once bears him out of himself, and raises him to the station of the



Father of Spirits; and thence he is enabled to look down over the realm of dependent minds, and apply to them the all-comprehending law which he has reached at the fountain-head. If this pathway is correctly traced, from the moral consciousness to religious apprehension, all possible excuse is taken away for treating the authority of Conscience as merely personal and subjective, or even as that of Reason, "impersonally conceived"; for that which is real in the universal Archetype of all Mind cannot be either an abstraction or an accidental phenomenon of human individuality.

*Types*, II, Bk. I, ch. IV.

## ETHICS PRIOR TO RELIGION

If we start from our own psychological experience alone, without assumption or speculation respecting the universe around, we meet there, at a very early stage, with ethical elements, involving the idea and furnishing the rule of duty. Childhood itself, small as are its concerns, is full of its moral enthusiasms and indignations, quick with its shame and compunction, bright with its self-approval; and with all its heedlessness betrays every day the inner working and the eager growth of Conscience. This order of feeling, personal and sympathetic, does not wait for the lessons of the religious instructor and the conception of the universe as under Divine administration: on the contrary, it is the condition on which such teaching depends for its efficacy; and is present, where no theological sequel is ever appended to it. The profound sense of the authority and even sacredness of the moral law is often conspicuous among men whose thoughts apparently never turn to superhuman things, but who are pene-

trated by a secret worship of honour, truth, and right. Were this noble state of mind brought out of its impulsive state and made to unfold its implicit contents, it would indeed (as I have endeavoured elsewhere to show) reveal a source higher than human nature for the august authority of righteousness. But it is undeniable that that authority may be felt, where it is not seen—felt *as if it were* the mandate of a Perfect Will, while yet there is no overt recognition of such Will: *i.e.*, conscience may act as human, before it is discovered to be divine. To the agent himself its whole history may seem to lie in his own personality and his visible social relations; and it shall nevertheless serve as his oracle, though it be hid from him *who* it is that utters it. The moral consciousness, while thus pausing short of its complete development, fulfils the conditions of responsible life, and makes character real and the virtues possible. Ethics therefore have practical existence and operation prior to any explicit religious belief: the law of right is inwoven with the very tissue of our nature, and throbs in the movements of our experience; it cannot be escaped by anyone till he can fly from himself.

*Study*, I, Introduction.

## ETHICS AND RELIGION

The *Enthusiasm* of the Moral Life is intensified by the consciousness of its Divine Source. That it is the meeting-ground of kindred sympathy between our nature and God's, where he lets us into the confidences of his thought and the partnership of his causality, is in itself enough to glorify the human characteristics and to endear the Divine, and kindle the zeal for bringing



them into harmony. But, over and above this general tendency, there is a provision, in the inward constitution of our conscience, which gives a special impulse in the same direction. It sees the springs of action in a certain order of rank in excellence—an order that speaks of the preferences of God. And among the terms at the summit of that scale are Compassion, Sympathy, Wonder (devotion to truth), and reverence (devotion to goodness); in short, the group (name the members as you will) of disinterested and spiritual affections whence all fruitful inspiration has ever burst upon the world. These, then, are the fountains of life most dear to the Soul of souls: and those are most like him whose energies, detained by no inner frosts, flow freely forth in streams of Love that nourish the roots of every human good. The Ethical spirit is often supposed to be cold and scrupulous and negatively correct, shrinking from innumerable things and worshipping nothing. In its period of critical legalism, prior to its new birth, it may be so; but once sweetened with the waters of regeneration and initiated into its Divine relations, it breathes the air of quite another world; discovers that the best vigilance against evil is to fling yourself away into some humane and purifying good; and, since the life of God is the life of love, gains assurance that, with an infinite ally, the battle of righteousness can never lose hope and heart.

*Essays*, IV, XII.

## THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF GOOD

If it be true that, in the individual mind, among social groups, and in the races of mankind, the several types of character exercise an influence proportioned to

their high level in the scale, there must be a perpetual tendency of power to pass into the hands of the most worthy: the vanishing elements must be those which can best be spared, the advancing ones those that are most wanted; and, in any struggle long and large enough to escape local tides of force and occupy the general surface of history, the presumption is in favour of the cause which wins.

No doubt, this general law attaches superior strength to the better type, only in virtue of its *quality*; and does not provide for its existence in greater quantities than its inferiors; and, in order to its effective prevalence, both factors must be rightly adjusted. If there should be, as there often is, a vast numerical preponderance of men in the lower stage, passion, in spite of its relative weakness, may outvote prudence; and prudence, conscience; and conscience, faith; and many a noble cause may be lost because, as yet, there are too few ready to answer its appeal. Not only is this undeniably possible; it is even the usual course of human experience in its earliest attempts to rise. The first chapter in every story of regeneration is tragical, and not unfrequently so quenches hope that no sequel seems conceivable. On some solitary soul, or some small band of friends in council, the oppression of an old wrong, or the inspiration of a new truth, has descended: but when its missionary comes before the multitude, and pours out his enthusiasm upon them, they stand agape and think him mad: or, even if he gathers some "little flock" to whom "it is the Father's good pleasure to give" this new "Kingdom", this does not prevent his being crucified out of the way, and their being hunted from city to city and filling up the measure of his sufferings. The inevitable rush of interest and passion,



to stamp out the threatening spark in the stubble of corruption, may overwhelm those who have kindled it, but is itself a foreboding of the coming blaze. The very cross which brings the darkest despair upon the present may lift its head into the light, and become the sacred ensign of the future. If the appeal of the new life be true, the statistics of the hour are of small account: it has a secret advocate in every mind, and will be for ever enlarging its minority, touching its very persecutors with repentance, out-living its inveterate foes, and winning young souls at once by its inherent beauty and by the pathos of its first sacrifice. Can any one name a good cause which—not locally, but in the world at large—has perished and had no resurrection? Intervals of suspended animation there may be: but the final mortality of the "better part" I must utterly disbelieve. When we say of the baffled reformer, "he was born *before his time*", we confess our assurance that "his time" must come, and betray the fact that, for us at least, it has already come. The unequal numbers, therefore, which may rob the superior type of its natural advantage, do not invalidate our law; they resolve themselves into a mere demand for *time* in order to render its operation visible; and all apparent exceptions will be found within the interval in which that time is being gained.

*Study*, II, Bk. II, ch. III.

# XVII
# THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL CHOICE

## THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL CHOICE

THE essence of sin lies in the *conscious free choice of the worse in presence of a better no less possible.* And to make us guilty in its commission three conditions are required:—(1) Our mind must be solicited by at least two competing propensities; (2) We must be aware that one of these is worthy and has a claim upon us, and the other not; (3) It must be left to us to determine ourselves to either of these, and we must not be delivered over by foreign causes to the one or the other. Take away any of these conditions, and guilt becomes impossible. If the mind has *not* the option of two propensities, but is possessed of only one, that single impulse, being its entire stock and constituting its only possibility, affords no scope of good or ill, and leaves the being a mere creature of instinct. Or if, while rival passions struggle at his heart, he knows no difference among them, or only this, that some are *pleasanter* than others, then also he is blameless, though he takes only what he likes. If, finally, while he is drawn by conflicting tendencies and taught to regard *some* as his temptations, and solemnly set in the midst to choose, the whole appearance of option turns out a semblance and a pretence, and the matter is long ago determined outside of him and now only performs the ceremony of *passing through him*—then, as before, he is irreproachable: the strife within him is the illusion of mimic passions wrestling for a dreamer's soul; and while the tragic agony goes on within—a dance of fiends, a rescue of





angels—he is stretched all the while sleeping on the bed of nature, and cannot wake but to find remorse and responsibility a dream.

*Studies in Christianity*: "Sin".

## THE RULE FOR MORAL JUDGMENTS IS COMPARATIVE

We are now prepared for an exact definition of Right and Wrong; which will assume this form: *Every action is* RIGHT, *which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher: every action is* WRONG, *which, in presence of a higher principle, follows a lower.* Thus, the act attributed to Regulus, in returning back to death at Carthage, was right, because the reverence for veracity whence it sprung is a higher principle than any fear or personal affection which might have suggested a different course, and of which we tacitly conceive as competing with the former. And the act of St. Peter in denying Christ was wrong, because the fear to which he yielded was lower than the personal affection and reverence for truth which he disobeyed. The act of the missionaries of mercy—whether of a Florence Nightingale to the stricken bodies, or of a Columban, a Boniface, a Livingstone, to the imperilled souls of men—is right, because the compassion which inspires it is nobler than any love of ease or of self-culture which would resist it. The act of manufacture of adulterated or falsely labelled goods is wrong, because done in compliance with an inferior incentive, the love of gain, against the protest of superiors, good faith and reverence for truth. This definition appears to me to have the advantage of simply stating what passes in all men's minds when they use the words whose meaning it seeks to unfold. I will

not say that, in his judgment on such cases, *no one* ever thought, with Paley, of his "everlasting happiness"; or, with Bentham, consulted the arithmetic of pleasures and pains and struck their balance; or, with Butler, took the question for solution to the autocratic oracle of conscience for an absolute "Yea" or "Nay". But, for the most part, these accounts of our reasons seem to me artificially invented, and in very imperfect correspondence with the real history of our minds: particularly the first and third as ignoring the sense of *proportionate worth* among right things, and *proportionate heinousness* in wrong. No constant aim, no one royal faculty, no contemplated preponderance of happy effects, can really be found in all good action. More scope for variety is felt to be needed: and this is gained as soon as we quit the casuist's attempt to draw an *absolute dividing line* between good and bad, and recognize the relative and preferential conditions of every moral problem. This has been remarked as a requisite of any true moral theory by Hooker: "In goodness," he says, "there is a latitude or extent, whereby it cometh to pass that even of good actions some are better than other some; whereas otherwise one man could not excel another, but all should be either absolutely good, as hitting jump that indivisible point or centre wherein goodness consisteth: or else missing it, they should be excluded out of the number of well-doers." The exigencies of this truth are met at once by the fundamental principle of the foregoing doctrine, viz. that, our nature comprising a graduated scale of principles of action, of which a plurality presents itself at the crisis of every problem, our moral estimates are always comparative.

*Types*, II, Bk. I, ch. VI.



## A GRADED SCALE IN SPRINGS OF ACTION

The sensibility of the mind to the gradations of this scale is precisely what we call *Conscience*—the *knowledge with one's self* of the better and worse; and the more delicate the knowing faculty, the finer are the shades perceived. Whoever feels no difference of worth between one propension and another, and yields himself with equal unreluctance to appetite or affection, to resentment or compassion, and emerges from them with equal cheerfulness, is without conscience. Nor is his case morally improved, if, while he recognizes a difference, it is still a difference, not of inherent excellence, but only of agreeableness or external benefit—a relish in one viand that is not in another. If this be all, he will feel at liberty, *mero arbitrio*, to fling himself in any direction, and will acknowledge no hindrance but that of distaste, in the way of each chance desire. This state of mind constitutes the direct negation of the consciousness of Duty; of whose very essence it is to feel that we have *no right* to dispose of ourselves by caprice, and that we cannot legitimate an autocratic power by any mere willingness to take its risks and bear its penalties. It is only in proportion as a man is alive to *other differences* than those of pleasantness among the several springs of action, that he has an awakened moral sentiment. And hence we see, with some precision, in what consists the peculiarity of an exact as distinguished from a confused or obtuse conscience. The former, like a fine ear for music, magnifies, as it were, the intervals between tone and tone, and is sensitive to intermediaries quite lost to the duller mind; the latter, accustomed only to the discipline of ruder

instruments, passes without notice a thousand things quite out of tune, and requires strong discords in order to feel a jar. Conscience, then, is the critical perception we have of the relative authority of our several principles of action. The sense of that authority is *implicitly* contained in the mere natural strife of those principles within us: when *explicitly* brought into view by reflective self-knowledge, it assumes a systematic character, and asserts its prerogative as the judicial regulator of life. Its proper business is to watch the forces of our nature and keep everything in its place.

*Types*, II, Bk. I, ch. I.

## THE APPEAL TO A HIGHER TRIBUNAL

Of no moral activity can the worth be determined without conceiving *what would else be there*; and unless this conception be identical in the thoughts of two advocates, they deal with differing problems under semblance of the same name. When, for instance, a discussion arises whether we ought to approve of the heroes and heroines who, like Howard, Elizabeth Fry, or Florence Nightingale, go into original fields of humane enterprise at the cost of home blessings of great price; those who condemn the course and those who admire it will have different conditions present to their thought: the former will regard it as an abandonment of family affections and nearer claims; the latter will perceive in it the sacrifice of self at the bidding of a pity and love which, in embracing the wider, does not cease to compass the lesser sphere. The former sees in it something *less*, the latter something *more*, than the



faithful service of duty close at hand. It is the same in all the great controversies of practical morals. The defender of the laws of honour secretly compares the sensitiveness to character which asserts itself against danger and death, with the pusillanimity which hugs its safety at the expense of a good name. The impugner of the same laws compares this jealous self-vindication with the quiet appeal to a higher tribunal and reverential willingness to "judge nothing before the time". The same type of disposition is placed side by side, in the one case, with the term below it, in the other, with the term above it. When the phenomenon of Christian martyrdom took the Roman magistrates by surprise, it presented to them the aspect of a mere obstinate egotism—a setting up of self and its whimsies against sanctities dear to the universal heart of man; seen from a higher point of view, it becomes the completest self-surrender in allegiance to a Divine Person, who is the reality of all that men revere. The significance of the act is not only changed, it is inverted, in these two views: instead of being an example of individual conceit against a general reverence, it is an utter merging of the individual will in devotion to one who is the substance of all shadows of true worship. For the confessor to yield and pay his sacrifice to the emperor would be, in the eyes of pagan observers, a becoming modesty; in those of his fellow-disciples, an impious betrayal of the Supreme Friend. The conception, therefore, of what else would be there, were the trial declined, is altogether different: hence the different verdicts; which, though apparently pronounced upon the same act, are really directed upon it in dissimilar and even opposite relations. Thus the facts that a part only of the moral scale is present to particular persons,

and to different persons not the same part, readily explain the divergencies of ethical judgment, without compromising in the least the uniformity of moral conception throughout the human race.

*Types*, II, Bk. I, ch. I.

# XVIII

# THE RESPONSIBILITY OF POSSESSIONS

## HONOUR IN COMMERCE

THERE are secrets which we may unworthily hold *against* our fellow-men; by the keeping of which we may secure to ourselves an advantage at their expense. The most characteristic instances are to be found in the two spheres of diplomacy and commerce—in the formation, that is, of *contracts* between nations in the one case, between individuals, in the other. Whenever, in such affairs, you allow your neighbour to enter into agreements which he would refuse, did he know what you could tell, assuredly you make a tricky and degrading use of the information you possess. If, for example, in framing a treaty, you discern in one of its provisions an interpretation not designed by your partner, and, keeping it close, intend to profit by it by and by, I know not of any honest name by which you can be called. Or again, a merchant, let us suppose, obtains exclusive information that, through large arrivals, his cargo will suddenly lose value in the morning; and he effects his sale to-night. Or, a shareholder privately learns that some act of intended legislation or some project of directors will double, in a few days, the price of some particular stock; and he buys up on all hands from those who are not in the secret. I believe persons are to be found on every exchange who will defend such transactions as these, and even regard them as representing the very spirit of all bargaining, in which, it is

said, each member must take care of himself. If so, let them not wonder that among men uncorrupted by such a school, the very name of "competition" is becoming hateful, and socialistic dreams are taking place of the old reverence for property. The whole fabric of our system of engagements with one another rests on the basis of mutual benefit: every instance in which one man's profit is, even unwittingly, another man's loss, convicts it of partial failure: every doctrine which justifies the deliberate acceptance of such a gain brings upon it total dishonour.

*Hours*, II, XVII.

## HAVING, DOING AND BEING

Some men are eminent for what they *possess*: some, for what they *achieve*: others, for what they *are*. *Having*, *Doing*, *and Being*, constitute the three great distinctions of mankind, and the three great functions of their life. And though they are necessarily all blended, more or less, in each individual, it is seldom difficult to say which of them is prominent in the impression left upon us by our fellow-man.

In every society, and especially in a country like our own, there are those who derive their chief characteristic from what they *have*; who are always spoken of in terms of revenue; and of whom you would not be likely to think much, but for the large account that stands on the world's ledger in their name. In themselves, detached from their favourite sphere, you would notice nothing wise or winning. At home, possibly, a dry and withered heart; among associates, a selfish and mistrustful talk; in the council, a style of low ignoble sentiment; at church, a formal, perhaps an irreverent,



dulness; betray a barren nature, and offer you only points of repulsion so far as the humanities are concerned: and you are amazed to think that you are looking on the idols of the exchange. Their greatness comes out in the affairs of bargain and sale, to which their faculties seem fairly apprenticed for life. History is constructed by a second and nobler class—those who prove themselves to be here, not that they may *have*, but that they may *do*, to whom life is a glorious labour; and who are seen not to work that they may rest, but only to rest that they may work. No sooner do they look around them with the open eye of reason and faith, upon the great field of the world, than they perceive that it must be for them a battle-field: and they break up the tents of ease, and advance to the dangers of lonely enterprise and the conflict with splendid wrong.

But there is a life higher than either of these. The *saintly* is beyond the heroic mind. To get good, is animal; to do good, is human: to be good, is divine. The true use of a man's possessions is to help his work: and the best end of all his work, is to show us what he is. The noblest workers of our world bequeath us nothing so great as the image of themselves. Their *task*, be it ever so glorious, is historical and transient: the majesty of their *spirit* is essential and eternal. When the external conditions which supplied the matter of their work have wholly decayed from the surface of the earth, and become absorbed into its substance, the perennial root of their life remains, bearing a blossom ever fair, and a foliage ever green.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, IX.

### GAMBLING

Gambling, I suppose, has its inner source in the competitive passion, or love of superiority, with the addition, distinguishing it from chess or cricket, of the love of gain. The former is irreproachable, where both parties wish to settle their relations by a trial of skill. The latter is always mean and base, where the gain to oneself is simply loss to another. The consent of that other, no doubt, distinguishes the act from thieving; but when you remember that he would not have consented, except in the hope of making you the loser, the whole bargain assumes an ignoble character. Then in the rational estimate of consequences the practice of gambling surely has no less demerit. The moment the simple excitement of competition of skill becomes insufficient without the money stake, the taint of moral character, the contented gain at others' expense, has set in; and that the stake is 2*d.* instead of £20 makes no more moral difference than there is between a theft of 2*d.* and a theft of £20. The mischiefs, of course, increase enormously with high play. But the immorality does not wait to begin with the swollen amount, so as to be a mere question of degree. There are many cases of morals, no doubt, where the division between right and wrong lies somewhere along a line of degree—*e.g.*, in the ethics of appetite. But this is always where the primitive impulse has itself a blameless beginning and defined function, beyond which excess sets in and runs into ever deeper guilt. In gambling the initial principle—gain by another's loss—is vicious and vitiating.

*Life*, II, p. 174.

## XIX

## MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

### KNOWLEDGE AND GOODNESS

KNOWLEDGE bears a double fruit—a physical and a moral. It enables us to *do more*, and disposes us to *be better*. But it is not the same kind of knowledge that effects both of these results. We increase our power by knowing objects that are beneath us; our goodness by knowing those that are above us. All the triumphs of the modern arts have been won by detecting the secret of some force inferior in quality to our own—some force, therefore, which we could transcend and subject to our convenience. Thus human thought has proved too much for the elasticity of steam, and sends it, like a captured bondsman, to do its task-work on the roads and in the ships. Electricity has been caught, despite its invisible wing, and made to fly to and fro on messages it knows not. Light has been trained to record and fix the images it creates, and paint portraits of the objects it reveals. In all such instances of new skill and enlarged resources, the advances of knowledge have been upon the physical laws of Nature; some conquered province of creation lies at our feet, and pays a tribute to our superiority. But who can say that we are *personally nobler* for this homage? The telegraph carries no redeeming shock to any guilty will; the sunbeam enables no deluded soul to see itself. Quicker voyages, more abundant jewellery, larger surfaces of silver, and unlimited square feet of glass, will

not make one temper sweeter, or open a transparent way through the heart of selfishness and guile. An Eiffel Tower, from its sublime height, may tell a story of stooping very low. If you could bridge the Atlantic it would give a path to knaves as well as to honest men; and did you roof the world with crystal, it would make a winter garden for weeds as well as flowers. It is a fatal delusion to imagine that the arts of life, which only enlarge its resources, have any necessary tendency to improve its spirit; or that the completest acquaintance with science affords any guarantee of higher goodness. No laboratory can neutralize the poison of the passions, or find a crucible to make the hard nucleus of the heart flow down; no observatory can show us a new constellation of the virtues, correct the aberration of life's true light, or deepen any heavens but those of space. Scientific culture is morally neutral, simply enlarging the range without altering the quality of the character. If love and faith be brought into it, they will find the universe diviner than they had thought, and yet, with an elastic incense of contemplation, be able to fill it all with glory.

*Faith and Self-Surrender*, I.

## INFORMATION AND SPIRITUAL TEACHING

There are various paths of access by which one mind may reach another and convey thither a light and life unfelt before. You may impart to me direct *information*, appearing before me as witness of facts I had not known, or painter of scenes beyond my range. It is thus that the traveller enlarges our pictures of the world as it is; the historian, of the world as it has been; the naturalist, of the groupings and methods of terrestrial being; the



astronomer, of the relative distribution and motion of the stars. Whatever is communicated to me in this way is added to my Science, not to my Religion; opens to me more of nature, but nothing that is beyond nature; and, even when reporting of human and historical affairs, is credible alike by the pious and the profane. This kind of knowledge is an outward thing, neutral to faith and no-faith; both of which alike receive it, but oppositely interpret it. Were the most desolate dream of scepticism true, there would remain the same stock of perceptible facts to tell as now; the events of the past, the arrangements of the present, would still be there: our histories might stand upon our shelves: our museums would become no lie; the microscope would disintegrate the same objects into the same parts; and the telescope would sweep no altered heaven. The great realities on which Faith reposes are not mere phenomena of either nature or history; not finite laws, read in the observatory or detected by the calculus, and missed by the uninstructed thought of man; not intellectual possessions entrusted to the learned, to be doled out as may be needed to the ignorant. And the Christian preacher who assumes this attitude, who stands before his fellows as the Scientific Lecturer before his audience, teaching *downwards* as to a lower level, and professing to deliver information specially his own, misses the whole essence of the very truth he represents.

*Hours*, II, VII.

## PROGRESS AND EDUCATION

The most rapid of social changes is found in the progress of material civilization; and certainly it is the least dignified element in the general advancement,

though essential to the rest. Of the rapidity with which a new act may be perfected, new channels of commerce filled, a new manufacture started into gigantic existence, no age or country affords more striking instances than our own. Let gain supply the adequate motive; and a few years suffice to reclaim the wilderness, and make the harvest wave where before the forest rose; or to cover the soil with cities, busy with congregated labour; or to enliven the sea with traffic, where none had disturbed its solitudes before. How much longer does it require to penetrate the mass of a community with knowledge; to fill a land with intelligence, than to throng it with life! Even in the long lives of nations, few have arrived at that season, when the demand for general instruction naturally appears, and the truth goes forth, that the people are not a herd of mere animals or instruments of mere wealth, but beings of rational nature, who have a right to their powers of thought; and even where this demand has arisen, scarce a people yet has lived long enough to answer it. The morality of a community cannot be matured till its intelligence is unfolded: in societies, as in individuals, character cannot set, till reason has blossomed. The pure tastes of virtue cannot be looked for in those who have never been led beyond their senses; nor even a wise self-interest be expected, where no habits of foresight have been acquired, and the intellect has not been taught to respect the future. I do not even suppose that the moral amelioration of a country immediately follows on the "diffusion of knowledge". On the spread of *education* it may; but it must be an education which comprises a principle of sympathy as well as of instruction; which has a discipline for the heart as well as for the understanding; which remembers the



composite structure of our nature, and applies knowledge to no more than its proper office of enlightening the reason, and summons up *feelings* of right as the fit antagonists to passions that tend to wrong.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XIX.

## FAITH AND PROGRESSIVE KNOWLEDGE

If the theologians could but look with a calm eye upon the past, they must see that, wherever the strife is over and the field is still, every advance of knowledge has been a gain to religion, won at the expense only of deforming fictions. As our petty schemes of the world break in pieces and fall away, diviner ones construct themselves and make us ashamed of our regrets. Who would now, in the interests of piety, wish to have back the childish little cosmos of the Hebrew legends, or the three storeys of the Pauline heaven? or dare to say, that, in superseding them, Copernicus and Newton blasphemed? Who would choose to have no cosmos at all till six thousand years ago, or to fling a stone at a Herschel or a Lyell for letting in light and showing life within that dark immensity? The age of the world, as it deepens, does but prolong its testimony to God, and make it worthier of his eternity: its scale, as it expands, does but place us in a temple more august, and nearer to his Infinity. Does any one, whose mind has been enlarged by ancient history and whose heart has listened to the old mythologies, want to have his sympathies reduced again to the "chosen people", and the divine communion with our race, so various and pathetic in its early struggling tones, restricted to that only channel? And if from the person of Jesus

Christ the artificial dress of Messianic investiture and some disguising shreds of Jewish fable drop away, who that can fix an appreciating eye on the emerging form, will not say that it is diviner far, embodying in its grand and touching lineaments the essence and spirit of a new life of God in our humanity? This experience, this removal to a higher point of faith, is from the first the invariable result with the scholar who works most freely, because quite trustfully, at these problems; as, after long delay, it comes to be the result with all at last. The intermediate disturbance of religious calm—the pious dismay on the one hand, the petulant irreverence on the other—befall chiefly those who do not intimately commune with such researches, but, looking on, judge them by external and inapplicable standards, and not by their inner and essential relations. Whoever, in these things, has gone deep and touched ground, is not afraid of falling into a bottomless abyss.

*Essays*, IV, VII.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN US

The age has been prolific (like many of its predecessors) in inventions and proposed social arrangements, by which we may sit still and be made into the right kind of men; which will render duty the smoothest thing on earth, by warning all interfering motives off the spot, and turn the Christian race into a stroll upon a mossy lawn. The trust and boast of our period is not in its individual energy and virtue, not in its great and good minds, but in its external civilization, in schemes of social and political improvement, in things to be done *for* us, rather than *by* us; in what we are to *get*, more



than in what we are to *be*. We have had systems of education, which were to mould the minds of our children into a perfection that would make experience blush; systems of self-culture, to nurse our faculties into full maturity; systems of socialism, for mending the whole world, and presenting everyone with a virtuous mind, without the least trouble on his part. Even those who escape this enthusiasm of system are apt to place an extravagant trust in sets of outward circumstances; and dazzled by the splendid forms which modern civilization assumes, to conceive of them as powers in themselves, independently of the minds that fill and use them. Commerce, mechanical art, and more reasonably, but still with some error, the school and the printing press, are each in turn cited as in themselves securing the indefinite progress of nations and mankind. It would be absurd to doubt that these causes operate with constant and beneficent power on the mind of a people; but on this very account an exclusive and irrational reliance may be placed upon them. It is obvious that two methods exist of aiming at human improvement—by adjusting circumstances without and by addressing the affections within; by creating facilities of position, or by developing forces of character; by mechanism or by mind. The one is institutional and systematic, operating on a large scale; reaching individuals circuitously and at last; the other is personal and moral, the influence of soul upon soul, life creating life, beginning in the regeneration of the individual and spreading thence over communities; the one, in short, reforming from the circumference to the centre, the other from the centre to the circumference.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, IX.

## RELIGION AND CIVILIZATION

Does it follow that, because our business is with the present, we go astray when we trust and meditate the future?—that, since we have to deal with the visible and finite, all affection is misplaced on the invisible and infinite?—that, unless we are surrendered, heart and soul, to the temporal claims of human life, we shall but wander from our true end? Not in the least. This is indeed the inference drawn by superficial men, who persuade themselves that dreams of religion are the great hindrance to the real amelioration of the world. But its utter falsehood is attested by the whole course of human and especially of Christian history; which rather proclaims, that, if you would improve this world, you must have the hearts of men set upon another; if you would give any grandeur to life, you must pale it beneath the splendour of an hereafter; if you would prevent the waste of industry, the contempt of moral economy, the indifference to the lesser humanities, you must train the soul to a worship that goes immeasurably beyond them. There is not a secular reform in the whole development of modern civilization which (if it is more than mechanical) has not drawn its inspiration from a religious principle. Infirmaries for the body have sprung out of pity to the soul; schools for the letter, that free way may be opened to the spirit; sanitary laws, that the diviner elements of human nature may not become incredible and hopeless from their foul environment. Who would ever lift a voice for the slave, that looked no further than his face? or build a reformatory for the culprit child, if he saw nothing but the slouching gait and thievish eye? Nay



what impulse would even science itself have had, if sustained only by the material utilities? what inspiring zeal, but for that secret wonder which feels the universe to be sacred and is a virtual thirst for God?

*Hours*, I, XIV.

## CULTURE AND THE LIVES OF THE SAINTS

The only knowledge that can really make us better is not of *things* and their laws, but of *persons* and their thoughts; and I would rather have an hour's sympathy with one noble heart than read the law of gravitation through and through. To teach us what to love and what to hate, whom to honour and whom to despise, is the substance of all human training, and this is not to be learned from the magnet or the microscope, from insects born in galvanism and light polarized in crystals, but only among the affairs of men; from the rich records of the past, the strife of heroic and the peace of saintly souls, from the great thoughts of great minds, and the sublime acts of indomitable conscience. The soul takes its complexion and its true port from the society in which it dwells; it lives with the living and dies with the dead, and no intimacy with rocks and reptiles, however enlarging to its conception of the world, can lift it to its dignity, and warm it with its proper glow; but only communion with the prophets, the patriot, the sage, the martyrs of the cross. It is the grand fault of our modern education—a fault which reaches its acme in the theory of a purely *secular* education—that we limit it to the mere knowledge of *things*, except where the Christian Scriptures save us from such blight, bring the scholar's mind into scarce any admiring contact with pre-eminent *persons*. We

teach him the grammar and the forms of speech, but few of the things most worthy to be spoken. We teach him the seas and lands, the rivers and mountains of a dead or empty world, but of the histories they have passed there, the proud passages of his country's life, the good men that should be as the beacon to his path, we too often leave him in ignorance. We lost the true notion of human culture when we threw away the "lives of the saints". The type of excellence which they held up was not, indeed, the right one, or worthy to be preserved in the place it claimed; but until they be re-written with a better selection of examples, and be made the manual and favourite of the cottage and the school, all our education will multiply the force without greatly mending the character of our society. The soul grows godlike, not by its downward gaze at inferior nature, but by its uplifted look at thought and goodness greater than its own.

*Faith and Self-Surrender*, I.

# XX
# THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE

## THE DISCIPLINE OF CHANGE

So completely is it the Providential plan to secure to us the discipline of change, that, when we fall asleep on the crust of usage, a fire is immediately kindled beneath us, and we sleep on a volcano. Our very inertia operates as an instrument to prepare for us new crises that shall force us to spring to our feet once more. Whatever be our appointed work, the first moment of its neglect is the first moment of its decay; and where we cease to grow our corn, the poison plants will cover all the ground. God has made nothing in this world to *keep*—nothing, at least, that has a beauty, and that bears a fruit; death only and negation, deformity and barrenness, will flourish when let alone. The individual mind, abandoned to negligence, watched by no eye of conscience, bathed in no presence of God, exercised in no athletics of duty, loosens all its healthy structure, and sinks into moral decline; little, perhaps, suspecting its own degeneracy, till surprised into some awful degradation, and wakening into shame. No institution, no state, no church, will go on of itself and hold its footing in the nature of things, while its guardians and trustees are dozing on their watch. There is ever a little speck of disease, a canker of evil and falsehood, secreted in the substance of terrestrial things, which is sure to spread, if you omit to wipe the dust from their surface, and wash them with the waters of purification. If you persist awhile in your unfaithfulness, you will be startled at

length by the spasm of a sudden agony; and it will be well, if by repentent efforts at renewal and the use of painful remedies, a disastrous dissolution is staved off. In nations, as in persons, too great a calm, too mild an indifference, too peaceful an apathy, is ever a dark and boding sign, the lull that comes before the storm, the dead silence ere the thunder breaks. If we stir the atmosphere and fling it upwards from no soil burning with noble passions; if every zone of our world reduces itself to temperate and timid heats; if no circulating breath of pure enthusiasm passes from land to land, bearing on it the cry of sympathy with the down-trodden, and of defiance to the oppressor; God will clear the air for us from above, and fling across our fields and cities the whirlwind of revolution. Thus it is that " He who abideth for ever will afflict us ", if, " because we have no changes ", we cease to stand in awe of him. There is no peace but in waking to all his seasons, and moving freely with the windings of his Will; quick to seize each fresh surprise of duty; alert before daybreak to strike our tent of ease; patient to endure the crown of thorns which must press upon the brow of every son of God.

*Hours*, I, x.

## THE INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATION

Nothing that has ever been advanced by economists can convince me, that the extreme division of employments which characterizes modern industrial operations, is anything but deadening and unhealthy to the mental nature of those engaged in them. To spend every working day of half or the whole of life, not in a craft of various nicety and skill, but in a solitary process of a



single manufacture, in tying threads or pointing pins, can assuredly give no discipline to any faculty, unless those of muscular alacrity or mental patience; and compared with the work of an earlier world, I should as little call this *skill*, as I should class among literary men a scribe who should devote his life to crossing t's and dotting i's. With long habit the monotony of such a lot may cease to be positively felt. But it taxes no worthy power: it enlists no natural interest: it presents only vacancy and listlessness to the thought: and the more so, as the work is another's, and not the labourer's own. The occupation does not educate the man. It may be true, in point of fact, that workers of this class are as intelligent as others. But if so, this is owing to influences extrinsic to the cause on which I dwell, and in spite of it; especially to their residence in the stimulant atmosphere of great cities, and the habit of association with large bodies of men. And this intellectual counteraction itself, there is reason to fear, is purchased at the cost of vast moral dangers. For, in proportion as men cease to have an intelligent interest in their work, and go through it with the weariness of a necessary task, do they quit it with a susceptibility to foreign excitements, and a more open avidity for the temptations of the passions: and losing the even glow of a constant activity, they fall under fearful inducement to alternate the stagnant blood of dulness with the throbbing pulse of revelry.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, VI.

## THE INFLUENCE OF ACTION ON CHARACTER

Every human deed of right or wrong fulfils two offices: it produces certain immediate *extrinsic* results; and it contributes to form some *internal* disposition or

affection. Every act of wise benevolence goes *forth*, and alleviates suffering; it goes *within*, and gives intenser force to the spirit of mercy. Every act of vindictiveness goes *forth* and creates a woe; it goes *within*, and inflames the diseases of passions. In the one relation, it may be momentary and transient; in the other, permanent and beyond arrest. In the one, its dealings are with pain and physical ill; in the other, with goodness or with guilt, and the solemn determinations of the human will. And inasmuch as physical ill is temporary, while moral agencies are eternal (for death is the end of pain, but where is the end of sin?)—inasmuch as a disinterested and holy mind is the sure fountain of healing and of peace, and a heart torn by passions fierce or foul is at once the seat and source of a thousand miseries; no particular natural good or evil can be compared in importance with the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, nor any effect of an action be ranked in magnitude with its influence on human affections and character. The great office of virtue (we are told) is to bless mankind; very well; but then the greatest blessing is in the increase of virtue. The essential character therefore of every choice we make is to be found in its tendency to promote or to impair the purity and good order, the generosity and moral dignity, of the mind: and this element of our actions can never die; but survives in our present selves, more truly than the juices of the soil in the leaves and blossoms of a tree. Such as we are, we are the offspring of the past; "the child is father to the man"; our present characters are the result of all that we have desired and done; every deed has contributed something to the structure, and exists there as literally as the stone in the pyramid on whose courses it was once laid. The action of the



moral agent does not consist in the contraction of a muscle or the movement of a limb—and this is all that is really transitory—but in the dispositions of the mind, which are indelible.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XXII.

## CIRCUMSTANCES AND CHARACTER

The souls that would really be richer in duty in some new position, are precisely those who borrow no excuses from the old one; who even esteem it full of privileges, plenteous in occasions of good, frequent in divine appeals, which they chide their graceless and unloving temper for not heeding more. Wretched and barren is the discontent that quarrels with its tools instead of with its skill; and, by criticizing Providence, manages to keep up complacency with self. How gentle should we be, if we were not provoked; how pious, if we were not busy; the sick would be patient, only he is not in health; the obscure would do great things, only he is not conspicuous! Nay, the infatuation besets us more closely still, and tempts us to expect wonders from some altered posture of our affairs totally inadequate to their production. What we neglect in summer is to be done in winter; what present interruptions persuade us to forego is to be gloriously achieved at some coming period of golden leisure, when confusion is to cease, and life to be set into an order unattainable yet. As if time and change, which should be our servants, and made to do the bidding of our conscience, were to be waited on by our servile will; as if the pusillanimous submission, once made, could at once be recalled. No; as the captive of old was carried off from the field of battle to the field of slavery, the vanquished soul be-

comes temptation's serf, and, after tears and repinings, learns to be cheerful at the toil of sin. Once let a man insult the majesty of Duty, by waiting till its commands shall become easy, and he must be disowned as an outlaw from her realm. If he calculates on this or that happy influence which is to shape him into something nobler; if he once regards his moral nature, not as an authoritative power invested within its sphere with a divine omnipotence that speaks and is done, but as passive material to be worked by the ingenuity of circumstances into somewhat that is good: it is all over with him; the ascendancy of conscience is gone; collapse and ruin have begun.

*Endeavours,* 1st series, IX.

## STRUGGLING AGAINST NARROW BOUNDS

There is nothing degrading in the humblest and the hardest fate; nothing much nobler in this world than a meek true soul struggling against the narrow bounds of the sphere assigned to it, and faithful to cherish the light of God in the inglorious darkness of a bitter lot. But to find the smallness of affairs a relief from any higher strain, to hug the degradation and make ourselves at home with it, to plead it in excuse for the unresisting meanness of our nature, to preach from its low platform a crusade of blind unbelief against the visions of prophets and the breathings of the devout—this is a direct betrayal of the post of life, and treason against the holy Providence of all. Whoever fixes himself upon the centre of mere prudential interest forfeits thereby his title to speak, because his power to judge, of anything divine: for heaven pays small respect to our poor taste for *plain* truths, and so withdraws from the earthly eye



the "deep things of God", that "the natural man cannot discern them".

Nay, this blindness may befall a far worthier class than the votaries of pleasure or of interest: it is the penalty of all who concentrate themselves upon the present, who live for the moment, even though it be the momentary *Duty.* Conscience also has its narrowness; its scrupulous, microscopic gaze, that looks for the animalcules of obligation till it grows blind to the stars of faith, and the free heaven swims dizzily before it. The anxieties of the merely dutiful mind show that there is yet a barrier leaving it outside the union with God. Those cautious steps betray the deterring fear, and are unlike the free movements of a confiding love. I know at once *whose* steps they are: they belong to one who appreciates religion as the means of good morals, instead of morals as the germ and condition of religion; whose very faith therefore is a worship of prohibition, a conservatism of limits, an apprehension of the escape of some fugitive desires; and can never fling itself in pure enthusiasm and with fearless trust upon a large career where no rule can guide it but only love impel.

*Hours,* I, XVIII.

## THE CROSS TO BE BORNE

*This* is the cross which, almost daily, we are called to bear; notwithstanding the languid mind and heavy heart to maintain an even persistency of service, to go with patience on and on, assured that, if we will, we can always take just the next step well. When appetite has the keenest edge, it must be wielded, like a dangerous weapon, with the most absolute mastery. When the nerves quiver with irritable propensity, the will must

lay a tranquillizing hand upon their trembling, forbid the lips to open but for quiet words, and compel the heart to live by the placid faith of happier hours. When coward inclination recoils from the austere simplicity of duty, shrinks from the hardness of its strife, grows sensitive to voices of derision, and obtuse to the whisperings of God, then inclination must be punished as a treacherous and wicked counsellor, and all that it forbade be undertaken at any cost. And when the proud, self-justifying thought would refuse to confess, and double the past wrong by shutting it up in sullenness, instead of opening it out in secret shame; we must instantly, by an act of self-crucifying will, invoke the Holiest to witness our impenitence, and humble ourselves within that presence to which our pitiable disguises are of no avail. And if ever a sad, distrustful mind, producing timid and wavering steps, comes over us, and life appears too vain and death too awful a thing; it were false in us to submit to such delusion, and listen to such monotony of strain; and we must force ourselves upon the wing away, fly to the hills of high faith where dwelleth our help, lose ourselves in the forests of our deepest worship, where blessed birds will sing the songs of heaven to our weary hearts. This inward denial, this resolute self-mastery, is the peculiar service which, as *human* and not always *inclined* to the best, yet, as *Christians*, bound never to do the worse, we are expected to render. Our work must be achieved, if not from momentary love of it, yet from persistent love of God who gives it. Ay, and the burden must be borne, not with elaborate effort, and audible sighs, and pains that self-complacency takes care to reckon; but with a cheerful spirit, that can put the poor obtrusive self aside; with an unsparing mind, that never counts



the cost at which a duty must be done; with entire relinquishment of rights, desiring only leave of service; with sedate and tranquil frame, like that of Christ through his last day, which beneath a divine composure concealed a universe of thought.

*Hours*, II, xxvi.

## ENDURE HARDNESS

There would seem to be an incurable variance between the life which men covet for themselves and that which they admire in others; nay, between the lot which they would choose beforehand, and that in which they glory afterwards. In prospect, nothing appears so attractive as ease and licensed comfort; in retrospect, nothing so delightful as toil and strenuous service. Half the actions of mankind are for the diminution of labour; yet labour is the thing they most universally respect. We should think it the greatest gain to get rid of effort; yet if we could cancel from the past those memorable men in whom it reached its utmost intensity, and whose whole existence was a struggle, we should leave human nature without a lustre, and empty history of its glory. The aim which God assigns to us as our highest is indeed the direct reverse of that which we propose to ourselves. He would have us in perpetual conflict; we crave an unbroken peace. He keeps us ever on the march; we pace the green sod by the way with many a sigh for rest. He throws us on a rugged universe; and our first care is to make it smooth. His resolve is to demand from us, without ceasing, a living power, a force fresh from the spirit he has given; ours, to get into such settled ways, that life may almost go of itself, with scarce the trouble of winding up.

It is not the failure of this or that doctrinal conviction, that we need in itself lament; of this sort we could part perhaps with a good deal of helpless trying to believe, without being at all the worse: but it is the loosening of Moral Faith; the fluctuating state of the boundary between right and wrong, or even the suspicion of its non-existence; the absence from men's minds of anything worth living and dying for; the lawyer-like impartiality, consisting of an indiscriminate advocacy, for hire or favour, of any cause irrespective of its goodness, this it is that marks how we are drifting away from our proper anchorage.

There is a remarkable intellectual subtlety engaged nowadays in perplexing man's moral convictions. On the one hand, there is the celebrated doctrine of happiness, ingeniously spun to a logical texture, to entangle those who are neither fine enough to pass through its meshes, nor strong enough to rend them—the doctrine which assures you that enjoyment is the great end of existence, and is the only real element of worth in the objects of our choice. Of this I will say no more at present, than that it plainly makes all duty a matter of taste, and reduces the distinction between evil and good to the difference between pills and peaches: and that it puts an end to the spirit of moral combat in human life, and metamorphoses the "good soldier of Jesus Christ" into one knows not what strange sort of mock-heroic insincerity.

*Endeavours*, 2nd Series, XI.

## GREAT IDEAS AND SMALL DUTIES

It is observable, that the trivial services of social life are best performed, and the lesser particles of domestic happiness are most skilfully organized, by the deepest



and the fairest heart. It is an error to suppose that homely minds are the best administrators of small duties. Who does not know how wretched a contradiction such a rule receives in the moral economy of many a home?—how often the daily troubles, the swarm of blessed cares, the innumerable minutiæ of arrangement in a family, prove quite too much for the generalship of feeble minds, and even the clever selfishness of strong ones; how a petty and scrupulous anxiety in defending with infinite perseverance some small and almost invisible point of frugality and comfort, surrenders the greater unobserved, and while saving money ruins minds; how, on the other hand, a rough and unmellowed sagacity *rules* indeed and without defeat, but, while maintaining in action the mechanism of government, creates a constant and intolerable friction, a grating together of reluctant wills, a groaning under the consciousness of force, that make the movements of life fret and chafe incessantly? But where, in the presiding genius of a home, taste and sympathy unite (and in their genuine forms they cannot be separated)—the intelligent feeling for moral beauty and the deep heart of domestic love; with what ease, what mastery, what graceful disposition, do the seeming trivialities of existence fall into order, and drop a blessing as they take their place! how do the hours steal away, unnoticed but by the precious fruits they leave! and by the self-renunciations of affection, there comes a spontaneous adjustment of various wills; and not an innocent pleasure is lost, nor a pure taste offended, nor a peculiar temper unconsidered, and every day has its silent achievements of wisdom, and every night its retrospect of piety and love; and the tranquil thoughts that, in the evening meditation, come down with the starlight, seem

like the serenade of angels, bringing in melody the peace of God! Wherever this picture is realized, it is not by microscopic solicitude of spirit, but by comprehension of mind, and enlargement of heart; by that breadth and nicety of moral view which discerns everything in due proportion, and in avoiding an intense elaboration of trifles, has energy to spare for what is great; in short, by a perception akin to that of God, whose providing frugality is on an infinite scale, vigilant alike in heaven and on earth; whose art covers the universe with beauty, and touches with its pencil the petals of a flower. A soul thus pure and large disowns the paltry rules of dignity, the silly notions of great and mean, by which fashion distorts God's real proportions; is utterly delivered from the spirit of contempt; and in consulting for the benign administration of life, will learn many a task, and discharge many an office, from which lesser beings, esteeming themselves greater, would shrink as ignoble. But, in truth, nothing is degrading which a high and graceful purpose ennobles; and offices the most menial cease to be menial the moment they are wrought in love.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, III.

## ADVENTURE AND SELF-INTEREST

Self-regarding motives are unable to initiate the highest acts and offices of duty; these must remain unperformed unless some great moral passion imparts the requisite energy. The sterner services which society has a right to expect from faithful hands—which at all times may imperil ease and reputation, and in evil days involve liberty and life—would never be undertaken on the most exhaustive computation of advantage to the



agent. At such an instigation what tongue would ever plead for truth unpopular and dangerous?—dangerous, I mean, to the advocate himself; and unpopular, not with an absent multitude whom it is easy to disregard, but with his neighbours and his hearers, whose derision he witnesses, and whose alienation his loneliness forces him to feel? What arm would ever strike the first blow at a powerful wrong, and be uplifted in the vow of self-dedication, often that of self-immolation, to the redemption of the oppressed? Where, amid the prevalence of such a spirit, would the despised, the outcast, the slave, the guilty, find a friend to notice them beneath the eye of day? No; Providence, as if to break the crust of our selfishness, has decreed that for the best blessings of this world men must venture something, must often venture themselves. Progressive knowledge, liberty, religion, are not won without a thousand risks; pearls not to be had without a plunge. Even those who maintain that acts of high courage and noble virtue *may have* their birth in a wise prudence must acknowledge that this has not actually been their usual origin; that the great and excellent whose names humanity holds most dear have, *in fact*, left unused the motives of personal welfare by which they might have been determined in their choice, and have been impelled by some mighty passion of good into which the idea of self could not enter. In truth, our best affections have that in their very nature which prevents them from being objects of anticipation: when their power is not on us we know not what they are, and, in indolent and selfish conditions of the mind, they are like a life forgotten in the draughts of sin. They are, indeed, the very essence of that heaven which "it doth not enter into the heart of man to conceive". They ever surprise us with their

blessedness; we expect a stranger, and find an angel as our guest. The prevailing idea of Self introduces a moral weakness into the will, even in cases where there seems to be no call for disinterestedness, and the duty required appears mainly prudential.

*Faith and Self-Surrender*, III.

## LIFE AND LENGTH OF DAYS

Some men there are whom no lapse of time seems to soften or expand; from whom whole floods of experience will flow off and leave them dry; who pass through events, and remember them, and like to call back their outward image again, but are just the same as if the events had been different; who reproduce in age the very sentiments and prejudices they had looked up in youth, and gather nothing from the past but a mood ungenial to the present. They repeat the story of their early days, not as a poem, but as an almanac; can give you the dates but not the meaning of the changes they have seen; and of the men they have admired, can tell as much as the register and the coffin-plate. To such natures, case-hardened against the elements, time and the seasons come in vain: winter and summer, not a crevice opens in the rock where a green thing can push its root. Wanting susceptibility to appropriate what is given and work it up into the organism of the personal existence, they can only by an abuse of terms be said to have "experience" at all: they want its diviner conditions, though supplied with its natural vicissitudes; and were life to come over again, they would do and be essentially the same.

Magnitude of life then stands not in mere length of days. *That* is but one of its dimensions; and only "in



our haste" can we protest, when it is abridged, that God has "created us in vain". It is not larger time that we want, so much as the more capacious soul to flow through every pore of the little which we have. So long as we shrink within the fence of selfish ease, and see nothing, feel nothing, think nothing, beyond the drowsy range of personal routine, our lot will be so empty, that no amount of it can ever seem enough; and our complaint of its brevity would not be cured by the gift of centuries. While the spirit sleeps, the longest time-piece will be running down, and can count nothing but its own lessening distance from stoppage and death. But to the insight and affections of a mind awake there is no end to the plenitude of things; it overcharges the hours that try to give its reckoning.

*Hours*, I, XVI.

# XXI

# THE WITNESS OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

## FAITH AND SUFFERING

At the side of every suffering by which God has dignified our nature he has set a belief to assuage it, to consecrate it, to turn it from weakness and confusion into strength and wisdom. The Reason which makes us deplore vicissitude and anticipate decay, enables us to discern the Eternal, and feel assured of the perpetuity of good. The Affections which render the separations of mortality so sad, open our eyes to the immortal worth and sanctity of a human Spirit, and reduce death to the rank of a temporary illusion. The Conscience which disturbs us with the shadow of guilt, directs our eye to the pure light that casts it; and the downcast look at our own sinful form sustains the aspiring memory of a heaven clear and clean. Thus the powers that deepen terribly the sense of ill, exalt gloriously the faith in good: they cast us into the midst of sorrow; but they throw us into the embrace of God. Faith is allowed us as the appointed antagonist of Fear; and none are so ready with the true courage and calmness of a man, as those whose trust is in One that is higher than man.

The truly religious man is, in fact, incapable of fear. Not that he has any diminished expectation of the evils incident to the human lot. He looks for no exemption from them, and would be the last to claim it. He loves to share the common heritage, and would feel a special





immunity to be a personal alienation. The particular Providences which please the piety of a narrow mind and a rude age offend his larger soul: a God whom he could have all to himself would cease to be the object of his worship; and a Heaven that would bend itself to his wish would be to him a heaven no more.

*Hours*, II, XI.

## PAIN AS CORRECTIVE

Hunger, thirst, fatigue, serve not only as heralds, punctually to announce a need, but as guides and incentives to supply it: nor is it conceivable that living power should be set in action at all, without a disturbance to the equilibrium of content. This class of pains is strictly self-corrective, and reacts into the corresponding pleasures: the tired animal sleeps, the thirsty drinks, the shivering creeps into shelter, the threatened flies or stands upon its guard. Reason itself, were it universal, would be a poor substitute for this sharp reminder. If each creature had to study its own case, and, like an outside physician, prescribe its diet and its meals, where to rest, and how and where to build, how long would it be before it slipped into some fatal forgetfulness, like the patient kept alive by art, and blundering among his medicines? As it is, the uneasiness of appetite or passion sets it upon tentatives for relief, and trains it to mastery over the resources of its world. It is curious to notice the opposite uses to which this law may be put by the differing tempers of its interpreters. Life, the pessimist tells us, is a continuous horror, a perpetual flight from pain; it is the goad from behind that spurs all its energy; it is to escape from itself that it is precipitated forward; and though

panting and spent, it cannot stop, for the ground caves in at every step; and its whole story is made up of exhausting effort, in recoil from inflicted suffering. Take the same fact in front, look at its *whither* instead of its *whence*, and how different the aspect it assumes: Yes, we say, Life *is* a constant *escape* from suffering, a triumph over it by energy, a leaving of it behind, as a shadow that cannot overtake the swift and strenuous; and in this victory the creature learns that its true function is, not to *enjoy*, but to *achieve*, to command its field, and to press into its own perfection. This is the true end that draws it forward into the future; and towards which its way is beneficently sped by a lesser content with the present. In proportion as the conquest of uneasiness by activity is better than the inertness of unbroken ease, are the pains to be welcomed which wake up faculty into existence. Take away from the animal all appetites, all passions, all affections, and what sort of creatures do you leave? whither will they move? what call will they answer? at what sound will they start? what will quicken and kindle their eye? You doom them to torpor, in which they hibernate instead of live. Do you think to stir them by pleasure and spare them pain? You may separate the names, but not the things; for they denote changes, and each is the transition from the other. You cannot have attraction where repulsion is made impossible, or joy where you forbid grief, or love where anger cannot come; these are polar forces, and must either enter in pairs, or stay away. I cannot say that, among the infinite reserves of things, there is no alternate possibility; but, so far as our range of conditions goes, the objection to pain is an objection to sentient life, and proposes not to reform, but to abolish, all but the



vegetable realm of natural history. It would leave the beauty of the world without a witness, and its affluence without participants.

*Study*, II, Bk. II, Ch. III.

## THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

It is in the presence of sorrow and privation that we most forget ourselves: and in many a home the crippled child or the disabled father has trained to tenderness and considerateness the habits which would else have been self-seeking and frivolous. The noble army of benefactors of mankind whose names tradition will not forget, consist of men and women whose hearts have been smitten with some great compassion, and who have given their lives "a ransom for many". And here too it is vain to say that, in a world without affliction, we could well spare them. It would be but an insipid place. Take away these figures from the stage of history, and who would care to sit its drama through? Has their biography no interest on its own account? Are they mere organs for discharging this or that evil from the world, and have they no measure but as instruments for this one end? On the contrary, it is their own depth of character, rather than their special work, that comes home to us with power; so that the end they had in view often affects us less than the great personalities which it created. More readily still must it be admitted that, but for its sorrow, the heart would seldom find its rest in God: for even the cynic feeds his humour on the fact that men betake themselves to religion, when they have lost all else. As usual, he sees aright, but gives the meaning wrong. He thinks it some mean fear, that wrings forth the sufferer's prayer—

some snatch of despair at a dismal refuge, like a plank in shipwreck, or a hideous meal in famine; and takes it in proof, that religion is nothing but the lowest dregs of life, when the generous wine is all drained off. And so it would be, if there were no truth in it, and the sole reality lay in the temporal well-being: to fall through the comforts into the pieties of life would then be to exchange the substance for the shadow, and to cheat away misery by opiate dreams of superstition. But if, through and behind the finite which we are and see, there is the infinite reality of God in us and around us unseen, if the former engages all our action, and crowds upon us appeals to our affections, while the latter lies around us as the spaces of a cathedral on which, like the workmen in it, we have no time to gaze; then surely it is intelligible without reproach, that, in the suspense of activity and through the tears of love, we should lift our eyes and look down the great perspectives, and ponder the sacred emblems, and find on what holy ground we stand. So long as we are abandoned to the customary play of phenomenal causes, we rarely quit the surface of either our own nature or the world: but when we are thrown out of the swift current and laid aside in the sorrow of some great change, the inner and the outer deeps are opened, and we sink at once into ourselves and God. Instead of passing away from reality, we now first reach it; and the foot which had been planted on the wave, rests at last upon the rock. Whether it be that the fading of external things brings out the inward lights, or that the surrender of all aims and desires delivers us into the Divine hand, it appears certain that the truest piety is to be learned only in the school of suffering: and, strange to say, its usual characteristic is in a



certain brightness and restfulness of spirit, free from the plaintive tone of painless religion: its faith is not shaken, but confirmed, by the shock. It is the observer that whimpers, while the victim sings, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

*Study*, II, Bk. II, ch. III.

## PAIN AND PROGRESSIVE GOOD

Whence comes the permanent uneasiness and discontent that are apt to haunt even favoured lives, and that trace the lines of care on every thoughtful human face? From the constant presence of unrealized ideas. The sense of shortcoming, of broken purposes, of blighted visions, follows everyone with a shadow darker than the sun's, and brings many a chill on the most genial hours. This is the one comprehensive human affliction into which innumerable minor troubles may be resolved; and it consists in a perpetual transcendency of conception beyond performance, a law of acceleration for the advance of thought beyond the rate of movement practicable for the will: so that in morals, in art, in literature, and in the State, action is disappointment and achievement poor. Yet to this very law we evidently owe the whole impulse which saves both the individual and society from a stationary existence. But for this felt interval between what is and what ought to be, who would stir from his position of content? who would resolve to make the future better than the present? what should prevent the whole world being arrested where it is, and becoming a stereotyped Chinese empire? In truth, what we often call "the struggle of life" and regard as the competition of men with each other, is in no small measure due to this

restless ideality, and is rather their attempt to overtake their own conception, and render more nearly perfect the work which they perform. Doubtless, the two incentives act together: but, without disturbed equilibrium between thought and deed, competition would have no effective engine of operation. This characteristic pain is therefore the very spring of all progressive good.

*Study*, II, Bk. II, ch. III.

## SIN AND SUFFERING

Let us now turn our attention to the provisions which admit *moral evil* into the world.

In treating of this old and terrible perplexity, some care is needed to keep it clear of passionate exaggeration, and present it in a form sufficiently exact for true appreciation. To judge from the threnodies of the modern pessimist, he is chiefly impressed by the *miseries* which vice and wrong produce. Would he then prefer that they should produce happiness? or would he have it make no difference to the external well-being of mankind, whether greed and licence prevailed, or disinterestedness and purity? Surely the entail of natural evil upon moral is the indispensable expression of a righteous administration of things: and the Divine holiness, instead of requiring its abatement, rather forces us to ask whether it is strict enough, whether there is not too much impunity, whether justice does not halt too long and far behind the fugitive from the law of Right. I have dealt already with the phenomena of pain and reviewed them in their several aspects: but the one class of them which I have not felt called upon to notice, because it was impossible to



make a difficulty out of them, is that of natural penalties for guilt. Sin being there, it would be simply monstrous that there should be no suffering, and would fully justify the despair which now raises its sickly cry of complaint against the retributory wretchedness of human transgression. The *incidence* of such wretchedness may doubtless be at times open to wonder and criticism: it may fall upon the innocent and so seem to miss its proper aim. But its existence and its amount are only what must be expected in a state of being in which character is to bear its consequences. The question which presses upon us is not, "how does it consist with the *benevolence* of God to admit so much morally incurred *pain*?" but "how does it consist with the *holiness* of God to admit so much *unholiness* in human life?" Nothwithstanding the supreme causality of God, it is rigorously true that only in a very restricted sense can he be held the author of moral evil.

*Study*, II, Bk. II, ch. III.

## THE INSPIRATION OF PAST TRAGEDIES

If it is the great crises of peril that, as they are passing, train a people's character, so it is their reflection in literature that, ages after they are gone, still spreads and perpetuates the ennobling influence. The inspiration that descends on us from the Past, and makes us heirs of accumulated thought and enriched affections—from whom chiefly does it come? Is it from the uniformly happy and the untempted good? from those who have most realized the lot for which our sentient and intellectual instincts cry aloud? No: but from the central figures of the great tragedies of our humanity; from the conquerors of desolating monsters; from the

creators of Law and tamers of the people; from love beyond death, that carried its plaintive music to the shades; from the avengers of wrong; from the martyrs of right; from the missionaries of mercy; from the pass of Thermopylæ; from the Sublician bridge; from the fires of Smithfield; from the waters of Solway; from the cross of Calvary. A world without a contingency or an agony could have no hero and no saint, and enable no Son of Man to discover that he was a Son of God. But for the suspended plot that is folded in every life, history is a dead chronicle of what was known before as well as after; art sinks into the photograph of a moment that hints at nothing else; and poetry breaks the cords and throws the lyre away. There is no epic of the certainties; and no lyric without the surprise of sorrow and the sigh of fear. Whatever touches and ennobles us in the lives and in the voices of the past is a divine birth from human doubt and pain.

*Hours*, I, xxiv.

# XXII

# DEATH, THE CORRELATIVE OF BIRTH

## ADVANTAGE OF DEATH IN ANIMAL WORLD

Death is in itself simply the application to organized beings of a universal rule, that whatever takes a beginning must reach an ending too. It is the necessary correlative of birth; and to ask for the one and protest against the other is no less inconsiderate than to cry out for light that shall cast no shadow or fuel that will never burn out. *Nature*, in its very meaning and idea, is the assemblage of *phenomena*, *i.e.*, of what comes and goes; it consists of cycles larger or smaller, and has no infinite lines; and to be exempt from exit by the returning curve would be to transcend Nature and merge in God. Whatever *ends* therefore are pursued in Nature must be *temporary ends*, admitting of realization within the term of a limited existence; and the vanishing of that existence affords no evidence that its purpose has broken short or failed: as well might we say, because the clock runs down, that it never can have been intended to mark time. When the function has been performed for its contemplated period, its cessation, instead of disappointing, completes its design. Nor can it be found that the design would be improved, were it possible to find some other means of renovation than by substituting new organisms for old. What alternative could be proposed? Sleep periodically repairs the waste in individual living beings, and sends them back with the full tension restored to their springs

of vigour; and it has been said that what sleep is to the individual, death is to the race. Could not sleep, then, it may be asked, be made to serve all through? Might it not continue indefinitely to effect a new creation, and endow the organism with perpetuity? Be it so; the only effect would be that in respiting the old from extinction you debar the new from its birth; and occupy the field with a few persistent individuals, instead of with a constant succession of ever fresh natures. What advantage would there be in this stiff conservatism, this nature without nativity, this world without young life?

*Study*, I, Bk. II, ch. I.

## ADVANTAGE OF DEATH IN HUMAN WORLD

Think what would be the effect in the intellectual world, whether of science or of letters, if its brilliant stars remained above the horizon for centuries. Give Newton four hundred years in the plenitude of his powers, and where would he have left astronomy and optics on his departure? Certainly at a stage not reached by the patient labours of a dozen followers in succession. Discoveries, now widely distributed, would thus be concentrated in some great individual, who would become Master of a whole department, and in his own person constitute not simply an epoch in its history, but for a vast period that very history itself. This pre-eminence in the *Princes* of science would invest them with an overwhelming authority; would mischievously dwarf the minor contributions of less gifted inquirers, and discourage the useful questionings of dissentient criticism; and render the next great advance difficult, without something like an intellectual revolution. And in literature, what would the prolific



genius of Walter Scott have accomplished with the labour of four centuries? The capacity of libraries and the possibilities of reading would be filled by a few such claimants whom no one could disregard and no one rival.

If even the guides and benefactors of mankind may live too long, what could we expect from the secured longevity of their foes and tyrants? What would become of the world, if its greatest empire were leased, for half a millennium, to a Domitian, a Philip II, or a Napoleon? With time enough to wear out the experience and almost the tradition of historic liberties, to strangle the protecting voices of the good, to drive the virtues and the arts into retreat, and muster and equip the bodyguard of bad passions and pay it with corruption, such rulers would weigh as a blight upon all lands, poisoning the germs of good, and nurturing to a frightful luxuriance whatever grows of rottenness. After so persistent a sway, resting upon a cynical contempt for mankind, and appealing only to the low elements which would justify it, recoiling from no cruelty, hesitating at no perfidy, and decorating every vice, what hope would there be of a return for the exiled and forgotten humanities? It is Death alone that hurls this kind of intolerable incubus from the breast of sleeping nations; and unless it comes soon to their deliverance, they do but gasp and die. True, if it makes haste to snatch the despot, it cannot be slow to take the patriot and the sage; but we can better spare the good to die, than bear the bad to live. When we are rid of the curse of the latter, its products will wither in the ground; from the former, there survives an essence which is imperishable and finds an endless fertility in other minds.

*Study*, I, Bk. II, ch. I.

# XXIII
# PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

## THE CELESTIAL HOPE NOT A DELUSION

If the celestial hope be a delusion, we plainly see *who* are the mistaken. Not the mean and grovelling souls, who never reached to so great a thought; not the drowsy and easy natures, who are content with the sleep of sense through life, and the sleep of darkness ever after; not the selfish and pinched of conscience, of small thought and smaller love; no, these in such case are right, and the universe *is* on their miserable scale. The deceived are the great and holy, whom all men, aye, these very insignificants themselves, revere; the men who have lived for something better than their happiness, and spent themselves in the race, or fallen at the altar of human good; Paul, with his mighty and conquering courage; yes, Christ himself, who vainly sobbed his spirit to rest on his Father's imaginary love, and without result commended his soul to the Being whom he fancied himself to reveal. The self-sacrifice of Calvary was but a tragic and barren mistake; for Heaven disowns the godlike prophet of Nazareth, and takes part with those who scoffed at him and would have him die; and is insensible to the divine fitness which even men have felt, when they either recorded the supposed fact, or invented the beautiful fiction, of Christ's ascension. Whom are we to revere, and what can we believe, if the inspirations of the highest of created natures are but cunningly devised fables?





But it is not so: and no one who has found true guidance of heart from these noblest sons of Heaven, will fear to stake his futurity and the immortal life of his departed friends, on their vaticinations. *These*, of all things granted to our ignorance, are assuredly most like the hidden realities of God; which may be greater, but will not be less, than prophets and seers have foretold, and even our own souls, when gifted with highest and clearest vision, discern as truths not doubtful or far off. In this hope let us trust, and be true to the toils of life which it ennobles and cheers.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XII.

## IMMORTALITY AND THE EXTINCTION OF GREAT MINDS

The student of Nature, or the servant of Art, is indeed obliged to put a limit to his aims and be content with small achievements: but what is it that arrests his attempts? Simply the consciousness expressed in the maxim, "Ars longa, vita brevis"; not that he could go no further and do no more; but only that he has a short loan of time and tools, and must reckon his piecework by his hours. The very fact that he sees what he must relinquish, and resigns it with regret, shows that he could conquer it, if he had the chance; and it is precisely at the end of life, that, from the vantage-ground of a lofty elevation and a large survey, he most intently turns to the horizon and best discerns the outline of the promised land on which his eyes are about to close. I do not know that there is anything in nature (unless indeed it be the reputed blotting-out of suns in the stellar heavens) which can be compared in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds: their gathered

resources, their matured skill, their luminous insight, their unfailing tact, are not like instincts that can be handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable; grand conditions of future power, unavailable for the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual. If that growth is not to be, the most brilliant genius bursts and vanishes as a firework in the night. A mind of balanced and finished faculties is a production at once of infinite delicacy and of most enduring constitution; lodged in a fast perishing organism, it is like a perfect set of astronomical instruments, misplaced in an observatory shaken by earthquakes or caving in with decay. The lenses are true, the mirrors without a speck, the movements smooth, the micrometer exact; what shall the Master do but save the precious system, refined with so much care, and build for it a new house that shall be founded on a rock?

*Study*, II, Bk. IV, ch. III.

## MAN'S CAPACITIES DEMAND A HIGHER EXISTENCE

What place can be assigned to *Death* in a world under wise and righteous rule depends chiefly, as it seems to me, on the *Scope* of the living nature on which it falls. That it happens to the plant in its season, and to the simply animal tribes, occasions us no perplexity; we see in it the correlative of birth—the indispensable concomitant of an economy of successive and progressive being. Not till we encounter it in human kind does it startle us with a mystery of surprise and sorrow. What is the secret of this difference? Does it lie in this —that in the *Scale* of the nature which vanishes in death there is an *infinite difference*, whether it be a Christ



or a sparrow that falls? In the mere animal creature the whole system of instincts and affections is in obvious subservience to the bodily organism, whose needs—of food, shelter, reproduction, and care of young, etc.—it supplies; the perfection of the physical structure is the *end*; the impulses and aptitudes of life are the *instruments* for securing it. When the end has been gained, and the body has fulfilled its term, it is a matter of course that the means should share its fate and lapse as well. We are, therefore, content to part with the whole creature—the visible form of the invisible life—at one stroke. In the case of man, this relation between the bodily organism and the animating intelligence and will is plainly inverted. His capacities and affections are not measured out by the exigencies of his corporeal structure, but immeasurably transcend these, and, assuming the headship of his nature, claim the right to subordinate and use the whole animal outfit in the service of their own higher ends. True *manhood* is first realized in one who wields all his physical energies and resources as tools of ideal achievements—knowledge, right, and loving service of others, and growth towards Divine Perfection. These are the genuine ends in which we find the inspiration and development and fulfilment of our life. And because they are far reaching and indefinite in their demands of time, while the bodily term is spent ere they have well started on their way, we feel the incongruous combination of immense possibilities with fragile tools, and, at the grave of every noble man, mourn to part with the mere fragment of a life. This seems to me the reason why we can never be content with *human death*, so long as we take it to be the same phenomenon—of actual extinction—that it is with the shot bird. The *scale* on which we are made is

conspicuously too vast for the short reckoning of our mortal years. The ripe and practised mind, the large and tender affections, the refined and steadfast conscience, which are the last attainments of a faithful soul, need nothing *but time* to realize the ulterior possibilities for which they sigh; their spiritual strength is not spent when their tools are broken; but was never greater than when the paralysed arm lay helpless at their side. Are we to believe, then, in such a disproportion between the inherent capabilities and inspirations of a self-directing nature and its material allowance of opportunity? Or, shall we not rather say, that we see at present only its first stage of opportunity, and are assured of the rest from the transcending range of its aims and powers? The profoundest feeling which possesses me at the end of life is, that I stand but little removed from its beginnings, schooled only in the mere alphabet of its attainable lessons.

*Life*, II, p. 445.

## JUSTICE AND PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

It is a dictate of natural justice to show some mercy at a first offence, but with every repetition to pass a heavier sentence, till the whole rigour of the law is visited upon the hardened criminal. See whether, in the inward court of conscience, any such judicial principle prevails. Is the first great sin treated lightly there? Is not the offender, on the contrary, terror-stricken by his sentence of shame and remorse, and would he not flee from it, if he could, as greater than he can bear? But if he falls again, it is with a less surprise of horror; the burden of compunction is more tolerable now. And each time that he is brought again



to the bar, he gains the ease of familiarity, and finds some successful plea of mitigation; till, at last, he contrives to corrupt the whole procedure, to suborn the judge, and turn the very chamber of justice into a council-room of guilty conspiracy. There is thus a process of gradual escape from the weight of inward retribution, as the transgression becomes habitual; and it is precisely on this account that upon offences again and again repeated the outward punishment is increased. So long as the moral sense is fresh and tender, it will itself effect, it is supposed, a good part of the work of law, and lenient treatment may perhaps suffice; but the frequent delinquent, who has hardened himself against the reproaches of his higher nature, must be brought under the heavy hand of society. It is not true therefore that Conscience, in its retrospective action, adequately administers its own law: were that the only justice, the greatest criminal would have completest impunity. The function which it really performs in our nature corresponds, not to the judge's sentence on the past, but to his prospective warnings addressed to the young offender for whom he would yet save "a place of repentance"—warnings grave and earnest at first, but fainter at every repetition, and at last relinquished as a mere waste and mockery of right. So it is with our natural contrition; it startles us with a fearful vision of what we are and may become. Treat it as a *premonition*, and it comes to us with all its intensity at the moment of happiest promise for its full effect; but treat it as a *punishment*, and where it is most wanted, it entirely fails.

For these reasons it is impossible to admit that our Moral nature runs through its own cycle, and fulfils its own idea, in our experience here. It announces a

righteous rule which again and again it brings to mind and will not suffer to be forgotten, but of which it does not secure the execution. It is a prophecy, carrying its own credentials in an incipient foretaste of the end, but holding its realization in reserve; and if Death gives final discharge alike to the sinner and the saint, we are warranted in saying that Conscience has told more lies than it has ever called to their account.

*Study*, II, Bk. IV, ch. III.

## SOCIAL AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS

The social and domestic relations whose loss we mourn do not really perish, when they seem to die.

Those relations, it is needless to say, do not consist in the mere juxtaposition of so many human beings. A certain number of animal lives, that are of prescribed ages, that eat and drink together, and that sleep under the same roof, by no means make a family. Almost as well might we say that it is the bricks of a house that make a home. There may be a home in the forest or the wilderness; and there may be a family, with all its blessings, though half its members be in foreign lands, or in another world. It is the gentle memories, the mutual thought, the desire to bless, the sympathies that meet when duties are apart, the fervour of the parents' prayers, the persuasion of filial love, the sister's pride and the brother's benediction, that constitute the true elements of domestic life, and sanctify the dwellings of our birth. Abolish the sentiments which pervade and animate the machinery and movements of our social being, and their whole value obviously disappears. The objects of affection are nothing to us but for the affection which they excite; it is for this that they



exist; this removed, their relation loses its identity; this preserved, it undergoes no essential change. Friends are assigned to us for the sake of friendship; and homes for the sake of love; and while they perform these offices in our hearts, in essence and in spirit they are with us still. The very tears we shed over their loss are proofs that they are not lost; for what is grief, but love itself restricted to acts of memory and longing for its other tasks—imprisoned in the past, and striving vainly to be free? The cold hearts that never deeply mourn lose nothing, for they have no stake to lose: the genial souls that deem it no shame to weep, give evidence that they have, fresh and living still, the sympathies, to nurture which our human ties are closely drawn. God only lends us the objects of our affection; the affection itself he gives us in perpetuity.

*Endeavours*, 1st Series, XXII.

## A HYMN

"WHERE is your God?" they say:
Answer them, Lord most Holy!
Reveal Thy secret way
Of visiting the lowly:
Not wrapped in moving cloud,
Or nightly-resting fire;
But veiled within the shroud
Of silent high desire.

Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder:
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder;—
Of duty grown divine,
The restless spirit, still;
Of sorrows taught to shine,
As shadows of Thy will.

O God! the pure alone,—
E'en in their deep confessing,—
Can see Thee as their own,
And find the perfect blessing:
Yet to each waiting soul
Speak in Thy still small voice,
Till broken love's made whole,
And saddened hearts rejoice.





## PRAYERS

FROM THE TWO SERVICES CONTRIBUTED BY DR. MARTINEAU TO *COMMON PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN WORSHIP* (1862)

### MORNING

ETERNAL God, who hast neither dawn nor evening, yet sendest us alternate mercies of the darkness and the day; there is no light but thine, without, within. As thou liftest the curtain of night from our abodes, take also the veil from all our hearts. Rise with thy morning upon our souls: quicken all our labour and our prayer: and though all else declines, let the noontide of thy grace and peace remain. May we walk, while it is yet day, in the steps of him who, with fewest hours, finished thy divinest work. *Amen.*

### EVENING

O GOD, who faintest not, neither art weary; whose everlasting work is still fresh as thy creative thought; we bless thee for the pity of night and sleep, giving us the rest thou never needest. We would lie down each evening in peace and thankfulness, and commit the folded hours to thee. But, O Lord, through toil and repose, save us from any fatal slumber of the spirit: and keep us through life to the holy vigils of love and service, as they that watch for thy morning of eternity. *Amen.*

## FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE

O God, who art, and wast, and art to come, before whose face the generations rise and pass away; age after age the living seek thee, and find that of thy faithfulness there is no end. Our fathers in their pilgrimage walked by thy guidance, and rested on thy compassion: still to their children be thou the cloud by day, the fire by night. Where but in thee have we a covert from the storm or shadow from the heat of life? In our manifold temptations, thou alone knowest and art ever nigh: in sorrow, thy pity revives the fainting soul: in our prosperity and ease, it is thy Spirit only that can wean us from our pride and keep us low. O thou sole source of peace and righteousness; take now the veil from every heart: and join us in one communion with thy prophets and saints who have trusted in thee, and were not ashamed. Not of our worthiness, but of thy tender mercy, hear our prayer. *Amen.*

## FOR CONSECRATION

O God, our everlasting hope, who holdest us in life, and orderest our lot; we ask not for any prosperity that would tempt us to forget thee. As disciples of one who had not where to lay his head, may we freely welcome the toils and sufferings of our humanity, and seek only strength to glorify the cross thou layest on us. Every work of our hand may we do unto thee; in every trouble, trace some lights of thine; and let no blessing





fall on dry and thankless hearts. Redeeming the time, may we fill every waking hour with faithful duty and well-ordered affections, as the sacrifice which thou hast provided. Strip us, O Lord, of every proud thought; fill us with patient tenderness for others, seeing that we also are in the same case before thee; and make us ready to help, and quick to forgive. And then, fix every grace, compose every fear, by a steady trust in thine eternal realities, behind the changes of time and the delusions of men. Thou art our Rock: we rest on thee. *Amen.*

## FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD

O thou whose eye is over all the children of men, and who hast called them, by thy Prince of Peace, into a kingdom not of this world; send forth his spirit speedily into the dark places of our guilt and woe, and arm it with the piercing power of thy grace. May it reach the heart of every oppression, and make arrogancy dumb before thee. Let it still the noise of our strife and the tumult of the people; put to shame the false idols of every mind; carry faith to the doubting, hope to the fearful, strength to the weak, light to the mourner; and more and more increase the pure in heart who see their God. Commit thy word, O Lord, to the lips of faithful men, or the free winds of thine invisible Providence; that soon the knowledge of thee may cover the earth, as the waters cover the channels of the deep. And so let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. *Amen.*

## FOR NATIONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

ALMIGHTY Lord, of whose righteous will all things are, and were created; who liftest the islands out of the deep, and preparest not in vain the habitable world; thou hast gathered our people into a great nation, and sent them to sow beside all waters, and multiply sure dwellings on the earth. Deepen the root of our life in everlasting righteousness; and let not the crown of our pride be as a fading flower. Make us equal to our high trusts; reverent in the use of freedom, just in the exercise of power, generous in the protection of weakness. With all thy blessings bless thy servant our King; and every member of the Royal House. Fill his heart and theirs with such loyalty to thee, that his people may be exalted by their loyalty to him. To our Legislators and Counsellors give insight and faithfulness, that our laws may clearly speak the right, and our Judges purely interpret it. Let it be known among us how thou hatest robbery for burnt-offering; that the gains of industry may be all upright, and the use of wealth considerate. May wisdom and knowledge be the stability of our times: and our deepest trust be in thee, the Lord of nations and the King of kings. *Amen.*