NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

A SECULARIST'S PRINCIPLES;

OR,

Which is the True Religion?

BY

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(OF THE 'NATIONAL REFORMER.')

'The multitudinous and discordant religions of the world suggest curious reflections.'

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DEDICATED

TO

MR. CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,

The Author.

PREFACE.

THE text of the following pages was written some years ago, and has been delivered several times as a lecture to working men and women with whom it has been my privilege to associate. It now appears in print, accompanied with the results of my later reading, which I trust may illustrate and explain the subject more fully.

The subject here discussed deserves abler treatment than I am capable of giving it, still the fact of my efforts being appreciated proves that, notwithstanding my deficiencies, the interest manifested in the subject continues to grow.

The quotations from the writings of others are numerous, not from necessity, but choice, for 'he who calls in the aid of an equal understanding, doubles his own; and he who profits by a superior understanding raises his power to a level with the height of the superior understanding he unites with.'* The authorities are quoted as Grotius advises, not as authorities from whom there is no appeal, but as witnesses who confirm and explain the view taken. The forms of expression I do not adopt, but the truth expressed I am prepared to defend.

My intention in this essay, whether obvious or not, is to spread truth and to do good. Those to whom, from whatever cause, the truth is unpalatable, may find herein cause of offence, but the offence is not intended; for to the honest

* Burke.

and well-meaning 'the plain dealing remonstrances of a friend differ as widely from the rancour of an enemy, as the friendly probe of a surgeon from the dagger of an assassin.'*

Infallibility is no man's privilege; so that if any one can convince me of error, I will expunge it from these pages with all my heart, for error is hurtful, and injurious to all who hold it. What I seek is truth, which hurts no one who loves it, and which never offends any but its enemies.

To those who may feel disappointment that speculation forms so small a part of this essay, I can only say that my special object is to call attention to those principles which are most important for daily use, believing, as I have done for many years, with Dr. Fuller, that 'the pains we take in books or arts, which treat of things remote from the use of life, is but a busy idleness;'† that the truest knowledge, the highest wisdom, is that which teaches men how to live well and increase the happiness of their fellow creatures.

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* E. W. Montague.

† Rule of Life, p. 82.

A SECULARIST'S PRINCIPLES.

We enter this world tremblingly alive all over, susceptible of impressions from every object that addresses our senses, from every thing we perceive, and of which we are capable of forming any idea. The world is a vast labyrinth, in which every one appears to be running a different way, and each is disposed to manifest hatred to the other for not running the same way. A few stand still, being indisposed to be led or to lead, and indulge in laughter at those who attempt to deliver themselves and fail; but even those who blunder and miss their way, are better than the idlers who never brave the attempt. The wise man and the fool are both liable to err, but it is only the fool who persists in his error. Those who suppose that they have no concern in the struggle of life are greatly mistaken, for there is nothing in this vast universe totally indifferent at all seasons to any one of its inhabitants; but no one is capable of appreciating this fact who has not interested himself in the well-being of his fellow creatures, and if we wish to instruct and benefit them we must have fixed and useful principles to guide us. These principles have to be acquired; for whatever we possess in addition to mere existence, must be the result of our own care and diligence, and the care and diligence of those by whom we are surrounded. To be of service, these principles must be acquired in the spring of life, so that in due time they may bloom with flowers and bring forth useful fruit. Principles thus acquired in the peaceful time of youth, when the sea is calm and smooth and the winds are prosperous, will become firm as a rock to our feet, and enable us to weather the storm as we travel across the tempestuous ocean of human life. A man without principles is as a ship without a rudder—at the mercy of every wind and wave. He is as a soldier untrained, for life is a battle; and he who

enters it will have to encounter, not only the heat of summer and the cold of winter, but also the passions of man—to meet these he requires that courage which knowledge alone inspires, and wisdom, which is the only sword by which man can drive violence permanently out of the world.

He who would carry light to those who are in darkness, and expel superstition from the world, must use his reason as the pilot to steer him amidst lust and fancy, ignorance and error, for whoever discards this guide must grope in the dark without one. Men may warn us that reason is a blind, fallacious guide, but only those who have none, or who never use it, will listen to such warning. Only those will decry reason or wit who find these agents powerful against themselves, or the purpose they wish to effect. He that follows the advice of reason 'has a mind elevated above the reach of injury; that sits above the clouds in a calm, quiet ether, and, with a brave indifference, hears the rolling thunders grumble and burst under his feet.'*

What! should every man be allowed to follow the dictates of his reason? Certainly, what else can he follow? Some men speak of things above reason: but if above reason, how did they become acquainted with such things? They tell us that reason may lead us away from the religion of our childhood—then that religion must be unreasonable, and therefore unsuitable for men. But they urge, it is a crime not to believe in the established religion of your country and your fathers—how comes it then that they honour the primitive Christians who disbelieved the established faith and proclaimed a new one? If it be considered a crime to reject the established religion, those who believe it to be a crime, must love Paul the persecutor more than Paul the persecuted. If they had lived in ancient times, they would have condemned the early Christians and put them to death! In our peaceful age of reason how intensely foolish the results of this spirit appear to us. In other matters, mankind see the folly of treating unbelief or disbelief as a crime. Many instances might be quoted in proof of this.

For instance, what a spectacle of hopeless slavery is presented to us in those long ages of darkness and oppression,

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* Scott's Christian Life.

of despotism and authority, when Aristotle was everything, and reason nothing, when the crime of being wiser than the ancients was the worst species of treason and almost impiety.

'It is at least as melancholy as it is ludicrous, to read the decree which was passed so late as the year 1624, by the Parliament of Paris, in favour of the doctrines of Aristotle. In this, all persons were prohibited on pain of death *(à peine de la vie)* from holding or teaching any maxim against the ancient and approved authors *(contre les anciens auteurs et approvès.* . . . The philosophy of Aristotle, so dear to our kings and our ancient parliaments, says D'Alembert, did not always enjoy the same gracious favour. . . . In the early part of the thirteenth century, the works of this philosopher were burnt at Paris, and prohibited under pain of excommunication. There is really no sort of folly into which the philosophy of Aristotle has not led our good ancestors.'*

'Time has been when it was judged expedient to enact laws against those who should teach any doctrine contrary to the categories of Aristotle, to nature's abhorrence of a vacuum, to metaphysical quiddities, and the whole of a part of a thing. We have still in different parts of Europe above a hundred volumes of jurisprudence on the subject of sorcery, and on the method of distinguishing true conjurors from false. The custom of excommunicating grasshoppers and other insects hurtful to the grain, was once very common, the form of it subsisting at this day in several rituals; the practice itself, however, is now totally abolished, and Aristotle rests in peace together with the wizards and grasshoppers. Instances of these grave, and heretofore important absurdities are innumerable.'†

Perhaps you, gentle reader, revolt at the idea of death for heresy: but this feeling is not prevalent in many countries. And what is the prevailing opinion in England? Practically it is this:—Believe as I believe, or I will hate you; if I do you no actual injury, I wont prevent others. You are impious—you are not of my religion, and therefore of

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* Quoted by Dr. Brown, p. 284.

† Voltaire on Toleration, 1764, c. v. p. 52.

none—you are rightly shunned—and no respectable society ought to receive you, and no decent family ought to invite you to partake of its hospitality—no mother should love you, no father should protect you—if you are robbed, the law should prevent your gaining redress in a court of justice, and last, but not least, no woman should marry an unbeliever!

I pen these words in sorrow, not in anger, and I hope to live to see the day when they will be denounced from one end of the country to the other, as a libel on the English people. Those who suffer, and live with those who inflict the suffering, and who see it daily under so many forms, must be pardoned by those who see it not, when they confess before the tribunal of public opinion, that 'civil and religious liberty' is as yet only the poetry of progress. There will be great hope for the world when the great body of persons calling themselves Christians, who have been persecuted themselves, and who have cut each other's throats for centuries, shall reject their narrow views of human rights, and proclaim and enforce universal justice among all classes of men.

Peace and good will can never prevail among men until some great nation shall set the example by appealing (their own hands being guiltless) to the common interests of humanity, and the highest principles yet discovered for testing the good of our endeavours—the happiness of our fellow creatures.

The right of persecution, so ably advocated by theologians of almost every age, is but barbarism and murder; it has produced war, discord, poverty, and vice; while toleration (that is justice) has the opposite tendency; and although it is not, as Protestants suppose, the *cause* of all human good, still it permits all those causes to operate which do produce it. It may be fairly put to our opponents of every creed—what earthly good has your principle of mental slavery and persecution done for the inhabitants of any country in the world? All history is against you. We impugn no man's motives; we are assured that men who persecute are as good as ourselves, as regards their character and intentions; but they are nevertheless enemies of progress in commerce, education, and social prosperity. They are agents of terror

and outrage, and whatever principles, laws, and institutions tend to prevent them working evil among men, are worthy of support and extension; for the men who succeed in destroying the power of persecution are as much our friends and servants as our forefathers who expelled from this island the tigers and wolves which formerly infested it. The persecutor looks on the heretic as a lost man who will suffer eternal agony in a future life; but if it be so, is that a justification for cutting his throat in this life? And what a monstrous idea to suppose that by doing the latter he can in any way benefit him, for all persecution is intended for the good of the sufferers and the world in general. What makes the matter still more deplorable, the believers of every national creed lay claim to the privilege of persecuting opponents, and if they do not do so it is because of their want of power—the intention and the spirit are strong if the flesh is weak—the passion is present if the arm is impotent. The monstrosity of this principle, common as it is, is perfectly appalling when we think for a moment that, if put in practice simultaneously by all nations, it would transform this world into a vast slaughter-house, the whole of its inhabitants would perish in a deluge of blood.

The author of 'Outlines of Philosophy'* makes a statement which I believe has the merit of being true as well as original. Before reading it my mind had for several years been strongly impressed with the truth it announces. Those who are unacquainted with any religion but their own, and who are but imperfectly acquainted with that, will thank me for pointing out to them a source of endless recreation, intellectual and moral. If no other result ensues, their reflective faculties will be thoroughly supplied during the time allotted to any ordinary man's existence on this globe. The statement referred to is that 'The multitudinous and discordant religions in the world suggest curious reflections.'

Probably some such notion as this pervaded the mind of Thomas Paine when, after writing his admirable work 'The Rights of Man,' he said, 'I will conclude this work with stating in what light religion appears to me.'

'If we suppose a large family of children, who on any

* Published in 1856. (London: John Chapman).

particular day or particular circumstance, made it a custom to present to their parent some token of their affection and gratitude, each of them would make a different offering, and most probably in a different manner. Some would pay their congratulations in themes of verse or prose, by some little devices as their genius dictated, according to what they thought would please; and, perhaps the least of all, not able to do any of those things, would ramble into the garden or the field, and gather what it thought the prettiest flower it could find, though perhaps it might be but a simple weed. The parent would be more gratified by such variety, than if the whole of them had acted on a concerted plan, and each had made exactly the same offering. This would have had the cold appearance of contrivance, or the harsh one of control. But of all unwelcome things, nothing could more afflict the parent than to know that the whole of them had afterwards got together by the ears, boys and girls, fighting, scratching, and abusing each other, about which was the best or the worst present.

'Why may we not suppose that the great Father of all is pleased with variety of devotion; and that the greatest offence we can act, is that by which we seek to torment and render each other miserable? For my own part I am fully satisfied that what I am now doing with an endeavour to conciliate mankind, to render their condition happy, to unite nations that have hitherto been enemies, and to extirpate the horrid practice of war, and break the chains of slavery and oppression, is acceptable in His sight, and being the best service I can perform, I act it cheerfully.'

It may be contended in reply to this, that there is *one* form of devotion only that is acceptable; but as so many different authorities contend for the same distinction, the question arises, which has never been answered to the satisfaction of all—*which is that one?*

'The quarrels and divisions about religion were evils unknown to the heathen.'

'If a heathen come in and hear you speak with several tongues, will he not say that you are mad? and certainly it is little better: when Atheists do hear of so many discordant and contrary opinions on religion, it doth avert them from the Church.'

'A man that is of sound judgment shall sometimes hear ignorant men differ, and know well within himself that they mean one thing, and yet they would never agree; and if it so come to pass in that distance of judgment which is between man, shall we not think that God above, that knows the heart, doth not discern that frail men, in some of their contradictions, intend the same thing, and accepteth of both?'*

The most perplexing and difficult of all the questions which present themselves to every thinking mind is—which is the true religion? The youthful inquirer knows not where to look for the answer, and consequently seeks the guidance of others who are older and pretend to be wiser than himself. In every country in Europe he finds distinct societies of men ever ready to set his mind at rest, to present to him a true system of religion, which has been verified by history, scholarship, and experience. Each society is fully persuaded of the unquestionable certainty of its own religion, and equally certain of the falsity and the dangerous tendency of every other religion in the world. The uninitiated inquirer, having made his choice, and discovered the remedy his heart requires, forthwith recommends his friends, if not all the world, to accept the same. The course here so briefly described is the history of the method by which millions solve the important problem—which is the true religion?

There are no *degrees* of certainty in the faiths of the world. Each faith must be accepted or rejected. Believe or be damned is the cry of all the heralds, is inscribed on every banner. There is no discretionary power in any sect—it is a case of all or nothing—eternal bliss or eternal misery. A man who had audacity enough to declare that good men of every faith would enter heaven, must be burnt at the stake as the enemy of every sect, and be condemned to everlasting flames hereafter as an accursed heretic. In modern times, in a very few countries, history, which describes the results of this view, is looked on as indicating the dark ages, which were, in fact, 'ages of faith,' when the

* Bacon on Religion.

path to the bulwark of Protestantism, the right of private judgment, was through blood and fire.

But suppose we grant as indisputable the pretension of each sect, that it alone is right and every other wrong—what is the only possible inference? If we credit them all, there is no escape from the conclusion that the whole are false. If we credit only one, every other one but that we accept, is necessarily false, and as *all* the others contain the chief points which constitute the one we accept, what becomes of our own solution of the problem—which is the true religion?

The only way out of this logical difficulty, is to find the affirmative truths common to each, and which admit of verification by reason and experience. The good and the useful in each may not afford proof of the truth of any, but they afford means of reconciliation to men who hate each other merely through opinion and prejudice. If we find a point of agreement obvious to all men and clear as noon-day light, goodwill and mutual sympathy will be possible. I am not ignorant of, or insensible to the efforts of one* who has ably attempted to reach the same end as here desired by other means. It may be true that all systems agree, or are reconciled in the unknown and unknowable, but the present effort is to reconcile them in the known and knowable. If we cannot agree in opinion, facts may help us; if imagination severs us, reality may unite us; if opposed on things speculative, let us at least agree on things practical. That on which all men can agree must be that which all men can verify, or which can be verified for them: this is the foundation of our hope to answer the question—which is the true religion?

The mere fact of being educated to believe in a system of religion is proof sufficient to many, indeed to the majority of mankind, that what they believe is true; millions would express astonishment on being required to give any other reason for the faith that is in them. But such believers are not examples worthy of reverence or imitation, for as Lord Bacon puts it, they merely 'believe that they believe,' and

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* See Mr. Herbert Spencer's 'First Principles.'

for aught they know to the contrary the system they believe in may be totally unworthy of credit. Coleridge somewhere says, that the road to belief is through the portals of doubt, but the majority of mankind have never entered these portals, and they would as little think of entering, as they would of committing suicide. Some, however, have the courage to doubt, and with these the habit of inquiry becomes a necessity—and the purpose and end of inquiry is knowledge. Dr. Watts once said, 'The speediest way to feel assurance in any point, is to read only one side of a controversy; these are the confident and infallible dictators to mankind; they see no difficulty, and admit no doubt. I must confess I have followed a different method of study, and therefore I have so few indubitables among my philosophical acquirements.'*

Leighton (in Coleridge's 'Aids') says, 'Men that know nothing in science, have no doubts. He never truly believed who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. Never be afraid to doubt.' As Bishop Shipley says—'The men I am afraid of are the men who believe everything, subscribe to everything, and vote for everything.'

A very great help in any inquiry is to know what we seek for, having firmly fixed in our minds a picture of the object we are looking for. Now, in the inquiry on which we are entering, there is one cause of confusion and error which must be removed at the outset. A great number of different things have received the same name. A great number of different and contradictory doctrines have received the name 'Religion.' At the very beginning it must be admitted that the whole of these contradictory doctrines cannot be true. If such confusion existed in any other department of human knowledge, the matter would receive immediate attention and rectification. If a vast number of different flowers had received the name 'Rose,' of trees the name 'Oak,' of heavenly bodies the name 'Sun,' men would speedily discover some distinctive marks of identity, and some suitable appellations by which to distinguish them. A classification of religions, a separation of heterogeneous particles in morals, is surely possible, at any rate the enor-

* Philosophical Essays.

mous difficulties shall not prevent the attempt. Here then we must agree on what we are bent on finding out. On matters which transcend the limits of thought and human experience, we do not propose to enter. The cardinal points in the popular religions of the world, as the existence of God and a future state, the infallible truth of oriental or Jewish literature, we shall not discuss, except in so far as the treatment of our subject requires for its proper elucidation. The belief in matters which do not admit of proof, we shall denominate superstition, faith, conjecture, theology, or any other name by which the holder of that belief may choose to distinguish it. But in Religion we shall recognise only the known and the useful. If by this method we succeed in showing that many who now hate each other because they think they differ, do, after all, agree on points of the highest importance, the effort will not be fruitless. To show that this attempt is not so hopeless as some may think it, we quote some remarkable words from the *Edinburgh Review*:*—'If there be a religion of nature, and we believe there is, we conclude that there can be no religion but truth, and no heresy but falsehood.'

The difference between true and false religion has been described as 'Orthodoxy' and 'Heterodoxy;' but any one acquainted with the history of the various systems of faith in England alone, must have observed that the schoolmen who employed these terms, always did so merely to proclaim their opinion right, and every body else's wrong. Orthodoxy is my 'doxy,' and heterodoxy is another's 'doxy.' Orthodoxy in the present day, owing to the sceptical tendencies of the present age, brought about during the past years by the agency of a free press and free discussion, is very difficult to define. It is like the stage coaches of our progenitors, almost gone out of use. Freethought in theology is becoming a source of alarm—but so were the lighting of towns by gas and travelling by railway objects of terror to the minds of many who in their day and generation were perhaps not inferior to our enlightened selves.

The *North British Review*, February, 1847, in an article ascribed to Dr. Chalmers, said—'As things stand at present,

* Vol. lxxxii., p. 56.

our creeds and confessions have become effete, and the Bible a dead letter: and that Orthodoxy, which was at one time the glory, by withering into the inert and lifeless, is now the shame and reproach of all our churches.'* 'There must be a most deplorable want amongst us of "The light shining among men," when instead of glorifying our cause, they (men like Carlyle) can speak, and with truth the most humiliating, of our inert and unproductive orthodoxy.'† Prince Albert said,‡ 'We cannot help deploring that the church . . . should be afflicted by internal dissension, and attacks from without.' His hope lay in 'The Gospel, and the unfettered right of its use.' Whether H. R. H. did really 'deplore' the circumstances mentioned, does not affect my present argument. Almost every speaker of note, since that time, bears witness to the fact the Prince professed to deplore. It has been pointed out long ago,§ that the fate of the terms orthodox and heterodox, depended on the religion of the king, and as they were used to denote opinions concerning the incomprehensible, no wonder that they caused so many endless and bitter disputes—but if they were employed to distinguish virtue from vice, and good from evil, they would never mislead, and would ever be taken in the same sense. John Locke showed in striking language the absurdity and divisions occasioned by these stereotyped words. An orthodox man is one who has found those that he thinks have found the truth; he takes his opinions in the lump, and rushes to conclusions with a jump, and he jumps from one opinion to another, as the fashion of the time dictates. The term heterodoxy is one of reproach, like the term infidel, and those who use these terms, suppose that others are responsible to them for their opinions. But as Lord Brougham has said,‖ 'The great truth has gone forth to the end of the earth, that man shall no more render account unto man for his belief, over which he has no control.' Professor Lawrence says, 'To quarrel with one who thinks differently from ourselves, would be no less unreasonable than to be angry with him for having features unlike our own.' Dr. Herbert Croft¶ says, 'No

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* P. 326. † P. 328. ‡ Vide Speech, June 17, 1851.
§ See Rev. R. Robinson's Sermons.
‖ Glasgow Discourses. ¶ Naked Truth.

man should be forced to believe: for no man can be forced to believe. You may force a man to say this or that, but not to believe it. . . . Would you, can you force him to believe the Scripture? Can you drive faith like a nail into his head or heart with a hammer? Nay, it is not in a man's power to make himself believe anything further than his reason shows him, much less divine things.'

Sir Thomas Brown says, 'I could never divide myself from any man upon a difference of opinion; or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that from which perhaps, within a few days, I should dissent myself.' Robert Hall considered freedom of thought, being intimately connected with the happiness and dignity of man in every stage of his being, as of much more importance than the preservation of any constitution.

A whole volume might be filled with arguments from the most distinguished writers of every age, to the same effect. But, what we want is to see these dictates of reason, and the wisdom of ages, reduced to practice in every-day life, to see them incorporated in the laws of our country, for the just government of its people. In the words of Euripides, we hold that—

> 'This is true liberty, when freeborn men,
> Having to advise the public, may speak out;
> Which he who can and will, deserves high praise;
> Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace.
> What can be juster in a state than this?'

Truly and eloquently has the poet sung of freedom, and what we want to see is, the realisation of those aspirations which characterise the writings of all the prophetic spirits of the world, believing, as we do, with Cowper, that—

> 'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
> Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
> And we are weeds without it.'

Dr. Watts* says, 'His [Locke's] admirable letter of toleration led me, as it were, into a new region of thought, wherein I found myself charmed and surprised with truth. There was no room to doubt amidst sunbeams. These leaves triumphed over all the remnant of my prejudices on

* Philosophical Essays.

the side of bigotry, and taught me to allow all men the same freedom to choose their religion as I claim to choose my own. Blessed be God that this doctrine has now taken such root in Great Britain, that I trust neither the powers, nor the frauds of Rome, nor the malice, pride, and darkness of mankind, nor the rage of hell shall ever prevail against it.' To this prayer of the Doctor's (which might have been usefully lengthened to include the Protestants) I heartily respond Amen!

'Yet so natural to mankind is intolerance, in whatever they really care about, that religious freedom has hardly anywhere been practically realised, except where religious indifference, which dislikes to have its peace disturbed by theological quarrels, has added its weight to the scale. In the minds of almost all religious persons, even in the most tolerant countries, the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserve. One person will bear with dissent in matters of church government, but not of dogma; another can tolerate everybody, short of a Papist, or an Unitarian; another, every one who believes in revealed religion; a few extend their charity a little further, but stop at the belief in a God, or a future state. Wherever the sentiment of the majority is still genuine and intense, it is found to have abated little of its claim to be obeyed.'*

But it is vain for superstition to proscribe inquiry, the desire to know, as the first and most flagitious of crimes. Experience teaches that into this one principle truth—and truth and knowledge are one—all the conditions of human welfare and happiness resolve themselves; for all our evils—intellectual, moral, and physical—truth, and truth alone, is the remedy.

We have already said that liberty must be allowed because no man can be compelled to believe—it is further required to keep the mind in a healthy condition. A most able and conclusive 'Essay' on this subject appeared in this country in 1859, from the pen of one whose name will be ever dear to the lovers of liberty and progress. Of course the idea of liberty involves the idea of some one to use it—some one able and virtuous enough to confront openly any

* On Liberty. Introd. J. S. Mill.

opinions to which he may object. Mr. Mill holds that an opponent is so necessary, that if none existed he would like to see the teachers of mankind contrive a substitute; for as he says, 'Both teachers and learners go to sleep at their post as soon as there is no enemy in the field.'*

A contemporary author has well spoken of the deep slumber of a decided opinion:—'If there are any persons who contest a received opinion, or will do so if the law or opinion will let them, let us thank them for it, open our minds to listen to them, and rejoice that there is some one to do for us what we otherwise ought, if we had any regard for either the certainty or the vitality of our convictions, to do with much greater labour for ourselves.' 'There is always hope when people are forced to listen to both sides.'

It is the fashion of the present time to cry down negative logic—that which points out weaknesses in theory or error in practice, without establishing positive truths. This fashion is one which never goes out. 'Such negative criticism would be poor enough as an ultimate result; but as a means to attaining any positive knowledge, or conviction worthy the name, it cannot be valued too highly; and until people are again systematically trained to it, there will be few great thinkers, and a low general average of intellect in any but the mathematical and physical department of speculation.'

If the utility of free discussion be admitted, if freedom of opinion be a necessity of progress in human affairs—the right must be conceded. But who has the power to withhold this right or to coerce those who exercise it? Mr. Mill denies that either people or government have any right to interfere in such matters, for 'The power itself is illegitimate. The best government has no more title to it than the worst . . . If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of a contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.'

The same liberty which we claim for the conscience, we

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* On Liberty, by J. S. Mill.

claim for the tongue, and for the pen, which, in the words of Paine, is the tongue of the world. As Mr. Mill says, from liberty of thought 'it is impossible to separate the cognate liberty of speaking and writing.' Even on the Catholic theory that only the teachers of mankind need be allowed to see all sides of every question—the logical result is that 'everything must be free to be written and published without restraint,' or the teachers of mankind cannot possibly learn what they should know. Whatever opinion is prohibited, may be the one which mankind most need, and whether it be that one or not, no man can tell, if publication be not allowed.

We assume then, on the arguments here stated, and others which might be, if space permitted, that it is our undeniable right, and our highest duty, to promulgate truth, which is knowledge; for the more extensive our knowledge becomes, the better shall we be able to improve our conduct; and the institutions in which all are interested, and by which the welfare and happiness of all may be promoted.

Those who are religious sceptics on this question may consult Mr. Mill's book with great advantage, and for their benefit we quote the following passages :—

'The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force, in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.'

'The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily or mental and spiritual . . . Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.'

We have already stated that the discussion of superstition in this Essay will be limited to the requirements of the question under consideration. Superstition is the result of observation, yet it is opposed to observation, which results in science; because science destroys superstition, which is founded on inaccurate observation. Superstition teaches that the earth is the primary body, and the stars satellites; while science teaches that the earth is a satellite of one of the stars which are suns. Hence superstition is opposed to astronomy. The invention of telescopes and the use of them is in this view Atheistic,* because it extends vision beyond the limits fixed by God in the human eye. Gravitation is opposed by the capricious-will theory. The following, translated from Boethius, will illustrate this doctrine :—

> 'O thou whose power o'er moving worlds presides,
> Whose voice created, and whose wisdom guides,
> * * * *
> From thee, great God, we spring; to thee we tend;
> Path, motive, guide, original, and end.'

If this theory of things be accepted, all the discoveries of modern science must be rejected as mere fictions of man's perverted imagination. Geology is opposed by the theory that the universe is of recent origin, and chemistry by the notion that things appear and disappear, as it were, by magic. Physiology, which demonstrates that it is the nature of brain to think, as it is of the lungs to breathe, or the magnet to attract steel, is opposed by superstition, which teaches that the mind is not under law, but is an immaterial free agent out of harmony with all things by which it is surrounded, including the very material organisms by which it is governed in all its operations, and without which its functions cease! Superstition is opposed to the conclusions of all rational thinking and observation, maintaining that man can and does obtain ideas without complying with the conditions by which alone any man ever obtained any ideas whatever.

Those who condescend to reason on this subject, consider the whole of scientific research refuted by the statement

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* See the History of the Royal Society.

(which is quite true) that 'blind unconscious matter cannot think.' Moreover, this assertion sounds well! Brought down to the level of ordinary minds, it means: blind matter cannot see; unconscious matter is not conscious. If these assertions explained what it is that thinks and feels, they might be of service. When you tell me 'an immaterial principle' thinks and sees—it may be all you can say, but do not delude yourself with the idea that you have explained anything! Knowledge, with its attendant modesty, always uses language pregnant with meaning, and never substitutes sound for sense. As an illustration of prevailing ideas on this subject, take the following:—'It may be laid down as a just conclusion that the convolutions of the brain are the centre of intellectual action, or more strictly, that this centre consists in that vast sheet of vesicular matter which crowns the convoluted surface of the hemispheres. This surface is connected with the centres of volition and sensation (*corpora striata* and *optic thalami*), and is capable at once of being excited by, or of exciting them. Every idea of the mind is associated with a corresponding change in some part or parts of this vesicular surface: and as local changes of nutrition in the expansion of the nerves of pure sense may give rise to subjective sensations of vision or hearing, so derangements of nutrition in the vesicular matter of this surface may occasion analogous phenomena of thought, the rapid development of ideas, which, being ill-regulated or not at all directed by the will, assume the form of delirious ravings! . . . Emotion when suddenly or strongly excited, or unduly prolonged, is most destructive to the proper texture of the brain and to the operation of the mind. . . . We have many proofs to show that the neglect of mental cultivation may lead to an impaired state of the cerebral nutrition; or, on the other hand, that diseased action of the brain may injure or destroy the powers of the mind. These are fundamental truths of vast importance to the student of mental pathology as well as of physiology.'

In addition to these statements, our authors speak of 'convincing evidence that the mind can work apart from matter,' and that 'the workings of the mind are doubtless independent of the body'— . . . 'Sweet melody results

from skilful playing on a well tuned instrument of good construction, so a sound mind,' &c.*

This theory transforms every man's brain into a sort of intellectual piano, and the skill of the 'mind' in playing on its instrument is regulated by the quality and construction of the brain! bnt if the instrument be out of order, nothing but the harshest discord will ensue! This would be very pretty if true—but if true, how can 'the individual experience of every thoughtful person . . . afford convincing evidence that the mind [the player] can work apart from matter [the instrument]?' He must be a very skilful player indeed who could 'produce harmonious music' without, independent of, or apart from 'the strings of the harp!'

Mr. Lewes gives a very pretty illustration of the immaterial principle theory:—

'Metaphysicians still insist on their "spirit," and declare that it uses the material organ as its "instruments" acting through them, but independent of them. If, however, the physiologist were to declare that the digestive ego acts through the organs of digestion, playing on them as a musician on a harpsichord—the muscular ego through the glandular system, each ego preserving its independence, we should not warmly applaud his reasoning.'

We now proceed on the 'immaterial principle:'—

'That strength has an existence independent of mere blind weak matter, will be evident to the experience of every thoughtful person. Strength, therefore, must be accepted as an "immaterial principle," using the muscles as its "instruments." Strength plays upon the muscles as a musician on the harpsichord. We have innumerable proofs that neglect of the exercise of strength leads to an impaired state of muscular nutrition, so that a man who does not employ his strength will be found to have small and flaccid muscles; while on the other hand—as a further proof that strength is independent of muscular fibre—any disease of the fibre will derange, or totally destroy the powers of the muscle, as snapping of the strings of the harpsichord will destroy its musical capacity! True indeed it is, that physical strength and muscular development go

* Todd and Bowman's work, quoted by Mr. Lewes.

hand in hand, but we are not to conclude therefore that strength is dependent on the physical condition of the muscles.'

Science teaches that knowledge is derived from nature and experience, and if it were not for the fixed relation between cause and effect, there could be nothing known: it teaches that belief depends on evidence, that volitions depend on motives. Superstition is opposed to this, teaching as it does, that man may be, and is operated on, and influenced by, supernatural forces; that events have been, and may be, out of the order of nature, that man can believe what he chooses, as well as choose what to believe; in fact that he is wicked if he does not believe what superstition teaches, whether it appears true or false; any way, with reason or without reason, one thing is unalterably decided before he is born—he must believe. When thus plainly stated, the whole system is so palpably absurd that its friends will disown it, or they will discuss with you, or they will charge you with misrepresentation, or put the matter into other words, to make it more palatable; but after all this, the fact still remains, that superstition is hostile to science and reason, and every man who impartially investigates the matter, arrives at one of two conclusions, for there can be no third—he will either decide to follow the conclusions of his own reason, or the conclusions of another's reason; he must be guided by fashion or by facts, he must walk by faith or by sight, his mind must dwell in the realms of conjecture or in the sunlight of knowledge.

Ultimate causes no man can know; but if Infinite and Almighty Wisdom placed us on this planet, he must intend that we should be happy; and if unconscious nature produced us, it cannot intend that we should be miserable; so that the most devout Theist or the most extreme unbeliever may be fairly judged by the efforts he makes to promote the increase of human felicity. On any other hypothesis, this world would be but a prison-house of wretchedness, and the extent of our sojourn here but the extent of our inevitable misfortunes.

Superstition is opposed to impartial history and criticism, because by these the frauds and forgeries of the past are

revealed. It is opposed to education, except under its own guidance, because knowledge is the instrument by which it is destroyed. It is opposed to free inquiry, because that leads to knowledge. It is opposed to all critical examination, and 'above all things it forbids and anathematises examination of itself. . . . Superstition is the incarnation of evil and darkness in rebellion against the powers of light and of good.'*

'If we assume a principle whence we wholly derive power, it follows that we must trace all efficient causes, whether productive of good or evil, to that first principle; and this is a doctrine which I conceive to be directly contrary to the notions which we ought to entertain of Deity.'†

But popular theories do teach that there is one only source of all power, knowledge, and goodness, which foreknew that the evil in man, in the world, or in the devil, would, under certain conditions, necessitate the everlasting torture of myriads of human beings throughout all time, in every age and country—that the chances of any escape are one in a hundred thousand. They further represent that a select few will be happy, while they know, if they are well informed, that millions of their brothers and sisters are suffering terrible and interminable misery. A man who could be happy while he knew that even his ox or his ass had fallen into a pit of fire and brimstone, where it would live and suffer for ever, must be a demon whose memory the pure in heart would hold in execration. The company of wild beasts would be heaven compared with that of the selfish, malignant beings who could be happy with the knowledge of the fate of the reprobate and the damned.

I have heard 'ministers of the gospel' utter denunciations against sinners, and proclaim to thousands their fate, as decreed by an all-wise and all-just Father, to be everlasting fire; and one whom I esteemed as sane and intelligent once told me he knew of no punishment too great for an unbeliever! yet this man would never admit the justice of holding one of his own children over the kitchen fire

* Adaptability, p. 18. † Drummond's Academical Questions.

for one second, as a punishment for any possible crime. He set his own notions of justice above that of the doctrine he was paid to preach, and would profess himself offended at my telling him that Supreme Wisdom must know what kind of punishment was best—that the Father of all the children in the world must know that the infliction of eternal pain was inconsistent with the highest justice, the dictate of Infinite wisdom, the offspring of Infinite mercy and love. How glorious is the consolation that men are better than their creeds, more humane to their children than the Gods they believe in!

Again, there is the doctrine, that 'without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission of sins." To an enlightened age such conditions are truly hideous and appalling, and yet these words are repeated in our ears by persons who would not put a man to death for theft or forgery, who would not delight in cutting off the ears and noses of their fellows, as did their fathers of pious memory. These practices are indulged in only by those who have the feelings of the tiger and the instincts of savages of the worst description. If a man or a government were to murder a fellow-creature for being a heretic, at the present time in England, the act would be looked on as a crime of the deepest dye, by thousands of Englishmen—yet the same persons go on repeating and believing as divine morality that 'without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins.' Perhaps the hideous deformities we call creeds prevail through want of thought rather than through want of heart—tolerated they are by ignorance and prejudice, but not by virtue and knowledge.

Real religion holds out no salvation to man until he has merited it. To be saved from the injury of error he must get knowledge; to maintain health he must practise temperance in all things; in other words, salvation from the errors of superstition, and errors of conduct in life, depends on the practice of what we know, compliance with the methods of our own nature, and the world by which we are surrounded. The evils with which we are afflicted can be removed only by industry, instruction, and religion. The salvation of man in this and all similar worlds can be effected only by his belief and practice of truth, his con-

formity to social and natural laws, his constant adherence to rectitude, his everlasting reliance on the practice of right, love, and justice. We may be told that in all countries the religious teaching is that salvation is alone to be gained by shedding of blood; but salvation by knowledge and virtue is alone consonant to reason and experience. Physical cruelty to rational and innocent creatures cannot atone for bad habits, evil dispositions, or social injustice.

The doctrine of vicarious punishment is as universal as it is absurd and difficult to account for. How there could arise the notion that there is any connection between suffering on the part of the innocent, and pardon or excusing of the guilty, is truly marvellous; or 'that two acts of the highest injustice should make one act of justice; it is equally astonishing that so many should believe it themselves, or impose it upon others.'*

Man arms himself with implements of destruction, and practises murder as a science, and its chiefs are honoured. For them the blessing of God is demanded by popular religion. Real religion teaches that murder is hateful, unnatural, and deems it blasphemous and vicious to do other than pity, restrain, and instruct the men who murder their fellow-creatures whom it is their nature to love and to serve.

The principles on which superstition proceeds are founded on the Old and New Testament. In the Old, its votaries read of a nation whose king was God and whose secular affairs were guided by omniscience, and by means altogether apart from any fixed order of nature. The New presents in its records a continuation of supernatural powers which direct and control the affairs of men, always giving the preference to those who believe aright. The whole of the history of our country displays a similar belief, if we except perhaps a portion of the present century. At the present time it is obvious that Providence is on the side of the most powerful army. The judgment and knowledge of the commander, the discipline of the troops, and the relative positions of the contending forces, are now seen to have some-

* W. Burdon.

thing to do with the results of an engagement. These considerations show the folly of attempting to decide by war the right of any matter in dispute. The morality of to-day seems to be that we must keep the sharpest sword, or live on good terms with those who do.

Not only do some men of this generation believe that the causes of war and the success of the warriors depend on the inscrutable decrees of Providence, but they also believe that the epidemics which break out in the armies may be removed by the same power. So long as we interpret the facts by which we are surrounded on this method, where is our consistency in describing the ancients as dark-minded heathens? When pestilence entered their armies, the terrified soldiers attributed it to offended Apollo avenging an insult to one of his priests! This is quite as reasonable as the enlightened (!) Englishmen attributing the cholera to God's anger against England.

'All the destructive animals fulfil their dire offices upon creatures belonging to other kinds. . . . Even the insatiably ferocious tiger keeps aloof from his brethren of blood. But when the drums roll, and the trumpets clang—when the banner folds are shaken abroad in the air, and the neigh of the charger re-echoes the deep notes of the bugle; then is man, with his boasted reason, preparing to spill the blood of his brother, to drive his desolating chariot over the faces of his kindred, spread havoc and despair before his path, and leave famine and pestilence to track his footsteps.'* So long as the military profession exists, civilisation is incomplete; and until the progress of nations in common is effected by a unity of interests and a uniform teaching of first principles, war will continue to disgrace the annals of humanity.

'And what, O superstition, have been thy triumphs! Thou hast selected thy victims from among the excellent of the earth; it is thy peculiar character to have reversed all the laws of nature and of God; to have inflicted, as far as thou couldst inflict on men of the sublimest virtue, the tortures of the foulest villany; and to have rendered purity unsullied, and piety sweeter and more celestial than thou

* American Paper.

couldst comprehend, the certain prey of misery and death. Thou hast fashioned to thyself a God, stern and sullen; retiring in awful gloom from his creatures—not to be approached but with groans, not to be appeased but by blood! Thy worship has been worthy of thy idol. The dungeon has been thy chosen temple, instruments of torture thy means of instruction; the stake thy eloquence, and thy piety the abolition of all human sympathy, lest those compunctious visitings of nature of which at first thou wert conscious, should render thy arm not steady enough to do its work, or thy eye not stern enough to look upon it.'*

If every teacher were compelled to give his definition of religion, to lay down certain boundaries (*i.e.*, limit the meaning of the word), I think a greater number of us would agree on the subject; or if not, certainly we should know what is the thing intended. Some persons mean by religion, a belief in the being and perfection of God, in the infallibility of the Bible, and man's obligation to believe every word of it, in certain established ceremonies, and in rewards and punishments after death in another world. Others hold that religion means any or every system of rites, ceremonies, and superstition. To another class, religion means what they call true godliness, real piety of life, or the practice of all the moral duties (which is piety in practice), and such they consider not distinct from virtue and morality. With the spirit of this definition I agree. Those who advocate this view evidently intend us to understand by religion what we call rightness of principle or practice—uprightness of mind, exact conformity to truth, or to the rules prescribed for our conduct in life, either by moral (divine) or natural (human) laws. In other words, this is believing in right, and doing right because you believe it.

According to Servius, and others, religion is derived from *religare*—to bind again, or to bind fast. According to Cicero, it is derived from *relegere (legere*, to read or consider)—to re-consider. The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, commenting on these definitions, says, 'In either case, the

* Dr. Southwood Smith.

import of the word *religion* is different from that of *theology*, as the former signifies a number of *practical duties*, and the latter a system of *speculative views*.' This distinction is seldom made, although sanctioned by high authority, and in itself of the highest importance.

David Urquhart, in his 'Familiar Words,' discusses this question fairly. He says:—'Religion coming to us from the Romans, we must seek first its Latin sense. It is derived from the verb "to bind," the binding of man by his faith to the performance of those duties that in modern English language are political. To the Roman "Religion" presented not worship, not faith—it signified the binding of man to do justice by and to the State, as a member of the community. In Greek the word "Politics," in Latin the word Religion, was equivalent to wisdom and justice. There was no religion that could be adopted as a vesture, there were no politics that could be worn as a mask. Politics was the knowledge of right, and religion the obligation to perform it. As it is by the fruit that the tree is known, it is he only who does what is just who is a Christian, whether in his individual capacity or as a member of a community. Natural religion teaches in like manner that man must do his duty to his fellow-men. Justice, then, and religion, of whatever form or denomination, are inseparable: it adds its authority to the instinct of justice already within every man's breast, and from which it derived its first sanction and its original form.'

Religion, as distinct from theology, is always described as godliness, and godliness means piety in practice, and piety in practice means reverence for parents, friends, and humanity; and reverence means affection and devotion to the honour and happiness of our fellow creatures, and all these together mean morality. Morality is the name of the quality as well as of the manner of an action, and is only applicable to good actions: it is the doctrine of moral duties founded on experience of the ordinary course of things—the actions of men in their social character, in which are included individual actions. Religion in theology means the duties of man to God, but, unless such duties are included in the above named, under the term morality, they form no part of the religion here advocated.

Once for all, to put the matter beyond the possibility of mistake—whenever the term religion is used in this Essay, it always denotes actions which relate to man. It may be objected by some who have not given the subject careful consideration, or whose interests are united with the institutions which teach another doctrine, that the scope and tendency of human faculties cannot thus be limited to this globe, and the service of human life. Many men 'of a bold, ungoverned zeal, aspire at things beyond their strength. . . . They are perfectly carried out of themselves with eagerness: forget that they are still poor insects upon earth, and think of nothing less than building their nests in heaven.'

'Some persons, in their great concernment about a future life, are prone to overlook the practical direction of the mind in the present. When we consider the nature and objects of the mental faculties, we perceive that a great number of them have the most obvious and undeniable reference to this life . . . stand in such evident relation to this particular world, with its moral and physical arrangements, that if they are not capable of legitimate application here, it is difficult to assign a reason for their being bestowed on us. Other faculties, as veneration, hope, &c., all of which, while they find scope for gratification in this world, may be adapted also for a higher sphere. But the important consideration is, that here on earth these two sets of faculties are combined; and on the same principle that led Sir I. Newton to infer the combustibility of the diamond, I am disposed to expect that the external world, when its constitution and relation shall be sufficiently understood, will be found to be in harmony with all our faculties.'*

It may be objected that the term religion as here defined is mere morality in the most extensive signification of the term. Certainly: whenever we speak of morality we mean all that is of human interest and utility in religion, and what we mean is not *a* religion, but *the* religion, and whoever means by that term anything more than, or different from, what is here defined, must mean something wrong,

* Combe's Constitution of Man, p. 189, 9th edition.

or must mean something transcending human faculties, and of no vital importance to ordinary citizens of a world constituted as ours is. Theologians have given their own interpretation to the term religion (which they are quite welcome to), but it is mere childishness in men of common sense to accept definitions from self-appointed authorities, merely because such authorities exist and laud their own importance. We have done with protection in trade, and why give any class of men a monopoly in words? If anti-theologians reject the science of theology, that is no argument for giving up all the sciences; and if men reject the religion of theology, that by no means implies the rejection of religion which denotes all that is rational, virtuous, and useful in the conduct of human life. If theologians choose to reject our interpretation of the term religion, it is they who are unbelievers; if they refuse to practise the conduct it describes and enforces, so much the worse for them and the people over whom their influence extends. If the term religion has lost its useful signification, its influence for good among the children of men, it is our mission to restore it, as one of the lost arts, 'the art of being and doing good.'* Life is sweet, the air is pleasant to breathe, gravitation will hold us to the planet; although these terms may find a place in orthodox sermons, and may enrich by their presence the countless volumes of the multitude of theologies which have darkened the intellectual horizon of an uninstructed world. This will of course be disputed by orthodox teachers, for 'They ["the keepers of Zion"] know and acknowledge religion only in one particular form and colour; whatever lies beyond these narrow limits is to them no longer religion, but irreligion. We, on the contrary, speak here of piety in general, in whatever form or colour it may appear.'†

The following may not be possible in the present generation, but the tendency of modern thought in this country justifies the expectation as an ultimate result of free inquiry and impartial criticism:—

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* Sermon preached before the Queen.

† Dr. Strauss's Soliloquies on Christianity, its errors and its everlasting truth!

'When philosophy shall have succeeded in purifying the Christian ideas respecting the relation of God to the world from foreign ingredients, which at the time of Jesus were still mixed up with them; when it shall have abolished the distinction between an extraordinary agency of God in the world, by which the cause of nature is interrupted, and an ordinary one, which is identical with the law of nature; when it shall have superseded the idea of angels assisting to execute the decrees of God in the world, and of a devil endeavouring to frustrate them—mere fictions, which, strictly speaking, are inconsistent with the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and only externally adopted from earlier religions; when these and similar prejudices shall have gradually been cleared away; will not then the nature of Christianity shine forth with greater purity?'*

The words of a great Scotch philosopher deserve careful attention when he says:—'We must, if we value our happiness, be careful in determining what it is which we denominate religion, that we may not extend its supposed duties to usages inconsistent with our tranquillity; and still more, that we may not form to ourselves unworthy notions of him on whom we consider our whole happiness to depend. It is not enough to believe in God as an irrisistible power that presides over the universe; for this a malignant demon might be; it is necessary for our devout happiness that we should believe in him as that pure and gracious Being who is the encourager of our virtues and the comforter of our sorrows . . . It would not be easy to estimate the amount of positive misery which must result from the mere contemplation of a tyrant in the heavens, and of a creation subject to his cruelty and caprice. . . . It is our duty to study the manifestations of his wisdom and goodness in the regular arrangement of the laws of the universe, that we may not tremble at superstitious imaginary influences, which we almost oppose to his divine power. . . . The cultivation of sound opinions in science is thus, in more senses than one, the cultivation of happiness. When religion is truly free from all superstition, there can be no question that the

* Dr. Strauss's Soliloquies.

delights which it affords are the noblest of which our nature is capable. It surrounds us with everything which is delightful to contemplate; with all those gracious qualities that even in far less degrees of excellence in which they can be faintly shadowed by the humble nature of man, constitute whatever we love and venerate in the noblest of our race.'*

What we venerate in the noblest of our race is far higher, nobler than the claims of any system, sect, or party—it is their fidelity, courage, industry, ability; in a word, their faithful service in promoting the good of their race. The veracity evinced in their dealings with mankind is the element in their lives which commands the veneration of our hearts.

To the earnest lover of truth and humanity, to the enlightened teachers of demonstrative principles, what are party, prejudice, and hypocrisy? 'He would as soon deviate from his appointed course, for the sake of such agencies, as the sunbeam would go out of its way to accommodate half a dozen wreaths of mist and vapour, which, though it may not penetrate at first, it is ultimately sure to scatter and dissolve.' There is an agency which is capable of scattering the mists of error which dim the sight of man, and that agency is veracity. 'Truth is the lever, which, operating upon the fulcrum of reason, can and does move the world, and will yet cause to approximate still nearer to rectitude the obliquity of its moral axis.'†

And why is it here contended that the happiness of mankind depends on veracity more than on any of the various religions of the world? Because this is not a mere prejudice, conjecture, or opinion, but is susceptible of proof, of demonstration—because the experience of mankind in every age and nation bears witness to the fact, and even those who have written most ably against the views here contended for, have uttered sentences in their favour of the most eloquent and convincing character. One of these writers is Dr. Thomas Chalmers, and, be it remarked, the following was written after his conversion from the

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* Dr. Thomas Brown's Philosophy of Mind, pp. 673 674.

† Adaptability, p. 6.

profession of a teacher of mere morality. Dr. Chalmers says* the consequences of 'universal distrust' are too obvious to be enumerated.

'The world of trade would henceforth break up into a state of anarchy, or rather be paralysed into a state of stillness and cessation. The mutual confidence between man and man, if not the mainspring of commerce, is at least the aid, without which its movements were impracticable. And if truth were to disappear . . . it would vitiate, and that incurably, every social and domestic relationship; and all the charities as well as all the comforts of life would take their departure from the world. . . . The observation of honesty and truth is of such vital importance to society that without it society would cease to keep together. This we may be assured of by an actual survey of human life.

'We can justly imagine the consequences upon human society, were perfect uprightness, and sympathy, and good-will to obtain universally; were every man to look to his fellow with a brother's eye; were a universal courteousness to reign in our streets, and our houses, and our market-places, and this to be the spontaneous emanation of a universal cordiality; were each man's interest and reputation as safe in the custody of another, as he now strives to make them by a jealous guardianship of his own; were on the one hand, a prompt and eager benevolence, on the part of the rich, ever on the watch to meet, nay, to overpass, all the wants of humanity, and on the other hand, an honest moderation and independence on the part of the poor to be a full defence for their superiors against the encroachments of deceit and rapacity; were liberality to walk diffusively abroad among men, and love to settle, pure and unruffled, in the bosom of families; were that moral sunshine to arise in every heart, which purity, and innocence, and kind affection are ever sure to kindle there; and even when some visitation from without was in painful dissonance with the harmony within, were a thousand sweets ready to be poured into the cup of tribulation from the feeling and the friendship of all the good who were around us. On

* On the Wisdom and Goodness of God. Brid. Treat. pp. 253-296.

this single transition from vice to virtue among men, does there not hinge the alternative between a pandemonium and a paradise?'

Emerson* bears witness to this view. He says:—'I look upon the simple and childish virtue of veracity and honesty as the root of all that is sublime in character. Speak as you think, be what you are, pay your debts of all kinds. I prefer to be owned as sound and solvent, and my word as good as my bond, and to be what cannot be skipped, or dissipated, or undermined, to all the *éclat* in the universe. This reality is the foundation of friendship, religion, poetry, and art.'

When we speak of religion as a binding principle, the obligation arises out of the relation in which we stand to one another, and denotes the fact that we feel obliged to speak and act truthfully for the good of others. We judge a man's actions, and pronounce them moral or otherwise, according to their effects, but if the effect be good without intention, or in spite of it, the action which produced it is not a virtue. 'If I fling half-a-crown to a beggar with the intention of breaking his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but with respect to me, the action is very wrong.'† The obligations before-named are what we term duties, and those who deny that man has duties must also deny that man owes anything to his neighbour, because what we are bound by natural, legal, or moral laws to do, pay, or perform to others, is what is intended by the term duty, and this word is as good as any other to express what is due from one to another—and if this term were destroyed it would have to be replaced by another of the same import.

Of course these remarks have no application to any but social beings, and to others they are not addressed—if any such exist. Unsocial beings are very singular; as Zimmerman says, 'they like nobody, are like nobody, and are liked by nobody!'

Religion, as we define it, implies that course of conduct in life which secures personal and social happiness. To be honest in belief, truthful in speech, moral in conduct, is to

* Conduct of Life, p. 285. † Johnson.

be religious—the belief and practice of truth constituting, in my estimation, the desirable and the real religion.

Morality is the name all mankind agree to give to that conduct which tends to the highest good—the good of all. All human beings of sane mind and sufficient knowledge can practise the ordinary duties of life, and these are what we call morality—which means, in fact, that quality of conduct which is admired and practised by all good men. The degrees of refinement in morals are regulated by the knowledge men possess—and consequently differ in various nations according to their discoveries in nature, in the nature of man, and in the relationship which exists between man and the universe.

It has been urged by way of objection to the views here advocated, that in different climates the motives to virtue differ; but what are motives? They are those causes which incite us to act, which determine our choice and move our will (by which I mean the final state of desire in the mind of the actor, and not any metaphysical entity in the brain) in the direction of truth and justice. Of course, different circumstances produce different effects on different individuals. We contend for this throughout, and those who raise this fact up against us confirm our views, and thus destroy the purpose they intended. Not only climate, but food, the aspects of nature, the scenery of our country, and even the moral (or immoral, as the case may be) atmosphere of society in which we live—all these and many more things affect the character of men. Every man has within him the seeds, as it were, of every virtue and every vice, and the proportion in which they ripen and thrive depends on the natural force of the seed and the situation in which man has been or may be placed.

'The same actions may be approved and disapproved in different ages and countries, from the greater importance attached to the good or to the evil of such compound results, in relation to the general circumstances of society, or the influence of political errors, &c. All this, it is evident, might take place without the slightest mutability of the principle of moral sentiments, because, though the action which is estimated may seem to be the same in cases in which it is approved and condemned, it is truly a different action

which is so approved and condemned; a different action in the only sense in which an action has any meaning, as signifying the agent himself having certain views, and willing, in consequence, certain effects of supposed benefit or injury. When some country is found in which the intentional producer of unmixed misery is preferred on that very account, some country in which it is reckoned more meritorious to hate than to love a benefactor merely for being a benefactor, and to love rather than hate the betrayer of his friend merely for being a betrayer of his friend, then may the distinctions of morality be said to be as mutable as any other of the caprices of the most capricious fancy.'*

By way of example to show what is intended by religion —suppose a man were required to take part in a false accusation against some innocent, helpless person, and various inducements were offered him to assist in the conviction of the innocent person—how should he act? If such a man refuse, in spite of consequences, to assist in the matter, then, I say, he is religious. The man who has the courage to be a good teacher of the ignorant, a just judge of the vicious, to prefer honesty to life, who would not keep his life by sacrificing all that makes life worth the holding —such a man is unquestionably religious.

'To do an ill action is base; to do a good one, which involves you in no danger, is nothing more than common; but it is the property of a truly good man to do great and good things, though he risk everything by it.'†

The actions of such men constitute real religion. Disinterested acts, so-called—acts done to humanity by one of its members because of his relationship, are certainly the highest examples of religion. Such acts reward the actor, and inspire the beholders with the purest devotion to truth. Such acts preserve tranquillity in the moral world from being extinguished by the sinners and fanatics. The application of truth to the affairs of men in society shows what is intended by the binding principle—religion. By principle is meant a law of action which is common to all men, the effects of which can be observed and predicted.

The most able opponent of the theory here contended for

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* Dr. Brown: Philos. of Mind, pp. 500. 501. † Marius.

is Dr. Thomas Brown. He contends that the utility of an action is not the motive of it which is present to the mind of the actor. But he admits that all virtue is useful. and he nowhere urges that an act would be virtuous if it were useless. 'It is true, indeed,' he says, 'that actions which are virtuous are actions of which the general principle is useful.' The good of the world is not our only moral object, but it is a moral object. Further, he admits, not that usefulness is present to his mind as a scale or measure of his virtue: 'But though it be not the precise measure of approbation and preference in his own mind, it may perhaps be the precise and sole measure of approbation when his action or patient sufferings are considered by other minds.'*

This is what we contend for, and we cannot conceive of any more powerful motive or reason why a man should do any act whatever, than his conscious belief that his efforts will be useful. This may not always be present to his mind, but the oftener it is, so much the better will be his life.

While it must ever be obvious that he who does good for the mere good's sake practises the highest morality possible to human beings, the benefactor finds sufficient reward to his mind in seeing the good effected. There is another motive equally powerful in the minds of others—namely, that in the doing of good they find pleasure; it is direct gratification to their own natures to relieve the sufferings of others, and, in many cases, this may arise entirely from the fact that it is painful to witness the sufferings and misfortunes of others—the removal of evil being as great a blessing to those who see it as to those who endure it.

'To give one hour of comfort to the frail victim of adversity, and to cheer with one transient gleam of joy the evening of life, ought surely to be among the pleasures, as they are among the duties of humanity.'†

The desire of good and the fear of evil are doubtless the two mainsprings of human action, and it would be difficult to say which has operated most in the history of the world. 'Self-interest—that is, the gratification of all or any of our desires, is certainly the rudder that steers mankind.

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* Lecture lxxviii. † Sir W. Drummond.

The performance of a benevolent action, though it appears so distant from selfish considerations, doubtless contributes as much to the happiness of the individual who performs it as any other. The satisfaction we receive from the accomplishment of any purpose, is in proportion to the intensity with which such accomplishment is desired, and he who performs any service for another, will receive greater satisfaction therefrom, than the receiver of such services, if he, the agent, desired the accomplishment with the greatest intensity. Thus the pleasure experienced by the benevolent man may be actually greater than what he bestows.' The broad distinction, which is most important, between self-interest and selfishness is this—that while the first is a motive which impels us to promote the good of others, selfishness always implies the injury of others; so that, impossible as it may be to act without serving our own interests on the first principle, the object we aim at is destroyed by the second, because it is vicious, having no regard for them.

The achievements of science distinguish men from brutes, but it is morality (*i.e.*, religion) which must make us good men, and promote the happiness of our race. The fruits of religion are seen in a virtuous and useful life. The forces or movements of our moral nature are not less certain and invariable than those in the physical world, of which we are a part. Sentient beings experience reaction, resistance, affinity, and attraction. The growth and activity of our nature may be made the subject of science, with not less profit than that which has accrued from the study of physics.

'Every physician knows, though metaphysicians know little about it, that the laws which govern the animal machine are as certain and invariable as those which guide the planetary system, and are as little within the control of the human being who is subject to them.'*

No man of science doubts for one moment that what we call mind is less under uniform and undeviating law than any other force in nature. The progress of the human intellect is subject to the same general laws as the development of our faculties. The results of every instant de-

* Priestley.

pend on those which precede them, and have an influence on all that follows them. One very absurd inference has been drawn from this view—namely, that because all men's actions result from causes, therefore to blame the actors is wrong. These objectors forget, or do not know, that men being made what they are by nature and the circumstances of their lives, are necessarily influenced by praise and blame, which are, strictly speaking, as much circumstances as anything else by which men are surrounded.

Every one guards himself against mischief, whether caused by the evil dispositions of men or by the raging of the elements in a thunderstorm. The only difference is in the mode by which this is effected. If the water of a violent storm rises above the level of your doorstep, you effectually resist the encroachment by raising an obstruction to the progress of the intruder and turning the stream in another direction. No one would attempt, in these days, to preach to the rising tide a sermon on the impropriety of incommoding the human species. But it is otherwise with man: he is influenced by words, and the effect of praise or blame on his character is the only justification of their use. Duty always implies instruction, and any man who is blamed or punished for not obeying a law of which he is ignorant, is the victim of cruelty and bad government, and not a criminal.

Whilst we bestow our love and admiration 'on those outwardly active natures, more on account of their productions than of their own persons . . . we find other individuals 'with natures thoroughly amiable, characters that we should like to take for our pattern . . . whose thoughts are turned towards their own inner being, who are, above all, endeavouring to be first in harmony with themselves, and thereafter to let that harmony, which they have established in their own minds, work also upon others. As an instance of such natures, I mention Socrates. What gives him superiority is the harmony of his inner life, 'What perfect order of all the strings of his mind, by virtue of which it sent forth none but melodious sounds when touched from without, like the Æolian harp, which is always in tune, however strongly and from whatever quarter the wind may blow. Other Greeks produced

greater works of art or science . . . yet none of them succeeded so well as he in cultivating and improving his own mind. Man's greatest work of art is man. . . . Man is man neither through his ear open to harmony, nor through his eye susceptible of beauty; neither through his social qualities, which caused him to found states, nor through his poetical talents; neither through agriculture; nor through the art of printing; but through that, from which all these various faculties are only so many emanations—that is to say, through reason. . . . In so far reason is nothing else but religion, and a founder of religion is he who assists man in developing his rationality, without which he would not be man, and consequently know nothing of civilisation, state, art, and philosophy.*

There is no mystery or perplexity in this religion—all is reasonable and natural. Can it be so difficult to understand that we are not to injure our fellow-creatures whom we are bound by our common nature to protect and serve? Why is there need of mystery in real religion? Why should the religious forsake knowledge and manliness? Some men affect to despise nature, others delight in expatiating on the terrible future! But what sensible man can reverence these teachers of terrors and misanthropy? It would be well if some of them would first preach to themselves, and assure their hearers of some anxiety about their own destiny as well as the destiny of others over whom they exercise their rhetorical arts.

It is significant of error, of irreligious intention, when we hear a pale, long-robed man apeak of the mysteries of religion! There are reasons why priests pretend to see mystery where all is clear as day. When a system is formed men conceive its existence a necessity.

It is, however, quite practicable to wisely alter our methods, and to use the same piece of social mechanism to produce other and better results, to direct the institutions at present existing to another and a better purpose. Men of strong character forsake the old methods and execute splendid designs by means never before tried. These are the men of to-day, who set up the strong present tense, do

* Dr. Strauss's Soliloquies.

broad justice now, and make progress a grand fact! There is no disguising the fact that many among those who hold out these terrors of the future, as 'a hangman's whip to haud the wretch in order,' take things very easily themselves. The words of Ophelia to Laertes are a just rebuke to those who have the audacity to unfold the destiny of others besides their own:—

> But, good my brother,
> Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
> Whilst, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
> And recks not his own read.*

'If I had the honour of being a preacher, I should not make frequent mention of the devil, as the prompter to wickedness; but generally lay the blame on men, for to be accusing Satan on all occasions, is like pronouncing mankind faultless. We have great reason to doubt whether this kind of excuse, and shifting off blame, will pass with God. . . . These remarks may, perhaps, meet with a cool reception, because they oppose the practices of all times and countries.'†

All men are more or less lovers of truth. The general purpose of men is fidelity. There is no absolute pure lie or pure malignity in nature. One of the wisest of the earth's teachers has emphatically told us that there is—

> 'Naught so vile that on the earth doth live,
> But to the earth some special good doth give.'‡

Ovid tells us the same story when he points out that—

> 'Our bane and physic the same earth bestows;
> And near the noisome nettle blooms the rose.'

True, the doctrine of total depravity exists in theology, but the innocence of man and the love he has for his kind, keep such profanity a dead letter. A man is justified in disbelieving such a doctrine, if he knows it to be contrary to facts.

'There is in man's nature a secret inclination and motion towards love of others, which if it be not spent on some one or few,§ doth naturally spread itself toward many,

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* Shakespere's "Hamlet."
† The Reflector. 1750.
‡ Shakespere's "Romeo and Juliet."
§ Bacon on Love.

and maketh men become charitable and humane. Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it.'

'I take goodness in this sense, the affecting of the weal of men, which is that the Grecians call philanthropia, and the word humanity (as it is used) is a little too light to express it. This of all virtues is the greatest . . . and without it man is a busy, mischievous, wretched thing, no better than a kind of vermin.'

'The inclination to goodness is imprinted deeply in the nature of man.' There is not only the habit of goodness directed by right reason, 'but there is in some men, even in nature, a disposition towards it.' On the other side, there are some 'that in their nature do not affect the good of others. . . . Such men, in other men's calamities . . . are not so good as the dogs that licked Lazarus's sores, but like flies that are still buzzing upon anything that is raw. The parts and signs of goodness are many.'*

'In the truly benevolent and enlightened there is a yearning, an all-absorbing aspiration to work out and realise the happiness, welfare, and good of aggregate humanity; there is a quenchless thirst, a burning immortal desire, an omnipotent longing for the accomplishment of this grand and glorious object: to see it and die would be the supreme of happiness. There is an overruling, all-powerful, ever-prompting instinct urging and impelling to labour for it—to lay down life for it, if need be. There are human beings in whom this passion is stronger than the instincts which combine to preserve and perpetuate the race.'†

There is an opinion prevalent among some men that because all men do not act rightly, in every situation of life, therefore no standard of morality is possible, that no human being is capable of acting morally. The explanation of this is not easy. A man who writes, speaks, or speculates on morality, has only one danger before him, and that is the danger of reasoning erroneously; but the man who has to carry out in life the deductions of reason, finds himself surrounded by innumerable dangers. The latter has to encounter his own passions and interests and also those

* Bacon on Goodness. † Adaptability, p. 4.

of others by whom he is surrounded—a thousand circumstances embarrass, perplex, or obstruct him in the performance of duties or actions in busy bustling life, about which, in his quiet moments, he has no manner of doubt or difficulty. He is often compelled to act without deliberation, to choose without investigation, and often in the presence of fear, danger, and confusion. The wonder, if any, is then, not that some men act wrongly, but that any act rightly. But these objections prove nothing but the necessity of fixed principles and the incessant cultivation of the faculty by which their application to the affairs of every-day life is guided. In any society in which these principles are held in common, and in which man is not merely told but trained in common to practise them, the difficulties before alluded to, arising, as they do, from the half-informed and ill-trained state of society, will not present themselves. If the opposite conclusion to this were true, the majority of mankind would be criminal instead of the minority; and it has yet to be proved that in any country where civilisation has progressed, as even in England, that the majority of mankind are more remarkable for their crimes than for their virtues. That society is not better than it is may be deplored, but place the blame on society which has the power to improve itself, and not on the absurd supposition that man is incapable of virtue, or, on the other, that no standard of morality is possible.

Mr. G. H. Lewes, speaking of A. Comte's views on religion, says—'He begins with religion as the keystone of the social arch; the bond which binds the divergent tendencies of human beings into unity, and which binds together (*religare*) the diverse individualities into society. Religion, which first spontaneous, next inspired, then revealed, now in this final state becomes demonstrated, following thus the laws of evolution which have presided over science. Religion, as defined by Comte, is not, however, this or that form of creed, but the harmony proper to human existence, individual and collective, constituting for the soul a normal *consensus* similar to that of health for the body. It gathers into its bosom all the tendencies of our nature, active, affectionate, and intelligent. . . . Since it concerns both the heart and the mind, it naturally divides itself into

two parts, one intellectual, the other moral; the first constitutes the *credo*, properly so-called, and consists in determining that external order to which we are necessarily subordinate.'* The truths of positive science furnishing precise and coherent views of physical phenomena, are thus the basis of religion. 'We all feel ourselves ruled over by chemical, astronomical, and vital laws, but on closer inspection we find there is another yoke, not less irresistible though more modifiable, resulting from the statical and dynamical laws proper to the social order. . . . Since the dawn of civilisation every one has felt that his destiny was materially bound to that of his contemporaries, and even his predecessors. Later on, the involuntary comparison of various social conditions manifests the intellectual dependence of each on all the rest. The proudest dreamer cannot misconceive the great influence exercised over individual opinions by time and place. And finally, as regards the most spontaneous phenomena, examination detects the dependence of our own moral condition on that of the general character of the corresponding sociality.† Thus under all aspects, man feels himself subject to humanity. Humanity is thus the great collective life of which human beings are the individuals.'

Mr. Lewes objects to Comte because he makes religion simply and purely what has hitherto been designated morals, and leaves out of consideration 'the other sphere' named infinite, into which our aspiring thoughts *will* wander. But this objection is invalid; since Comte's views are founded on what we know, and are strictly limited to the relation in which we stand to one another: and whatever we may think of, or however far we may wander into the infinite, our thoughts and actions, by their very natures, are confined to this finite sphere. Our views leave man to speculate on the unknown, but, at the same time, his conduct must be in harmony with what is known, and with the welfare of the human race.

The best answer to Mr. Lewes, however, is in his own words:—'Our province is to study her [nature's] laws, to

* Exposition of the Positive Philosophie.

† The truth of this sentence is shown in Mr. Buckle's History of Civilisation, vols. i. and ii.

trace her processes, and, thankful that we can so far penetrate the divine significance of the universe, be content—as Locke wisely and modestly says—to sit down in quiet ignorance of all transcendent subjects.'*

'Morality is usually said to depend on religion; but this is said in that low sense in which outward conduct is considered as morality. In that higher sense in which morality denotes sentiment, it is more exactly true to say, that religion depends on morality and springs from it. . . . Virtue is the state of a just, prudent, benevolent, firm, and temperate mind.'†

What religion is without morality, and its effects on society, any one can judge who is at all conversant with the history of Christianity in the various countries in which it has flourished. The Rev. H. H. Milman in his able and instructive work‡ shows that, without morality, religion is mischievous in the extreme. Christianity had become the religion of the Roman world, Paganism was slowly expiring, the empire of Christ succeeded to the empire of the Cæsars. The reign of Faith commenced, faith which saw supernatural agency in every occurrence of life. 'The Christian in these days lived in a supernatural world. . . . God was not only present, but asserting his presence every instant, not merely on signal occasions and for important purposes, but on the most insignificant acts and persons. The course of nature was beheld, not as one great uniform and majestic miracle, but as a succession of small insulated, sometimes trivial, sometimes contradictory interpositions, often utterly inconsistent with the moral and Christian attributes of God. . . . Each incident was a special miracle, the ordinary emotion of the heart was divine inspiration.' The Christians' 'dreams came direct from heaven.'

'They were far more inclined to suspect reason of presumption than faith of credulity. Where faith is the height of virtue, and infidelity the depth of sin, tranquil investigation becomes criminal indifference, doubt guilty scepticism.'

As to the clergy, the great agents, the assertors of constant

* Page 31, same book.
† Sir James Mackintosh's Life.
‡ Hist. Christ., vol. iii., c. v especially.

miracle in all its forms—'it was treason against their order and their sacred duty, to arrest, or to deaden, whatever might tend to religious impression;' all closed their eyes against the folly of superstition. It was the reign of faith, faith which saw signs of old age and decrepitude in the world, the day of judgment was ever before their eyes. The Christian theology became the religion of the world. Heresy of opinion thus became almost the only crime. 'The opposite parties denounced eternal punishments against each other with such indiscriminate energy, that hell had become almost the predominant image in the Christian dispensation.' The heretic was the one being with whom it was criminal to associate, who forfeited all the privileges of life and death.

'The case was this, the mind of man had before it a recent and wonderful revelation, in which it could not but acknowledge the divine interposition. God had been brought down, or had condescended to mingle himself with the affairs of men.'

'The Bible, and the Bible interpreted by the Fathers, became the code not of religion only, but every branch of knowledge.'

It was so much more easy to subscribe to certain defined doctrines than to work out these doctrines in life, that 'we deplore rather than wonder at this substitution of one half of the Christian religion for the whole.'

'It was the consummate excellence of Christianity, that it blended in apparently indissoluble union religion and moral perfection. Its essential doctrine was, in its pure theory, inseparable from a humane, virtuous, and charitable disposition.

'But there has always been a strong propensity to disturb this nice balance: the dogmatic part of religion, the pioneer of faith, is constantly endeavouring to maintain a separate existence—faith, in this limited sense, aspires to be religion.'

But directly this took place in the Roman empire—'No sooner had Christianity divorced morality as its inseparable companion through life, than it formed an unlawful connection with any dominant passion; and the strange and unnatural union of Christian faith with ambition, avarice, cruelty, fraud, and even licence, appeared in strong con-

trast with its primitive harmony of doctrine and inward disposition. Thus in a great degree, while the Roman world became Christian in outward worship and in faith, it remained heathen, or even at some periods worse than in the better times of heathenism, as to beneficence, gentleness, purity, social virtue, humanity, and peace. This extreme view may appear to be justified by the general survey of Christian society.'*

Of course Mr. Milman would object to religion, or morality without faith, but he nowhere traces results so disastrous to society as when theology usurps the province of knowledge and virtue.

R. W. Emerson, in his last work, complains that what is called religion effeminates and demoralises men, is discreditable to them, either childish and insignificant, or unmanly and effeminating. 'The fatal trait is the divorce between religion and morality. Here are knownothing religions, churches that proscribe intellect; scortatory religions; slave-holding and slave-trading religions; and even in decent populations, idolatries wherein the whiteness of the ritual covers scarlet indulgence. There is no faith in the intellectual, none in the moral universe. There is faith in chemistry, in meat, and wine, in wealth, in machinery, in the steam-engine, galvanic battery, &c., but not in divine causes. "There are two things," said Mahomet, "which I abhor—the learned in his infidelities, and the fool in his devotions." Our times are impatient of both, and especially of the last.'

'The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it be, must be intellectual. The scientific mind must have a faith which is science. Let us have nothing now which is not its own evidence. Let us not be pestered with assertions and half-truths, with emotions and snuffle.

'There will be a new church founded on moral science, at first cold and naked, a babe in a manger again, the algebra and mathematics of ethical law, the church of men to come, without shawms, or psaltery, or sackbut; but it will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters, science for

* Milman, vol. iii. p. 528.

symbol and illustration; it will fast enough gather beauty, picture, music, poetry.'

That kind of conduct we call moral is that which every man must practise if he desires to be happy, whatever may be his theoretical views; in fact the conduct of all the men whose conduct is esteemed by honest and truthful religious men, is most unquestionably the same as that we describe as morality. Hence I decline any controversy about the difference between real religion and popular morality—only the ignorant are disposed to esteem the conduct of a professedly religious man more than the same conduct performed by one who lays no claim to the name 'religious.' To contend that the nature of a good action is changed by a man's differing from his brother respecting the truth of some theological conjecture, is to encourage ignorance and irreligion; it is talking something worse than nonsense, and promoting deadly strife.

The bigoted religionists, so-called, who exclude the 'religious' name from all good men whose theological tenets may differ from their own narrow conceptions, do the greatest injury to the cause of real religion. It is the prejudice of religious men, so-called, that prevents the union of great and good men for the purpose of advancing the common interests of humanity, irrespective of what some call the 'essentials of religious belief.' I perceive no cure for 'religious differences' except we act on Solomon's advice when he says—'Get wisdom, that is the principal thing, and with all thy getting, get understanding.' Wisdom is the right, the best use of what we know.

There is a sense in which each member of society has an interest in the institutions and welfare of society; hence his own interest, or, as it is commonly called, his 'self-love,' furnishes a sufficient motive to incite him to act in promoting the general good. What society requires for its own protection and improvement is that the interests of men shall be united; not destroying freedom of thought and self-reliance, but insuring the fullest or most extensive good to each. The great objection to a man acting as his own interest dictates (and the majority of mankind would pronounce him a fool if he acted in opposition to its dictates) is that in so acting he works mischief to some one

else. The remedy for this is not to attempt the destruction of his self-love, but to harmonise his affections with those of his neighbour. I think it was Feltham who said—'He that loves his neighbour as himself, is at the extent of the commandment: he that does more, breaks it. I would so serve others, as I might not injure myself; but so myself, as I might be helpful to others.' Rousseau says—'I could have wished to have been born in a country where the sovereign and the people have only one interest, where all the movements of the political machine tend to the common good; which can happen only where the sovereign and the people are one.' Now it so happens that their interests are one, and their ignorance of this fact or their not acting on this truth, produces misery among mankind.

An illustration of this view may be taken from the invention of self-acting machinery. No one denies that this is a direct benefit to society. But even machinery, great as is its blessing to mankind, works mischief to individuals. Thousands of men subsisting on the results of the labour of their hands suddenly discover that the genius of some one man has been transformed into practical power; the wants of men are supplied by his invention at probably one half their former cost; the labour of thousands is superseded. This should be a cause for rejoicing among these thousands, but it is oftener a cause of weeping and poverty to them—and why? Because their immediate necessities are not supplied by this new source of productive power. This is simply owing to the fact that their interests are not united with the inventor's and the productive power of the machine. Very frequently even the inventor himself leads a life of poverty while unnumbered thousands reap the benefit of his invention. This will continue so long as skill, labour, and capital are unassociated; and this state of things will be reversed so soon as they are associated, and each receives its due reward according to merit. There can be nothing plainer or more demonstrable than that, in a state of society under arrangements founded on justice, the application of machinery to supply the wants of man would be an unmixed good.

'Depend upon it, the interests of classes too often contrasted are identical, and it is only ignorance which pre-

vents their uniting for each other's advantage. To dispel that ignorance, to show how man can help man, notwithstanding the complicated state of civilised society, ought to be the aim of every philanthropical person.

'God has created man imperfect, and left him with many wants, as it were to stimulate him to individual exertion, and to make all feel that it is only by united exertion and combined action that these imperfections can be supplied, and these wants satisfied. This pre-supposes self-reliance and confidence in each other.'*

'Nobody who has paid any attention to the peculiar features of our present era, will doubt for a moment that we are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which all history points—the realisation of the unity of mankind. Not a unity which treads down the limits and levels the peculiar characteristics of different nations, but rather a unity, the result and product of those very national varieties and antagonistic qualities.'†

The religion here advocated includes all men and all truth. Those who do not accept any popular system, believe and practise the principles of right, love, and justice—and, though unbelievers in popular creeds, ever bow their heads to truth and nature. A system which does not insist on justice to all human beings, is not real religion. The existing sects of the world are evidently incompetent and indisposed to fulfil the mission of real religion, that of associating all men under one faith and practice. At the present time sects are opposed to sects, religions to philosophies, and even religions to religions; and this is caused by ignorance and its offspring prejudice. Some men reason wrongly, others not at all, and others persecute those who do reason for want of knowing how to silence those whose arguments they cannot refute.

There is one way of putting down heresy and infidelity, and the only one which reason can justify, recommended by Margaret of the Netherlands, which has not had a fair

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* Prince Albert's Speech, May, 1840. I am not responsible for the orthodoxy of this statement.

† Ibid, March 1850.

trial. 'Who is this Luther?' said Margaret. The courtiers around her said, 'He is an illiterate monk.' 'Is he so?' said she, 'I am glad to hear it; then do you, gentlemen, who are not illiterate, who are both learned and numerous, do you, I charge you, *write* against this illiterate monk. That is all you have to do. The business is easy; for the world will surely pay more regard to a great many scholars, and great men, as you are, than to one poor illiterate monk.'

Sects and sectaries may exist for ever; but that opposition which implies hatred and injury must one day cease. To make the cause of religion to descend to the cruel and execrable actions of butchery of people—'Surely this is to bring down the Holy Ghost, instead of in the likeness of a dove, in the shape of a vulture or raven; and to set out the bark of a Christian church a flag of a bark of pirates and assassins; therefore it is most necessary that the church by doctrine and decree, princes by their sword, and all learnings, both Christian and moral, as by their Mercury rod to damn, and send to hell for ever, those facts and opinions tending to support the same. . . It was a notable observation of a wise father, that those which held and persuaded pressure of consciences, were commonly interested for their own ends.'*

Religion is a principle of action, and not a collection of dogmas out of harmony with human nature. There is no religion worth holding but that of right-doing, and whoever pretends to more than this, or practises less than this, is beside the truth. Religion is right action, or truth in motion. The great and good have ever reverenced the religion of right, truth, and justice. This religion does not ask men to believe in anything unreasonable. Its practice is not difficult, and it does not demand of man any course of conduct but that which it is his interest (that is, his own good, which is necessarily, either directly or indirectly, the good of others) to pursue. It does not insist on a religious life on the grounds of past or future existence in another world, but on the grounds of personal happiness and public usefulness. The motives to religion exist in our own sense of right and the known advantages of a virtuous, morally good, and useful life.

* Bacon's Unity in Religion.

If it be affirmed that the moral have no advantages over the immoral, that the religious are not happier than the irreligious, I can only answer that the experience of every good man contradicts such affirmations. The good are truly great, noble, and happy. 'If I am asked who is the greatest man, I answer the best; and if I am required to say who is the best, I reply he that has deserved most of his fellow creatures.'*

'Simplicity and gentleness are more beneficial to the human race than the prudence of all its individuals; for nobody has ever described the golden age as composed of prudent, but of candid men.'†

While there should be agreement of thought and speech, there should also be consistency between our deeds and our words; for deception, in whatever form it may appear, is but a lie in practice: it is falsehood in things instead of words, but still a lie.

'I own I could never think so considerably of myself as to decline the society of an ignoble or worthy man upon difference of opinion only . . . Some believe upon weak principles; others cannot feel the efficacy of the strongest. One of the most candid, most upright, and single meaning men I ever knew, was the late Thomas Holcroft. I believe he never said one thing and meant another in his life; and as near as I can guess, he never acted otherwise than with the most scrupulous attention to conscience. Ought we to read the character false, for the sake of an empty compliment to Christianity?'‡

'Seek to make thy course regular, that men may know beforehand what they may expect. . . . Certainly the ablest men that ever were, have had all an openness and frankness of dealing, and a name of certainty and veracity. . . . It will be acknowledged, even by those who practise it not, that clear and round dealing is the honour of man's nature. Truth is the sovereign good of human nature. . . . Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'§

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* Sir William Jones's Commentaries.
† Feyjoo's Discourse on Policy.
‡ Charles Lamb's Letters. § Bacon.

What you have once wisely purposed, stick to, as a law not to be violated without grief; and mind not what others say of you.* Fix your character, and keep to it, whether alone or in company.†

All associations of men worthy of the name of society, must be united in the bonds of truth. It requires but little illustration to show that by social truth is meant that principle, the practice of which creates confidence and trust—which every association of men must necessarily have. When men mean one thing and say another, there is an evident disunity between their thoughts and their speech, necessarily precluding the existence of confidence and trust—which constitute social truth. In the presence of lies or falsehood there can be no unity, no society, and hence I affirm that those who value existence at all are necessarily interested in the truth. It may be urged that the forms and ceremonies of society differ at different times, that the perception of truth varies in different individuals, and in the same individual at different times in his life—all of which is doubtless true enough, but truth is the nature of things, and unchangeable. The words of Goethe describe us accurately—

> 'Well paints the varying bow our life's endeavour,
> For ever changing, yet the same for ever.'

But truth expresses a relation of things which nothing can change. A statement which is substantiated by facts is logically true: moral truth is an exact image of things in language, as in sculpture truth is expressed in marble, when it presents a form the exact image of some living thing. Truth may be known from error in this—that it is beneficial, while error is always pernicious.

> 'O hateful error, melancholy's child!
> Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men,
> The things which are not! O error soon conceived,
> Thou never com'st unto a happy birth,
> But kill'st the mother that engender'd thee.'‡

'Truth, whether in or out of fashion, is the measure of knowledge, and the business of the understanding; what-

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* Epict. Ench. cap. 74. † Idem, cap. 40.

‡ Shakespeare.

ever is besides that, however authorised by consent, or recommended by rarity, is nothing but ignorance, or something worse.'*

'Truth and justice are the immutable laws of social order. Far from us be the dangerous maxim, that it is sometimes useful to mislead, to enslave, and deceive mankind, to ensure their happiness. Cruel experience has at all times proved that, with impunity, these sacred laws can never be injured.'†

If man be to continue in the world, and would have the advantage of conversation while he is in it, 'let him make use of truth and sincerity in all his words and actions: for nothing but this will last and hold out to the end.'‡

The following is the morality of the Hindoos:—Never to hear patiently of evil, nor speak that which is mischievous and wicked; to utter no lies, prevarications, or hypocrisy; to use no deceit nor over-reaching in trade or dealing; never oppress the weak and humble, nor offer any violence to your neighbours; to keep your hands from pilfering and theft; and in no way whatever to injure a fellow creature.§

Real religion, in its widest signification in relation to life, teaches men to live according to nature. It commends the practice of virtue in order to secure physical and moral happiness. The rule of life drawn from the ascertained consequences of human actions constitutes the science of religion, which has for its object the highest happiness of man. It depends on facts the whole world is collecting and observing, and all men are interested in the success of its inquiries. Any departure from the practice of truth and justice will not escape its punishment. Some may think to profit by profession, pretence, and hypocrisy—but it is a delusion. It is a satisfaction to be assured that those who act contrary to the laws of their nature will not escape the consequent penalty. Many writers of eminence are beginning to acknowledge the truth of this view, however much they differ on other points which do not admit of verification.

'I do affirm that the moral government of God is by

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* Locke.
† Laplace: Systeme du Monde.
‡ Tillotson.
§ Brahminical Books.

general laws . operating in the physical and moral world.' If this be so, 'then must a violation of these laws be a violation of His will, and be pregnant with ruin and misery.'*

'Science has banished the belief in the exercise, by the Deity, in our day, of special acts of supernatural power as a means of influencing human affairs, and it has presented a systematic order of nature which man may study, comprehend, and obey, as a guide to his practical conduct.'†

The Rev. Dr. Guthrie says—'They commit a grave mistake who forget that injury as inevitably results from flying in the face of a moral or mental, as of a physical law.'‡

What George Combe (Religion and Science) says of the human lungs will illustrate this. He says there are 'certain conditions, on the observance of which the organism will continue successfully to perform its functions, and on the infringement of which it will either become impaired or altogether cease to act. These conditions, to a great extent, are cognizable by the human intellect, and constitute the terms on which the boon of health is presented to man: . . . and these he must abide by, whether he will or not.' Again he says—'The great object which I have had in view in "The Constitution of Man," is to show that this notion [the notion that natural law is like human law, arbitrary or alterable] is erroneous: and that there is a natural pre-ordained consequence, which man can neither alter nor evade, attached to the infringement of every natural law. . . . The popular interpretations of Christianity have thrown the public mind so widely out of the track of God's natural providence . . . that the most flagrant, and even deliberate infractions of the natural laws, are spoken of as acts of mere imprudence. . . . Disguise the fact as we will, the order of nature—in other words, God's secular providence—is a power which in this world shapes our destinies for weal or woe; while the peculiar doctrines of sectarianism only exalt the consequence and power of clerical teachers, and the few zealous laymen who constitute their staff.'§

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* A. Sedgwick, M.A., Univers. Dis.
† Combe's Religion and Science.
‡ On Ragged Schools.
§ Combe's Religion and Science.

'The answer will probably be made—that this argument is rank infidelity.'

'The public mind is opening to such views as I am now unfolding; and they must in future be met by other arguments than cries of irreligion, and appeals to bigotry and passion.'

'Society, including the Calvinistic world itself, proceeds in its secular enterprises on the basis of natural science.'*

If they send a ship to sea they take care that it don't leak, and that it is well manned and commanded: if they are sick, they call in the physician; if wet seasons come they drain their lands; and yet their preachers from the time of Galileo even unto this day, make war on science, from which alone they derive all the knowledge and benefits they possess.

'No human pursuits make any material progress, until science is brought to bear upon them. . . . Look at the transformation which has gone on around us since the laws of gravitation, electricity, magnetism, and the expansive power of heat have become known to us. It has altered the whole state of existence—one might say, the whole face of the globe. We owe this to science, and to science alone.'†

'It was formerly believed, says Oersted,‡ that basilisks existed in cellars which had been long closed; they were invisible, but their look killed whoever it fell upon. Since it is become more generally known that fermentation is produced by a noxious air, whose weight causes it to accumulate in low places, we recognise the destructive agent, and drive it away by means of fresh air.'

Another example of the same kind is given by Mr. Lewes. There was a church in Sienna, which had often been injured by lightning. A conductor was set up in defiance of the 'religious world,' wherein it was regarded as 'the heretical stake.' A storm arose, the lightning struck the tower, crowds flocked to see if the church was spared, and lo! the very spider's webs upon it were unbroken! This is science calmly rebuking theology, and substituting certainty for conjecture.

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* Religion and Science.

† Prince Albert's Speech, 1855.

‡ Quoted by Lewes.

'It is sometimes objected by the ignorant, that science is uncertain and changeable, and they point with a malicious kind of pleasure to the many exploded theories which have been superseded by others as a proof that the present knowledge may be also unsound, and, after all, not worth having. But they are not aware that, while they think to cast blame upon science, they bestow, in fact, the highest praise upon her.

'For that is precisely the difference between science and prejudice: that the latter keeps stubbornly to its position, whether disproved or not, whilst the former is an unarrestable movement towards the fountain of truth, caring little for cherished authorities or sentiments, but continually progressing, feeling no false shame at her shortcomings, but, on the contrary, the highest pleasure, when freed from error at having advanced another step towards the attainment of divine truth—a pleasure not even intelligible to the pride of ignorance.'*

'Science is eminently practical, and must be so, as she sees and knows what she is doing, whilst mere common practice is condemned to work in the dark, applying natural ingenuity to unknown powers to obtain a known result. . . . The study of the laws by which the Almighty governs the universe, is therefore our bounden duty. . . In all our operations . . . it is not we who operate, but the laws of nature, which we have set in operation. It is then of the highest importance that we should know these laws.'†

'We are placed here upon the earth, which is composed of a variety of substances, each substance is endowed with particular properties, or powers of influencing other substances, or ourselves. Our world and ourselves are further influenced by other worlds, suspended in the boundless space that our globe inhabits. Science is simply a knowledge of the properties of these various substances, of the powers which are operating within and around us. The business of the philosopher is to investigate them, of the artisan to use them, of mankind in general to enjoy them.'‡

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* Prince Albert's Speech, 1855. † *Ibid.*
‡ W. M. Williams's Speech, at the Midland Institute, 1854.

'Some obscurity, which it is proper to remove, occasionally attends the use of the words "Laws of Nature." A law of nature is not an entity distinct from nature. The atoms, or elements of matter, act invariably in certain definite manners, in certain circumstances; the human mind perceives this regularity, and calls the action characterised by it, action according to law. But the term "law" expresses nothing more than the mind's perception of the regularity. The word does not designate the efficient cause of the action; yet many persons attach a meaning to the term, as if it implied causation. Physical objects act in certain determinate modes, and produce certain invariable consequences; organic substances act in certain determinate modes, and produce also invariable results; and each faculty of the mind, and function of the body, has its mode of action, and produces happiness or misery, according as it is used or abused. General health, happiness, and prosperity, are the results of our habitually acting in conformity with the several ordinations of nature, each communicating its own pleasures or pains independently of the others, but all being in harmony.'*

Another writer on this subject says—'It must be remembered that what are called laws, are not metaphysical abstractions, figments, and chimeras of the imagination, like the occult qualities or genii by which phenomena were formerly explained. The word law is a compendious formula, used to express the mode in which things act, and are acted upon. These operations exist, and go on, whether observed by the human mind or not.'†

The word law does not imply cause but mode, it does not explain why things exist but the mode in which they act and react—it is not the cause of things operating, nor the explanation of why they operate, but merely the way in which they operate. The phrase 'Laws of Nature,' does not express what is understood by ultimate causes, of which truly scientific men know nothing—it does not explain why, but how—it does not mean that 'law' makes the needle point to the north, or bodies gravitate. The objection to this phrase is founded on the fact that it misleads and creates other phrases, such

* Combe, Religion and Science. † Adaptability, p. 8.

as 'breaking the laws of nature,' 'infringing the laws of nature,' &c., equally misleading. The most natural and useful way of correcting this phrase is, in our opinion, to define its meaning, thereby familiarising the mind with its true import every time it occurs in this essay. It must have some meaning, and a correct one may be understood and remembered as easily as an incorrect one—otherwise, the reader would have to accept a new term altogether to express the same meaning, the great objection to which is, that all the scientific works in existence would require re-writing! As no one has put this matter in a clearer light than Mr. Lewes, we quote his explanation as follows:—

'On the much-used and much-abused term "Laws of Nature" which for nearly twenty years I have employed with misgiving . . . what shall be the substitute? The difficulty of finding one has been very great. . . The one upon which I finally settled, does not altogether satisfy me, but it fulfils the main requisites. I propose to call the relations of co-existence and succession, usually named Laws, by the name of Methods. Etymologically, method is a path leading onward, a way of transit. The methods of nature would therefore express the paths along which the activities of Nature travelled to results (phenomena). I cannot avoid figurative language, and it is useful, because expressive; but the conception here expressed is limited to the facts, with nothing superadded. Given the phenomena, we name the process by which they are called forth the *Way* of nature—the path Forces take to that particular result. These paths may be intersected by the paths of other Forces. For instance, a spark will ignite dry gunpowder. Here a particular path is opened, along which forces can travel to a particular issue (explosion); but if we throw water on the powder, *the* particular path is blocked up, and another issue is reached. Fire raises the temperature of water, yet, if you pour water into a red-hot crucible, containing liquid sulphuric acid, the temperature of the water is *not* raised; nay, so far from that, it is lowered to freezing point, and in lieu of steam you have ice! This is no contradiction to the Laws of Nature; no law is broken; all we can say is, that the path is intersected by another path, thus: the

rapid evaporation of the sulphuric acid produces cold so intense that the water which (the acid absent) would have hissed off in steam, now not only loses in evaporation all the heat given it by the fire, but also loses a portion of that heat which kept it liquid. And this is simply because the Method of Nature, the true path of her activity as regards sulphuric acid subjected to heat—is what we call rapid evaporation. We thus see that the path of activity is one of the *conditions* of an act; and that to the observed actions we superadd nothing not given in the actions themselves, by declaring such and such to be the Methods of Nature. . . . What we call Laws are nothing but the paths, or Methods, along which the Forces [of nature] move.'*

The development of practical religion has been through thousands of years, and the laws of its growth are yet unknown to the mass of the people. The experience of ages which the printing press enables man to accumulate and preserve, will one day become the property of all men, and whenever that happy day arrives, wisdom will produce its beneficent influence in every part of society. The improvability of man is a fact, and on this we rely, so that all is not gloom and despair before us—nor are we as men without expectations, and our delight is to work for the realisation of our hopes. In the words of Prince I ask:—

'Did God set his fountain of light in the skies
That man should look up with tears in his eyes?
Did God make this earth so abundant and fair
That man should look down with a groan of despair?
Did God scatter freedom o'er mountain and wave
That man should exist as a tyrant and slave?
Away with so hopeless, so joyless a creed,
For the soul that believes it is darkened indeed.'

Ancient professions of faith had their origin in fear and very limited knowledge, and hence their mysterious pretensions; but real religion is loveable and useful, carrying with it irresistible conviction, having for its object the happiness of mankind. Through what mazes of bewilderment we have to pass before we understand popular beliefs, and when we do understand them, of what use

* Exposition of A. Comte's Works.

are they? Yet how simple, pure, and useful is religion, when it means the belief and practice of right conduct! I am indisposed to lean on the traditional and obscure, since with Wordsworth I am—

> 'Well pleased to recognise
> In nature and the language of the sense,
> The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
> Of all my moral being.'

Apart from man's theological notions, he has a right to be employed, trusted, loved, and revered. It will yet be found possible to maintain the order of the social system, even as the solar system, and for a reasonable citizen to exist without the hint of a hell, a gaol, or a gallows. When men become really religious, they will have faith in the power of rectitude, right, and love. The mysteries and absurdities of popular religious ceremonies, by engrossing man's attention, keep him in ignorance. A thousand calamities overtake man in life, and when in the midst of ruin and misery, popular religion directs his attention to unknown causes to explain known effects. When surrounded by pestilent vapours and decomposing substances, which produce pain and sickness, popular religion says, appeal to heaven! If man constantly fixes his eyes on the heavens, no wonder that he is sometimes found stumbling on the earth. Real religion points direct to the known causes of evils, and insists on their removal. It discovers the methods of nature on which health depends, and instructs man to regulate his life according to these methods. Men have long enough admired the advice of Jupiter to the waggoner, but when will they act on it?

The following remarks will illustrate what is here intended. A report of the mortality of Edinburgh and Leith for 1846 states the mean age at death—

1st class gentry, &c. . . .	43½ years.
2nd ,, tradesmen, &c. . . .	36½ ,,
3rd ,, artizans, &c. . . .	27½ ,,

George Combe, commenting on this, says:—'It is an intimation that these different classes have fulfilled in widely different degrees the condition on which God proffered to

continue with them the boon of life. We cannot imagine that He deals partially with man, and establishes one law for the rich and another for the poor; on the contrary, the structure of the various organs on which life depends, is similar in all; and the composition of the atmosphere, the rays of light, and the winds of heaven, which affect these organs for good or evil, diffuse their appointed influences without the least respect of persons.' This report led him to consider what was taught at the 'great normal seminary in Edinburgh,' in which hundreds of the third class and nearly one hundred teachers are instructed, and he found that physical science forms no part of the instruction given either to pupils or student-teachers—it formed no part of the course of study prescribed by the Church.

'Regardless of the divine arrangement [that is, of the atmosphere in a certain condition suited to the lungs and blood], the inhabitants of Exeter, Liverpool, and many other large towns, have, through ignorance and indolence, allowed the exhalation of decaying animal and vegetable matter to mingle with that compound atmosphere, and the consequence has been that many have suffered from disease, and prematurely died.'

At a meeting in Exeter, in 1846, a report was read showing that where there were good sewerage and a plentiful supply of water in that part of the city, the deaths were from 1-83 to 1-93 per cent. per annum; while where the drainage was deficient, the mortality was 5 to 7 per cent. Mr. Chadwick said that while 23 out of 10,000 were killed by disease at Tiverton, no less than 103 were killed at Exeter. He also mentioned that, about three years before, an epidemic raged in almost every family in Glasgow, but in the well regulated and ventilated prison of that city, 'there was not a single case of epidemic.' In consequence of overcrowding the hospital, which killed two thousand people, they took forty cases into the prison, and not one of them spread. 'Here, then,' says Mr. Combe,' we see the men of science enlightened by chemistry and physiology unfolding to the people of Exeter the relations established by the author of nature, between the composition of the atmosphere and the human body. . . . Yet these infractions of the laws of nature were allowed to continue year

after year, under the very eye of the Bishop of Exeter, unheeded and unrestrained. Not only so, but while his flock were dying from removable causes, his Lordship was warmly engaged in denouncing the Irish system of national education!' The only cure for this state of things is knowledge and the application of it to the affairs of society, and the highest interests of society demand this. Whatever tends to ameliorate the condition of man, or to increase his means of happiness, is not merely profitable, but useful and necessary. When the hours of labour cease, and a man seeks rest for his wearied limbs, and recreation for his mind, what gratification is equal to that which, whilst it imposes no labour of body, unfolds to him the precepts of the moralist, the experimental knowledge of the philosopher, or the history of his own species in the details of past ages? Relieved from the tediousness which is the constant attendant on the leisure hours of the ignorant (except indeed when they are indulging in riotous excess, or are lost to consciousness in the torpidity of sleep), the man who devotes his leisure moments to the cultivation of his understanding, feels the importance of that knowledge, the stock of which is receiving small but daily additions, and rises above the practice of those vices which are not only the bane of prosperity and health, but constitute the foundation of the greatest of all slavery. The fact is indisputable, that the greatest of human enjoyments arises from the cultivation of our capacities, and the attainment of knowledge; and as a man, from the very constitution of his nature, is exposed to the necessity of making provision for the employment of his thinking as well as of his bodily powers, whatever tends to increase his knowledge must have a direct tendency to increase his usefulness to others, and consequently his own happiness. Knowledge is the powerful lever by which man has raised himself above the level of the brute; and as the pages of the moralist and the historian amend the heart by informing the understanding, so the study of natural philosophy dignifies the character by increasing our powers of usefulness to others. Man, in a state of ignorance, becomes the dupe of artifice, the victim of error, and is destroyed by the operation of those very causes which would, under a proper discipline, become

the principal aids to his happiness. His passions and his appetites, which in a state of ignorance are the tempests that hurry his deluded bark to destruction, when properly directed, become the means of good and great actions, as they are the true and only sources of rational pleasures. They are the elements of life; to destroy which is out of our power—to attempt it criminal. It is perfectly within our power, however, to subject them to the dictates of knowledge and experience, and thus engage them in the cause of usefulness and virtue. They have long since been engaged in the cause of vice. The ambition of a dog-fighter or a pugilist differs only in its object from that which governed a Cæsar or a Bonaparte. Strong natural powers are the sources of strong natural passions, which seek, as naturally as the eagle seeks the sky, or rests him on the towering and lofty rock, objects calculated to call forth the exertion of their energies, and on which they can rest with self-satisfaction. These are the strong and restless spirits of the age, that be active in vice or virtue; that they have not been engaged in the cause of the latter is the fault of circumstances rather than of themselves. Were the thinking powers of the poor man properly cultivated in youth, were his energies properly directed, and his pride engaged in the love of that distinction which arises from the possession of knowledge, how different would be the conduct of thousands who are lost to a sense of their degraded situation, because they have never been elevated above it. 'Knowledge softens down the asperities of the human character, and gives peace to the heart which passeth the understanding of the ignorant.'*

For the reasons already stated, I claim the right to be considered religious in the only useful sense of the word—to be respected, to possess myself body, heart, and mind. I do not deny or disbelieve in a universal sense. I do not, as some critics say, 'doubt even that I doubt'—nor do I scoff at, jeer at, or despise that which is noble and good. I respect all that is excellent. Atheists, Infidels, and Secularists are supposed to have no belief—but when I deny it is because the truth compels me, and be-

* Detrosier.

cause I would rather be considered sceptical than untruthful. The universe gives certainty, but popular dogmas seem delusive. The doctrine the truth of which produces conviction, we accept and reverence, but the external law that compels one to profess to believe in spite of evidence, is manifestly injurious.

'We live in a very low state of the world, and pay unwilling tribute to governments founded on brute force. The less government by force we have the better, the fewer laws, and the less confiding power. The antidote to this formal government is the influence of private character or natural morality. For any laws [arrangements] but those men make for themselves are absurd and unjust. The grandeur of human character is unperceived in the present human society. Homage and hollowness will yet quail before the order of merit. When we are true to our natures, and live in honourable relations with men, we shall feel the power to walk through life by the authority of right and love—it will give us the grace and tranquillity of right, which is might. I am interested in the truth only, it is my only desire, nothing else can serve me, nothing else can save me. Truth is the highest summit of being, and justice is the application of truth to the affairs of men. I think with Plato, "unwillingly the soul is deprived of truth." What man in his sane moments desires to be unhappy? to be hated? or to be in the wrong? Such a man is scarcely conceiveable.

'We are naturally believers. The connection between cause and effect interests us. A book or statement which goes to show that there is no straight line, nothing but random and chaos; a calamity and no account of it; prosperity out of nothing: a hero born from a fool, a fool from a hero; dispirits us—produces despair. Do not rely on heavenly favour, the old usage and main chance of men. Nothing can keep you but rectitude only, rectitude for ever and ever. I cleave to right as the ladder that leads up to all that is noble and true. That which befits us, embosomed in wonder and beauty as we are, is cheerfulness and courage, and the endeavour to realise our aspirations. Man shall yet rely on the law alive and beautiful, which works within and around us. Men are all secret believers in it,

or the word justice would have no meaning; they believe that the best is the true, that right is done at last; or chaos would come. Men already rely on the laws of gravity, that every stone will fall where it is due. Our orbit is all our task—and when we attend to it, we shall apply the natural methods to govern the social state. We can drive a stone upward for a moment into the air, but it is true that all stones will for ever fall; and whatever instances can be quoted of unpunished theft or of a lie which somebody credited, justice must prevail, and it is the privilege of truth to make itself believed. A healthy soul stands united with the just and the true, as the magnet arranges itself with the poles. The man whose religion is real, natural, becomes the medium of the highest influence to all who are not on the same level with himself. Thus men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong. Men should be intelligent and earnest; they must also make us feel that they have a controlling happy future opening before them which sheds a splendour on the passing hour. The really religious are full of courage, they are "victory organised." Who can over-estimate religion based on knowledge? I know nothing in life so satisfactory as the good understanding that can subsist between two virtuous men, each of whom is sure of himself and sure of his friend. It is happiness which postpones all other gratifications, and makes politics, commerce, and temples insignificant. For when men shall meet as they ought, each a benefactor, clothed with thoughts, deeds, and accomplishments, it should be the festival of nature which all things announce. I know one man who does believe that thousands might unite and live by the same law as a knot of friends or a pair of lovers.'*

Religion does not, as some suppose, consist so much in words as in deeds. Paine uttered a most compendious creed when he wrote, 'The world is my country, and to do good is my religion.' What avails it to build temples, to instruct in works of love, and daily ask for mercy—if we extend neither love nor mercy to our brethren? Good men should—

* Emerson: Essays. (The order and phraseology of sentences have been altered.)

'Show that religion is an earthly plant,
That grows by love and not by priestly cant,
That earthly good must mingle in its plan,
That serving God consists in serving man.'

Men now profess a religion which excludes justice. The ruling powers, the great ones of the earth, prefer orthodox Christianity to Truth. Humanity and popular Christianity are not identical throughout, although some of the teachings and acts of Christ had the improvement of humanity for their object, if we interpret them in a rational manner, as we would the teachings of Confucius, Socrates, or any other teacher of morals. It is however a subject of grave doubt in my own mind whether the early teachers of the Christian faith ever intended to teach even the possibility of a man being *happy in this life.*

'But no frail man, however great or high,
Can be concluded blest before he die.'*

Pope gives it as his opinion that—

'Man never *is* but always *to be* blest.'†

Rogers has aptly expressed the prevailing opinion among many Eastern nations when, in describing the widow mounting the funeral pile in India, he says—

'To die is to be blest.'

The earth on these principles is but a sort of asylum whence the patient hopes to escape by death alone—he never hopes for recovery while here; he is in a strange land, on his journey home, and lives on hope.

'Exiles, the proverb says, subsist on hope;
Delusive hope still points to *distant* good,
To good that mocks approach.'‡

'Archdeacon Paley defines virtue to be "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness."§ The last part of this definition is the most important part of the whole; for the knowledge of this everlasting happiness he supposes to be all which constitutes moral obligation, meaning by obligation not any feeling of love, but the influence of happiness as an object of physical desire, and of pain as an object of physical aversion. . . . In

* Addison. † Essay on Man. ‡ Euripides.
§ Moral Philosophy, b. i. c. 7.

short, the inducement or temptation to be virtuous is precisely of the same kind with the inducements or temptations to vice. . . . This form of the selfish system, which has been embraced by many theological writers of undoubted piety and purity, is notwithstanding, I cannot but think, as degrading to human character as any other form of the doctrine; or rather, it is in itself the most degrading of all the forms. . . . It is rendered more offensive by the noble image of the Deity which is continually presented to our mind in all his benevolence, not to be loved, but to be courted with a mockery of affection.

'The sensualist . . . seems to me, even in the brutal stupidity in which he is sunk, a being more worthy of esteem than the selfish of another life, to whose view God is ever present, but who view him always only to feel constantly in their hearts, that in loving him who has been the dispenser of all the blessings which they have enjoyed, and who has revealed himself as the diffuser of an immortality of happiness, they love not the giver himself, but only the gift which they have received, or the gifts that are promised. . . . The doctrine of Paley differs only by the peculiar importance it very justly gives to everlasting happiness or misery, when compared with the brief pains or pleasures of this life. In the scale of selfish gain, it is a greater quantity of physical enjoyment which it has in view. It is a sager selfishness, but it is not less absolute selfishness which it maintains.'*

The following question will decide the morality of this principle. If two individuals were to expose themselves to the same peril, for the same common friend, the one having no other motive than the wish of securing a certain amount of happiness to himself on earth or after he had quitted earth, the other no motive but that of saving a life—in which case would our feeling of moral approbation be more strongly excited? Orthodox views on this subject are set forth in a work† largely circulated in this country and deserving all the praise it has received. The most important point we are informed is 'in what condition we are to die.' 'That only fits us for death

* Dr. Brown's Philosophy of Mind, pp. 533, 534.

† Self-knowledge, by J. Mason, M.A., New Edition, c. 18.

which fits us for happiness after death.' But what is that? The previous question must be settled first—viz., 'what that happiness is?' 'It must be a happiness suited to the nature of the soul, and what it is capable of enjoying in a state of separation from the body. And what can that be but the enjoyment of God?' And what is that? 'It is that which makes us like to him now.' So that the great question, 'am I fit to die?' resolves itself into this, 'am I like to God?' He then defines God to be 'a being of infinite love, mercy, and patience, whose righteousness is invariable, whose veracity is invaluable, and whose wisdom unerring. These are the moral attributes of the divine being, in which he requires us to imitate him.' All this moral conduct, remember, is not recommended as fitting us to live, but only to ascertain that we are fit to die, and 'for the enjoyment of God, in the future state of separate spirits.' This I hold to be pure and genuine Chistianity, understanding the words of Christ literally when he emphatically proclaimed, 'my kingdom is not of this world.'

This view is supported by one of the ablest writers* of the New Testament in words of unmistakeable significance. If this life is all, he contends that we are most miserable men: in fact, if the dead rise not again, he would abandon himself to the lowest of human passions, the mere physical pleasure of eating and drinking—as though the possibility of a future life were the only motive for man's exercising any function of his nature except the stomach! He made the great object of life to be preparation for heaven and the judgment day, to get free from the prison-house of earth, the home of the body, for all that is seen is of a temporal and shifting nature; the only stedfast and eternal thing is the unseen, a house not built with hands, but a building of God, eternal in the heavens.

The effects of this view on the human mind are well exemplified by the following story:—'An Indian prince, Tisso, one day riding in the forest, saw a herd of elk sporting; "See how happy," he said, "these browsing elks are! Why should not the priests, lodged and fed comfortably in the

* Paul: Corinthians, books i. and ii.

temple, also amuse themselves?" Returning home, he imparted this reflection to the king. The king, on the next day, conferred the sovereignty on him, saying, "Prince, administer this empire for seven days, at the termination of that period, I shall put thee to death." At the end of the seventh day, the king inquired, "From what cause hast thou become so emaciated?" He answered, "from the horror of death." The monarch rejoined, "Live, my child, and be wise. Thou hast ceased to take recreation, saying to thyself, in seven days I shall be put to death. These priests in the temple incessantly meditate on death; how can they enter into healthful diversions?" '*

In the present condition of divided interests, some people act from one motive, some from another, but the shortest way to decide which way to act is to ascertain in which way you can do good and then do it, irrespective of whether you are rewarded here or hereafter. Briefly, we would say those acts are right which are beneficial both to ourselves and others.

Mr. Bradlaugh, in one of his discussions, gave the following useful rule of right—'That is right which tends to the happiness of the greatest number and to the injury of none.' At one of my lectures an opponent presented himself professing his inability to understand this. I then said, give me a case. He said, 'Suppose two persons are desirous of doing something for their mutual pleasure, would they be justified in doing the act?' The discussion continued in the form of a dialogue.

I: Would the act be for the good of each?

He: Yes.

I: Would it be for the good of others?

He: I don't think it would.

I: Would it injure others?

He: No.

I: Then the act is justifiable on the grounds that it would do good to the actors and do no harm to others.

He: Your principle is mere *convenience.*

I: If it is *convenient* to do good and to abstain from evil, I hope you will adopt my principle at your earliest *convenience.*

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* Emerson's Conduct of Life.

From these explanations it will be obvious that the interests or likings of one individual are not sufficient to guide us aright without the important consideration too often overlooked by the interests and likings—namely, *the good of others.* After all that has been said, some will still inquire—'What is just?' 'What is right?' 'Christ, and others before him, said, "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you;" that is *right*, is it not?'

Answer: Yes, supposing all believed and desired and deserved the same thing.

But a course of conduct is not necessarily right because *you* would act in a given manner in a special case. You are not individually the judge of universal acts. The case of a prisoner tried before a judge for robbery will illustrate this. The judge does not commit the prisoner because he *would* that another should commit *him:* but he commits the prisoner on the ground that society has agreed that whoever steals shall be punished. And society does not punish the criminal because of his particular crime, but because such criminal conduct generally practised would be disastrous to all. Hence the laws of society put Christianity entirely out of court, so far as the particular part in question is concerned.

'To explain the moral standard more fully—if a voluntary agent could be found to devise and execute a plan through which all sentient beings would enjoy happiness, experience agreeable affections of their natures only, throughout their whole existence, this would constitute the standard of moral perfection; and the greater the happiness and the longer its duration, the higher would the standard be.'‡

There is nothing more common than for one man to judge another by his own taste. When we censure a man for eating, drinking, studying, or working, it always means —'You do these things differently; why don't you do them as I and others do?' Constitutions and tastes differ, and any man who attempts to regulate others by his own except by persuasion and the like, is a tyrant, and must be resisted as an enemy of individual choice and liberty. Perhaps no two men ever exactly agree in their wants, except when, as does happen sometimes, two persons want the

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* Adaptability, p. 21.

same thing. Some want less than others: Diogenes only wanted a tub, while Alexander desired more than a world.

Perhaps, after all that has been written by ancient and modern moralists, there is no passage in literature which conveys so good a lesson as the advice of *Polonius* to his son:*—

> 'This, above all: to thine own self be true.
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.'

The man who observes accurately the results of his own acts will see that the injury of another is no gain to himself—to be at peace with oneself is, as Shakespeare expresses it, 'a peace above all earthly dignities,' but this depends on the tranquillity enjoyed by our neighbours, and the latter depends in some measure on ourselves. In whatever condition of life we may be, the finest opiate is a good conscience, and 'sweet are the slumbers of him who can lie down on his pillow and review the transactions of the day without condemning himself. Nemo malus felix.'†

No one desires other, or less, or more, than what he deserves, if he is just; but the rule for ascertaining what is just, or by which all are expected to act who act justly, is to treat others as they would be treated themselves. This rule has been attributed to Confucius, and it was re-published in the New Testament as an original precept; consequently every Christian professes to be guided by it; in fact it is called 'the golden rule' of the Christian faith. 'That the system of morals propounded in the New Testament contained no maxim which had not been previously enunciated, and that some of the most beautiful passages in the apostolic writings are quotations from pagan authors, is well known to every scholar. . . To assert that Christianity communicated to man moral truths previously unknown, argues, on the part of the assertor, either gross ignorance or else wilful fraud.'‡

But what we are immediately concerned with is not the origin of the 'golden rule,' but its application. In England it is interpreted in the following manner:—A is of opinion

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* Shakespeare's Hamlet. † Knox.

‡ History of Civilisation, vol. i., p. 164.

that one and two are one, and further that his opinion is right, and whoever has a different opinion is wrong. Now, if A had a wrong opinion, he would like B to put him right, then, obviously, it must be the duty of A to do the like for B; and if A has the power, should B prove obstinate, he uses the necessary force to make B conform to A's opinion. The history of Christianity affords innumerable instances confirming his own views and actions in this matter. That the effect of this conduct is horrible suffering and misery to B, and that the amount and intensity depend entirely on the sincerity and power of A, must be obvious to every man of ordinary capacity. On this view of the matter we may quote the words of a modern writer,* whose extensive knowledge and unquestionable honesty make him an indisputable authority. He contends that sincerity without knowledge is dangerous, for there is no limit to the mischief a good man may do if he is ignorant. To be willing to perform our duty is the moral part; to know how to perform it is the intellectual part; and to accomplish the scheme of life, and lay a foundation for the further progress of mankind, it is necessary that these two should work in harmony. It is on this ground that I insist on reason being our guide, in opposition to the majority who contend for the blind guidance of our feelings and hopes without the illumination which the intellect gives to the path of life. Mr. Buckle says†—'These conclusions are no doubt very unpalatable; and what makes them peculiarly offensive is, that it is impossible to refute them; for the deeper we penetrate into this question, the more clearly we shall see the superiority of intellectual acquisitions over moral feeling. There is no instance on record of an ignorant man who, having good intentions, and supreme power to enforce them, has not done far more evil than good. And whenever the intentions have been very eager, and the power very extensive, the evil has been enormous. . . . It is impossible that this should be otherwise, for they are not bad intentioned men who seek to enforce opinions which they believe to be good. Still less are they bad men

* Buckle's History of Civilisation, vol. i.

† Intellectual and Moral Laws. History of Civilisation, vol. i.

who are so regardless of temporal considerations as to employ all the resources of their powers, not for their own benefit, but for the purpose of propagating a religion which they think necessary to the future happiness of mankind. Such men as these are not bad, they are only ignorant; ignorant of the nature of truth, ignorant of the consequence of their own acts. But in a moral point of view, their motives are unimpeachable. Indeed, it is the very ardour of their sincerity which warms them into persecution. It is the holy zeal by which they are fired, that quickens their fanaticism into a deadly activity. If you can impress any man with an absorbing conviction of the supreme importance of some moral or religious doctrine; if you can make him believe that those who reject that doctrine are doomed to eternal perdition; if you can give that man power, and by means of his ignorance blind him to the ulterior consequences of his own act, he will infallibly persecute those who deny his doctrine; and the extent of his persecution will be regulated by the extent of his sincerity. Diminish the sincerity, and you will diminish the persecution: in other words, by weakening the virtue you may check the evil. This is a truth of which history furnishes such innumerable examples, that to deny it would be not only to reject the plainest and most conclusive arguments, but to refuse the concurrent testimony of every age.'

Mr. Mill* refers to the well known story of the Parsees, in India, which illustrates our subject. The Hindoos think eating beef wrong, and of course like others to be right as well as themselves, hence the Parsees must not eat beef. The Mahomedans think eating pork wrong, hence when they governed the Parsees, the Parsees must not eat pork—the consequence is that the Parsees eat neither beef nor pork! These two sects, seeing their fellow-creatures in error, and knowing the dreadful consequences of error to themselves, use every means in their power to do for others what they would that others should do for them. They overlook the fact that they have no more right to prevent the Parsees eating pork, than the Parsees have to make them eat it.

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* On Liberty.

It is useless to multiply instances, because every thinking man can supply them for himself. He has only to use his eyes and observe the actions of Sabbatarians and 'Maine Law,' anti-theatre going, anti-beef eating, and anti-beard-growing people, to see the effects of what is intended. The assumption is that what is suitable for me must be so for everybody else, and, therefore, my chief aim must be not to give everybody what is suitable for them, but to give them what would suit me, if I were them. Thus, every man's tastes, opinion, and preferences, become the standard by which he is guided in his dealings with others, and in accordance with which, when he has the power, he compels others to act. Men who use this moral rule no doubt mean what is just, and do what is just in their own eyes, but the justness of the act depends on, and is regulated by, the knowledge and virtue of the actor in every case. If a man is ignorant and vicious, his notion of 'doing unto others as he would wish to be done by' may be just, but the probability in favour of this may be about equal to the probability that a blind man would see the right road across a common in a dark night. 'We ought always to deal justly; not only to those who are just to us, but likewise with those who endeavour to injure us. And this, too, for fear lest, by rendering them evil for evil, we should fall into the same vice.'* There is a notion in the minds of many that mercy is a virtue, and that it is preferable to justice; but this is manifestly absurd, since the idea of justice includes every idea —it is perfection itself, nothing better is conceivable; hence whenever mercy sets aside justice, treason is committed against society. The talk of tempering justice with mercy is downright nonsense, and will never escape the lips of one who has a correct view of the grandest and most important word in language—the word just.

'We are desired to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to do unto them as we wish they should do unto us. Are these precepts practical in this world, or are they not? And what is implied in their being practical? Before they can become practical, it must be shown that they are in harmony with, and supported by, the order of nature; that

* Hierocles.

is to say, that nature is so constituted and arranged, that all the real interests of individuals and nations are compatible with each other, and that it is not necessary to rob and impoverish one to enrich another. The history of all Christian nations shows that while they professed to believe in the Divine authority of the Scriptural words, they were in a great measure sceptics as to their being supported and enforced by the order of nature. In their practical conduct towards each other, they have too often set them at defiance; nay, each has striven to depress, spoil, and ruin its neighbour, as the most effectual means of raising itself to independence and prosperity. But not one has succeeded by these means . . . no church, and no religious sect with which I am acquainted, has recognised the order of nature as the basis of the practical precepts which it teaches regarding Secular conduct and duty. Science, as I have said, attempts to do this; but many religious men denounce it as "Godless Education." I ask, in what age or nation have the religious instructors of the people directed them to reverence and obey the natural laws as the roads that lead to Secular virtue and prosperity? Ever since the promulgation of Christianity, . . . not one example is known of such conduct.'*

It concerns us materially that our neighbour should not be less informed, less temperate, or less qualified to know and to practise religion. The moral sensibility of man is improved by the practice of virtue, even as it is deadened by repeated crimes. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners,' said Euripides, and the converse is equally true—there is some redeeming quality in every man. Good communications purify evil manners. In this morality truth there is hope for all, and those who work to improve the surroundings of man, to draw out and strengthen the excellent that is in him, may find in this truth encouragement to extend their efforts. It is sometimes said by very pious people that the most ignorant may be a religious man: but only those who know can practise the religion here advocated. Education, knowledge, is essential in this religion, and men would not be without it if justice ruled the world.

* Religion and Science.

The subject of education, or the culture and direction of all the faculties of a human being, is one of the most important considerations to every nation, and every man and woman; yet it is unhappily one still open to public discussion. The chief obstacle to education in England is religious sectarianism—and so powerful is the spirit of antagonism and discord created thereby, that some of the most intelligent and influential friends of education find their efforts frustrated by the apple of discord called religion. Even Prince Albert was compelled to observe that if these differences had had to be discussed on the day of the educational Conference, he could not have consented to take the chair! He said he was 'happy to meet them upon a neutral ground; happy to find that there is a neutral ground.'

It appears to me that Mr. John Stuart Mill has suggested a method by which this neutral ground can become fruitful. He holds that it is the right and the duty of the state to see that the nation is educated; not as Churchmen or Dissenters, but whichever they may be—the state shall see that they are educated Churchmen or educated Dissenters.

The elements of which a sect is composed are the points in which it differs from others, and its existence depends on the success with which it infuses a knowledge of and reverence for these in the minds of the young: it represents them as of the utmost importance to their temporal and eternal interests: in the estimation of its zealous leaders, they greatly surpass, in practical as well religious importance, the order of nature. If any sect were to cease investing its points of difference with the highest reverence in the estimation of its pupils, and begin to magnify the truth and utility of the doctrines in which all are agreed, it would commit *felo de se*. . . . On the other hand, the laws of nature, physical, organic, and moral, present the same instruction, and recommend the same line of action to all, and are therefore destructive of sectarianism. Hence the deadly cry of infidelity which all sects raise against them!

Supposing that the sects were right, England ought to be superior to any other nation in respect to the results of education. Mr. Horace Mann, who has had ample opportunities, from observation in different parts of Europe, to form

a judgment in this matter, in his Educational Tour says:—'England is the only one among the nations of Europe, conspicuous for its civilisation and resources, which has not, and never has had, any system for the education of its people. And it is the country where, incomparably beyond any other, the greatest and most appalling social contrasts exist; where, in comparison with the intelligence, wealth, and refinement of what are called the higher classes, there is the most ignorance, poverty, and crime among the lower!'

This is the state of society after 250 years of voluntary sectarian education in England, without any interference on the part of the state except by way of protection and encouragement. It is quite time that the other plan were allowed, at least, a trial. If we cannot agree as to what religion the children shall be taught, surely we can agree that they shall be taught that which will enable them to tell, as the country folks say, a great A from a chest of drawers! The most obfuscated mind can see the advantages arising from the ability to read, write, and compute; and no sect or interest has any right to deny these advantages to any child born into this world. There are some things necessary and useful to every man, and these should be taught to every man, for he that does not know these is an ignorant man, whatever else he may know.

As Mr. Combe says—'Truth alone can benefit a nation, yet the doctrine of every sect cannot possibly be true; to give each of them public money to teach its own tenets, is to endow equally truth and error. It is tantamount in physics to setting in motion antagonistic forces. . . To pay all sects who are teaching solemn contradictions, implies an utter disbelief in any intelligible order of God's providence on earth. It deliberately supersedes that teaching, and plants conflicting catechisms, liturgies, and confessions in its place. . . The best interests of society suffer from this unhappy state of things.'*

Mr. Mill says—'If the government would make up its mind to require for every child a good education, it might save itself the trouble of providing one. It might leave to

* Religion and Science.

parents to obtain the education where and how they pleased, and content itself with helping to pay the school fees of the poor classes of children, and defraying the entire school expenses of those who have no one else to pay for them. The objections which are urged, with reason, against State education, do not apply to the enforcement of education by the State, but to the State's taking upon itself to direct that education, which is a totally different thing. Under this system they [the children] would be brought up either Churchmen or Dissenters as they now are, the State merely taking care that they should be instructed Churchmen or instructed Dissenters. . . All attempts by the State to bias the conclusions of its citizens on disputed subjects, are evil; but it may very properly offer to ascertain and certify that a person possesses the knowledge requisite to make his conclusions, on any subject, worth attending to.'*

The following statistics may be useful in showing the enormous work which has to be performed in this country before any appreciable improvement in the morality of the country can be reasonably expected :—'The rate of progress [in education] is further illustrated by statistics which show that in 1818 the proportion of day scholars to the population was 1 in 17; in 1833, 1 in 11; and in 1851, 1 in 8. . . We are told that the total population in England and Wales of children between the ages of 3 and 15 being estimated at 4,908,696, only 2,046,848 attended school at all, while 2,861,848 receive no instruction whatever. At the same time, an analysis of the scholars with reference to the length of time allowed for their school tuition shows that 42 per cent. of them have been at school less than one year, 22 per cent. during one year, 15 per cent. during two years, 9 per cent. during three years, 5 per cent. during four years, and 4 per cent. during five years. Therefore out of two millions of scholars alluded to, more than one million and a half remain only two years at school. I leave you to judge what the results of such an education can be. I find further, that of these two millions attending school, only about 600,000 are above the age of nine. . . Carefully collected statistics reveal to us the fact that while about

* On Liberty.

6,00,000 children between three and fifteen are absent from school, but known to be employed, no less than 2,200,000 are not at school, whose absence cannot be traced to any ascertained employment or other legitimate cause.'*

We now send men to prison slaves to vice, the victims of ignorance and misfortune, and they return from prison hardened by bodily tortures into human fiends thirsting for vengeance. Under such treatment, we almost accept as an axiomatic truth—once a criminal always a criminal. It is gratifying to know that some of the most influential advisers of the nation on this subject are beginning to look on crime as a misfortune, and to treat it accordingly. I have often wished that the advocates of vengeance and retaliation would recommend some uniform plan of punishment, so that their schemes might be duly appreciated by a calm and dispassionate thinking public. For instance, why not advise for theft, the amputation of an arm ; for lying, of the tongue ; for trespass, of a leg : and so on according to the nature of the offence, leaving of course, as it now exists, for murder, the amputation of the head—or rather, in this enlightened country, strangling, as by custom and law established ?

The abolition of the execrable traffic in human blood, the traffic which distant ages will regard as fabulous, is one of the brightest trophies that adorn our country. A remnant only of this horrible practice exists to mock the solemnity of justice, which only requires more light to effect its final extinction. Surely that doctrine is doomed, in England at least, which teaches that the violations of social rights authorises society to retaliate by murder, that the best corrector of morals is the executioner, and the best instrument to effect his purpose, the halter. The opinion, that all punishment should be of use to the person punished is happily progressing, and the opposite school have never been able to show that a man is improved by being put to death, for of what use is a man when he is hanged ?

One of the most effectual ways of promoting virtue is by preventing or removing the causes of vice—the production of good is always possible or probable in proportion as we

* Prince Albert's Speech, 1857.

decrease the opportunities of evil. It is a practice fraught with great danger to put people in the way of temptation by way of trial. It matters not however ancient or sacred the authority may be, which enjoins by precept or example such a course of proceeding, we know that the most virtuous, the strongest, the healthiest of human beings are liable to fall, and their fall cannot be prevented by submitting them to experiments by which, under ordinary circumstances, that deplorable end is invariably accomplished. The worst of men may be improved by being removed from among the causes which produce crime, and the best of men are injured more or less by being placed among them. That some of the latter escape is a cause for thankfulness, but in no way disproves the rule we are here contending for. 'It is certain that either wise bearing, or ignorant carriage, is caught, as men take diseases, one of another; therefore, let men take heed of their company.'* Paley uttered a truth when he said 'man is a bundle of habits.'†

Rivetted to this agglomeration of accidents men call a *system* of society, who can be moral? We erect gin-palaces and ale-houses on the road man must travel, and preach 'be sober.' We neglect the formation of the character of the child, and say 'be virtuous.' We give men the lowest prices for labour, and bid them 'be provident.' We make it their interest to evade the truth, and say 'be faithful.' We surround ourselves with every possible evil influence, and then exclaim, What a sad thing we are not healthier and happier! Science says, 'It serves you right.' Crime, vice, and confusion, must exist until justice reigns omnipotently. If we do not apply remedies for our evils, we must continue to suffer. The cry of all the earth is, Give us justice! Until this cry is hushed, this demand is acceded to, it is useless to expect peace and order. There can be no peace with injustice, nor order in the presence of misery, confusion, and murder. It avails but little that the people are told of their sins. Denunciation of error is only useful when it leads to truth. Very little good comes of preaching that man is fallen. We must preach the restoration of man. It is to little purpose that we teach religion at all, if

* Shakespeare.

† Moral Philosophy.

we make its practice an impossibility. We can show our sincerity in religion only by creating circumstances in which the interest of man to be virtuous shall be paramount. If man's interests draw him into vice and your teachings point him to virtue, it amounts to little better than placing him in a boat with the streams running in opposite directions, —he may keep above water or he may sink into it, but progress, over such 'opposed foes,' is next to impossible.

While one portion of the population lives in luxury, another on charity and by sufferance, and the masses by slavery, it is in vain that you tell me the popular religion is the real, for the old answer inevitably arises, 'religion is known by its fruits.' It is sometimes said that the labouring class furnishes the greatest number of criminals: but this is not because they are labourers; it may be because their number is the greatest. And neither is their number the cause of crime, but the conditions under which they labour to provide a mere sustenance from hour to hour, and the deplorable state of ignorance in which they are born, live, toil, and die, are sufficient to account for any amount of crime attributed to them. No one contends that labourers are slaves, but although they have liberty to change their masters, their lot is still one of constant servitude, and, although those who work produce all that ministers to the comfort of man, they are contemptuously denominated the lower orders. Surely those who produce nothing and enjoy most are the inferior members of society. Millions work at severe and dangerous tasks in the bowels of the earth, and live on the coarsest fare, to whom education and even the light of the sun are strangers, and generation after generation still work on without the least prospect of deliverance. Is it any one's prerogative to speak of these heroic servants of humanity as other than nature's true nobility? Whoever works is honourable; and those whose position and leisure enable them to do service to others less fortunate, will find one great object before them,— the adjustment of the labourer's advantages in proportion to the service he performs for society.

The enjoyments of life, which tend to make man social, a friend to his neighbour, are despised or prohibited by popular religion, which casts a perpetual gloom over life, that

renders it a misfortune to be born, a misery to live, and a terror to die. Unfortunately, the experience of almost every young man confirms this statement. The consequences arising from this state of things are often deplored, but no effort is made to remove the causes. Archdeacon Paley pointedly mentions the matter in the following words, but his enlightened liberality is not recognised even by those who think very highly of his general principles. He says:—'If a father's piety be morose, rigorous, and tinged with melancholy, perpetually breaking in upon the recreation of his family, and surfeiting them with the language of religion on all occasions, there is a danger lest the son carry away from home with him a settled prejudice against seriousness and religion, as inconsistent with every plan of a pleasurable life.'*

Religion, instead of being the friend and guide, a thing to be desired and carried away from home, is oftener a thing to be abhorred, and most young men look forward anxiously to the time when home and religion will cease to trouble them. The religion of Christ has been described as good will, but the religion of Christendom is ill-will, and of course the less a young man has of the latter, the happier he is. If, instead of living and dying amongst persons holding such opinions, we could view with unbiassed reason the working of them among the inhabitants of a far off country—such a people would appear to us as though, fearing lest they should not be miserable enough in the present, they therefore joined to the evil they suffer from remembrance of some former distress, the vivid apprehension of some future calamity. With the popular notions in our heads, the past is piled with sadness and gloom mountains high; life becomes joyless and ghastly, a pilgrim's progress, a probation—behind us are doleful histories of Adam's fall and curse, before us are doomsday, purgatorial and penal fires. Whoever propounds a gospel which shall deliver us from notions like these will be a servant of humanity, and his message a song of joy and emancipation to the heart of man. To a mind thus delivered, how strange would the notion appear that such views of life were once believed to be true, and, stranger

* Moral Philosophy.

still, that they were ever deemed absolutely necessary to make life happy.

'Nothing can retard the moral and intellectual advancement of the people more thoroughly than having a religion for churches and Sundays, and a widely different code of principles for every-day conduct; and yet this is, and must continue to be, the case with all the Christian nations, while they fail to recognise the order of providence in nature as a divinely appointed guide to human action.'*

Real religion teaches man to be cheerful and joyous, that gloom is not his only mood, that innocent recreation is not vanity. Objects that instruct the mind, enlarge the understanding, purify the heart, it is always (Sundays included) religious to contemplate, and no enlightened moral man can doubt it. It can be doubted only by those whose reason has been perverted by the groundless fictions of popular belief. We are compelled by necessity to devote six days to toil and trouble, and on the seventh, popular beliefs demand our attention to the laws of the Jews. Real religion is the law of humanity, a part of our daily life and work, and there is no day of the seven in which it cannot be practised, nor is there any day of the seven in which it demands greater reverence.

Our daily duty is not less religious than that we perform for the nation, or the world. Those who are dutiful, industrious, and practise truth every day, are the only really religious. A religion that makes distinction of days for its own sake, that defies historical law and ignores natural law, that bids men suspect their hearts and distrust their reason, merits the ridicule, the hatred, the unbelief it creates and extends. Sunday is a legally-appointed day of rest and holiday, a day in which the weary recruit strength and health, a day of joy, of instruction, and recreation—and whoever appropriates it to the purpose of trade, beyond the wants of society for health and enjoyment, physical, moral, and intellectual, misuses the day, and is in no sense better than others who seek to make it a day of superstitious ceremony or filthy drunkenness.

It may be said† that popular views on this question are

* Religion and Science. † Oriental Memoirs.

universal; but the universality of any religion is no greater proof of its truth than the antiquity of it. For instance, Forbes says: 'The Hindoo religion probably spread over the whole earth, there are signs of it in every northern country, and in almost every system of worship: in arithmetic, astronomy, astrology; the holidays, games, names of the stars, and figures of the constellations; the ancient monuments, laws, and coins: the languages, &c. The Brahmins were the true authors of the Ptolemaic system; the Buddhists of the Copernican system; as well as of the doctrine of attraction; and probably the religion of the Greeks, and the Eleusinian mysteries, were only varieties of the two different sects.' But granting all that may be said on this view of the subject, and much may be said, no Englishman would think of embracing the Hindoo faith for such reasons; and no one is justified in accepting the religion of his own country on such grounds, although such is not at all an uncommon practice.

'Antiquity is worthless, except as parent of experience; that which is useful is alone venerable; that which is virtuous is alone noble; and there is nothing so illustrious as the dedication of the intellect and the affections to the great end of human improvement and happiness;—an end which will be the ultimate test and touch-stone of our institutions, by reference to which they will be judged, and be either perpetuated or swept away.'*

'It is time that men should learn to tolerate nothing ancient that reason does not respect, and to shrink from no novelty to which reason may conduct. It is time that the human powers, so long occupied by subordinate objects and inferior arts, should mark the commencement of a new era in history, by giving birth to the art of improving government and increasing the civil happiness of man. It is time that legislators, instead of that narrow and dastardly coasting, which never ventures to lose sight of usage and precedent, should, guided by the polarity of reason, hazard a bolder navigation in unexplored regions, the treasure of public felicity.†

Real religion teaches what is naturally and socially right,

* Westminster Review, No. 10. † Sir James Macintosh.

whatever histories or Bibles prescribe. It is simply ridiculous to practise a law because it exists in some history or Bible. Is it a natural law, or a true law? If so, it matters not from what book we learn it. 'Thou shalt not commit murder,' is not a moral rule because it is found in the Bible—it would be equally opposed to the happiness of society for a man to perpetrate a murder, if murder were classed among the virtues which the Bible commends. It may be very useful to quote from every book in the world all the virtues recommended in them, but the fact of their being in these books is no proof of their being virtues—and as ten million circles can never make a square, so the united voice of myriads cannot lend the smallest foundation to that which in itself is a falsehood. Any man who regulated his conduct according to the Bible must use his reason and conscience to guide him in choosing what characters to imitate and what to shun; not that his conscience is an infallible guide.

For instance, men have acted conscientiously who have killed their brothers for not believing as they did themselves; still every man thus put to death was cruelly murdered. Reason ought not, like vanity, to adorn herself with old parchment and the display of a genealogical tree: more dignified in her proceedings, and proud of her immortal nature, she ought to derive everything from herself; she should . . . be, if I may use the phrase, the contemporary of all ages.* Mason,† says some, are for setting aside reason as a rule, describing it as 'carnal reason' when it is against them. By right reason he means common principles allowed by all the sober and thinking part of mankind, and which 'may be easily learned by the light of nature.' Therefore any doctrine in practice, supposed to be countenanced by, or founded in revelation, apparently repugnant or contradictory to our natural notion of the divine attributes, or which weakens our obligation to universal virtue, we may be sure is no part of revelation. 'Reason was designed to be our guard against a wild and extravagant construction of scripture.' 'It must be surprising to one who reads the scriptures with a free, unbiassed mind, to see

* Neckar. † Self-Knowledge: J. Mason, M.A., pp. 252-55.

what elaborate, fine-spun, flimsy glosses men will invent and put upon some text . . . who, if they were to write a critique in the same manner on any Greek or Latin author, would make themselves extremely ridiculous in the eyes of the learned world.'

'We consider the Deity as possessing the highest moral perfection; but in that theological view of morality which acknowledges no mode of estimating excellence beyond that divine command itself, whatever it might have been, these words have no meaning; since if, instead of what we now term virtue, it had commanded what we term vice, his command must still have been equally holy. . . . In the system of Paley, if virtue be conformity to the will of God, whatever that will may be, God and the most malignant demon have no moral difference to our heart, but as the one and not the other is the irresistible sovereign of the universe. . . . We do not merely submit to the will of God as we submit to any power which it is impossible to resist. . . . There is an earlier law of God, which he has written in our hearts; and the desire of our mere personal happiness or misery, in this or in another world, is truly an object of our approbation, not the source of it.*

'To use Dr. Cudworth's argument, it must either be right to obey the law and wrong to disobey it, or indifferent whether we obey it or not. If it be morally indifferent whether we obey it or not, it cannot be a source of virtue; and if it be right to obey it, the very supposition that it is right to obey it implies a notion of right and wrong that is antecedent to the law, and gives it its moral efficacy. The law on which right and wrong depend did not begin to be law when it was written; it is older than the ages of nations and cities, and contemporary with the very eternity of God. A sovereign, it has been truly said, may enact and rescind laws; but he cannot create or annihilate a single virtue.'†

The truths of real religion are discoverable only by trials and experiments. They are not founded on mysterious dogmas, ancient fictions, or myths, but on the real nature of man. There may be ignorance but not mystery as to our

* Dr. Brown: Philosophy of Mind, p. 537. † Ibid, pp. 504-6.

duty. We are limbs of one great body—nature has made us with social affinity, according to which law an injury to ourselves, or others, is a sign of irrationality. Religion teaches us to govern ourselves—and that our actions should be in harmony with the good of all. We shall be happy when we deal justly and have friendship, humanity, or good will, for all of our nature. No good effort is in vain, as the aggregate of human endeavours will one day prove.

The practices of ignorant, bigoted, and vicious dead men, are not to be accepted as precedents to decide the morality of living men. Men profess to regulate their lives by the foolish customs of extinct generations of men. The men of to-day walk by the faded, flickering light of barbarous nations. Some of the civilised of to-day consider it blasphemy not to reverence the authorised literature of extinct barbarians. Such is refined idolatry. We see many who stand on the side of popular belief exert themselves to obtain knowledge and justice. This fact is a proof of the power of truth and its force in operation; but their conduct is opposed to or independent of their historical errors. They who desire to stand on the vantage ground of truth, where the air is always clear and serene, should not retain the fond associations of vulgar superstition. To the intelligent and virtuous the fables of the present and the bygone days stand for what they are worth, as fictions of human fancy or miracles of human genius.

But the virtuous never practise imposture—neither do they bewilder the minds of the ignorant. Philosophers spend their lives in explaining phenomena on rational grounds, despising the outcries of the vicious and the insane. Religion deserves respect only when it despises mythological terrors, and in the place of them offers motives to virtue which can be easily understood. If a religious life is not worth living for its own sake, no man should adopt it, neither should he practise vice though the devils command him.

A man may hold theoretical views concerning Hindoo, Jewish, Persian, Greek, or Christian literature, concerning the pretended infallible and inspired nature of each of them, without being in the right sense 'a religious man.' Biblical or historical views regarding the persons and teaching of

Oriental philosophers are now confounded with the practice of simple and necessary, social or religious duties. Religion is neither theology nor metaphysics. Religion as here defined agrees with science (a knowledge of things), and with philosophy (the explanation of phenomena), but is often at variance with the inferences of theology, and the doctrines of metaphysics—in fact, religion loses its value by being mixed with them. Every man must practise ordinary good conduct—he cannot be absolved from the observance of natural social laws, for the consequence of disobedience are suffered alike by Theist and Atheist, Christian and Secularist. The rain falls on the land of the Secularist, the sun shines on it, and the fruits of his digging and planting are as invariable and abundant under suitable conditions as those of the Christian. Nature gives us notable instances of justice independent of theological considerations.

When social and natural laws cease to be dissimilar, the Secularist will be esteemed a good and useful citizen. Why should a Christian be less just to his neighbour—the Secularist—than is the Christian's God? The Christian professes to look through Nature to its God, but neglects to imitate the Nature which contains the Secularist.

'Science gives no countenance to the notion that vegetable substances prosper or suffer directly in their growth, in consequence of the moral qualities of the men in whose fields they grow. . . There is no warrant in science for believing that if all the natural conditions of fertility be present, a blight will nevertheless pass upon the crop because of the owners' sins.'

The sermons on fast-days show what notions on this subject prevail among mankind if they agree with their preachers. In the case of the potato disease, they said it was caused by, not the sins of the owners of the field, but by the sins of the rulers over whom the potato growers had no control whatever. Even a member of parliament in the House of Commons attributed it to the endowment of Maynooth College! I always retain a lively recollection of a story my Sunday-school teacher delighted to relate. In brief, it amounted to this—he once knew a man who was an 'Infidel' and, strange to say, that

man, in three successive years, had two of his cows taken away by death, one of his sheep carried off by a thief, and one of his best hay-ricks destroyed by fire! And during this same time his farm was prosperous! After the story, he would exclaim with great earnestness—'O! my young friends, be warned in time!' On one occasion, one of my fellow scholars, in the summer time, absented himself, and on the following Sunday we learned the sad intelligence that he was drowned on that very Sunday while bathing! Our good teacher took occasion to point out to us, what no one could gainsay, that if our dear departed friend, instead of wickedly breaking the Sabbath, had been in his place at school, he had not been drowned in the pool! This kind of teaching is very common and very mischievous—it is dictated by goodness of heart, but betrays a deplorable state of mind.

The Archbishop of Dublin, in some remarks on the famine in Ireland 1846-47, said, 'Roman Catholics who are told that a pestilence or famine is sent as a judgment on the land for the toleration of Romanism, may contend on the contrary, it is the Protestantism that is the national sin. And without the evidence of a sensible miracle to appeal to, neither party can expect to convince the other.' He believes in all the cases mentioned in the Bible, 'but for an uninspired man to make similar declaration' respecting any of his neighbours 'is as irrational and presumptuous as it is uncharitable and unchristian.'

However absurd this may be, as it unquestionably is, in a theological sense, it is something to have an Archbishop subscribe to the unalterable order of nature now, whatever variations may have occurred in former times, when people were totally ignorant of the fact that the laws of nature are invariable.

Some words by the same Archbishop (on Christian self-denial), may illuminate his other statement just quoted. He says—'Revelation, though going beyond reason . . will never contradict the perceived laws of the universe. A pretended revelation would be proved not to be a true one, if it were at variance with the laws by which the maker of the universe governs it.'

Popular belief teaches forms of devotion, certain utter-

ances in the form of prayers, but in real religion there is not only the devotion of the lips, but also that of the head, the heart, and the hand. All who are toiling, all who are thinking, are performing true worship, offering true prayers.

You may pray, in words only, no man denies your right to do this, but do not say that thereby you get your food cheaper or its quantity increased, or that, without prayers, wholesome food would refuse to nourish your body. To desire an impossibility is madness, and to expect your physical good to be sent you in answer to a prayer consisting merely of words, is to expect an impossibility.

Mr. Combe* gives the following illustration :—'Suppose, for example, a society of mothers to be instituted to pray for their children. Two modes of conducting such an association might be conceived. First, the mothers might meet to receive and communicate instruction concerning the best method of complying with the order of God's secular providence, which regulates the health, and also the moral, religious, and intellectual development of children; to express their deep sense of the benevolence and wisdom of the laws according to which his providence acts; and to pray for his blessing on their endeavours to discover those laws, to reverence them, and to carry them into practical effect. Or secondly, the mothers, at their meetings, might pray to God to illuminate their minds by the influence of his spirit, in regard to the treatment of their children, and to bless their offspring from his overflowing grace, without any direct reference to their own obedience to the laws by which he regulates the health and welfare of the young. The latter course, in my view, would be erroneous, and could lead to no beneficial results.'

There is a growing tendency among those who have the power of influencing the mind of the present generation to direct the same faculties, which, in days gone by, were employed in contemplating and reverencing the Gods, in another and totally different direction. Professor Tholuck, of the University of Halle, says, 'What we here speak of is no anxious dream, no unreal imagination. No! undeniable is

* Constitution of Man.

the existing tendency in this generation, to consecrate the temple which our pious forefathers raised to their father in heaven, to man, the fleeting sun of an hour.'* What the Professor deplores is what this essay is intended to extend; aiming, as it does, at the humanising of divinity and the deification of humanity.

Dr. Strauss† says;—'The peculiar and original spirit is wanting which, in the Christian middle ages, caused these gigantic plants of stone to spring up, with their ornaments like twisted leaves, their thorn-like pinnacles, and rose-like windows. Instead of which, an extraordinary desire is now spreading, chiefly over Germany, to have everywhere monuments erected to great men and eminent spirits. Much of the ridiculous is mixed up with this rage; but it has also its serious side, and it is, at all events, a sign of the times. . . The only worship, whether it be to be pitied or to be praised—the only worship left to the better educated of our age from the religious ruin of the latter, is the worship of genius.'

R. W. Emerson has said that 'As soon as man is at one with God he will not beg, he will then see prayer in all action.' And Theodore Parker has said that 'man's ploughing is holy as is his prayer, his daily bread as the smoke of his sacrifice; his home sacred as his temple; his work day as his Sabbath.' Thomas Carlyle contends that all hand labour is divine, is sacred. 'Labour, wide as the earth, has its summit in heaven. Sweat of the brow, and up from that to sweat of the brain and the heart; which includes Kepler Calculations, Newton Meditations, all sciences, all spoken epics, all acted heroisms, martyrdoms, up to that "agony of bloody sweat" which all men have called divine. O brother, if this is not "worship," then I say the more pity for worship; for this is the noblest thing yet discovered under God's sky.'

With the spirit of the foregoing I entirely agree, and with those who hold that 'Labour is worship.' I also think—

> 'He prayeth well who loveth well
> Man, bird, and beast, and all;
> He prayeth best who loveth best,
> All things, both great and small.'

* Select Sermons, London, 1844. † Soliloquies, London, 1845.

Other views of worship may seem true to those who hold them, but whatever else is true, my view is true to me, and every word that gives a sacredness to labour gives dignity to the labourer, and is one more grain in the balance against the weighty curse of Eden. Labour, if a tax on sin, is also a tax on idleness, for the blessings of health flow from 'the curse' called labour, when labour is performed under conditions suited to the nature of man, and not inconsistent with those physical laws which regulate the exercise of all his functions.

There is a form of devotion, of meditation, which is suitable for all men and all time—it is of ancient origin, but none the less useful on that account.

'Our hearts,' says Baxter,* 'would be the best prayer-books, if we were well skilled in reading them.'

'It is an advice worthy of a Christian, though it first dropped from a heathen pen; that before we take ourselves to rest, we review and examine all the passages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redress what we find to have been amiss; and make the shipwrecks of one day be as marks to direct our course on another.'†

This practice has been recommended by Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, and particularly by Pythagoras, in what are called his golden verses. Seneca‡ also recommends this practice, and says that he took the same course himself.

'When all is hush and still, I make a scrutiny into the day; look over my words and actions, and hide nothing from myself; conceal none of my mistakes through fear; for why should I? when I have it in my power to say thus: This once I forgive thee; but see thou do so no more. In such a dispute I was too keen; do not for the future contend with ignorant men; they will not be convinced, because they are unwilling to show their ignorance. Such an one I reproved with too much freedom; whereby I have not reformed, but exasperated him; remember hereafter to be more mild in your censures; and consider not only whether

* Quoted by Mason, xi., 217. † Mason: Self-knowledge, p. 239.
‡ Vide Seneca de Irâ, lib. 3, cap. 36.

what you say be true, but whether the person you say it to can bear to hear the truth.'

Whoever thus investigates his own affairs impartially will doubtless discover many things which otherwise would escape his notice: he will frequently find cause for amending his erroneous tendencies, and will thereby form a more correct judgment of the failing of others. By these means, as Burns has said:—

'Ye see your state wi' theirs compared,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard—
What makes the mighty differ?

Discount what scant occasion gave
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

* * * *

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin' wrang,
To step aside is human.

* * * *

Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.'

If asked to describe a religious man, I should say he is one who looks on Truth as a Deity all should reverence, a Saviour all should seek, and finds therein the source of all help, hope, and abiding felicity. A religious man sees humanity afflicted with two great evils, ignorance and poverty, and devotes his life to the removal of them, by increasing the means of knowledge, and by promoting an equitable distribution of the products of industry. His principles are based on knowledge and justice, and they exclude intolerance and superstition. His aspirations, desires, and actions, are united with the best interests of mankind. His spirit breathes benevolence and good will for all good men. In nobleness of mind and purity of heart he walks through life unawed by all authority but truth. Conscious that the purpose of his life has not been pursued in vain, he willingly retires from the busy scene

of man's activity, leaving behind him the sublime remembrance that a good and glorious being lived in the world and served humanity.

The principles of such a man, and of this essay, have been well expressed by J. C. Prince in the following lines:—

"In man I love all that is noble and great,
But war, and oppression, and falsehood I hate;
And oft has my spirit burst forth into song
Against every species of riot and wrong.
I'm a pleader for freedom in every form;
For my country I feel patriotic and warm,
Yet still I've no wish to disorder the land
With the flame of the torch and the flash of the brand;
I'm for measures more gentle, more certain, in sooth,
The movement of morals, the triumph of truth;
And my hopes are that men who are toiling and grieving,
Will make this fair Earth like the Heaven they believe in."

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