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# ON THIS AND THE OTHER WORLD.

BY

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THE HISTORY OF THE

## THIS WORLD AND THE OTHER WORLD.

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THE title I have assumed for this tract may appear gigantesque : but the reader will kindly remember that no author need attempt to exhaust his subject. In fact, I do but intend to make various remarks chiefly on one writer who has devoted intense effort to the topic. The philosophers who will have no theology, except such as can be elicited by the study of that which is external to the human mind, may attain to a belief in some world-ruling Supreme Being, but in no case are likely to have even the faintest expectation of renewed existence for individual man after death. In extreme contrast to this, such Theists as were Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and, recently deceased, Theodore Parker and Mazzini, make human immortality a first principle of religion. So is it with the Bengâli Theists, members of the Brahma Somâj ; to whom I cannot allude without expressing admiration and sympathy. My friend, Miss F. P. Cobbe, an ardent admirer of Theodore Parker, is by far the most vigorous and prominent advocate of this doctrine among ourselves ; which, in spite of the double-edged nature of the arguments on which she relies, deeply moves me.

In republishing her *Essays on Life after Death*, which appeared in the *Theological Review*, she has prefixed an elaborate, and, in many respects, valuable Preface, commenting on Mr J. S. Mill's three Posthumous Essays. Perhaps it may seem needless to say, that in

everything which Miss Cobbe writes, there is sure to be much that commands my interest and true sympathy ; but I avow this distinctly now, because I am about to express strong dissent from her cardinal arguments and statements : and it may be well here to quote from her what I regard as a primary truth, p. iii. " We shall never obtain our truest and most reliable idea of God from the inductions which science may help us to draw from the external world. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned, or we must be content never to discern them truly at all. In man's soul alone, so far as we may yet discover, is the moral nature of his Maker revealed," as in a mirror. . . . . " If (as we must needs hold for truth), there be a moral purpose running through all the physical creation, its scope is too enormous, its intricacy too deep, the cycle of its revolution too immense, for our brief and blind observation. It must be enough for us to learn what God bids *us* to be of just and merciful and loving, and then judge what must be his justice, his mercy, his love," &c., &c.

One caution I desire here to add. Owing to essential differences of nature, we need to practise virtues which cannot exist in God. The exhortation, " to imitate him," in order that we may attain high virtue, is a precept in the Sermon on the Mount, which Miss Cobbe, with many assenting, regards as high wisdom, p. 216 ; but to me it seems a profound mistake, virtually reprov'd by my quotation from her, just made. We do not see by our outward eyes the moral virtues of the most High. We find nothing of him outside of us *to imitate* ; we only gain some knowledge of him by first knowing and feeling pure and noble impulses in ourselves. But when Miss Cobbe deduces from this precept of imitating God's indiscriminateness, " which, for eighteen centuries has rung in men's ears," that " we ought to make the same sacrifices for the vicious, as we should readily make for a beloved friend," she

seems to forget that we cannot imagine the possibility of God making any sacrifices at all. At least I do not yet believe that she would seriously assert that "making sacrifices" is one of his virtues. When from an imaginary quality in Him, she deduces a superlatively high-flown and doubtful duty for us, this may warn us how dangerous is the *method* she employs. Nay, poetry may sternly warn us :—

“ Must innocence and guilt  
Perish alike?—Who talks of innocence?  
Let them *all* perish. Heav'n will choose its own.  
Why should their children live? The earthquake whelms  
Its undistinguish'd thousands, making graves  
Of peopled cities in its path; and this  
Is heav'n's dread Justice; ay, and it is well.  
Why then should *we* be tender, when the skies  
Deal thus with man?”

(MRS HEMANS' *Vespers of Palermo.*)

Surely this is as good an argument as that based upon the Rain. We cannot be wise in imitating the action of the elements. All such precepts are an *ignis fatuus*. In my belief, duty must stand on its own basis, as a purely human science, to which religious knowledge contributes absolutely nothing. Upon pre-existing morals, spiritual judgments are built. Religion cannot tell us what is moral, though it can give great force to moral aspirations. It can immensely aid us to self-restraint and sacrifice for the attainment of virtue, hereby in turn making individuals nobler, and conducing to more delicate moral perception, out of which rises an advance of moral science itself.

But I proceed to Miss Cobbe's topic, The Hopes of the Human Race,—that is, the doctrine of human immortality. The new Hindoo Theists propound it as a spiritual axiom. Apparently this was Theodore Parker's idea, who, nevertheless, also reasoned for it, if I remember, from the alleged universal yearning of mankind. The fact that all men so yearn, always appeared

to me very doubtful ; nay, from the history of Hebrew religious thought, a formidable objection arises : nor is any such yearning of unspiritual men to me a worthy argument. Indeed, what do they want ? A life as closely like this life as possible, only *more comfortable*. How can such desires, however universal, be an omen that they will be gratified ? But when it is asserted, that in proportion as men become sounder in morals, and purer in religion, so does this belief of an after-existence, in which sin shall be subjugated, and evil practically annihilated, grow up and take deep root ; the assertion (if true), comes to me with great weight. It may not be decisive against objections, but I cannot make light of it ; and the very possibility of an after-life, has, in my belief, a specific influence on spiritual thought and feeling.

But to Miss Cobbe mere possibilities and probabilities seem feeble : she is a bolder reasoner. To express my own judgment, I fear I must say, she is an audacious reasoner. The "existence of evil" is with her "a dread mystery," which (I am glad to say), she tries to present as an exception ; yet, she only doubtfully admits Paley's assertion, that "it is a happy world after all ;" and calls his solution (pp. xlii., xliii.) "an easy-going optimism." Truly, in my sentiment, the surrender of this fact (for, a fact I consider it) would inflict on Theism a most formidable wound. If there be no future life, "Man (she says), is a failure, the consummate failure of creation." On this assertion she bases the belief, that there *must be* a future life, to set right what was wrong here. Seeing that we (the few) are here happy, and that others, "no worse than we, and often far better," "drag out lives of misery and privation of all higher joy, and die, perhaps, at last, so far as their own consciousness goes, in final alienation and revolt from God and goodness," therefore, we *demand* for these [*Italics in the original*] "another and a better life at the hands of the Divine Justice and Love : and

in as far as any one loves both God and man, so far he is incapable of renouncing that demand. One who thanks God for his own joys, and is satisfied without making "demand for farther existence for himself or anybody else," she entitles "SELFISH," pp. lxiv., lxv.

Now, I try to apply this by taking the case of some singularly wicked man, whose crimes or vices bring him to a shameful death; and I ask myself, Could I approach God in prayer, with this man's name on my lips, and say: "Thou hast created him, and hast not *hitherto* shown him common justice, or common kindness; thou hast allowed him to become depraved and miserable; therefore, I *demand* of thee a renewed life for him, in which thou mayst redress thy injustices and neglects." To my feelings, such an address is the height of presumption: even a harsher word may seem appropriate. It reminds me of a much milder prayer, that of a Frenchman, opening with the words "Fear not, O my God, that I am about to reproach thee." Yet I cannot see wherein my hypothetical prayer differs from Miss Cobbe's argument, except that the one is said inwardly to one's self, the other is said inwardly to him who reads the heart. In substance they are the same. My reason, as well as my sentiment, is shocked by it; yet, she "commends it to us as the true method of solving the problem of a life after death," p. lxvii. Such an avowal is to me very revolting; and from one whose many high qualities are justly appreciated, cannot be passed over without definite protest and disavowal.

Why are we to admit that man, as we see and know him in this world, "is a failure,—the consummate failure of creation?" This is a natural idea to those who believe that the first man was perfect in virtue, and that a golden age was succeeded by ages of silver, of brass, of iron, and of clay. "*Ætas parentum pejor avis,*" &c. ! From one who not only has laid aside the fables of Gentile religions, but reads Lubbock, Darwin,

and Tyndall, we might far rather expect a cheerful light-heartedness, if not a joyful exultation, that by the mysterious guidance of a hidden providence, our race is ever advancing. History is to me a book so bitter of digestion, that when consulted by aspiring ladies, I have never dared to advise their study of it, without warning them how very painful it is. Yet history brings to me an unshaken conviction that man is no failure, but a noble success,—the noblest success in the only world open to our moral sight. The men of the present day, collectively and on the average, are far superior in virtue, as well as in knowledge, to those of old.

“Atrides ! speak not falsely, when  
Rightly to speak thou knowest.  
For us, our boast it is to be  
Far better than our fathers.”

Let those who tremble at crumbling creeds fancy that man is becoming viler and viler, that the ages of faith and goodness are past, and that we are ripening for a fiery deluge, as Noah's contemporaries for the flood. But from Miss Cobbe I claim a clear perception that the sway of reason is ever winning on passion and caprice ; that compassion wins on selfish recklessness ; forethought how crime may be hindered, wins on rude vengeance ; mild rule wins on severity ; woman wins on man ; slavery is fast dying, serfdom is doomed ; the millions obtain a consideration never before accorded to them ; not only is public war less inhuman, less reckless, less permanent in its ravages, but insurgents too are less frenzied and milder in their successes ; nor are foreigners so alienated as once. Man claims foreign men for brethren as never before. Superstition, bigotry, persecution are disowned, and are marvellously abated. All the civilized profess, however little they practise, equal morality to all races of men ; in all the strongest communities, science and literature unite many nations. The increased brilliancy of our light



discloses, alas! the blackness of our guilt as never before; but this is a necessary part of our shame, our repentance, and our purification. Our crimes and our vices cause thousands of English hearts to weep inwardly, as if they were daily afflicted by great domestic calamity. We will not dissemble nor disparage the guilt, which is our common disgrace, and, to the right-minded, the greatest of afflictions; yet it is good to be thus afflicted, and it is a part of the agency by which our nation and all the foremost nations of the world are to be elevated; yes, and we may boldly say, this ennobling process is perpetually going on, and that, with very sensible acceleration. What more (David Hume well asks) can we wish for than the gratification of a [noble] passion? and what passion can be, in a man, more noble than the longing after a better and better future for mankind? Miss Cobbe herself expects this better future; "To judge from irresistible analogy (she says), every future generation will have a livelier sympathy with the joys and sorrows of all sentient beings, such as scarcely in their tenderest hours the most loving souls of former ages experienced" (p. xx.). If human nature thus advances, why does she account man to be a consummate failure, if there be no life after death? Certainly I, for one, cannot allow that to contribute to the permanent and true welfare of the human race, of which we are organic parts, is a slight honour, an insufficient reward for a whole life of virtue; and whether from Miss Cobbe, or from anyone else, I must regard it as mischievous, delusive, and morbid, to pretend that life is a mournful dream, an empty bubble, unless it is to be followed by an immortality. If seventy years of life are worthless, so are seven millions. The multiplication of bubbles gives nothing but bubbles: it cannot change the quality. Life, in the instinctive belief even of the miserable, is worth having,—is intrinsically full of joy to every healthy

being. At least, suicides are but a fraction of the race, and Miss Cobbe will not claim them as particularly sound-minded. To the sound-minded, life is surely precious; and if it have many pangs, of body or mind, she herself does not wish it otherwise. Every great birth comes forth with severe travail; and the less we have to grieve for personally, the greater the heartache which must be borne for others. Nevertheless, every good man joyfully accepts this, nor can it disturb his serene peace. To hold that pain is an essential part of the high-training through which God's wisdom leads mankind, will not be called by Miss Cobbe "an easy-going optimism." It has long appeared to me that Virgil, in his treatment of this whole topic, showed himself a wise philosopher,—wiser than Christians and wiser than Atheists. "Pater ipse colendi Haud facilem esse viam voluit, &c., . . ." "It was Jupiter (says he) who added evil venom to the hideous serpent, and ordered the wolves to prowl and the sea to heave; and shook down the honey from the leaves, and hid away the fire, and stopped the wine that ran abroad in rills; that use by practice might, little by little, hammer out diverse arts—." To earn bread by the sweat of the brow, was, in Virgil's belief, no curse fulminated from an angry God on the human race, but a stern necessity imposed by a wise God, counselling for our exaltation, and "forbidding his realms to become benumbed in drowsiness." Miss Cobbe, in her *Intuitive Morals*, emphatically proclaims that virtue is the highest human good, which also it is the grand unchanging purpose of God to promote in his human world. She evidently has not changed from this conviction. She must refuse to admit that the physical pains suffered by the human race (however inexplicable in separate instances), do at all in a broad view affect the great argument of Theism. *Moral* evil alone can, in her view, weigh against it.

Consider then the two opposite extreme cases of

her moral argument quoted above. Take, first, a robber tribe—from the hills of India or from an Eastern archipelago—or take a family of Thugs. They were brought up from childhood with a very narrow moral horizon. Duty to their nearest kin or to their tribe, they understood; but truthfulness, or mercy, or justice, to any beyond their tribe, they no more dreamed of as duty, than an English sportsman thinks of truthfulness or justice to salmon or hares, or an ancient Greek or Roman to barbarians whom it was convenient to attack. Surely it is a great mistake to account men as wholly without virtue, or wholly miserable, because the circle within which their virtue is to be exercised is deplorably narrow. To deny the piety, or morality, or mental happiness of an ancient Hebrew king, because of his ferocity to Moabites or Ammonites, does not belong to a very deep philosophy. His conscience did not condemn him. The Thug had a still stranger and more perverse religion, coupling itself more visibly with avarice. He perhaps may be correctly described as having never had a chance of attaining a noble moral state, and at last dying under the English hangman, "*in alienation to God.*" Yet few persons, I think, will see in the fact any proof that Thugs have a *claim* on God for a future life in order to win a nobler morality. In contrast to this, take the deplorable case of a man of high and refined genius, subtle talent, poetical gift, easy and fluent eloquence—acceptable alike to the cultivated and the rude—a man reared in the highest cultivation both of the family and of the schools (such a man was well known in my youth)—who nevertheless surrendered himself to the love of wine, beer, spirits, laudanum—in short, any narcotic; and first disgraced himself beyond recovery, becoming enamoured of the coarsest company, and before long went down into the grave, a miserable victim of his debaucheries. Will Miss Cobbe say, "God is neither just nor merciful, unless

he doom this man to be saved in another and a better life?" To me the whole argument seems inadmissible; but I must leave it to the reader's judgment.

At the bottom of all seems to reside an assumption, that if God permits wrongs and "undeserved suffering" in this life, he must needs give retribution in another life. Man, she says, is bound to do justice and mercy without delay; but God, having an eternity to work in, may put it off to a distant time (p. xxxvi.). In early theology, the Divine Ruler was compared to a human king, who had his throne and his court, his errand-bearers, his armies, his judges or judge, his executioners and his prison. Minos, Æacus, Rhadamanthys, according to Ægypto-Greek notions, judged the dead, as Jesus for the Christians. Retribution for the crimes of earth was of course a paramount object in such mythology. Retribution for our sins or errors we often suffer here, and therefore may suffer also in a future world; but in neither case (in my estimate) barely because God is *just*. Miss Cobbe propounds (p. 117), as a solemn fact of the future, a mental purgatory of awful misery, and concludes its description by the words, "when it has been accomplished, the blessed justice of God will be vindicated" (p. 119). Perhaps by justice she here means nearly the same as goodness; in which case I reverently accept the thought as possible: yet I fear that the word contains with her the idea of retribution—of forensic punishment—which is notoriously the prevalent creed. "Virtue," says she (p. 28), "cannot be without reward; nor can the crimes which human tribunals fail to reach *escape retribution for ever*" (so p. 41, 42). But the analogy from human to divine punishments breaks down entirely. Indeed, no wise law-giver punishes for retribution's sake. Though, without *past* guilt, the judge has nothing to punish (for of course he dares not to touch the innocent); yet the purpose of punishment is to prevent guilt in the *future*. If the officer of law could have prevented it in the past, and did not, he

would be himself to blame. What theology will pronounce that God *was* incapable of hindering sin in the past, but *will be* capable of it in the future? or that, having been capable in the past, he neglected his duty, but he will be more attentive in the future? To put a chasm and a convulsion between his present and his future action, seems to me both morally and intellectually inadmissible. The argument that he can delay punishment, because he has an eternity to work in, is singularly weak, as if his convenience were the matter in question; but we have to consider what is equitable and beneficial to his frail creatures. Elsewhere I have used a comparison, which I venture here to reproduce, of punishments by a schoolmaster. These should be applied day by day, to keep the boys from offence. The quicker the punishment follows the offence, the more effective it is as a preventive: hereby it is kept light—mere chidings may suffice for good discipline. But if the master were to reserve all punishment to the year's end, and meanwhile only threaten and warn, the volatile temper of children, unable to look far forward, would make his warnings vain. Impunity would overthrow all discipline, and lead on into actual crime. Then we should severely blame the master, and almost exculpate the children. Now, if we are to reason morally concerning the divine action, we cannot believe him to leave the guilty unpunished in the present world, and then to reserve severe punishments for them in the distant unknown hereafter; nay, without even public intelligible warning of a future tribunal; though, indeed, to men as frail and short-sighted as children, no such warning could be of avail. For this reason, all idea of future retribution, as such, seems to me quite untenable in the present stage of knowledge. Such a Theodice as Leibnitz made an axiom, has no plausibility. The punishment of guilt Miss Cobbe regards as entirely purifying, remedial, and beneficial. Good. But for the innocent, and for those guilty ones whose

guilt is their misfortune, she intensely demands redress of wrongs. "A tortured slave, a degraded woman, *must* be immortal; for God's creature could not have been made for torture and pollution" (p. 49). It would be unjust in the Creator (she alleges, p. xxxvii.) to create a being "who endured on the whole more misery than he enjoyed happiness." An infant which is born sickly, and, after lingering in undeserved pain (p. xli.), dies without enjoying life, in her estimate is injured by its Creator unless it has hereafter a balance of happiness—a dialect more like to Bentham than we might expect from her. Of course animals have never "deserved" the torments which cruel men inflict on them: must not a just God give them future redress? It is almost necessary for her, and she seems not averse, to adopt from Bishop Butler the immortality of dead animals. I will only here say, that such a theory seems to break down with its own weight. The essence of justice (she says, p. 42) is, that "*no one* being shall suffer more than he has deserved, or undergo the penalty of another's guilt." What moral beings have "deserved" is hard to know; that we must suffer, one for and from another, is involved in the unity of our race, but not as a forensic penalty.

What perhaps shocks me most, is the instability of faith to which Miss Cobbe's logic would lead us. After much discussion, she brings out the flat avowal, as the net result (p. 48)—"Either man is immortal, or God is *not just*." The whole passage seems to glance at what I have myself written: my kind friend evidently hopes to lead me forward to her more elevated position, while, alas! she repels me. She seems quite to forget how limited is our knowledge of the possible and the impossible; and that it is by no means *certainly* beyond the sphere of external science to establish that the re-existence of an individual man, whose body has crumbled to dust, is a physical contradiction. Wherein IDENTITY consists, no one seems able to say. We know

that our minds and souls were either born with our bodies ; or, if with Plato we say they pre-existed, their previous existence was nothing to us. I cannot shut my eyes to the possibility of its being hereafter accepted as a physical and metaphysical certainty, that a disembodied soul of man is a monstrous idea, against nature, intrinsically absurd, and incapable of being identified with a man who has lived in organic flesh. *If* this were proved to me beyond dispute, should I then conclude (or would my friend draw the inference) therefore God is unjust ? Miss Cobbe herself seems nearly convinced that memory has been scientifically proved to depend on "the brain-tablet" (pp. 74-77). What would future existence be to any of us, if it cut away all the memory of the present world ? I confess, if my confidence that God is just, depended on the certainty that man is immortal, while the latter opinion is *possibly* disprovable by science, I could have no firm faith in the attributes of God at all. Miss Cobbe means to make faith in God primary, and a belief of man's immortal life secondary (p. xiii.). Most rightly ; but in fact her proposed dilemma overthrows faith in God, if immortality be disproved. This I hold to be a very grave mischief. We censure those preachers who assert that all moral law rests on supernatural evidence, on miracles, on an infallible Bible, and that whoever disbelieves miracles may as well be immoral as moral. We say that such preachers lay a trap for men's feet, and prepare for them a career of profligacy so soon as they unlearn superstitions. But is not Miss Cobbe laying a net for our feet, a dilemma to cast us into black darkness of religious sentiment, if ever the progress of external science happen to prove (which, for anything which she or I know, *may* happen) that identity is absolutely irrecoverable when the vital organs are all dissolved ? If this were established to-morrow, my cheerful, happy faith in God would remain undisturbed. I cannot look with terror on science, but believe that all truth

is good for us. That God works under strict conditions, all thoughtful persons know, who ascribe wisdom to him. Mr J. S. Mill, it seems, imagined religious people to be unaware of this, and thinks to refute them, when he is saying, coarsely indeed, yet in substance the same, as they say reverently; but this merely shows how little intercourse he ever held with any high religious mind. But only the fanatical can insist that reverence for God shall depend on his doing for us things intrinsically impossible. Miss Cobbe seems anxious to possess us with an agonizing despair concerning this present world, if there be not an immortality awaiting us. She fancies that nothing but clear light or total darkness is possible: any intermediate position she calls "playing fast and loose with our beliefs in immortality" (p. xi.). But between certain knowledge that a proposition is true and certain knowledge that it is false, there must very often (and oftenest in the highest inquiries) be an intermediate state of great uncertainty; and if this be inevitable to our present condition, it must be accepted as best for us by all who revere God. Spasmodic discontent with inevitable ignorance, is a morbid state. It is not our task to govern the world. As we are not "equal to eternal cares," how can we wisely undertake to decide what conduct is *required* from the divine justice? It is astonishing to me that a deeply pious mind can enter on such an argument. Never did I imagine that on a religious question I should find myself on the side of Mr J. S. Mill, and against Miss Cobbe: but so it seems now to turn out. Sadly and scornfully she rejects his declaration that the benefit of the doctrine of immortality "consists less in any specific hope than in the enlargement of the scale of the feelings." Specific hope!—I never had any, and I am convinced that very few people have; but the *intellectual conception* of a life after death I feel to be enlarging and ennobling, though incapable of being fixed. Mr Mill,



I think, does not exhort us to cultivate delusions concerning it: he only insists that immortality is not (cannot be) a proved and certain truth. That no proof has hitherto been attained available for all spiritual minds, appears to me an undeniable certainty. Not the less is it possible, that always to discuss the topic and never settle it, enlarges the human sentiment.

No argument seems to me less weighty than that favourite one, "I could not have a day's happiness, unless I believed I should meet my babe, or my husband, or my sister, in Paradise: therefore there must be a Paradise." This is certainly very deep in Miss Cobbe, who indicates that she was brought to a belief in immortality by the death of one deeply beloved. Deep grief has its values,—grief for the loss of friends, as well as grief of other kinds: I certainly do not plead for heartlessness or apathy. But as, when a revered parent departs in very full age, grief is milder and soon fades into sweet and sacred remembrance, so too ought it surely to be with *every* loss, though for a while acuter. But to nourish perpetual grief, to refuse every consolation but a belief in immortality,—vowing to be miserable for life, if we cannot attain this conviction,—presents itself to me as emphatically morbid.

With the educated, the whole idea of God's government of the world is essentially changed, since the time that Christianity became prevalent. Jew and Christian, Manichæan and Arab, Saxon and Celt, so far as they believed in any divine government at all, supposed it to be carried on by direct intervention. Jesus himself (if we believe his biographer), announced the doctrine: "If I pray to my Father, he will presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." While this angelic theory was current, all the reasonings concerning divine rule were different from what we can now accept. At present neither of our Protestant Archbishops, nor yet Archbishop Manning, expects

divine aid for the church through the swords of angels. We hold universally, that divine influence follows subtler paths for working its designs; a procedure for which there must be profound *reasons*. Some reasons we understand, but our knowledge must ever remain mutilated and very partial. If cruel and undeserved torture had been prevented, that of course would be the thing to rejoice us; that it has *not* been prevented, startles us dreadfully; but after it has been permitted, it cannot be undone. If it be an imputation on the Divine Justice, let it have what weight it may. To raise animals or men from the dead, and give them a balance of happiness as a late compensation for injustice, does not exalt my idea of the divine rule; and for man to devise this method of divine compensation for injuries, which, according to our barbarian reasoning, God *ought* to have prevented, strikes me as reasoning equally barbarian.

This leads to a matter already touched on,—the assumption that God's future rule is to differ from his past rule. If theology could be a web spun entirely out of the head and heart, we might abide by our own theories of divine rule, unmolested by material science. But in fact it is from the outer world, reasoned on by us, that the first suggestion of a World Spirit comes, and from our own spirits we reason out *some* of the attributes of that Spirit from whom is our origin. Then we are bound to check our notions by observed facts. We cannot disregard external attestations: then we discover to our dismay that the divine rule is wonderfully, nay, terribly, different from what we expected. Surely then humility should conclude; "We are somewhere in mistake: God is wiser and better than we, and our fancies were folly." How then can we add, "Because he has not done *now* what we thought he ought to do, we are quite sure he will do it *hereafter*, else he would not be just." I had fancied that only an infantine philosophy could expect God's future rule to differ from his past; that is, a

different law of justice to rule in a future (or in an unseen), world, from that which exists in the seen and known world. To argue: "This present world is terribly bad, *therefore* there is an unseen world in which everything is good; or if not, then God is unjust," appears to me to be planting the germ of Atheism, and not at all to attain the wisdom, or even the humility, of modern science. I cannot consent to condemn as *bad* the only world of God which I surely know. There is evil in it which appals us, and evil against which we are bound all our lives to struggle; but it is not, therefore, simply bad, and requiring a supplementary world to be believed in, before we will praise God for the present world. To say so, is to throw contumely on all the religion of the early Hebrews. Yet with its abundant infantine errors, it originated for us that inward piety, which Miss Cobbe with me values as life; a piety, which according to her, if I rightly understand her logic, was with them groundless, because they did not believe in immortality.

But again, the future world which Christians imagine (and apparently Miss Cobbe also), is to have *no* evil in it. Whether this mean physical or moral evil, in both cases it seems to me incredible. Beings which have no bodies cannot have bodily pain; yet if we imagine a community of personalities without *wants*, none seem to have duties: something of want and possible pain appears even desirable. And if there be duties (without which we are not moral beings) finite creatures must always make partial failures and be liable to error, wrong-doing, sin; and virtue, which in a finite being cannot be divinely perfect, must always need effort, sometimes even struggle, to rise. Is it credible, that our Creator, who put us in this world for present duty, should intend us to hammer out for ourselves the image of an unrevealed world, and plant this in the front of our adoration of him, as something to be believed as firmly as his existence and goodness? I confess, nothing has made

me so sympathize with the Secularists, as reading this book of Miss Cobbe. A future life which can only be conceived most dimly, hidden away in the background and reverentially contemplated as possible, acts on us profoundly, like gazing into nightly darkness, and seeing the mysterious infinite universe. It acts much on the sentiment, little on the intellect; it does not use up the mind by fruitless activity, nor has it any influence at all for evil. As for its reasonableness, even so severe a reasoner as J. S. Mill does not censure, and rather commends it. But a doctrine of immortality, thrust into the front of religion, intruded upon us as a condition without which we may not believe God to be just, distorts all proportions and perspective, and perniciously carries minds into endless argumentation hostile to tranquil serene reverence. Thereby it defeats the end which my very devout friend sincerely proposes to herself.

I more than ever doubt, whether religious thought concerning these particular matters has changed since the age of Cicero. In his dialogues are found substantially all that our materialists can now urge against a divine rule. It has often occurred to me, that the Oriental doctrine of *the stubbornness of matter* was perhaps only their mode of stating, that God works *under conditions*,—partially known to us. Side by side with Atheism or Pantheism, were men, like Cleanthes, who held to the belief of a perfect and just God. The Stoics and Marcus Aurelius or Epictetus did not need the belief of future existence (though like Socrates many of them half believed it), to maintain that virtue was the chief good, and that this remained true even to a martyr dying on the rack. If Miss Cobbe, assuming the character of a Satanic tempter, had put to Thræsea her question, "Why is it *worth while* for you to persevere in virtue, when you are in five or ten minutes to be annihilated?" he would have replied, "simply because virtue is the chief good;" and I think she would applaud.

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