FREE-THOUGHT

AND

TRUE-THOUGHT

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FREE-THOUGHT

AND

TRUE-THOUGHT

A CONTRIBUTION TO AN EXISTING ARGUMENT

BY

F. REGINALD STATHAM

AUTHOR OF
"FROM OLD TO NEW," "SOCIAL GROWTHS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," ETC., ETC.

"*Liberté! Liberté! En toutes choses justice, et ce sera assez de Liberté!*"—JOUBERT

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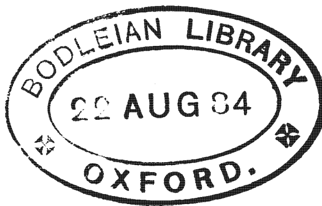

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To MATTHEW ARNOLD, Esq., D.C.L.

My dear Mr. Arnold,

Some few years ago you were kind enough to express your appreciation of some part of the following chapters, which I had forwarded to you in a pamphlet form.

Now that the plan, then fragmentary, is complete, I shall esteem it a privilege to be allowed to recall that appreciation by these few lines.

Yours very sincerely,

F. REGINALD STATHAM.

May, 1884.

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PREFACE.

A FEW words are, perhaps, necessary to explain the circumstances under which this volume is published. In 1871 the author accepted an invitation to become the "pastor," if such a term may be used, to a "free-thought" congregation in Edinburgh which had a somewhat characteristic history. Some few years previously, the Rev. James Cranbrook, the minister of a Congregational Church in Edinburgh, and a man of singular culture and independence, got into a dispute with his congregation by reason of the presumed unorthodoxy of his views on certain subjects. Mr. Cranbrook declined to sacrifice his mental independence, and, rather than endure the attempt to interfere with him, resigned his charge, and, accompanied by a large portion of his former flock, opened a series of services in a hired building. The

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movement attracted a good deal of attention both in Scotland and England; and Mr. Cranbrook received a large amount of support from leading men of science, including Professor Huxley, who delivered one of the best-known of his "Lay Sermons" to Mr. Cranbrook's new congregation. It happened to Mr. Cranbrook, however, as it would probably happen to any other conscientious man who might be similarly situated. Once loosed from his old moorings, he was driven by a spirit of criticism further and further away from them, till he reached a point to which very few of his former adherents cared to follow him. His congregation fell away week by week, ill health intervened, and he died some two years after his resignation of his original charge.

An effort was made to carry the movement on, and for some little time Mr. Page, who is now, I believe, Professor of Geology in Durham University, undertook the duties connected with the post. Subsequently, through the mediumship of mutual friends, I received an invitation to carry on the work. My conditions, which were accepted, were those of perfect voluntaryism and complete intellectual independence—conditions which may seem quixotic, but of

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which I had, on my side, no reason to complain. My congregation consisted mostly of persons who had abjured, or who believed themselves to have abjured, all existing creeds, and who were in search of some new basis for their morality. Some attempt in this direction was expressed by two volumes of lectures which were published in 1872. I was not long, however, in finding out that the mental position of the majority of my usual audience was much more one of negation of old beliefs than of a desire to formulate new ones. Considering the matter over some length of time, it seemed to me at last that such a position was one more likely to be attended with moral injury than intellectual advantage, and that I had no right to assist or take part in keeping such a state of things alive. I resigned my post, therefore, under such conditions as I believe left no doubt as to my reasons for doing so; my final advice to my congregation being that they should go back to the Churches they had left, and endeavour to give their old beliefs a new trial.

This volume, therefore, may be regarded as an expression of the conclusions arrived at through a close practical contact, extending over some two

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years, with an attempt to formulate a "free-thought" religion. Some portions of the work, particularly the chapter on "The Dangers of Free-Thought," were published in the form of separate lectures as long ago as 1873, while some parts of the first chapter appeared as a paper contributed to the *Theological Review*, in 1876.

It has been a question in the author's mind whether it was advisable to retain the original references to a certain series of "free-thought" pamphlets which perhaps have not now so great a circulation as they had some few years back. On the whole, however, he has thought it best to retain these references, believing that the arguments and views which those pamphlets contained and expressed are still such as will most readily occur to and be adopted by minds impatient of what they hold to be the incredibilities and inconsistencies of orthodox beliefs.

February, 1884.

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PART I.

RETROSPECTIVE.

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FREE-THOUGHT

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CHAPTER I.

THE CASE STATED.

IN the columns of a once well-known but now defunct weekly newspaper, whose special aim it was to support the extremest Radical views, there appeared not very long ago the following advertisement:—

> "FREE-THOUGHT EDUCATION.—A parent is desirous of hearing of some first-class Boarding School where the Bible is treated as a human book, where the ceremony of church-going is dispensed with, and where an effort is made to found morality upon a rational basis."

Now whereas, in the mere title of the present volume, "free-thought" and "true-thought" have been placed in a species of contradistinction to each other, it is not unreasonable to expect from the "free-thinker" some such protestation as this—

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"We do think truly, and it is because we have thought truly that we have become free; we protest that the world has been living for centuries in dreams of divinity and metaphysics which were, perhaps, well suited to its childhood, but which it befits us, as living in the age of the world's manhood, to put from us as fruitless deceits; we hold in our hands truths of science experimentally verifiable, which are to us a veritable new revelation, and which contradict to the uttermost those theories which we have been taught as truths. We, the 'free-thinkers,' are pre-eminently the true-thinkers, and it is the truth that has made us free."

A great part of all this may for the moment be granted; only let it be noticed what is the main support of the "free-thinker" in this his position. One of the writers in a tolerably well-known series of "free-thought" publications, has, in a pamphlet discussing the relationship of the Book of Common Prayer to the present age, expressed himself thus—*

"The present age is an age of wonderful improvement in art, science, and literature. . . . Religion cannot remain stationary while every other kind of knowledge is progressive. . . . Considering, then, how vastly our views of nature and of life have been enlarged by the discoveries of modern science, it is no wonder that the Book of Common Prayer is now found to be behind the age."

Without stopping to remark on the somewhat doubtful inference contained in this passage, to the effect that "religion is a kind of knowledge," it is enough to say that this argument constitutes the

* "The Prayer-book adapted to the Age." By W. Jevons. Published by Thomas Scott, Upper Norwood.

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great battering-ram of the army of "free-thinkers;" the only difference of opinion being a difference with regard to the extent to which it is to be employed; some, with the writer quoted above, merely assaulting the outworks of the besieged city, others seeking to raze it entirely to the ground. That this, however, is the argument almost exclusively employed, every one knows, both those who use it and those against whom it is used. The only mistake is that its use is not carried far enough. For it must be clear to every logical mind that, if scientific discovery is once allowed to exercise itself on the Book of Common Prayer, there is no point at which, in respect of religious matters, it can consistently stop until the very root of the matter is reached. For instance, a certain amount of astronomical knowledge induced the author of this pamphlet on the Book of Common Prayer to include such sentences as these in a scheme for an improved Liturgy—

> "Worthy art thou, O God, of our profoundest veneration; for by thee it was that we were called into existence, and made inhabitants of this planetary world which is so richly fraught with tokens of thy providence. It was thy almighty power that launched it in its orbit, and made it tributary to that stupendous orb which faintly reflects thy glory."

Now, though this is an improvement which might have been creditable to and in harmony with the age of Copernicus, it can scarcely be said to be in

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harmony with the present age. For clearly a Liturgy which is really to harmonize with the best-supported astronomical theories of the present age must take cognizance of the nebular hypothesis, and whether this hypothesis leaves any room for an *à priori* argument in favour of a Liturgy at all is a consideration which may be left to those who have a mind for it.

The scientific argument, as has been said, is, with this writer and many others on the same side, not carried far enough; the "free-thinker," if he once begins to look to modern science for his support, cannot consistently or safely stop till he rests upon that "solid basis" of evolution which is regarded by religious persons as a thing only worthy of detestation. If anything is to be tested by that *à posteriori* system of reasoning which is generally described as scientific, then everything must be so tested. The importance of recognizing this necessity is so great, that it might almost be said that no one has a right to criticize theology from a scientific point of view, unless he is prepared to go this length—to come down to the "solid basis" of evolution and take the consequences; for any halt made at an intermediate position will only involve him in hopeless confusion, and leave him suspended between two worlds of philosophy, to neither of which he belongs.

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And hence the implied recommendation to the "free-thinker" to cease talking about "free-thought," if only for his own sake, and to seek rather after thought which is true.

Now, of course, in such a recommendation as this it is by no means intended to be implied that there is any system of thinking which can lead to a truth which is more than relative. What is meant is rather this—that the "free-thinker," having made use of scientific discovery and the scientific method of reasoning in his first attacks upon religion, is clearly bound to follow out that method to the utmost; to be not content with a half-and-half acceptance of it, but to make all his propositions conformable thereto, and thus make them true from the positive point of view. The apprehension so frequently expressed in religious circles, that, if once the test of scientific analysis is allowed in matters of religion, there is no point short of Atheism at which the inquirer can stop, is, in a sense, exceedingly well grounded. The ordinary man of business (and the whole British population consists mostly of such) must either believe in the Church traditions and commit himself into the hands of the theologians, of one sect or another, who expound them, or he must, if he be really in earnest, and have a regard for logic, go on till he finds his feet resting on that "solid basis" of evolution already alluded to;

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a basis which, like the highway in the "Pilgrim's Progress," is safe only for those for whom it is safe. He may begin, like the Liturgical reformer already quoted, with thinking it no harm to bring the Copernican system into the Prayer-book ; or, in the following of the late Dr. Colenso, he may take exception to the arithmetic of the Pentateuch ; he may perhaps go a little further, and think it no harm, with a writer more socially distinguished, to leave himself no standing ground except the impregnable fortress of "faith in God." But here, even, he is not safe ; he will find the same spirit which began by tempting him to question the probability of a miracle, or to assert the superiority of the Copernican system of astronomy over the Ptolemaic, still haunting him and persecuting him with the same questions in substance, if altered slightly in form. He will find his supposed impregnable fortress very quickly vanishing away under the repeated failures to answer satisfactorily the insidious queries, "What is faith? What is God?" And the more really sincere he is, the sooner will he be compelled to evacuate that fortress, and to come forth and lie down desolate amid the dry bones of utter materialism, under the dominion of the unclean spirits of Darwin and of Strauss, and of all things unutterable and abominable.

It might be sincerely said to him, then, Do not

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take the first step; but, unfortunately, so many have taken the first step, and so many have, owing to the pressure of well-meant but ill-grounded opposition, been persuaded into thinking it to be a virtue to take that first step, and a good many steps beyond it, that it is tolerably certain there must be a good many either already at the bottom of the pit, or at any rate but a little distance therefrom. But as it is their mistake, so it is also their misfortune, that they have not carried the process far enough; they have not discovered the way out at the further side of the slough; and that either because they have not the power to see it, or because they prefer to stay where they are. Pressed down by the weight of that scientific Calvinism which is so thoroughly repudiated by all really great scientific minds; doubting, because they are told that all their mental actions can be associated with changes of matter, whether they have any minds or thoughts at all; it is extremely probable that they may come to fulfil the fate predicted for the Reprobate in the Seventeenth Article—"fall into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation." And therefore, in the abstract, entire sympathy might be accorded to those orthodox preachers who warn their flocks against the first steps in "infidelity," as the phrase is. But, knowing that practically such warnings are of no

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avail, and that the tendency towards a scientific analysis of religion is the sign of a "time-wave" which nothing can resist, it may be better advised to say to the "free-thinker," in his own interest and (as will perhaps be seen) in the interest of religion also—

"Do not stand pottering with questions about miracles and inspiration and so on; rather accept the whole scientific position boldly, and save yourself from the demoralizing consequences of successive defeats. Make up your mind that Biblical science is totally inaccurate; that the Biblical histories are to all intents and purposes fictional; that the existence of a personal God is an unverifiable proposition; that religious doctrines are merely the shadows of man's own nature cast upon the uncertainties around him; that thought is the collateral of changes in matter; that Darwinism is substantially true, and evolution the great principle of the whole universe. Then you will really be adopting a true system of thinking (for the truth of a system of thinking is shown in its consistency), and will be in a fair way towards a solution of your religious difficulties."

Postponing for a few moments the consideration of the means by which that solution can be brought about, it will be worth while to dwell briefly on one or two other requisites of a true system of thinking, besides its consistency with itself. In the first place, it must recognize its own limits; recognize the fact (that is to say) that there is an abyss of fathomless conjecture eternally encircling all our knowledge. Were other proof wanting, this fact of the limitation of human thought, of its power to arrive only at a relative, and never at an absolute, truth, is evidenced

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by the manner in which all theories of life or morality that assert an absolute value for themselves are ultimately rejected as untrue—as out of harmony with that vast mass of ordinary human experiences upon which the most general of human convictions are based. *Fas est ab hoste doceri;* Calvinism is a case in point. Now, although there is much in some parts of the Calvinistic scheme of theology to recommend it at any time to minds of a certain class, and although its main points had been recognized in the Christian Church many centuries before the time of Calvin; yet it can hardly be doubted that it gained its hold upon the Europe of the sixteenth century chiefly through the doctrine of Free Grace, the previously prevailing abuse of the idea of purchaseable salvation having predisposed the minds of great numbers towards a contrary extreme. And had this doctrine been allowed to remain in a vague and general shape, no harm would have resulted. There was, and is still, much in the doctrine itself to recommend it, for it is associated with that feeling of beneficent magnanimity which is, perhaps, one of the noblest of human qualities. Unfortunately, however, owing to the nature of other then universally received doctrines with which it was bound up, this very doctrine, which was the strength of the Lutheran Reformation, has been the ruin of Calvinism. For,

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being so much the strength of that Reformation as it was, it was dwelt on until, from being regarded as a highly probable and edifying conjecture, it was viewed as if it were an absolute truth; and with these results. The Reformed Churches clearly could not afford to be behind the Catholic Church in their assertions of the Omniscience and Omnipotence of God, and Free Grace in consequence very rapidly became, by a most inexorable logic, Irresistible Grace, with all its concomitants. For it was plain to those of the sixteenth century, as it must be to us, that if salvation by Free Grace is dependent on a God Omnipotent and Omniscient, those who are to be saved will be saved, no matter what they may do, and those who are to be lost will be lost, no matter what they can do. It is to this ultimate proposition, as every one knows, that Calvinism comes round; a proposition so repugnant to the human sense of justice that, except under the pressure of semi-political persecution, Calvinism, in its strict sense, has always been rejected. And yet it is not the doctrine at the root of it, the eminently beautiful doctrine of Free Grace, that has led to this rejection; nor is it a want of logical consistency in the system itself, for the system is most cruelly logical. Calvinism has been rejected because the doctrine on which it was built, not being accepted as conjectural only but as absolute, brought it into violent collision

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with the vast mass of ordinary human experiences; and a theological escape has only been made out of Calvinism, to the great advantage of European religion in general, by denying the absoluteness of either this premiss or of some other; by acknowledging, in fact, with the more moderate of the sixteenth-century Reformers, that the relationship of the Divine to the Human is not a thing which is capable of an exact logical definition, being beyond the limits of human thought.

Now, it must to most minds be tolerably clear that this condition of true-thinking, the neglect of which has committed Calvinism to a self-contradiction, must be kept in view in respect of any system of thinking whatsoever; the fact must be recognized that, look from what point we will, there are things which cannot be known, and which will elude the most ingenious applications of logical machinery. It makes no difference whether the metaphysical or the positive system of thinking is adopted; in the one case the difficulty is at the beginning, in the other it is at the end of the chain. If all other arguments were wanting, the existence of the eternal dispute about the "Ego" and the "Non-ego" should be a sufficient argument to disciples of the metaphysical school; while as regards those of the positive school, it should be only

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necessary to remind them of the division of Mr. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles" into the two sections of the "Knowable" and the "Unknowable." For if the philosopher of Evolution recognizes a limit to thought, the "free-thinker" is bound to follow him.

Again, thought that is to be accounted true must recognize its proper relationships—must recognize the fact that, upon whatever object thought may be exercised, there are certain other objects which connect themselves with it more naturally and readily than others, and to the field of which the mental vision must be more or less confined, if we are to get any clear impression at all. The commonest experience shows that objects are liable to vary their apparent magnitude and importance according to the relationship in which they stand to any single object upon which thought may be centred; and it would seem absurd to refer to this fact, a fact so constantly recognized in common custom and by common sense, were it not that there is so great a tendency among "free-thinkers," and many of their opponents also, to ignore it. Thus the Liturgical reformer before alluded to may be found holding a public recognition of the Copernican system to be essential to religion; or the tutor of a college asserting that "the discoveries of science are throwing much light on the Bible, and that reason and revela-

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tion are essentially the same thing." Now, it is no doubt very true that a man who in these days refused to believe in the Copernican system might well be suspected of some interested motives that seriously impeded his progress along the path of uprightness; and it is also no doubt true that there is a certain remote connection between (say) deep-sea dredging and the Book of Isaiah. Only, as it happens, such relationships are so devoid of self-evident coherency that they tend rather to confusion than otherwise; and it has been found, by long experience, more convenient to speak of these things as though they were essentially different—to make no mention of Copernicus in the Prayer-book, and to insist that, for all practical purposes, reason and revelation are by no means the same thing. And it must be clear that unless we were in the habit of thus parcelling out into convenient groups the objects that may at one time or another engage our thoughts, we should involve ourselves in the most hopeless confusion. Particularly is this the case when the same object suggests, as is the case with almost all objects, different lines of thought, any one of which may be pursued according to choice or habit. For instance, if an artist and a student of molecular physics were to stand side by side in front of the same picture, a certain process of thought would be awakened by

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that picture in the minds of both; but while the artist would be engaged in regarding the feelings it produced in him as a work of art, the other would be more naturally engaged in reflections upon the molecular composition of the colours it contained. Nor are these things to be at any time confounded; they appeal to and engage entirely distinct lines of thought, diverging from each other so much that, though they both alike end in mere conjecture, they are seldom found included in the possibilities of one and the same mind. A picture must be thought of as a picture—must be thought of in connection with those things which are most nearly related to it in common experience; and the same rule applies also to the molecular composition of colour. To attempt to make the two lines of thought coincide would be to falsify them both, and to lose sight of a great deal of truth which might otherwise be reached. What does it matter to the artist if Helmholtz has declared a blue eye to be a turbid medium? It matters nothing to him at all; he has to do with eyes as part of his means of expressing the human emotion he is dealing with, and not all the gallipots in all the laboratories in Europe can interfere with him; while, on the other hand, artistic considerations will only confuse and hinder the student of molecular physics. To paraphrase a sentence of a well-known

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writer, "it is thus found that there is truth of art and truth of physics; and that truth of physics cannot become truth of art until it is made artistic."

Bearing in mind these two conditions of true-thinking—conditions which are always practically recognized whenever emotion is not enlisted upon the side of any argument—it will not be difficult to understand why the state of mind that leads so many persons to call themselves "free-thinkers" is almost certain to hinder them from becoming true-thinkers. For the very word "free-thought" includes a species of boast—the boast that the person practising it has escaped from the chains and fetters which bind so many of his brethren. In any case, the boast is a most dangerous one; for it must almost of necessity carry with it the notion that there is an absolute distinction of false and true between former and present beliefs; and just as much as the former are regarded as absolutely false, the present will be regarded as absolutely true, thus once more bringing on the danger of logical contradiction. Nor is this all; for it is pretty certain that when once a particular belief is regarded as possessed of absolute truth, attempts will be made to apply it universally and without any regard to those proper and natural relationships of thought which are so necessary to be observed. Who does not know how completely a single fixed idea may give to every other mental

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impression an entirely false interpretation? The thing happens every day, with every class of persons and in every department of life: how else should scandal be circulated, or the leading articles in daily newspapers be written?

For his own sake, then, and for the sake (as will have to be shown) of religion also, the "free-thinker" might well be invited to be thoroughly consistent—to leave off his assaults upon Liturgies and his other such inglorious performances, and come down boldly to the "solid basis" prepared for him by that which he calls (and to a great extent rightly) the intellectual progress of the age. And then, when he is once on that "solid basis," it will not be unfair to invite him to contemplate the facts of religion—these beliefs which he rejects as superstitious, these books which he denounces as impostures, these religious organizations which he asserts are so tyrannical, this European consent to give glory to the name of one man who sprang, if he ever lived at all, from an Asiatic stock; and then to ask him to account for these things. How is it, he might be asked—how is it, and why is it, that the worship of Christ has survived so many political changes and so much ecclesiastical corruption? Why is it that the Bible has been and is so valuable to countless numbers of earnest and striving men and women, that they have seen and still see nothing in-

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congruous in regarding it as a book peculiarly inspired? Why have these beliefs in the power of prayer, in immortality, in a Supreme moral government, prevailed so much in the past; and why are they regarded as so precious in the present? Or why has European society for centuries reserved one day out of seven more or less for religious purposes; and why have there existed, and why do there still exist, specially organized religious bodies? These things are accounted for by a large section of mankind in a manner which you, the "free-thinker," reject; how do you account for them? For certainly you have no right to cast away a theory that has been held for certain centuries unless you have some other theory, at least equally probable, to suggest. Take up the tabernacle of Spencer and the star of your god Darwin (and it is to be hoped that your gods are at least as respectable as these); ask counsel of these, if you have a mind to make good your position, and utter the words which they shall put in your mouth.

How the late Mr. Darwin answered this question, or at any rate a parallel question, is sufficiently well known; and it might be worth the while of a "free-thinker" in the liturgy-assailing stage of development to consider through what patient labour and against what powerful opposition the new theory as to the origin of species has been able to assert itself at

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all. Species not being specially created, how then? And it may be considered certain that, unless Mr. Darwin had been in possession of facts more than amply sufficient to support his theory, he would not have made it public, or, having made it public, would have been content to be burnt or otherwise maltreated as a zoological heretic. Species not being created, they have been gradually developed; in the struggle for existence those individuals which could best sustain themselves survived beyond the others, grew stronger, and gave birth to succeeding generations in which those slight variations and peculiarities which gave themselves an advantage were confirmed more and more. This is the only other theory which can consistently hold its own against the theory of special creations; and as the "free-thinker" is bound to repudiate the theory of special creations, he must perforce, in respect of zoological matters at least, accept Mr. Darwin's theory. But this is not all. One part of the theory of development once accepted, all the rest must be accepted also. Mind has been developed; language has been developed; creeds, customs, morals, have all been developed in like manner. No more than any zoological species has been divinely created has any religion been divinely appointed; it survives and exists along with varying customs and beliefs, because it and they were the fittest to survive and

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exist under certain combinations of circumstances. And here the "free-thinker" may be suddenly astonished to find that, at the extreme limits of a journey away from reverence for the popular religion, he feels bound to treat that religion with more respect, possibly, than ever he treated it with before. For however much one holding the old-fashioned doctrine of divine appointment might be tempted, in the contemplation of religious matters, to think that the Divine Appointer had in some instances made a mistake, the consistent "free-thinker"—the man who thinks truly from the scientific standpoint—is, on the other hand, inexorably bound down to the conclusion that these things have existed by reason of their fitness; and if he believes, as he cannot well help believing, in the progress of human nature in Europe from a lower to a higher type during eighteen centuries, then he must believe, and cannot help believing, that the religious creeds which have existed in Europe from time to time have been connected in some way or other with the scheme of European progress, and that those articles of belief which are most universal and perennial are of such a nature that progress could not have been accomplished without them. For it is not except with the strictest economy of forces that such progress is accomplished; not without either the entire elimination, or the reduction to a mere rudiment,

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of every organ as regards physical progress, of every custom as regards social progress, of every emotion and aspiration as regards moral progress, which is not necessitated by the gradually changing conditions, internal and external, under which progress takes place.

Now, here is a conclusion, if it is accepted (and clearly, whoever else may dislike it, the disciple of evolution is bound to accept it), of the greatest importance. These creeds and religious organizations and religious ordinances have been useful and necessary to the cause of human progress; they still, even though in slightly modified forms, obtain a wide acceptance in Europe. They have not yet, as it would seem, been eliminated; they have not yet become merely rudimentary in their relationship to society; so far, indeed, is this from being the case, that within the last fifty years there has occurred in Great Britain a religious revival which is still growing, and which in some ways seems to threaten the establishment of a religious ascendency over all other interests. These are facts which the scientific thinker, however much he may deplore them, cannot venture to ignore. The more, indeed, he is disposed to congratulate himself on the general progress of human nature towards a higher type during eighteen centuries of European history, the more is he

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compelled to admit the importance and usefulness of those but slightly differing forms of religion which have taken so prominent a place in that history. Even if he is disposed to regard the modern return of Christianity towards its mediæval type as the sign of a certain amount of retrogression, still (unless he wishes to commit the terrible sin against scientific reasoning of supposing an effect to exist without an efficient cause) he must admit it to be probable that there are still contained in human nature, in a very large proportion, the same qualities which gave rise to religious creeds, ordinances, and organizations in the past, and which may well bring about, whether he wishes it or not, a continuance of such creeds, ordinances, and organizations in the future. For here, it will be observed, another most vital point of the evolutionist's creed is involved. Changes, he holds, though continually taking place, take place but by slow and almost imperceptible degrees; the advance to a new stage of existence by anything like a sudden or immediate leap is a possibility which, if to any extent admitted, falsifies in its every aspect the evolutionary scheme. It must be held, therefore, as probable that religious creeds which have been useful to progress during the past, and which still evidently receive a powerful justification from human nature in the present, will exist (in slightly modified forms, no

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doubt) and be found necessary to further progress in the future. There is one supposition certainly, and only one, on which we could be entitled to hold a contrary opinion ; and that is the supposition that the Fifth Monarchy has been set up, the Millennium begun, and that all things have, at a bound, been made subject to new laws. This, however, is not a supposition which will much recommend itself to the mind of the "free-thinker."

Why, then, and in what manner have the religious creeds and organizations of past European history tended to promote progress towards a higher type of human nature? Why, and in what manner (supposing the idea of a Millennium to be given up) will they be serviceable towards the same end in the future? It is agreeable to the modern theory of evolution to suppose that the advancement of the human type must be aimed at through the endeavour of each individual to improve himself; to improve himself, of course, in his completeness and in respect of all his sides, but especially, if conduct be "three-fourths of life" (as we have all been led to admit that it is), in respect of his conduct—his relationships towards his own best self and towards those by whom he is surrounded, and to whose happiness or misery his conduct will conduce. And here the following concurrent testimony from the lips of Professor Huxley,

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ought to appeal in the strongest possible manner to those who are in these pages specially addressed. Professor Huxley, in his well-known Essay on "The Physical Basis of Life," remarks—

> "We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was when he entered it. To do this effectually, it is necessary to be fully possessed of only two beliefs ; the first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited ; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events."

Now, if it were not for the fact that there is evidently a certain amount of rhetorical fervour in this passage, it might be interesting to notice how completely it admits the basis of that intuitional philosophy of which Professor Huxley is commonly supposed to be one of the most strenuous opponents. It is more essential to the present purpose, however, to notice the nature of the practical admonition he bestows. To make the little corner of the world which he can influence somewhat less miserable and less ignorant than it was when he entered it, is the "plain duty" of every human creature. There is no necessity to go so far as to say that it is our "plain duty" to do this; and the word duty has about it such a strong theological flavour that those using it

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incautiously might, in such a discussion as this, lay themselves open to the charge of seeking to establish the ultimate position aimed at by means of a *petitio principii.* But it is clear that for those who are desirous of progress this is the most reasonable act in the world; because progress consists and is manifested in making the world "less ignorant and miserable"—less ignorant by the investigation of the laws we live by, less miserable by the application of those laws in ruling our conduct. But, in order to do this, says Professor Huxley, two beliefs are necessary, if only two; and these are, first, that the order of the universe is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; and next, that volition (and it is plainly the higher volition that is referred to) "counts for something as a condition of the course of events."

It is with this second article of belief that we have here most to do, for clearly volition must be exercised before we can attempt to ascertain the order of nature by our faculties. An article of belief, it is convenient to call it; but the language of the author quoted from would certainly justify those who regarded it as a truth of the highest degree of certainty; for, as he goes on to say, it can be verified experimentally as often as we like. And so it can; no matter into what metaphysical subtleties Milton's angels may have been

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drawn, or what arguments may be gathered from experimental philosophy to prove that, in an abstract sense, our acts are predetermined, every one knows that for all practical purposes volition, including the higher volition, can be freely exercised. Whatever, then, volition may be, clearly it "counts for something;" nay, it is evident that the more volition ascends towards that higher kind of which Professor Huxley was speaking, the more and more it "counts for something." But, then, let another point be noticed upon which psychologists of the modern school are all agreed. Volition is not volition unless it is consciously exercised in response to some external impulse—external, or as represented to consciousness as the recollection and association of certain directly external impulses. Thus, for example, any person who was convinced that it was his "plain duty," or, as might rather be said, his highly reasonable act, to make the world a little less ignorant, would consciously take steps towards accomplishing that end. And while the impulse that set this, his higher volition, in motion might, roughly speaking, be termed either an intellectual or an emotional impulse, it would really be an impulse recognizably compounded, in ever-varying proportions, of both; for, as Mr. Herbert Spencer has so carefully laid down,* no "act of

* "Principles of Psychology," vol. i. p. 474, 2nd edit.

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cognition can be absolutely free from emotion," and "no emotion (on the other hand) can be absolutely free from cognition."

An impulse, then, either directly external or representatively external, being necessary before volition can be set in motion, and volition being necessary (as Professor Huxley says) to enable us to advance (that is, to make the world a little less ignorant and miserable), where is the impulse to our higher volition to come from? Impulses to our lower volition we know we have in plenty; we call them instincts, appetites, and so on. But these, instead of stimulating our higher volition, ignore it, and often act, indeed, against it; for our higher volition we need an impulse of a different kind. Now, the exercise of the higher volition, if necessary now, has (unless we are indeed to believe in the present existence of the Millennium) been necessary always; always, therefore, must there have existed, in the progressive course of European history, an impulse to set the higher volition in motion. Was this impulse mostly intellectual, or mostly emotional, in its character? Having regard to the fact mentioned a few pages back, that it is not without the strictest economy of forces that progress, in the evolutionary sense, is accomplished, it might certainly be thought highly probable that a provision would be made (to speak for a moment in a teleo-

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logical sense) for such an impulse to be given with as little expenditure of force and as large a likelihood of its being effective, as possible. And further than this, seeing how much more simply an emotional impulse (like an emotional prejudice) can be generated, and how much more powerfully, save, perhaps, in a few exceptional cases, it acts upon the will, it might well be thought that the impulse provided would be rather emotional in its character than intellectual. Whether or not there has been such an impulse "provided," and what has been its nature, must be discussed in another chapter.

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CHAPTER II.

THE USE OF RELIGION.

IT has already been seen that an examination of the guiding principles of the philosophy of evolution will justify us in believing *à priori* that religion, viewed in its threefold external form of creeds, ordinances, and organizations, has a use. It has been found that the disciple of evolution, however scornfully he may reject the proposition that religion rests upon intuition, or that it has been divinely appointed, cannot afford, if he would be consistent, to regard religion as a thing of no worth and no moment, seeing that its very existence must suggest that it is in some way useful to mankind. Nay, further than this, the more he finds the acceptance of his own favourite theories resisted by religion, the more is he bound to inquire into the nature of the resisting force and to respect it. And the more he wishes to merit the name of a true disciple of reason, the more is he bound to follow in a neutral, if not in an interested

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spirit, any attempt, such as the present, to determine in a true scientific manner—through the generalization of observations and experiences, that is to say—what is the function which religion fulfils.

Now, when the use of a religion is spoken of, it must not for a moment be supposed that its abuse is lost sight of. As is well said in one of the Prefaces to the Church of England Liturgy, "There was never anything by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted." Religion has its abuses, without doubt, and sensible people, of whatever creed, are pretty well agreed as to their nature. Nay, further, seeing that religion is such a common possession in one form or another, it might very well be thought that instances of the abuse of religion are more frequent than instances of abuse in respect of other social institutions. For example, it might well be considered an abuse of religion when a system of fraudulent trading is kept concealed behind a rigid observance of religious ordinances. It is an abuse of religion when, under cover of encouraging religious activity, writers in Nonconformist journals invite all the branches of the "great Methodist family" to unite in a "holy war" against the Established Church. It is an abuse of religion when the excitement engendered by a revival meeting finds vent in outward

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expressions of affection something more than Platonic. It is an abuse of religion when religion is represented as existing for its own sake; when it forbids the reception of a clearly proved logical truth; when it withholds men from the study of natural phenomena; when it is made the instrument for creating family dissensions, or when it drives fanatics to attempt impossible miracles. Now, when in respect of matters such as these we say that religion is abused, we are clearly justified in saying so; because religion is then made the encourager of acts tending to the inversion of that progress from a lower to a higher type of human nature, in which we all so thoroughly believe, and which we all so strenuously desire. Fraudulent trading, political strife, unrestrained passions, neglect of social duties, contèmpt of reason, and so on, are all of them forces in the highest degree hostile to such progress; and if the only function of religion were to encourage these forces, then the evolutionist, the consistent "free-thinker," would be bound to give up religion at once and for ever. But then, as has been seen, the probabilities are highly in favour of the hypothesis that religion has, in the fullest sense, a use; and therefore a recognition of its abuses ought not to lead us to abandon the search for that use.

It will be well, in order to arrive at a conclusion with regard to the use of religion, with regard, that

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is, to the manner in which it helps or has helped forward evolutionary progress, to examine the phenomena of some time remarkable for its religious activity, and with reference to which the evidence that reaches us is tolerably authentic. And possibly it may serve to procure toleration for the present discussion from some who would be naturally disposed to regard it as useless or worse, if preference is given, before all others, to the period of the Methodist revival of the last century, as supplying a striking example of the "use" of religion. This preference is given, not only because the evidence with regard to that period is tolerably fresh and untampered with; but, further, because no one is ever the worse for being reminded how a thing which is a powerful reality in one generation may, owing to a slight change in the surrounding conditions, become an unreality and, by comparison, useless, only one or two generations later. For that the Methodist revival was as much a reality to the middle of that century as the spread of trade-unions (say) is a reality to this, no one who considers the whole facts of the case can doubt.

Now, as regards the Methodist revival, let us see what were the facts of the case. There can be little doubt that, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, religion in England was at a very low ebb. And

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the reason why this was so, is, it may be thought, not very obscure. Organized religion had become, under the circumstances of the time, little more than a mere political plaything. Owing to political pressure—pressure which threatened the very existence of the English nation—a severance had been accomplished, under Henry VIII., between the Church of England and the Church of Europe (for that the Church of Rome was till then the Church of Europe, admits of no question). From that date, owing to the very natural endeavours which were made to bring the English Church back into the Catholic fold, all political questions in England involved questions of religion also. It became necessary that the policy of England should be anti-Catholic; and through all the external dangers that threatened her by reason of this policy, England came triumphant during the long reign of Elizabeth—a reign during which the marvellous development of the maritime resources of the country gave a unity of spirit and a greatness to national policy which, according to some, have been lacking ever since. After this, however, there came, not unnaturally, a time of reaction. The first impulse of development was over; the splendours of success had partially faded; and men began to count up the cost, to turn to examine the internal condition of the country. Parties which had been

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more or less united during the season of national danger, began to diverge again from each other in the season of national security. The High Churchman and the Puritan, when they had done fighting the Armada, began to fight with each other. Here, then, was the opportunity for the religious reclamation of the nation; and without entering into more minute particulars it will be sufficient to remark that, in eighty years' time, after the death of Elizabeth, the avowedly Catholic predilections of the last of the Stuart kings led to that prince's abdication, and the ultimate succession of the Hanoverian family. Thus, it will be easily seen, the political importance of the religious question in England became greatly intensified. With a Protestant Usurper (as even some of the most strenuous religious opponents of James II. regarded William of Orange) on the throne, and a Catholic monarch abroad seeking by all possible means to regain possession of his hastily abdicated rights, what wonder that the profession of Catholicism came to be accounted as almost identical with high treason, or that nonconformity of any sort, though tolerated, was regarded with suspicion? Later, under Queen Anne, when it was seen that the nation would at her death be compelled either to accept as king the Elector of Hanover, or to recall the family of the Stuarts, the political persecution of Catholicism was

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carried still further. Laws previously allowed to slumber were put into active operation ; the estates of Catholics were subjected to special burdens of taxation ; every political engine, in fact, was put in motion in order to repress the Catholic influence.

Under such circumstances as these it is not to be wondered at that the National Church, then even more than now constituting the principal provision for religious purposes, became merely a political machine ; that personal earnestness was as much at a discount as a pass to ecclesiastical promotion, as political service, either direct or indirect, was at a premium. But it was not religion alone that suffered. Acting upon it, and reacted upon by it, was a deteriorated state of morality. It was not for nothing that the great wave of exaggerated Puritanism had swept over the country in the preceding century, to be followed by the anti-Puritan reaction after the Restoration. It was not for nothing that political distrust and civil dissension had, during a period of not much less than a century, exercised their joint influence on the whole structure of society. The cabinet gave the key-note to the castle, and the castle to the church and to the cottage ; and when this key-note coincided with the maxim, "Do well unto thyself, and men will speak good of thee," it is scarcely to be wondered at that there were in England, as Whitefield found, greater

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heathens than any in the forests of Pennsylvania. It is impossible to read Richardson or Fielding, or even the more precise utterances of the *Spectator*, without feeling that life in England, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, had no high aim. There might have been, nay, indeed, there were, a few burning exceptions amid so much that was dark; but the commonplace, ordinary life of the millions, in all classes, was corrupt and corrupting. The softer, more sympathetic side of human nature was under an eclipse; all the tender and kindly feelings that are a natural part of it were crushed out of sight and trodden upon; and the Government that delighted in hanging and quartering rebels found fit servants in the card-playing clergy, and fit subjects in the colliers of Kingswood and the degraded crowds of Moorfields.

Under these conditions the Methodist revival arose, Whitefield being the first to make proof of its popular power. The discouragement which he received from the ecclesiastical authorities is well known, and his persistence in spite of that discouragement, amounting indeed to persecution, is well known also. To a warm and enthusiastic nature like Whitefield's, it seemed but a small thing to give up, practically, his standing in the Church, in order to follow what the success of his efforts showed him to be his imperative duty; nor was he alone in his work.

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The same circumstances that produced his first successes were already productive of similar successes elsewhere. In Wales the more zealous of the Established Clergy had adopted the same system; going beyond the boundaries of their parishes, and preaching with effect to extemporaneous audiences wherever a market or a fair brought large numbers of people, often of a degraded stamp, together. Soon, at Whitefield's urgent request, the more cautious and accomplished Wesley (a man, it must ever be remembered, of the very highest Academical distinction) commenced to preach in the open air near Bristol, not without grave misgivings at first, having till then (as he says himself) "regarded the saving of souls almost as a sin, if it had not been done in a church." The extraordinary success of this itinerant preaching, together with the hardships and perils undergone both by those who undertook it and those who favoured it, cannot but convince us that it was a work of the greatest value and expressive of a deeply rooted national feeling. When we read of such scenes as occurred at Wednesbury, where (in 1742) a mob, unrestrained by the slightest interference on the part of the magistrates, held possession of the town for four or five months, wrecking the dwelling-houses of the Methodists, dragging women and children into the streets and treating them with the most abomin-

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able ill-usage; when we find the Methodist preachers purposely impressed into the army, and insulted to the utmost in order to give a pretext to those in authority for treating them to the summary justice dealt out to insubordinate soldiers; when we find country gentlemen assembling crowds to attack the Methodist places of meeting, and the wandering preachers in danger of their lives for weeks together owing to the fury of a mob that persisted in regarding them as agents of the Pretender—when we become acquainted with such facts as these, we feel compelled to believe that there was something very real to those who thus suffered in the things for which they suffered; for it is not in human nature to risk life and endure insult and privation for nothing. Or when we reflect on some of the scenes of Wesley's itinerary; when we imagine him preaching for three successive nights in Cornwall, his pulpit a jutting rock, his audience the whole population of the neighbouring town, the roaring of the sea contending with the preacher's voice; or at Exeter in the old Castle moat; or in Yorkshire on the side of an enormous mountain, with his congregation ranged in rows up the slope before him; when we find that his audiences, judging by the space of ground they covered, could sometimes only be estimated by tens of thousands; or when we hear of the dockyard labourers at Sheerness, who

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were far enough from being Methodists themselves, working after hours and free of charge to complete a Methodist chapel—again we cannot resist the conviction that Methodism was the expression of a feeling as deep and real as any of which human nature is capable, and of a social necessity quite as great as that which has been more recently expressed in the growth of trade-unions.

Did Methodism, however, really contribute to social progress? To which question it might be asked in return, "Have we progressed since the time when Methodism first made its appearance?" Undoubtedly we have; our knowledge has progressed, our capacity for intellectual propositions has progressed, our commerce has progressed. But Methodism has nothing to do with any of these. No; but we have progressed also in respect of morals; we have recovered from that state of moral deterioration which is so painfully characteristic, with respect to English society in general, of the earlier portion of the eighteenth century. No one, comparing the general spirit of that period with the general spirit of the present, through the means of their respective literatures, can fail to notice how much more healthy, more hopeful, more inspired (if the term may be allowed), is the social atmosphere which we now breathe, as compared with that breathed by the con-

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temporaries of Richardson and Fielding. The key-note of society, instead of being "Do well unto thyself, and men will speak good of thee," is rather "Do well unto men, and men will speak good of thee;" and though, owing to the often strange notions that exist as to what is good for men, and the frequent endeavours that are made to get well spoken of through a profession of philanthropy, the change is not so obviously for the better as it might be; still, the change is on the whole advantageous, carrying us back in a measure to the spirit of the time when England, from the anarchy that immediately succeeded the Reformation, rose into a great and genius-inspired nation, and shattered the Catholic coalition of the Continent. And to produce this progress in morals, what force has been at work? Can it be laid to the credit of any of those forces which have advanced our commerce, our knowledge of nature, our general intellectual capacity? The connection, if there is any, is not conspicuously apparent. But, on the other hand, there does seem to be a close connection between this improvement in morals and the Methodist revival. For what purpose did the Methodist revival exist, if not for this? What did the Methodist revival express, if not a reaction towards a better general morality? That such was its service to society, its ardent

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admirers assert; and much as we might feel bound to point out that in a multitude of individual cases its effect was only transitory, and the result of an excitement not much more than physical,* still, it would be contrary to general experience if this assertion did not contain some amount of truth. And we are the more bound to believe that the Methodist revival contributed to progress (and if not to moral progress, to what kind, then?) when we consider that, within a few score years of its first appearance, its doctrines and manner of working had been adopted, not only among the independent bodies that sprang out of it, but throughout almost the whole of the National Church as well; insomuch that the profession of the very doctrines which, in 1760, were regarded, as in John Newton's case, as a bar to ordination in the National Church, would have been, say in 1840, regarded as the best possible title to such ordination.

But now to consider what was the nature of the force which the Methodist revival supplied. It is a maxim well understood among psychologists of the

* Cowper was evidently aware of this:—

> "Too many, Lord, abuse Thy grace
> In this licentious day;
> And while they boast they see Thy face,
> They turn their own away."
>
> *Olney Hymns.*

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more modern school that a low state of morality, while not favourable to the reception of intellectual propositions, is favourable for the display of more or less violent emotions. Most persons will remember the very suggestive remarks, in an essay of Mr. Herbert Spencer's ("The Use of Anthropomorphism"), upon the violent emotions displayed by certain Fiji islanders on the occasion of (in missionary language) certain "gracious visitations of the Holy Spirit." To the Fiji islanders, as Mr. Herbert Spencer points out, who were, if they are not still, among the most savage and relentless of all savages, it was but natural that the vivid pictures of eternal torments and of an offended God presented to them (of course, among others of a more pleasant kind) by the evangelistic preachers, should, when once conviction of sin had been entertained, produce such extraordinary effects. And a similar rule holds good when there has been a moral retrogression. The remembrance of past and forfeited pleasures (and the pleasure of moral rectitude, of living up to one's best ideal, is surely among the greatest of all pleasures) is, as every one knows, a source of the keenest possible pain—pain which not seldom may rise to that pitch of intensity at which it becomes impossible to avoid seeking, in muscular exertion, a relief from nervous tension. In such a condition, when the pain of recollected pleasure

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may at any moment recur, the nervous energy that might else be expended upon work of a more or less intellectual kind, is liable to be suddenly drawn aside from such work, and to be whirled in turbid and ungoverned volumes through the channels of emotion. The intellect cannot be confidently appealed to; the thing to be done, as every one professionally acquainted with mental disorder is aware, is to keep the emotional channels supplied with impressions of a pleasing and soothing kind, and thus block out those which ravage and destroy. Now, a rule that holds good in respect of an individual will hold good in respect of that great mass of individuals which constitutes a society. A general retrogression in morals will bring about a proportionate waste (if it may be called so) of general intellectual capacity, and an increased susceptibility to emotional influences. Bearing these facts in mind, let us see what follows.

It has been premised (and few, it may be thought, will be ready to dispute the assumption) that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the general level of morality in England was below that which had existed in the time even of Elizabeth—the time when England was living in the strength and in the faith of a national God.* Society had retrograded, human nature was

* "Thus it pleased God to fight for us and to defend the justice of our cause, against the ambitions and bloody pretences of the Spaniards;

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going downhill; unless some check or counteracting influence could be provided (to speak once more in a teleological sense) the consequences might have been permanently disastrous. And that check was found in the evangelical doctrines of the Methodists. Intellect being, comparatively speaking, at a discount; the emotional faculties being more than usually active, whether for good or evil—and for what an intensity of evil the profligacies and cruelties of the time bear witness—the doctrines of the Methodists supplied a counter emotion strong enough to overcome the lower emotions which previously bore sway, and to lift society not only to its former level once more, but beyond it. The social conscience was wounded; in the mental organization of each individual there lurked, unrecognized and often unsuspected, a sense of discontent,* of waste of life, of money given for that which was not bread, and labour for that which did not satisfy. Suddenly came the evangelistic message, humanizing, tender, and hopeful; for it must be borne

who, seeking to devour all nations, are themselves devoured."—Raleigh's "Last Fight of the *Revenge*."

* "If happiness could have been found in classical attainments, in an elegant taste, in the exertions of wit, fancy, and genius, and in the esteem and converse of such persons as in these respects were most congenial with himself, he would have been happy. But he was not. He wondered (as thousands in a similar situation still do) that he should continue dissatisfied, with all the means apparently conducive to satisfaction within his reach."—John Newton's Preface to Cowper's first volume of poems.

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in mind that the "terrors of the Lord" had but a small place in the exhortations of the first Methodist preachers. The temples of Arianism and Pelagianism were suddenly deserted, and all the force of theology rushed, regardless of logic and of moderation, to the brighter Calvinistic extreme. God was man; God had died for man; man was precious to God—so precious that (to use Whitefield's quaint language on one occasion) God would receive even the devil's cast-aways; every tender and magnanimous feeling which man could entertain for his fellows, God entertained, only a millionfold more intensely, for man. "You have sinned," said the preacher; "God gives you pardon, salvation, eternal life, freely." It is not difficult to imagine the power which this message possessed for a dissolute generation, in whom the more tender side of human nature had for long suffered under oppression. Those rough colliers, down whose grimy cheeks Whitefield saw the tears making white channels as he spoke,—they knew that they had sinned; they knew that their life was anything but the best after which they might aspire. Those degraded men and women in the lowest districts of London, they too knew that they had sinned; the miners in the valley of the Tyne, the thousands on the mountain-side in Yorkshire; the seaside listeners in Cornwall; the more respectable tradesmen in cathedral cities; even the

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fashionable curiosity-mongers in London drawing-rooms;—all these, to whom the voice of the preacher came, knew that they had sinned, that there was in themselves the knowledge of a better life than they had ever lived up to. And when upon this conviction followed the proclamation of full and free salvation and forgiveness from a God who had himself been man; who had known the weaknesses and temptations of man; who had given up for a time his glory and taken upon himself the pains of a mortal existence and a cruel death in order to save man;—what wonder that among those never much trained to restrain their feelings such scenes took place as remain recorded in the journals of the Methodist leaders? Even at this distance of time, and viewing the whole matter from an outside point of observation, we shall be but cold-hearted if we do not feel rising up within us something of the same feeling which thrilled through those listening crowds. We may call it idolatry if we will; we may say, as the modern Theists are fond of saying, that the doctrines enunciated were horrible and profane, and that to set up Christ in the place of God was an act to God's dishonour. Yet we cannot get over the fact that many of the very highest attributes of human nature—those which more than all others enable men to be true to their highest ideals, to be gentle towards their fellows, to be patient under

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adversity—found in the doctrines of Methodism their fullest and highest encouragement. The weaknesses of these doctrines, nay, their highly dangerous tendencies when carried to extremes, we of this generation know well enough. But they have their strength also, and there, in the deteriorated morality of the eighteenth century, was the field of their beneficent action. For unless we are to believe that the Methodist revival arose from nothing and expressed nothing (which the evolutionist cannot possibly believe), or that the general level of our morality now is not superior to that of a century ago (which the "free-thinker" dare not believe), then we can scarcely escape from the conviction that the Methodist revival helped forward a resurrection of morality; and that therefore, in a time of unusual religious activity, religion acted usefully with regard to evolutionary progress by supplying an emotional stimulus to the higher volition.

Now thus, it will be seen, is the point reached which has been aimed at. It was found to be highly probable, *à priori*, that religion had a use. Further, seeing that "volition counts for something" in the process of evolutionary progress; that volition, whether lower or higher, requires an impulse to set it in motion; that evolutionary progress necessitates the strictest economy of forces; and that an emotional impulse to

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volition can be most easily generated and is the most certain in its action, it has been seen to be highly probable that means of giving an emotional impulse to the higher volition would be "provided." And now it has been seen that religion has a use, and that its use, judging from what took place at a particular time, is to supply an emotional stimulus to the higher volition. But though the events of that time may afford a striking and marked instance of the way in which religion works, it will be safer for the present argument if an endeavour is made to supplement this particular instance with others of a more general kind, which will also have the advantage of appealing more directly to ordinary experience.

When we speak of the world being made less ignorant and miserable through the exercise on our own part of that volition which "counts for something" as a condition of the course of events, we are apt at first, not unlike Naaman the Syrian, to think of some great thing; building model cottages, going out as missionaries to Patagonia, passing a Reform Bill, or, it may be, founding a new religion. Such great things, doubtless, there are to be done in the world, giving birth to results more or less unlike what we expect, according to circumstances. But it would be a grave error to suppose that evolutionary progress depends on such great things alone, or even chiefly. It depends

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much more on those daily, unnoticed acts of common life, which are so infinitely more numerous than all the great acts, real or imaginary, that ever attract our attention. Most of all it depends on the performance of ordinary duties, ordinary occupations, fully, conscientiously, and hopefully; upon the exercise of volition, even when volition is allowed but a small margin for its action, on the events of the day with a determination to exercise it in the highest direction and to the fullest possible extent. To a man in good health and happily circumstanced it may be said that it comes to him as a matter of course thus to exercise his volition from day to day; and through the exercise of it, whether he knows it or not, the world will be made, if ever so little, less miserable, and progress will be furthered. But the converse of this proposition is also true. It is also true that if, in the course of daily occupation, volition fails of its highest, evolutionary progress is imperilled. The history of the "Do-as-you-likes," in Kingsley's "Water-babies," is a case in point. With that unfortunate people, it will be remembered, owing to their indulgence from day to day of whatever wish or passion came uppermost at the moment, the Darwinian process was reversed. They sank from stage to stage, losing arts, intellect, and language, until their race was extinguished in the person of a solitary ape that perished by the hand of an African

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traveller. Whenever, then, volition, which "counts for something," fails of its highest, progress is imperilled; and it will be well, therefore, to notice what are some of the adverse forces against which volition has to contend in respect of ordinary matters of life and business.

Volition acts most effectually, as every student of modern psychological theories will admit, when it is most vividly associated with a sense of pleasure. Now, although all pleasure is in point of fact emotion, still it may, by approaching us through different avenues, take from time to time different forms. There is, for instance, the intellectual pleasure which results from the consciousness of having solved a problem; the moral pleasure that results from the performance of a duty; the social pleasure that results from a sense of being sympathized with in our work. These three kinds of pleasure, at least, it may safely be assumed, are experienced from time to time by all persons engaged in the ordinary occupations of the world, and the commonest experience shows that a man will be likely to do his best, to exercise his volition most effectively, when he finds his daily work associated with pleasure of these three descriptions; when, for example, he is satisfied with the result of his work, satisfied with himself, and in close sympathy with some, or with one at least, of his kind. Suppose, however, anything should

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happen (and the commonest experience shows us that nothing is more possible) to interfere with his sense of pleasure in any one of these three directions; suppose he should, in an unguarded moment, have done something to offend himself; suppose that, owing to a conflict of circumstances, the work that he takes pleasure in should be thwarted and deprived of its anticipated results; or suppose that the near friend whose sympathy and appreciation was such a spur to his efforts should die—what would be the result? There cannot be a doubt that his volition, being deprived to a greater or less degree of the vivid sense of pleasure with which it was associated, would be impaired, would lose its elasticity; and that, unless something else could be found to supply the deficiency, he would be, in respect of his daily occupation, an inferior being to what he was before. His volition would still be exercised, but it would be exercised in a dragging, unbuoyant, hopeless manner, and would in consequence not secure the same result as formerly. Now, when it is remembered that this, which may happen to any one man, probably in a greater or less degree happens to all; and when it is remembered, further, how important it is for evolutionary progress that the daily business of life should be hopefully and thoroughly discharged, we might well stand aghast at the spectacle of volition, which "counts for some-

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thing," thus despoiled of its force, and demand, in the name and for the sake of progress, either that mankind shall never be dissatisfied with themselves, never lose confidence in the end of their endeavours, and never be separated by death from those most dear to them; or else that something shall be "provided" to supply again to volition the elasticity which it has lost.

The first of these alternatives, though it may be possible when the modern millenarians of the Republican press shall have completed their revision of human nature, has not as yet been found possible. We see on every side men and women losing heart in life—becoming, as we say, quite unlike their former selves, by reason of accidents such as have been mentioned above. These accidents occur to and disable average people; but for average people the second alternative exists, as an endeavour must be made to show, in that average religion in which they have been educated. Average people in England have inherited and hold, let us say, these three religious beliefs—the efficacy of the Atonement, the benign over-ruling of Providence, and the existence of a life after death. That these beliefs may, in an abstract sense, be totally imaginary and unverifiable makes no difference whatever: it is enough that they are inherited and held as truths; and it may be surmised that they

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would not be so held if they did not present to those holding them a certain congruity with interpretations of actual experiences.

To deal with the three instances of impaired volition in the order in which they have been mentioned, let it be seen, first of all, how religion can be made effectual to the restoration of volition which has suffered through the dissatisfaction of the individual with himself. And it must not be forgotten that, owing to the progressive development of conscience, dissatisfaction with one's self is a contingency which increases in probability the more the probability of the commission of acts calling for external restraint diminishes. Conscience, of course, may be over-sensitive, just as a Draconian legislation may be too severe; but as to the general utility of conscience there can be no dispute. Let us imagine, then, the case of any one who, in an unguarded moment, overpowered by some unforeseen and sudden combination of circumstances, has indulged in some act which is offensive to himself. Now, if he has inherited and been trained in the average beliefs of the time, he will see in the act that offends himself an act offensive to God; he will, in evangelical language, stand "convinced of sin." He has incurred (he will believe) the anger of God; all his acts and all his days are overcast by that threatening cloud; his occupations, useful and

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even virtuous though they were, cease to give him pleasure; he goes through them but half-heartedly, with a deteriorated volition; he finds himself incapacitated, even if but to a small extent, from doing his best; and of course the more sensitive is his conscience (the higher he stands, that is to say, in the scale of moral advancement), the more overpowering will seem to him the Divine judgment under which he lies. Now, if such a state of things persisted, who shall deny that the man would be permanently injured, that in him and through him evolutionary progress would be retarded, owing to his defective volition? That the beliefs which he has inherited and in which he has been trained would not be responsible for such retardation is clear; because it was not until his conscience (his whole moral nature, if we like to call it so) showed him his fault, that he felt the reality, as he will say, of the Divine abhorrence of sin. But now, having had such a religious training, the religious beliefs which have been made present to him through his moral lapse themselves supply him with the means of rising superior to it. God is offended, truly; but Christ has died; the death of Christ was God's special provision against such cases as his own; his contempt of himself for his fault, the fact that he can see his fault, is the result of the action upon him of the Holy Spirit; he thus sees

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that the very consciousness of his offence is the Divine persuasion of the Divine pardon, if he will accept it. He does accept it; he embraces the belief in which he has before been verbally instructed; he believes that Christ has (as Wesley expressed it) "taken away *his* sins, even *his*, and saved him from the law of sin and death." And thenceforth his conscience is not silenced, indeed, but outvoted. The recollection of his offence will still rise up before him to the end of his days, threatening to make him despair of and despise himself, and thus to impair his volition. But thenceforth also, whenever the memory of his fault rises up before him, with it will rise up before him the memory of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Against the accuser of his conscience he "pleads the blood of the covenant;" and thus he "finds peace in Christ." The bare intellectual propositions in which he was educated suddenly become emotional realities; an emotional stimulus, through them, is supplied to his higher volition, restoring it to the point whence it had fallen, enabling him once more to go about his daily occupations with that cheerfulness and hopefulness which is so necessary for the accomplishment of further progress. True, it would have been better if he had not sinned, if he had not offended against himself. But who does not do so, and who are so likely to be betrayed into

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actions offensive to themselves as those whose sensitive and impulsive natures ultimately make them the heroes of the world? The offence was there; the consciousness of the offence impaired volition; and religion acted usefully with regard to evolutionary progress by restoring volition to its former level.

Again, it has been seen that volition is liable to be impaired whenever, as must often happen, the purpose for which it is exercised cannot be attained; when the result of the effort to fulfil the duties of each day is, owing to some unforeseen combination of circumstances, kept back out of sight. It cannot but be that in such a case volition will flag and lose its elasticity; for whenever it is put into action for the desired end, instead of being associated with the pleasure (an intellectual pleasure, as it may be called) of achievement, it will be associated rather with the pain of disappointment. Now, here again progress is imperilled, because progress is dependent on volition; volition, that is, exercised in the highest degree for the fulfilment of duty. And here again, with those who have inherited and been trained in average religious beliefs, religion steps in to avert the danger. Those who have been thus trained believe that to labour cheerfully and conscientiously in their daily occupation—to do their duty in that state of life in which they have been called—is a Divine command, the

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fulfilment of which will secure the favour of Providence. That cheerful and conscientious labour often brings success, apart from any reference to extra-mundane considerations, we all know. Often, however, it does not bring anything like the success anticipated, and here is where the danger to progress comes in. For even if the disappointed worker does not adopt unfair means to make his success greater, his disappointment will, as has been seen, impair his volition. "But no," says the believer in religious doctrines which are at present generally accepted; "these things are in the hand of God. I am fulfilling God's commandment by cheerfully and conscientiously labouring; and if the results which I anticipated do not appear, this, too, cannot but be by the providence of God also. There is something in the matter, and there may well be, which I do not understand. I dare not question that all is well; I dare not slack my efforts because God sees fit to withhold from me the success which I looked for, still less dare I supplement honest means by dishonest. Nay, sooner than do this, my efforts shall be doubled; I will cease to think of myself at all; I will put all into the hands of God, endeavouring to be more conscientious, more hopeful, more business-like; feeling certain that he has his own plan with regard to these matters, and that to show distrust will not only deprive me of seeing, some day,

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the fruit of my labours, but will also (if such a thing can be) hinder the work of God. And therefore, though indeed my flesh and my heart are failing me for very heaviness and weariness, I will go on quietly and cheerfully doing my duty, content to feel that God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." And thenceforth, though the same continued disappointments may be experienced and the same tendency to grow weary of duty, his belief in the beneficent providence of God, having become to him an emotional reality, rescues his volition from deterioration, and gives to it again the elasticity which it must needs possess, if through him the world is to be made a little less miserable, and evolutionary progress is to be accomplished.

But volition may be also impaired by the removal of human sympathy, by the death of a near friend, let us say a wife, whose understanding, encouragement, and appreciation has served on many occasions to promote a renewed persistence of efforts, or a calm endurance of repeated disappointments. Who does not know this? And who, even among the most thorough-going revisers of human nature, would wish to do away with, or think it possible to do away with, that highest possibility of civilization—the union of two lives for the furtherance of each other's nobility? Such unions exist, and, as long as progress is to be

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made, will not cease to exist. But still it will be out of the power of even revised human nature, for some time to come, to provide that such unions shall not be prematurely severed. As the case stands, we know that with average men and women, who have married for average reasons, and who reap the average benefits of their act, it often happens that the one is taken and the other left. And though every one does not know, many must know how volition is weakened for the one who is left—how the sense of pleasure is taken out of every pursuit, and a sense of pain substituted for it. This is an instance of another way in which volition may be weakened by the common accidents of life; and here, as in the other two instances already given, the sense of loss does not depend upon the holding of a religious creed, nor upon the nature of the creed held. But who, on the other hand, can fail to see how the average creed of the present time steps in to the rescue of volition? The separation, it is believed, is not eternal; the bond of sympathy, in all its best aspects, is not broken. So believing, the one left alone lives yet as though he were not alone. The memory of the "touch of a vanished hand," or of "the sound of a voice that is still," must and will rise up before him from time to time, and threaten to overwhelm his power of "patient continuance

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in well-doing." But even with such memories will rise up also the belief in a continued sympathy, and a not far distant reunion; a sympathy purged of all its grosser aspects, a reunion for the sake of carrying on farther and farther the most perfect companionship of a more and more perfect fellow-service. And thus, at the very moment when his volition is disposed to droop, he finds in his religion its restorer. The belief in immortality, which he has inherited and in which he has been educated, becomes suddenly an emotional reality to him, and by its help he rises up above the pain of the present and visible loss, to live in the pleasure and fulness of the invisible sympathy and the future glory. His strength is renewed, the accident of his life surmounted; and his religion, by supplying an emotional stimulus to his higher volition, enables him to go on with the duties of his daily life with that cheerfulness and hopefulness which must be present if progress is, in him and through him, to be accomplished.

May it not be said, then, judging from such cases as these, that religion is capable of giving an emotional stimulus to the higher volition, and that this is the service which it renders to evolutionary progress? That instances of this kind, in which the service rendered may be so distinctly recognized, are not frequent, may be admitted; the human mind

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is a thing so complex, and its relations to surrounding conditions are so varied, that it would indeed be almost impossible to find a case in which the help derived from religious beliefs is not more or less mixed up with other influences. It is in this manner, however, that it acts; even if (as reason may presently be shown for believing) its results are often more negative than positive. That religion, while useful in this way to evolutionary progress, may be abused, and often is abused, is not denied nor attempted to be denied; nay, as has been said, seeing how common a possession religion is, the probabilities would seem to be in favour of the occurrence of a large number of instances of the abuse of religion. Only it must be remembered that, religion being so common a possession, it may be with it as it is with matters of eating and drinking; the abuse of which comes to the surface, while the use, and the justification of the use, seldom or never engage the intellectual powers of those who use it.

But now to take note of the progress of this whole discussion. That there should be means "provided" for supplying an emotional stimulus to the higher volition, just as there are means "provided" for supplying an emotional stimulus to the lower volition, an examination of the guiding principles of the philosophy of evolution seemed to make highly

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probable *à priori*; and the same examination seemed also to make it highly probable that religion, which has co-existed with European progress (to extend our glance no further), has in some way or other helped that progress—that religion, in short, has been of use. But it has also been ascertained, by the examination of certain commonplace phenomena and by reference to certain events which are tolerably well known, what the use of religion is—that it does, in fact, supply, in some cases at any rate, that emotional stimulus to the higher volition which there was reason to believe would be "provided;" an emotional impulse in the way in which it works, though closely associated in all cases with an intellectual belief, which, if not capable of experimental proof, may at least be supposed to have a certain congruity with the interpretations, by those who hold it, of actual experiences.

And here, possibly, the difficulty of the "free-thinker's" position will begin to be apparent. For it is clear that he dare not ignore that truth which (as Professor Huxley says) stands on the strongest foundation upon which any belief can rest—the truth that volition (no matter what it may be, or how far it may be limited or predetermined) "counts for something as a condition of the course of events." Nor dare he deny, unless he wishes to throw himself into the arms

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of those who will talk to him of the Ego that exists apart from consciousness, that volition, both higher and lower, requires an impulse, either directly external or representatively external, to set it in motion. Nor dare he (without running so much counter to his favourite prophets as to suppose that things can exist without a reason for their existence), even while lamenting the terrible predominance, as it seems to him, of religion in Europe, hold that such religious predominance has been "uncaused"—that is, that it has borne no relationship whatever to surrounding conditions and interests. Europe, he must further confess, has progressed while under the shadow of this religious predominance. And dare he, while contrasting the "economy of nature" with "ecclesiastical waste," assert that nature has been so extravagantly wasteful in her management of the evolutionary progress of society in Europe as to permit the existence of an utterly useless and injurious religious predominance? Or dare he make so light of accumulated experiences as to deny that those who hold certain religious doctrines are helped by them, in such a manner as has been described, to rise superior to the common accidents of life? And if these are admissions which he is compelled to make by ceasing from his attacks upon Liturgies, and coming down to the "solid basis" of evolution, might he not be

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fairly asked what justification there is for his own existence?

Still, however, the "free-thinker" will assert that nothing has as yet been brought forward materially to injure his position as at first laid down. "That religion has been useful in the past," he will say, "we are ready to admit. In the dark ages, before the light of science had dawned, doubtless it may have been necessary for men to be possessed of this or that belief, just as children must be attracted and pleased with toys. But now the sun of reason has risen upon the earth, and these creeds are no longer necessary or possible for us. We admit that religion may, in many instances, have supplied an emotional stimulus to the higher volition—that men may have been led to do their duty through the idea or feeling that they thereby secured happiness, both present and future; but we do not now need such an emotional stimulus. Every one now knows what morality is, and we object to have our morality tainted with the selfishness which an emotional stimulus to duty cannot but imply. This we believe, and this we feel bound, as we believe it, to teach to the uttermost, claiming every one as a friend to progress who helps, even if ever so little, to loosen the chains of ancient superstition."

Without directly contradicting any of this, a slight misgiving may still be entertained as to the safety of

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the Fifth Monarchy or Millennium theory which it involves. Possibly, however, a little fresh light may be thrown on the subject when an examination has been made into the origin and basis of religion, both generally, and also with particular reference to the forms which it has assumed during the course of European progress.

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CHAPTER III.

THE BASIS OF RELIGION.

IT will be nothing new to those who have interested themselves in recent discussions of subjects akin to the present, to find religion described as affording an emotional stimulus to volition, or (as a well-known writer has put it) as being "morality touched with emotion." And if all other evidence were wanting of the powerful influence exercised by the religion which has for so long been current in Europe, simply through its one special doctrine of self-denial, sufficient evidence is to be found in the fact that the writer of a signed article in a Radical journal, when upon one occasion objecting to such a definition of religion that, instead of being "morality touched with emotion," it should be more properly described as "morality tainted with selfishness," knew that he was making use of the most powerful argument possible to induce ordinary readers to view it with suspicion. For, as the same writer went on to say, "as soon as we allow the abstract rule

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of right to be affected by personal considerations, a loophole is provided for all sorts of mischievous doctrines."

Undoubtedly a loophole is so provided, though it might be suggested that such a loophole may be as useful for egress as it is dangerous for ingress. Undoubtedly, also, emotion implies personal considerations, and the nearer we can get to an abstract rule of right apart from personal considerations the better we shall be. Thus it is that we admire the utterance of the three men who, being threatened with the burning fiery furnace, replied, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; *but if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods." Here was an approach to something like an "abstract rule of right," an approach which we all know we shall do well to imitate. And yet the more we try to define the "abstract rule of right," and the more we try to eliminate personal considerations, or "selfishness," the more difficult does it seem to do either one thing or the other. For the more we examine into the nature of this "abstract rule of right," the more we find ourselves unable to describe it except through instances of conduct that have clearly had their root in personal considerations—conduct on the part of those who, for the joy that was set before them, have endured crosses

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and despised shames; and the more we endeavour to define morality, the more difficult do we find it (unless we throw ourselves into the longing arms of the Intuitionalists) to conceive of morality except as a convenient collective title for certain individual acts. And if morality be only a convenient title for certain individual acts (as the evolutionist, if only for his own safety's sake, is bound to hold that it is), then it may be presumed that we cannot act at all without some regard to personal considerations. And will not then every act, even if we are only conscious that it gives us pleasure to perform it, be "tainted with selfishness"?

Let it be so; as far as strict reasoning is concerned, we cannot, indeed, escape from this conclusion. But here, where an appeal to strict reasoning will not help us, an appeal to literary propriety will. The word selfishness, whatever new meanings may be assigned to it in the future, has hitherto been always understood to imply a certain amount of calculation, of weighing probabilities with an eye to the main chance. But there are impulses to volition so powerful as to take possession of the whole mental system to the exclusion of the possibility of calculation; impulses which produce insanity or genius according as they are associated with a diseased or a sound state of the nervous system. Between these two things—insanity

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and genius—it is not always easy for the unprofessional observer to judge; but, assuming sanity, we know that the best things are done in the world when an impulse acts so powerfully upon volition as to exclude all possibility of calculation, when the impulse (it may be an impulse to paint landscapes, or to compose symphonies, or to preach a new religion) carries its possessor along with it, scarce suffering him to reflect on what he is doing, only filling him with a great hunger and thirst, and threatening him at times, when he pauses in his labour, with the shadow of the great woe of loss of happiness, if he preach not his gospel, whatever it may be. It is out of no regard for any "abstract rule of right" that he does this; it is purely from personal considerations. And yet, because the impulse is so strong within him, that it overrides all possibility of calculation, as to the result which is to come to himself from his act, he is, by the appeal to literary propriety, absolved from all imputation of selfishness.

"But why so," it may be asked, "seeing that by this very showing genius is only a more refined form of selfishness?" According to strict reasoning, genius is so; but then, as has been already said, it is just in such cases as these, where strict reasoning may lead us into confusion, that literary propriety is useful. It is one of the great functions of literature to enable us

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to distinguish clearly, and for practical purposes, between things which are lower or higher manifestations of the same forces. A single grain and a heap of grain may be said to be lower and higher manifestations of the same forces; they merge into each other by the most imperceptible degrees; there is no point at which it could be positively said that the heap begins to be a heap. And yet an appeal to that sense of literary propriety which every one is more or less possessed of, shows us that it would be as absurd, in ordinary conversation and except for some special purpose, to speak of three grains as a heap, as it would be to speak of a heap as fifty thousand and odd grains. What is there in strict reasoning to prevent us, if once we are denied this appeal to literary propriety, of speaking of ourselves as "manifestations of force," or as "protoplasm raised to the power of *n*?" Or, not to stretch the matter so widely, what is there to prevent us, except this appeal to literary propriety, from expressing every passion of human nature, including that which is the most powerful of all passions, in their lowest terms instead of in their highest, and thus, through the force of association, turning into an engine of degradation everything that once had a power to elevate and refine? It may seem a small thing to lay so much insistence on this appeal to literary propriety; but if words are, as they

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are held to be, the solidified residue of thought and of morals, care must be taken in their handling, lest suddenly from them should be set at liberty forces which would make terrible havoc of the delicate balancings of our modern civilization.

It is not, as may be supposed, for the sake of fighting any one else's battles that these remarks have been made. It is rather because it is necessary, in speaking of religion in somewhat similar terms, to provide beforehand against a similar criticism ; and also because it will be necessary, in dwelling upon the basis of religion, to seem to confuse, albeit for a special purpose, the higher and lower aspects of religion. Being now come down to the "solid basis" of evolution, the possibility of the existence of such a thing as an abstract "rule of right" must be excluded just as completely as the possibility of an intuitional morality. As a starting-point the proposition must be accepted that all states of consciousness are the results of external sensations, either simple or complex, either decomposable or undecomposable; either acting directly through our external organs of sense, or representatively through the means of reason, memory, and association. And it is the necessity that exists, when upon the solid basis of evolution, of taking this proposition for our starting-point that has specially rendered advisable the foregoing protest

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against neglect of literary propriety. For as far as literary propriety is concerned, no offence could easily be greater than to refer, in our ordinary use of language, to things so different from each other as the higher and lower forms of religion in the same terms. Here, however, it is done (as will be seen) for a special purpose ; and the special purpose must stand as an excuse for the act.

To acknowledge that all states of consciousness are the result, either direct or indirect, of external sensations, is clearly to give to all states of consciousness a personal value. For, to go down to the root of the matter, we can no more convince A, except indirectly, of the occurrence of an event that has been witnessed by B, than we can keep B from starvation by feeding A. Now, this fact of the essential personality of consciousness is a very important one, and one to be kept in mind throughout the whole of the ensuing argument. For it obviously necessitates the proposition that, all states of consciousness, including religious beliefs, being based on sensational experiences, those beliefs which are most common, which are most widely accepted, are based on experiences proportionately wide and universal. To imagine otherwise would be to upset the whole evolutionary scheme —would be to admit that effects may exist without a cause, and to throw ourselves bodily (as has been

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before said) into the longing arms of the Intuitionalists—a fate from which every good "free-thinker" wishes to be preserved. And consequently, if it can be shown "that religious ideas of one kind or another, are almost, if not quite universal" (as Mr. Herbert Spencer says they are),* the "free-thinker," if he wishes to be consistent, is bound to believe that such ideas are founded upon experiences which are universal in proportion.

Are, however, religious ideas "almost, if not quite universal"? It might, with some, be enough to point out that Mr. Herbert Spencer accepts it as true that they are; and, in effect, his authority will in this place be considered as sufficient. A word or two must be said, however, to guard against the possible criticism which some over-zealous follower of Mr. Darwin might be disposed to make. "Where," such a one might ask, "is to be found, in the lower types that now represent most nearly the type from which man has descended, the germ of that which we now call religious feeling? Either the undeveloped germ must be recognizable there, or else it must at some time have been especially created. I do not believe the latter, and I do not see the former; and therefore I deny that such a thing as a religious sentiment, made up of religious feelings, exists." Now here, it

* "First Principles," 3rd edit., p. 13.

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may be observed, is touched the great Calvinistic puzzle, or rather its scientific equivalent; a puzzle with regard to which it will be the wisdom of both sides to recognize the limits of thought and to refrain from words. For the arguments are equally forcible in both directions. "The apes," says the Darwinian, "exhibit no such thing as the germ of a religious sentiment; and therefore that which in man you call the religious sentiment is nothing of the kind." But on the other side says the Anti-Darwinian, "It is incontestably proved by observation that all races of man, at least when they have reached a certain very low pitch of civilization, are possessed of a religious sentiment; if you assert that the apes have no such thing, nor the germ of it, then Darwinism is all moonshine; if you, however, were even to assert that your friends the apes do possess the religious sentiment in a rudimentary form, then you must (unless you are going to admit a special creation somewhere) allow its existence all through the scale of physical existence, down even to the Protozoa under your microscopes; and then Darwinism will be little better than moonshine, after all." It will be advisable, then, for both sides to respect each other and acknowledge the weaknesses of their respective positions; at least, until the "missing link" has been found, when it may become possible to draw out even this logical

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Leviathan with a hook. And in the mean time, it will be perhaps considered excusable if, on the present occasion, so slight an appeal is made to literary propriety as to confine the application of the word "religion" to the human race.

On the high authority referred to, then, it may be accepted as true that "religious ideas of one kind or another, are almost, if not quite universal," providing in the word "almost" a loophole for those few authenticated instances of races apparently destitute of such ideas. And from the same authority (an authority which ought to be almost like a last court of appeal to the consistent "free-thinker") may be derived, for the sake of saving time, a definition of religion, or rather, in the first instance, of religious creeds. "A religious creed," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "is definable as an *à priori* theory of the universe;" * and again, speaking of the same thing, he says: "To the aboriginal man and to every civilized child the problem of the universe suggests itself. What is it? Whence comes it? are questions that press for solution when, from time to time, the imagination rises above daily trivialities." † This might at first sight seem a sufficient definition for the present purpose; but it is not. It is sufficient for Mr. Herbert Spencer's purpose in the chapter from

* "First Principles," 3rd edit., p. 43. † Ibid., p. 30.

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which it is taken (on "Ultimate Religious Ideas"), but it is not sufficient to show the consistent "free-thinker" how closely religion is bound up with human nature. For, to the assertion that a religious creed is an *à priori* theory of the universe, the "free-thinker," who is always disposed to regard the creed as the chief part of a religion, might reply that science presents an *à posteriori* theory of the universe; that though savages and children may hold by religion, he prefers to hold by science; and that therefore his case is proved. "The problem of the Universe," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "suggests itself to every aboriginal man and to every civilized child, when, from time to time, the imagination rises above daily trivialities." The important question to be answered, then, is this—When does the imagination rise above daily trivialities? What forces it to do so from time to time? And only when this question has been answered, will the basis of religion be made apparent.

Now, every one that is at all acquainted with the nature of savages or children knows that they are peculiarly unsusceptible to abstract ideas; that in the one case the missionary must produce his glass beads before he can gain acceptance for the truths of the Bible, and in the other case the nurse must supplement her arguments with very tangible con-

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siderations of profit or loss. It is not, then, plainly, any consideration of the abstract kind that will raise the imagination of the savage or of the civilized child (or, let us say, of the savage only) above daily trivialities. It is rather an impulse of a directly personal, or, as many might call it, of a purely selfish kind, that can alone do this. An unexpected or unusual pleasure, or, more strikingly, an unexpected evil or threat of evil, of the most direct sort, will alone force the imagination of the complete savage to "rise above daily trivialities." And as the complete savage is a mere follower of his senses, that which will most arrest his attention will be that which most completely puts a stop to the pleasure he draws to himself through his senses, and that is—death. Death, and whatever has caused or may cause death—these are the things that threaten his sense of pleasure, his animal joy in his existence. Whenever he is made cognizant of the fact of death, his "imagination rises above daily trivialities;" the question is forced upon him, How is this? Whence comes this? And in the first instance he answers the question by attributing to the instrument or object by which death has been inflicted a magical property. Regarding it next as conscious, he seeks to propitiate it, to enlist its services on his own behalf; and thus, simply through the fear of death, the dread of the

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haunting shadow of evil and supreme personal loss, is Fetishism, the rudest possible form which a religious creed and worship can assume, established.

That such a form of religion is Fetishism, and that Fetishism is the least developed form of religion possible, every consistent "free-thinker" will admit; indeed, writers in the ultra-Radical journals are so often found speaking of this or that modern religious ordinance as an evidence of Fetishism, that it may be presumed that all "free-thinkers," inconsistent as well as consistent, will agree to this proposition. But now let it be noticed by those who, possibly, have not been able to trace much connection between the conceptions of the complete savage and the thoughts which to-day we are accustomed to call religious, and who may feel annoyed, in spite of the excuse given above, at their being alluded to in the same terms,—let it be noticed by these, as well as by the consistent "free-thinker," that through the admission of this proposition about Fetishism an opportunity is afforded for introducing an entirely new set of terms. Fetishism is the lowest possible form of religion, as far as we know: it is engendered by an individual dread of the chance of death; it finds external expression in the endeavour to propitiate that which has the power of killing. For these expressions let the following be now substituted:—religion is engendered in the universal

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individual experience as to the uncertainty of life, and finds its external expression in the endeavour to propitiate the powers (however they may be defined) presiding over life and death. Life as well as death; for it is obvious that the moment even Fetishism advances far enough, as it quickly does, to recognize a personality in adverse influences, the supposition of an opposing personality protecting life will be necessitated—the Ormuzd that contends against Ahriman, to use the names of personages of whom the reading world is at present pretty well weary. But let it be observed also what a leap has been made, by this substitution of general for particular terms, towards a definition of religion as modernly understood. "Religion is engendered in the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, and finds expression in the endeavour to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death." We seem to have lost sight of the picture of the Fuegian struggling with the rudest implements and amid the perils of famine to preserve an existence little more than animal, and to have caught sight instead of the gorgeous religious festivals of some Empire of the East—of some ceremony of benediction in the presence of a mighty host about to march to battle, performed by innumerable priests, with all the pomp of a magnificent ritual, in the jewelled presence of Imperial, or even Celestial, majesty itself.

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But it will not do to anticipate, even though the terms thus substituted may themselves have to be replaced by others before a definition of religion can be arrived at which will be acceptable to ourselves. Religion is seen almost universally existing in a threefold external form of creeds, ordinances, and organizations; and we want to know what is the popular, the all but universal, sanction for these things,—on what basis they rest. Now, with regard to creeds, "a creed (as Mr. Herbert Spencer says) is definable as an *à priori* theory of the universe—a theory such as, however rude and however limited to certain aspects of the universe only, be it the merest Fetishism, every savage is driven to form for himself whenever his "imagination rises above daily trivialities." But though, as has been seen, the imagination of each individual savage would be forced to "rise above daily trivialities" by the unpleasurable occurrence of death, if by nothing else, still some further process would be necessary before the universal experience of even millions of individuals could properly become a creed; for a creed implies a systematic arrangement which the simple experiences of many individuals, similar though they may be, does not necessarily involve. A creed is not formed until some one, a little (if only a very little) more intelligent or reflective than his fellows, constructs out of the general experiences,

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which are of course similar to his own, a rude philosophy which is universally recognized as representative of the universal experience. Naturally, in a society where all are sensual or selfish, the creed-maker, or rudimentary theologian, will be under a strong temptation to use the influence he thus acquires for his own sensual and selfish advantage. This, however, does not interfere with the main fact to be gathered for the purpose of the present argument—viz., that a creed exists and is accepted because it agrees with the general experiences of those accepting it. "For" (to quote Mr. Herbert Spencer again) "a belief which gains extensive reception without critical examination is thereby proved to have a general congruity with the various other beliefs of those who receive it." * And simultaneously with the systematization of individual experiences into a creed, there will naturally take place a systematization of the universal individual impulses to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death. And what more natural than that the creed-maker, the rudimentary theologian, who has presented his fellows with a creed which their experience sanctions, should be regarded as the proper person to direct them to the proper means and times of propitiating the powers which the creed defines; should be regarded, in short, as their

* "First Principles," 3rd edit. p. 4.

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priest, the director and leader of their acts of worship? No doubt (it may be said again) in a society in which all the individuals are sensual and selfish, the priest will use his influence partly for his own sensual and selfish ends; but not the less for that will the ordinances he prescribes be sanctioned by the popular experience; for he himself being but one of the people, even though a trifle more intelligent, the ordinances and ceremonies that most naturally suggest themselves to him will be such as would most naturally suggest themselves to his fellows.

Now, here it begins to be evident how terribly wide of the mark are those who, in common with the writer of one of the series of "free-thought" pamphlets already alluded to, assert that "the notion of a special religious faculty has evidently emanated from the minds of priests" * (as if priests were some specially created species). For, according to an evolutionary view of things, the real state of the case is that priests have themselves resulted from the same causes as have ultimately produced what is by some called (though rather misleadingly) a "special religious faculty." Religion is found almost universally existing in its threefold external form of creeds, ordinances, and organizations, by reason of the popular sanction, which popular

* "On Religion. By a Former Elder in a Scotch Church." Thomas Scott, Upper Norwood.

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sanction is itself based on the popular experience. And although it may be difficult for us to realize the exact manner in which religion, in its lower forms, has contributed to progress, has stimulated the comparatively higher volition in individuals, yet the facts are very important that no race has risen into the first rank of civilization which has not possessed a religion, and that none of those few tribes which are quoted occasionally as being possessed of no religion at all, have ever shown the slightest qualification for civilization, rather disappearing like melting snow before their contact with civilized races. But most important for the present argument are the facts that Europe has progressed during eighteen centuries in a most remarkable manner, and that Europe has, from the earliest European times, been in possession of a religion manifesting itself in the threefold external form alluded to. And as it has been previously seen that it is impossible, from an evolutionary point of view, to believe that European religion has been of no assistance to European progress, so now it may be concluded that, from the same point of view, European religion has existed and exists by the popular sanction, that popular sanction in its turn resting upon the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life. And now the question most obviously occurs, "If religion really rests upon this basis, upon the universal experience as

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to the uncertainty of life, will it ever be possible to dispense with religion as long as the possibility of such experience continues?" In other words, if the "free-thinker" is not prepared to believe in a Millennium can he afford to dispense with those "personal considerations" which set in motion the higher volition, and which he is given to repudiate as being akin to selfishness? Before, however, an answer to this question can be fairly demanded, an attempt must be made to connect the present position of religion in Europe with those propositions which have been accepted as to the origin of religion in general.

In the first place, however, let it be remarked that, in view of those propositions, religion, even in its earliest form, has evidently two sides, a positive and a negative. As has been said, as soon as a power presiding over and directing adverse influences has been recognized, the next and most natural step is to recognize a power presiding over influences of an opposite kind; the contests between which two powers are, as every one knows, the subject-matter of the nature-myths of all races. But, though both these sides of religion are recognized, it is not difficult to see which will be externally the most popular. The natural tendency of men, be they savage or civilized, is to seek for pleasurable sensations; it is, as all utilitarians know, the first law of their being, and the

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most necessary law for their preservation, that they should do so. More than this, mankind have an almost overwhelmingly strong tendency to seek for pleasurable sensations of the most direct kind: they seek, if savage, after the merely sensual gratification of sensual desires; if civilized, after the more refined gratification of social comfort and success. This is, of course, in a great measure just as it should be; for without the spur of such purely personal or selfish impulses the race could never, in its earlier stages at least, be preserved, nor society be maintained. But observe the effect upon religion. Every man finds it most pleasant to enjoy his ease; to draw pleasure to himself with as little exertion as possible; to do his duty in that passive sort of way which Arthur Hugh Clough has so scornfully described as "pure non-entity of duty." In this condition the imagination is content (for it has no reason to be otherwise) with "daily trivialities," and does not rise above them, unless some powerful influence seems at work to interfere with or extinguish altogether the possibility of pleasure. And hence, because in the majority of cases the imagination never rises above daily trivialities except under the impulse of fear, the popular side of external religion has always a tendency to be the negative side; there has always been, and it might be thought there always will be, so long as religion exists,

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a tendency to think of it rather as a means of averting evil than as a means of securing positive good. Now, of course it is not to be denied for a moment that to secure good is to avert evil, and that to avert evil is to secure good; the two processes merge into each other much in the same way that emotion and cognition merge into each other. Only when an examination is made into the more physical conditions under which volition is exercised, it is found that volition which is exercised under an impulse of fear can never be of so high an order as volition exercised under an impulse of an opposite kind; for while hope or joy stimulate the whole nervous system, fear, on the other hand, relaxes and depresses it. From all which it may be most plainly gathered, that, so long as religion can only afford a stimulus of fear, it can never be capable of supplying an emotional impulse to the highest order of volition, and consequently can never be useful to evolutionary progress.

This must be fully admitted; but with it must also be admitted the corollary that, whenever religion has been useful to progress, it has supplied to the higher volition an impulse much more positive in its kind than negative—so strongly positive, indeed, as almost entirely to exclude from the consciousness of those acted upon by it any recognition of its opposite negative. Those to whom the emotional impulse

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supplied by religion has been of any use, those to whom it is to be of any use, have been and must be filled with it, lifted up by it, carried on by it. And any one who studies the lives and the utterances of religious men of any age—men with whom religion existed for something more than religion's sake—will see that to such men religion did afford an impulse of this kind. It was the possession of such an impulse that lifted St. Paul, even when he was endeavouring to be most carefully logical, above his logic, and brought from him the magnificent burst of rhetoric that marks the climax of his Epistle to the Romans. Such a positive, joyous, uplifting impulse it was that gave its strength to the Methodist revival, as any one may realize who takes the trouble to read over Watts's well-known hymn beginning, "When I survey the wondrous Cross"—a hymn that perhaps expresses better than any other composition the intense reality of the religious reaction which its writer scarcely lived to see. In each of those three commonplace instances which were brought forward to illustrate the use of religion, the impulse given to volition was clearly much more of a positive than of a negative kind. And though, as has been admitted, no positive impulse after good can be absolutely free from the negative impulse to avoid evil (just as no cognition can be absolutely free from emotion), still

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it will now begin to be tolerably plain how offensive it is to literary propriety when the positive religious impulse, albeit a thing entirely personal, is described as being akin to selfishness. For, to repeat what has been said before, selfishness implies a calculating and reasoning process, and the ultimate determination, more or less recognized, to take a certain course for self-advantage; whereas the positive religious impulse to volition takes possession of a man, transforms him, carries him along with it, as the artist is carried along by his genius; not suffering him to reason out what is best for himself, although he is doing the best for himself all the time. And when we call to mind the general tendency of men to take the world as they find it, and not to let their imagination rise above "daily trivialities" until some evil or threat of evil compels it to do so, it is plainly seen that the positive religious impulse—the emotional impulse, not to avoid evil, but to seek after higher good—must of necessity be as intense and all-possessing as this, or it could never be of any service at all.

Now, having thus acknowledged that that side of a religion which is always (except in times of some special religious revival) externally the most popular is not capable of supplying a sufficient, or perhaps, indeed, any stimulus to the higher volition, it might be thought that the whole position here contended

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for is lost; and it must indeed be admitted that a society in which religion was universally and solely employed (as it might have been among the "Do-as-you-likes") to keep at bay the threats of an interruption of the pleasure taken in "daily trivialities," would be likely to do anything but progress. Two things, however, must be remembered. First, that though the negative side of a religion will almost always be externally the most popular, that negative side has nevertheless always its positive obverse; it is a necessity of thinking that the recognition of an evil to be avoided involves ultimately the recognition of a good to be followed; the general view taken of religion by individuals, whether it is more positive than negative, or the reverse, depending entirely on individual peculiarities of conduct and character. And next, it must be remembered that in a society which is progressing there must be and will be, among the comparatively small number of persons who are at any time in earnest about religion at all, a tendency rather to take the hopeful and positive view of it than the negative view. For in a society in which all the other conditions of progress are established (no one supposing that the possession of a religion can alone produce progress), life and thought will be budding and springing; there will be a more than average tendency present to look at the bright side

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of things, to find out the highest possibilities of the time, to look upon evil as a thing not to be suffered and propitiated, but to be conquered and driven out by good. And thus in a progressive society, whenever from time to time the imagination of numerous individuals (numerous intrinsically, though perhaps few at any one time comparatively) "rises above daily trivialities" to contemplate that *à priori* theory of the universe which is expressed in the popular creed, it is certain that some at least will recognize the popular truths it contains, not on their negative, but on their positive side, and thus from religion derive an emotional stimulus to their very highest volition.

But further than this, as religion has both a positive and a negative aspect, and as the more positive its aspect becomes the more it is able to afford an emotional stimulus to the higher volition; so it may be well conceived and readily granted that religion has a real sanction and an imaginary sanction, that the popular sanction of religion may occupy any position between absolute reality and absolute imagination, and that the more real the sanction is at any time, the more power will religion possess over that time, either in its positive or negative aspect. And while it may be freely granted that a great part of the popular sanction of religion in Europe (the

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religion which concerns us most nearly) is, and has been, only imaginary—that is to say, it would not have stood and cannot stand the test of direct experiment—at the same time it must be held that wherever there is an imaginary sanction there is some proportion of real sanction also, even though that real sanction may not take the exact form which might at the first glance be expected. For with regard to religious beliefs (as Mr. Herbert Spencer says), however different the essential verity of a religion may be from its concrete expressions, "some essential verity must be looked for." To suppose otherwise would be to "discredit too profoundly that average human intelligence from which all our individual intelligences are inherited." *

* "First Principles," 3rd edit., p. 13.

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CHAPTER IV.

RELIGION IN EUROPE.

RELIGION, then, based on the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, exists by reason of the popular sanction in its threefold external form of creed, ordinances, and organization. In the popular view, it exists for the sake of propitiating the powers presiding over life and death; as a help to evolutionary progress, it contains the means of supplying an emotional stimulus to the higher volition. And while at any time a great part of its popular sanction may be only imaginary, may be unable to stand severe critical tests, yet at no time has that sanction been altogether devoid of reality. For (to go down to the root of the matter) it must be clear to any one who will take the trouble to study the habits of aboriginal races, that even the African rain-maker or the Esquimaux conjurer is not wholly an impostor; that he maintains his supremacy not merely by his own

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professions and occasional coincidences of his predictions with subsequent occurrences. He maintains his supremacy also on the solid grounds of superior knowledge and superior sagacity — knowledge of herbs available both as medicines and as poisons—sagacity that will quite as often enable him to do good service to his fellows as to gather riches to himself. And if he should sometimes seek to gain his ends, or to subject unruly tempers by the threat of turning himself into a wild beast and devouring all indiscriminately—a threat which would seem to be with some tribes equivalent to the greater excommunication—who shall blame him? Certainly not the members of his tribe, who (more especially the women) run to a distance as soon as he begins to roar, and who eagerly buy back his general services by giving in to his immediate exactions.

These several propositions being accepted (and the "free-thinker" can scarcely complain of being unfairly treated in this), an endeavour must be made to connect them with the present position of religion in Europe. Now, though it has been allowed that the definition of religion given above—that it is based on the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, and finds its expression in endeavours to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death—may not appear very adequate or acceptable to some as

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referring to religion in Europe, yet by those who are to the smallest extent acquainted with the general principles of the theory of evolution, its applicability will be seen at once; that is, if they accept this as a proper definition of that lowest of all forms of religion—Fetishism. For they will know that the surest accompaniment of evolutionary progress in its human aspect is the development of more abstract and complex ideas. They will know that the unfailing and necessary accompaniment of a progress towards a highly civilized state is the development of conscience—conscience at the bidding of which the individual at last restrains himself spontaneously and with pleasure from acts which in former generations he would not have been restrained from, except under the strongest external compulsion; conscience which may be developed to such a pitch that (as Mr. Herbert Spencer somewhere says) even the memory of our unworthy thoughts becomes intolerable to us. Now, as this development of conscience goes on, there cannot but go on with it a progression of the ideas of good and evil (that is, of pleasure and pain) towards a more and more complex form; a progression in which they constantly tend to become more and more abstract, and less and less associated with merely physical conditions. A convenient example of this, and an example, moreover, which will readily appeal to a

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large proportion of even ordinary readers, may be found in that well-known chapter in the Gospel of St. Matthew which contains the first part of the "Sermon on the Mount"—a sermon which, whether it be regarded as expressing the teaching of one man or of many, is unmistakably the outcome of a refined state of society. "Ye have heard," says the preacher, "that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.'" And again: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'" From these passages, in which the old standard of morality and the new are contrasted, a pretty clear notion can be obtained as to the nature of the change that had taken place in a particular society during a long interval of years. For when a man who preaches, and who is listened to, who is indeed popularly regarded as a superior teacher of righteousness, is found placing vindictiveness or impurity of thought upon the same level with the utmost extreme of vindictive or lustful action, it may be accepted as certain that he is addressing those from among whom, as natural habits,

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acts of violence and rapine have died away, and who, for the acquisition of further moral progress, have rather to be on their guard against the indulgence of vindictive or lustful thoughts. Now, with men whose moral nature has become so far refined (and such refinement is the invariable accompaniment of a general advance towards a higher grade of being), it would be but reasonable to expect that more abstract also, and less associated with merely physical conditions, will become the notions entertained upon matters more peculiarly religious. And this, which we might expect to find, experience shows that we do find. Religion with ourselves, for instance, is still founded upon the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, and still finds its popular expression in endeavours to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death. With most persons, however, it is not now the physical life that it deals with, but the moral—the life of the soul, of the whole mental and moral being in its widest aspects. Moral catastrophes, moral difficulties, moral uncertainties, are the forces that now, with many among ourselves, lift the imagination from time to time "above daily trivialities;" and with many, too, it is the moral life, the ultra-physical life, which is believed to be eternal, that is regarded as of most importance. With many, at least, this is so; and doubtless it is now the case to

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a greater or less degree with all; but progress takes place so unequally, that for the present, while discussing things as they are, and not as they may be or should be, it will be still most convenient to adhere to the definition of religion already given, and to understand the words "life" and "death" in a sense more or less physical according to circumstances. That a more refined definition will be ultimately arrived at will be seen.

Before going further, however, it must be noticed that when religion is spoken of as existing in its external forms by popular "sanction," that sanction in its turn being "based" on universal experience, some caution must be observed. "Sanction" must not be understood to imply a conscious acquiescence, nor must "based" be regarded as a synonym for "originated." The theory by which the existence of religion is here accounted for is, it must be remembered, no less hypothetical than any other (such as, for instance, the theory of supernatural institution); only it is a theory which possibly agrees more with some of the thinking tendencies of our own race and time. It is needless to say that no one has ever seen a religion in the act of origination, any more than species have ever been seen in the act of development by natural selection. In this case, as in the other, the theory accepted is accepted on the evidence afforded

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by a comparison of different religions or of different species. A religion has been here supposed as originating in a certain manner, and giving rise to a threefold external form of creed, ordinances, and organization ; the supposition being founded on the evidence afforded by primitive religions now existing. But this threefold external form, having once come into existence, does not ever need to be created afresh ; it persists, passing through as many modifications towards refinement as are passed through by the society in which it is found. With each generation a little is added, perceptibly or imperceptibly, to the general progress of the society ; with each generation, in like manner, the existing religious creeds, ordinances, and organizations are perceptibly or imperceptibly modified. And thus, modified from generation to generation, the religion in its external form will always represent more or less accurately the average beliefs of the time, and will always persist, ready to be used—ready to supply an emotional stimulus to the higher volition—whenever such a stimulus is needed by the individual men and women who have been educated in connection with it.

Another point also must be noticed before proceeding further. For the majority, who only see the negative or propitiatory side of religion—the "Great

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World," which A. H. Clough has personalized *—religion does not possess much power to supply "an emotional stimulus to the higher volition." Doing their duty as if it were the "pure nonentity of duty," living just up to the level of the morality which surrounds them, what is it that keeps them from relapse, from individual retrogression towards such a fate as overtook the Do-as-you-likes? Nothing else, it might be said, than their negative social conformity—negative conformity, in abstaining from those deleterious actions which the average popular feeling of their time prohibits. Nothing else, it might be said, than this; only it must not be forgotten that even here religion, which supplies an emotional stimulus to the higher volition of the better natures, may have, and often has, a powerful indirect effect. For obviously the same popular belief which sanctions a certain external form of religion will make it disreputable to

* "And the Great World, it chanced, came by that way,
And stopped, and looked, and spoke to the police;
And said the thing, for order's sake and peace,
Must certainly be suppressed, the nuisance cease.
His wife and daughters must have where to pray,
And whom to pray to, at the least one day
In seven, and something sensible to say.
* * * * * *
As for himself, perhaps it was all one;
And yet he found it not unpleasant, too,
On Sunday morning in the roomy pew
To see the thing with such decorum done."

The Shadow.

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be altogether neglectful of that external form of religion ; and thus, besides being subject to the deterrent influence of social disapprobation (which to those seeking to be as comfortable as possible is an eminently painful and distasteful thing), the "Great World," the passive majority, is also subject, even though indirectly, to the deterrent influence of religion, the moral precepts of which, while capable of soaring infinitely above, can never, in a progressive society, fall below the average of the moral condition to which that society has attained. Even if in no other way susceptible to religious influence, the "Great World" himself is all the better for seeing "the thing with such decorum done" on stated occasions ; for if by any shock the corporate imagination of the "Great World" could possibly be raised "above daily trivialities," his previous habit of attending to religion as a formality would give him a better chance of discovering what religion is as a reality. And that even the "Great World" is not altogether beyond the reach of such shocks, the religious revivals of many periods amply bear witness.

Bearing in mind, then, the fact that, once established in the remote times of primitive society, the external forms of religion do not need to be recreated, but persist, and that the moral prohibitions of society must at any given time necessarily coincide more or

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less with the moral prohibitions of religion, and receive from religion a certain amount of support—bearing this in mind, an endeavour must now be made to ascertain what has been and is the nature of the real sanction of external religion in Europe, what have been and are the means, in European religion, of affording an emotional stimulus to the higher volition. With this object, a brief glance may be bestowed on two periods of European history, separated by a considerable interval of time, and in some respects extremely different from each other.

No one who studies even in the most superficial manner the condition of Europe between the eleventh and twelfth centuries (which is one of the periods referred to), can fail to see that at that time the rule of the strongest was the guiding principle of society. Abstract justice, or any idea of abstract justice, there was none. The right of the rich to rob, plunder, and imprison their equals and inferiors was accepted as a matter of course, just as it is now popularly accepted as a matter of course that every man has a right to better his position, by less violent, even if sometimes scarcely more legitimate, means. And as might be naturally expected, a society so violent in respect of its manners, was not less superstitious in respect of its beliefs. As ignorant of the laws of nature as of the laws of civilization, the nominal Christians of the

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eleventh century, equally with their pagan ancestors of previous generations, beheld in every change of the physical universe the possibility, or even probability, of a magical interference. To them a miracle was more natural than nature; while to be regarded as possessed of supernatural power was the passport to homage even greater than that which attached to the feudal lord. The feudal lord, like the strong man armed, exercised his will downwards through his temporal vassals without regard to anything but his own gain, plundering here, slaying there, exacting everywhere. But in the chair of St. Peter at Rome sat a stronger than the strong man armed; the wielder of more than material might; the vice-regent of him to whom all power was given in heaven and earth; who through his spiritual vassals in the cloister and in the pulpit, held power over Europe to bind and to loose; to inflict eternal pain, or to open the gates of an everlasting life of happiness.

The popular sanction, then, of European religion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was to a great extent founded on the common belief in magical or miraculous interferences with the conditions of the physical universe, and in the right and power of certain persons to exercise such interference—a common belief, shared in by all grades of society, from the Pope who divined upon an egg down to the

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meanest subject of the Emperor whom the same Pope, simply through the power of this belief, kept standing for three days barefoot in the snow. This part of the popular sanction was, it may be well guessed, a myth and a delusion—a merely imaginary sanction. It would, however, be a slander on our forefathers if we were to suppose that even they, ignorant and uncritical as they were, would have allowed this belief in magic to be so influential, would have laid themselves under the shadow of clerical terrors, unless there had been co-existing some sanction more than imaginary for the assertion of the ecclesiastical authority. And this real sanction was undoubtedly present in the average superior intelligence of the clergy—an intelligence used as much for the benefit of the people as for the exaltation of the Church. That in an age when every one was more or less seeking his own lower interest, often scarcely more than an animal interest, the clergy, drawn from among the mass, should as a body have been altogether above doing the same, was not to be expected. It would, however, scarcely be reasonable to suppose that the average clerical morality was below the whole average of the time, while the more scattered instances of exalted virtue which the Church produced might be well considered to have raised the average morality of the clergy above that of the laity. But,

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leaving altogether on one side the probability that higher intelligence would produce a better morality (a probability which the "free-thinker" is sometimes disposed to insist on), there can be no doubt whatever that the superior intelligence of the clergy in the time referred to gave them a real title to authority which will stand the most critical tests. With the clergy alone remained, and by them alone was valued, whatever of literature and of art the receding tide of Roman dominion had left in Europe. Ignorant enough though individual members of their body might often be, the clergy were nevertheless the only schoolmasters, the only farmers, the only engineers, the only architects, the only financiers. The monastic lands were better cultivated; the monastic revenues better managed. Wherever a monastery was built, there followed in its train better roads, greater security to person and property, and other like advantages; insomuch that the uncritical laity might well be excused for their belief in the efficacy of relics, when they saw the amount of visible and tangible prosperity that attended the gift of a saint to any particular locality. To a people ignorant and superstitious, superstitiously reverencing knowledge and ignorantly assigning to it a supernatural origin, the real intellectual superiority of the clergy, slight as it may have been, was sufficient to justify a belief in their deputed

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powers over heaven and earth; more especially when the clerical power was seen to be centred in the city of Rome—that city by which their own barbarian forefathers, though conquering it in one sense, had been themselves conquered in another.

As yet, however, it has not been seen in what manner the religion of Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries supplied, or was capable of supplying, that "emotional stimulus to the higher volition," without which it could have been of no service to evolutionary progress. The belief in the power of the keys, in the Divine vice-regency of the occupant of the Papal chair, in the eternal consequences of excommunication—this belief possessed the power of making the Church feared, the power of preventing the masses from sinking below the average level of the morality of the time; the power, in short, of maintaining, if but by fiery threats and semi-voluptuous promises, that "negative social conformity" which is often to the majority of persons their highest virtue. But herein was only the negative, the propitiatory, side of religion made manifest. We can appreciate the power of the popular sanction of religion, both real and imaginary, when we see how by it kings were constrained to observe some decency in their relations with the other sex. We can appreciate it when we see the most powerful prince of Italy

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undergoing, for an ecclesiastical offence, public chastisement at ecclesiastical hands, rather than incur penalties less direct indeed, but more terrible both in their present and future consequences; or when we see another Italian noble taking counsel with the Church, as to the best means of purging himself from past offences (probably including Church spoliation), and accepting gratefully ("libenter et ardentissimo animo") the advice to bestow his property on the Church for the benefit of the poor. All these instances, however, only show us volition exercised under an impulse of fear. Where was to be found, it must now be asked, in the religion of mediæval Europe that impulse of an opposite kind which religion must be able to supply before it can be useful to progress?

Knowing, as all must, how much a high state of civilization depends for its existence on the restraint of the lower passions and a regard for the interests and feelings of others, and knowing that in the Europe which has been spoken of the lower passions and the desire for mere self-gratification predominated over society, it might reasonably be supposed that, if human nature was to have a chance of developing its highest possibilities, some means would be found to attract and draw out from it the qualities of personal purity and self-denial, strengthening in individual

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men and women the power of restraint over the lower passions, and the desire to be serviceable to their fellows. Nor will it be difficult to understand that, if any good and lasting result was to be obtained, the contrast between the actual and the possible must in the first instance be extremely marked. Such means were found, how and where it seems almost superfluous to say. The receding tide of the Roman dominion had left behind it whatever learning and literature the mixed races of Europe could boast of; little enough it was that was thus left, nor was it left in the hands of those who were at all competent to appreciate its full value. But so it was, that the men who possessed and preserved all the lettered intelligence of mediæval Europe were the men who also inherited the engagement to teach all nations the Gospel of Christ. What the real Gospel of Christ was they did not know; nor did they know with the smallest degree of historical accuracy (with far less, possibly, than is now possessed by Sunday school children) who Christ was or in what relation he stood to his own time and race. It was not the human Christ, nor the historical Christ, nor the Hebrew Christ, that the ignorant teachers of a more ignorant Europe accepted. They could not have understood or have accepted such a Christ as any of these. Such a Christ in such a society would have been the Christ of disorder and insurrection and

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anarchy, as Arnold of Brescia, the Mazzini of the twelfth century, found when he raised the standard of Christian Republicanism in Rome. No; it was the grand, mythical, Jupiter-like Christ of the popular intelligence of the decaying Roman Empire that they accepted; the Christ with no human emotions, but the God of no human sins; the Christ whose protection was over the weak, whose hand was against the oppressor of the poor; the Christ whose kingdom was to be ultimately established in peace, but who, until it was established, would not fail to pursue his enemies with the two-edged sword of spiritual and temporal authority. It was this Christ that stood supreme over the rude Teuton's polytheistic Christianity, just as the literature and arts of ruined Rome stood supreme over his unlettered ignorance. It was this Christ whose omnipotence was appealed to in the sentence of excommunication, whose return to the earth was so confidently expected at the close of the tenth century, whose mysterious presence was worshipped in the Eucharist, in the chair of whose chief apostle, as it was believed, sat the "little old man" who had humbled the proud successor of the Cæsars.

A Christ of terror, it will be said. Necessarily so, but a Christ of promise also to the troubled and darkened Europe of the first German Emperors. For though it has never been here pretended that

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religion can supply to human nature qualities which are not possessed by it beforehand, it must notwithstanding be held that religion has the power, as commonplace experience shows, of calling into activity qualities which have been more or less dormant. It was in the possibilities of the Teutonic races to arrive at such a high pitch of civilization as now exists among us—to arrive at a high pitch of that moral self-restraint, and of that social reciprocation which are the true bases of social security. These qualities, however, were, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for the most part dormant and potential only; the external surface of society showed only the excess and violence that are prompted by unrestrained lust and sensual ambition. Yet whenever the figure of Christ pressed upon the imagination of any one more earnest and more noble than the average, it kindled into sudden reality all the slumbering possibilities of human nature with which the Europe of to-day is so much more familiar. It kindled them into a reality—a reality, howbeit, somewhat exaggerated and fantastic. The social atmosphere was too thick and heavy, too much charged with the fumes of inordinate passion, for the flame of moral purity to burn openly without imminent danger of its extinction. A protection was necessary for it, and that protection was found in the ascetic regulations

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of the monastic life. Without that shield chastity and temperance would have had no chance against licence and sensuality; the lesson of the time would not have been taught, and until that lesson was taught (and surely the sooner it was taught the better) no progress towards a refined state of civilization could have been made. And equally ill would it have fared for the cause of more abstract justice, of respect for person and property, had not the Christian lesson of respecting the weak been backed by the high spiritual (and, if need were, temporal) authority of the Papal chair. The necessities and conditions of the time determined the manner of the advance in these two most necessary directions; but the moving power which led individuals to attempt such an advance was the emotional stimulus given to their higher volition by that divine benediction on holiness and brotherly love which came to them, even though refracted and distorted, through the Christian traditions of the vanished empire of the South. The very incompatibility of such a moral standard with the conditions of the time made it all the more powerful over men who possessed, though they knew it not, the potentiality of its fulfilment. Like the wind over the harp, the influence of it swept over a thousand chords in the hearts of the forefathers of to-day, making music strange, unexplainable, faint

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often, and at times discordant, but always hinting at some problem to be solved, some glory to be reached, some destiny to be fulfilled. The high-born noble felt it. Riding forth on his stern yet hereditarily sacred errand as the avenger of his kinsman's blood, he met his enemy, helpless, in the way, and spared him at the sign of the cross. The rough brutal populace felt it, siding, though they knew not why and though licentious enough themselves, with the greater asceticism of the unmarried clergy. Haughty and ambitious enough, it may be said, was Gregory VII., but it was not for himself or for his class; for with not less zeal than he claimed a supremacy over Emperors did he support the just claims of the subordinate classes against feudal tyranny; and with not less zeal than he asserted the rights of the clergy as a body, did he, by enforcing clerical celibacy, deprive them individually of the then supremely coveted prospect of hereditary power. St. Bernard, it is true, would have put a check upon metaphysical speculation by pursuing Abelard to the death; but the time was in need of the practical lesson of the one, and was all too unripe for the theoretical inquiries of the other. A thousand Abelards would have left the masses, high and low, undisturbed in their licentiousness, their bloodshed, and their plunderings; one St. Bernard spoke, and it was like the awakening

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conscience of a world. A strange world it was, chaotic and unformed; darkness upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of the civilization that was to be brooding unseen over the waters. But when we ask, Whence came the first light to this wilderness of passionate forces, we can only say that it flashed from beyond the Alps and the Apenines; from the dying twilight of Imperial Rome; dazzling, even confusing at first, in its contrast with olden shadows; radiating from the countenance of the crucified and ascended God, to whom purity was his nature, and lovingkindness his omnipotence.

Europe, as we know, has outlived that time; not only outlived it, but from it dated the commencement of a progress, social, scientific, moral, of a most remarkable kind. And as might, judging by many analogies, be not unnaturally expected, the very things which then tended to her health have since become in a great measure the associates of disease. That the victory of the Church over the secular power in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was beneficial, in enabling the cultivators of peaceful arts to resist better the tyranny of the feudal chiefs, cannot be reasonably doubted. And yet it may quite consistently be held that, after the close of the twelfth century, ecclesiastical predominance was rather a hindrance to progress than a help. The river of

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civilization, of evolutionary progress, passed over into new channels, those which it had left becoming the mere standing-places for stagnant pools, whose exhalations, it has been said, are fraught with danger to the social constitution. We have seen the asceticism which once raised a standard for the world's advance, which once was the external expression of an uplifting and unselfish enthusiasm, come to be an abuse, to exist for its own sake; or, worse still, to exist in appearance only for the sake of the covetousness and sensuality which have hidden themselves behind it. We have seen hands, not less inspired than those which raised up the monastic system, stretched out to pull it down; pulling it down, too, in the same name in which it had been built up. We have seen the self-renouncing code of morality which St. Bernard found so difficult and yet so glorious become commonplace, come to be identified with a mere wordy formula, too often (if only once) used as an excuse for half-hearted effort and neglect of a fair intellectual scrutiny of the conditions of life—until, indeed, a protest has not inexcusably been made against it as insufficient and undesirable. Situated as we are in less volcanic times, we find it often hard to believe that such a thing ever was as the necessity for a monastic system and a Supreme Pontiff. But that there was such a necessity we cannot doubt, unless,

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indeed, we are to commit ourselves to the theory often put forward, with a strange blindness to its ultimate consequences, by "free-thinkers"—the theory that priests, as a distinct species, have always been by nature more far-sighted and intelligent than the rest of mankind—a theory which surely is neither so safe nor, in an evolutionary sense, so consistent as the theory that priests are nothing more than ordinary mortals until they are made something more by the popular voice.

Turning, however, from mediæval Europe, it is now time that an endeavour should be made to determine what is now, in the nineteenth century (the other of the two periods referred to), the nature of the real sanction of external religion in Europe, and what means it contains of affording an impulse to the higher volition. And here it will be desirable to narrow considerably the field of view—to consider the question more in its English than in its continental aspect. For, not to speak of the continual protests that, from the earliest Anglo-Norman times, have been made against the assumed dependency of the Anglican Church on Roman authority, every one knows that now, whether it be a matter for regret or for congratulation, the Anglican Church is for all constitutional purposes completely severed from the Church of Europe. That this ecclesiastical insularity

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should ultimately result from the fact of our geographical insularity, may be very well argued; it is not, however, within the scope of the present attempt to enter upon this question, nor yet upon the question of the advantages or disadvantages which such insularity entails. The mere fact that it exists is sufficient to justify us in examining the religious phenomena of the nineteenth century from an English point of view; for if we once extend our glance across to the continental shores even nearest to our own, we meet with phenomena so different from any that we personally and ordinarily witness, that we shall be liable to confuse ourselves in any endeavour to refer them all to a common basis.

When we ask what is the imaginary sanction of external religion in the England of this century, we cannot but be struck by the comparative poverty of the answer we are in conscience bound to return. So thoroughly in England has the puritanical axe been applied to the tree of European tradition, that not only have the useless and unfruitful branches been lopped off, but many that were undoubtedly fruitful also. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that the English Reformers cut down the tree altogether, and left us instead, as far as religion pure and simple is concerned, a mere bare pole of justification by faith, rooted in the not over-nourishing soil of the

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individual conscience. Our creed, our "*à priori* theory of the universe," covers, it is true, pretty much the same ground as is covered by the creed of Europe in general; but a creed is popularly nothing except as expressed through ordinances and organizations. And when we come to examine our ordinances and organizations (not, of course, in the learned light of English Church historians, but in respect of their power to attract the popular imagination), we find them to be mere make-believe. The priest baptizes, but he has grave doubts about baptismal regeneration; he consecrates the Eucharistic elements, but dare not assert that any change in them is thereby effected; he alone can pronounce the words of absolution, but denies that he has power to remit sins; he cannot minister except after the imposition of hands, but yet he is not held to have received anything through the ceremony of ordination. There is no point in the Anglican ritual upon which the popular imagination, not yet even in the nineteenth century cured of seeking after a sign, can fix itself with any satisfaction. The connection with European tradition having been severed, the only thing there is upon which the popular mind can fix itself as supplying an imaginary sanction for the existence of the Anglican Church, is the very same Puritanical axe with which the severance from tradition is believed to have been accomplished—the

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belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible. It is true, as the Protestants boast, that the Anglican Church of the Reformation professes to draw its sanction, so far as purely religious matters are concerned, from the Bible alone; but it is quite superfluous to say that a common-sense appeal to the Bible, as plenarily inspired, and apart from tradition, would leave the Church of the Reformation devoid of all justification for its existence.

Feeble, however, as is the imaginary sanction of external religion in England, the real sanction is, or perhaps it would be almost safer to say has been, powerful in the extreme. And it is worth while noticing, as illustrative of the strange transmutations that things undergo in course of time, that the very same practices which endangered religion in the Europe of the eleventh century have been among the chief means of preserving it, as a system exercising a powerful negative effect at least, in the England of a later time. Against Investiture and the marriage of the clergy, Gregory VII. effectively waged war, as institutions detrimental to the usefulness of the Church of Europe; it has been in a great measure by the help of the modern equivalent of Investiture and the liberty of the clergy to marry that the English Church, lopped most piteously of an imaginary sanction, has secured a real sanction of the most useful kind. For

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the influence of the English Church since the Reformation has been essentially a social influence, exercised through the means of the parochial system. Under this system the parochial clergyman has been the state-appointed standard of morals and manners, of literature and learning, to his district; and though, as compared with some abstract ideal, fault might often have been found with him on any of these points, experience still shows that, at any given time (for times vary in their morals and culture) the parochial clergyman will generally be found superior to the landowner in respect of morals, to the farmers in respect of manners, and to the whole parish (if it be a rural one) in respect of literature. He is, or at least is highly capable of being, the humanizing influence of the parish; the representative, even if but a poor one, of the best civilization of the time; and the value of such a representative, supposing him to be such, even the most prejudiced must allow. But the English Church having been so carefully pruned of all that could give her a hold over the popular imagination, it is evident that, to wield this social influence effectively, the parochial clergyman must have gathered some other support elsewhere. And this support he has received jointly through the curiously Erastian constitution of the English Church, and through his power to marry; for by these means his social

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interests have been identified with those of the land-owner. Now, the landowners in England are, as we all know (and if we did not know, the Radical journals would take care not to leave us long in ignorance of the fact), the most influential body in the country, and have been so for a long time past; though whether they will continue to be so in the future is an entirely different question, and a question which must be kept in view in any serious measure of Church Reform. And as by the events of the Reformation the possessions of the Church fell almost entirely into the hands of the powerful aristocratic families, appointments in the Church have thus become a convenient portion for the poorer members of those families. The interests of the landowner and of the parochial clergy in this way became almost inseparable, and the advantage was great to both sides. The clergy obtained the powerful support of the landowners, and the landowners were glad to have enlisted on their side the additional sanction of religion; while the power of the clergy to marry not only made them more sensitive to the will of the landowners, but at the same time gave them a greater interest on the side of social order. That this state of things could never be absolutely good, and that it is even now exposing its fatal defect, may be perfectly true; but that it has been productive of good for a long time in

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England is true also. For the landowners have been, till very recently, the veritable "powers presiding over life and death," both to farmers and labourers; to serve the landowners has been to these their most pressing interest, and thus the commonplaces of average morality, which the parish clergyman could not but utter in his pulpit even if he disdained to put them rigidly into practice in his life, came to the bulk of his audience backed by the magisterial authority of the occupants of the landowner's pew. And certainly, when a due estimate is made of the loss of restrictive power which the Church sustained at the time of the Reformation (as will presently be seen), it cannot but be regarded as fortunate that, the clerical and landowning interests being so bound up together, the most pressing interest of the farmers and labourers, who till recently constituted the great bulk of the English population, should have become so closely associated with the following of a standard of morals and manners above the average of the time—that the maxims "Fear God, honour the King," should have been popularly regarded as including each other. Nor can it be denied that the parochial clergy, while serving the interest of the landowners, have also materially served the interest of the labourers in softening the impact of an almost irresponsible magisterial power, and regulating its exercise.

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All this, however, has to do only with the negative or propitiatory side of religion ; and much as we may value the really great moral service done for English society by the parochial system, it is hardly possible to avoid feeling a sense of loss and a dread of great ultimate danger, when we contemplate a system in which so little appeal has been made to the reverent imagination, and so much to the lower necessities. Nor can we wonder that a system which has acted so powerfully, so exclusively, it might be said, as a means of preserving negative social conformity (a thing which it is most necessary to preserve), should have rather repelled than encouraged that individual effort after a higher ideal of life, which must be made if society is to progress. And herein is to be found, not indeed an argument against the principle of Establishment in the abstract, but a most valid and powerful justification of Protestant dissent. For to the earnest-minded and independent persons who are to be found scattered up and down in every society, whose earnest and strong natures have been to them the occasion of religious "experiences," and who have gathered from their experiences an increased sense of independence, it cannot but seem a grievous thing to be subject to a religious system which, while it affords but little encouragement to individual earnestness, affords abundant opportunity

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for the hypocrisy of mere self-interested conformity. And hence it comes about that, while the creed held by the Protestant Dissenters is almost identical with that held in the Established Church, and while the Established Church has done a service which Dissent could never have done in securing a negative social conformity; yet it must nevertheless be admitted that, up to a very recent period at least, the Protestant Dissenters have had far more to show of the positive side of religion, and that their ranks have contained a far greater proportion of individuals in respect of whom religion has supplied an "emotional stimulus to the higher volition."*

And whence has come that stimulus to the higher volition? What has been its nature? Undeniably it has come from the doctrines that more particularly centre on the person of Christ. Even as it was in the Europe of the eleventh century, so it is in the England of the nineteenth. The Christ of the Protestant Dissenter, it is true, is a different Christ from that of St. Bernard, less mythical, more human; but (to the Protestant theologian at least) at the same time more metaphysical also. It is not, however, difficult to see that, in practice, the metaphysical Christ, the Christ

* No mention, it will be seen, is here made of the Ritualist, whose good services no one can deny. The Ritualist, however, expresses the revival of the European tradition in England, and I have been here considering religion in England as severed from the European tradition.

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of the Atonement, has received a powerful sanction from the human Christ, the Christ of daily life. To those who, like the early converts of Wesley and Whitefield, are conscious of a sense of moral imperfection, it is necessary, first of all, to supply such a strong emotional force as that which resides in the idea of God becoming a sacrifice for man. The *vis inertiæ* of self-discontentment needs this stronger emotion to overcome it; and while that emotion is in force, occupying all the mental channels, the reality of the generating cause is not criticized. This first emotion, however, soon expends itself; and then comes the trial of its reality. The varied duties of daily life do not and cannot allow of a resort being continually made to the overwhelming feelings of the moment of conversion;* and unless they can receive some confirmation from the quieter experiences of daily life, the mind is liable to reject them altogether as unreal and illusory. But here the human Christ, the Christ of daily life, the Christ of gentleness and purity of spirit, supplies a sanction to the metaphysical Christ, which, it is true, is only imaginary in itself, but is closely associated with a great reality.

* It need scarcely be said that the word "conversion" is used purposely. For, in spite of the disgust which spurious and hypocritical conversions must call up in every reverent mind, not the most physiological of psychologists can deny the often lasting value of a sudden mental impression.

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For to the man of Teuton stock, as has been seen, the exercise of gentleness and the cultivation of purity in morals—the exercise of the social virtues, it might be said—is capable of affording the highest satisfaction and pleasure. To the exercise of these he sees himself enjoined in the name and for the sake of the God who became man for his salvation ; and reaping as he does a real and experimental pleasure from the following of the human Christ, has he not thus a sanction, powerful, though imaginary only, for believing in the metaphysical Christ of the Atonement? And is it not almost certain that, the two Christs being thus associated in his mind, any discredit thrown upon the one will appear to him as discredit thrown upon the other?

But here is something clearly to arrest the attention, something which cannot be accidental ;—that, in spite of changing times, dividing nationalities, improving arts, and progressing morals, the emotional stimulus which religion is capable of affording to the higher volition should always have centred itself upon the person of Christ, whether the mythical Christ or the metaphysical Christ of pure imagination, or that really more powerful human Christ, the Christ of daily life and experience. This cannot be merely accidental, the mere result of coincidence; and if we decline to believe in the popular notion of

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the divine appointment of the religion of Christ to be the religion of at least the whole European world, the only other conclusion we can come to is that there is a peculiar fitness in the figure of Christ to appeal to the European mind; that Europe, in the beginning of her civilization, selecting Christ as the most vivid ideal of her own possibilities of human nature, has in the progress of her civilization more and more assimilated Christ ("put on Christ," as St. Paul has it); a Christ becoming less and less mythical and more and more human as Europe advanced from the enchanted ground of early morning visions into the clearer and fuller noonday light of social and moral fulfilment. For can it be supposed that, in that struggle for existence which is not less severe in respect of beliefs and ideas than it is in respect of physical species, any but the fittest could have survived? Of all the schemes of philosophy, or of government, which the ages have produced and are still producing, how many are remembered even by name, how many are forgotten even in the next generation? Reading in the names of the countless early Christian sects—Arians, Pelagians, Sabellians, Montanists, Gnostics, and all the rest—the differently diverging directions in which Christianity might have developed, why, we must ask, did it follow the particular course which it has followed? Two answers only are pos-

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sible; either that it has been guided and moulded through all its various forms by a supernatural power; or that it has taken the form from time to time which the existing circumstances—the condition of culture, of government, of philosophy, of morals—demanded. The first answer the "free-thinker" will certainly reject; the second, however, if he wishes to earn a right to be called consistent, he must in the most unreserved manner accept, for in its rejection is involved the rejection of the whole evolutionary scheme.

Christianity, then, it may be said, has followed a certain course and taken certain forms because such a course and such forms have been the "fittest;" or, it might indeed be said, seeing that the progress of Europe has been coeval with Christianity, that these forms and this course have been the "best"—the best, as still contributing to the progress which has been going forward. But it will not fail to be noticed here that now for the first time the religion of Europe has been spoken of as Christianity; and the question is so often asked, "What is Christianity? why are we Christians?" that some justification of the use of the term will not be improper.

To deal with these questions in order. It is not to be doubted that the word Christianity is capable of being made to appear extremely ambiguous. Pro-

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fessor Francis Newman, for instance, once expressed himself on the subject thus :*

"The admission that Christianity is our religion draws after it the very vexatious, very difficult, and very obscure inquiry, What is Christianity? If, for instance, the Indian Theists called themselves Christians, they would inflict on their successors the curse of Christian controversies, from the Romanist to the extremest Unitarian School. . . . We from within are proud of Christianity, and little realize how hateful it is seen from without. What more wicked than the conduct of Christians for centuries together to Jews, to Indians, and to all the dark-skinned races? Why am I to take on myself all this frightful odium? By disowning the name Christian I purge myself of Christian guilt."

It is impossible not to be touched by the ostrich-like simplicity of this last sentence; and equally impossible is it to prevent the mind recurring to those who boasted of their efforts to garnish the sepulchres of the righteous. For, seeing that Christianity has been at least the nominal religion of the whole of Europe since the sixth or seventh century, it is quite certain that Professor Newman is bearing witness against some of his ancestors. But why not for the same reason equally repudiate the title of Englishman? Surely there was nothing more barbarous done in the middle ages than the comparatively recent act of Englishmen in forcing the opium trade

* "A Reply to the question, 'Why I do not call myself a Christian.'" Printed in the *Boston Radical* in 1870, and reprinted by Thomas Scott, Upper Norwood.

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upon China—an act the remembrance of which might well cause every Englishman to wish that he belonged to any other nationality. But we are Englishmen by history and by descent; we are all of us responsible for the sin of the opium business, and we shall all bear the consequences of that sin, whether we recognize them as such or not. By history and by descent also are we Europeans and Christians; for whatever may be done for us in the future by the revisers of human nature, hitherto Christianity has been the only religion that has existed in Europe. Utterly vain, then, must be any attempt, by refusing the acceptance of a name, to wash our hands of our inherited responsibilities as members of (if it indeed were so) a cruel and persecuting Church. And as utterly vain is it to deny that, though indeed it might be difficult to find a name for European religion when looked upon in its negative or propitiatory aspect, no name can be more clearly appropriate for that religion, when looked on in its positive aspect, than the name of Christianity. For it has been seen that whenever religion in Europe has been of service to evolutionary progress by furnishing an emotional stimulus to the higher volition, it has done so invariably through the doctrines or ideas that more peculiarly centre round the figure of Christ. And thus, so far from the admission that we are Christians involving us in an

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inquiry "vexatious, difficult, and obscure," such an admission rather draws after it a sense as clear as any daylight; the sense that, being of European stock, we own that religion which has been useful to Europe during her progress towards a higher civilization.

And from this it may be gathered how simple is the true answer to that second question, "Why are you a Christian?" with which the "free-thinker" is not indisposed to puzzle (as he hopes) the intellects of the orthodox unwary. For if any one should be simple enough to ask, "Why are you an Englishman?" we should not think it worth while to answer that we were so because we believed in the great Trinitarian myth of the British constitution, or because we believed that Britannia possessed a prescriptive right to rule the waves, or because we had coals in our grates, or because we all possessed the right to say and think whatever we pleased, no matter how foolish it might be. No; we should consider that the question had received a full and complete reply when we had said, "We are Englishmen because our fathers were so before us." And such an answer as this is the full and sufficient answer, even should it be received with derision, to the "free-thinker" who in his wisdom should ask us why we are Christians. For to say that we were Christians because

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we had read Paley or Butler, or because we believed in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, or because we had had certain individual experiences, would be to place ourselves in a position of doubt and of only partial security. But to say that we are Christians because our fathers were so before us, to throw ourselves back, as Europeans, upon the great European tradition which has grown up with our race, is to disarm all but appropriate criticism—is to submit the historical religion which we hold to historical jurisdiction, feeling confident, as we must do, that such a religion could not have existed unless it had been useful.

Instead, therefore, of speaking of the religion of Europe, henceforth let us speak of Christianity, and say that Christianity is based on the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, and finds its popular expression in the endeavour to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death. But here surely will be a proper place for the introduction of that more refined definition of religion which has been already hinted at. As has been said, with most persons it is not now the physical life that religion deals with, but the moral—the life of the soul, of the whole mental and moral being in its widest aspects. Moral catastrophes, moral difficulties, moral uncertainties, are the forces which now, with many among ourselves, lift

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the imagination "above daily trivialities." With many, too, it is not now the sense of physical health that is capable of affording the highest pleasure, of seeming the highest good, but the sense of moral rectitude, of fulfilling the highest possibilities of our moral nature. May it not, then, be said that Christianity is based on the universal experience as to the difficulties of moral rectitude, and finds its popular expression in the endeavour to propitiate the powers presiding over righteousness? This, at any rate, is the definition which must now be suggested; its fitness will possibly become more apparent presently.

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CHAPTER V.

THE DANGER OF FREE-THOUGHT.

IT will never be thought by those who rightly estimate the necessity for the maintenance of an average standard of morality, that a slight has been intended in these pages to the Established Church, in describing her influence as rather negative than positive—in regarding her rather as the repressor of vice than as the encourager of active virtue. For in a progressive society scarcely any work can be more important than this—the maintenance of a strong check upon vices which would inevitably, by rendering society insecure, tend to counteract, or more than counteract, the action of the progressive forces; the maintenance also of a channel by means of which the continually advancing higher morality of any time may gradually find its way down to the lowest social strata, and leaven them to itself. This work it is that the Established Church of England has done; a work which can never be over-estimated; a work which

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could have been accomplished by no other means, and certainly not by the dissenting bodies; a work which is all the more precious and honourable because it is so thankless, affording scarcely any other than negative results, and never rewarded by the glory of a brilliant and positive success. And in the presence of these considerations it is difficult to resist the feeling that, if to the men who have from time to time been driven out from the Church for conscience' sake, there belongs something of the glory of martyrdom, there must have been many more unknown to fame remaining within it who should be crowned with the milder glory of the saint—men who began life in hope and endured it in disappointment; who, seeing not the end of things, but only their daily aspects, have laboured day by day under a grey sky of discouragement to fulfil their duty, to make the world "a little less ignorant and miserable," and have seen too often the harvest of their own good sowing reaped, without a word of acknowledgment, by others.

In performing this great and necessary work, the Church of England, as has been said, has drawn her main support from her close connection with the landed interest; the social power thus obtained being the real sanction for her existence, her belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible the imaginary sanction. Now it cannot but be evident that a Church

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existing by such a sanction, real and imaginary, as this, is always exposed to a very great danger—a danger which may be long in making itself felt, but which is almost certain to be felt sooner or later. For it may happen that a time will arise when the subordinate classes, instead of feeling that their interests are entirely bound up with the interests of the landowners, will feel that those interests are in some respects antagonistic to their own—a feeling which will be very probably exaggerated until it is made to appear as if the antagonism were complete and unexceptional. It may happen also that doubt will at some time be thrown upon the legitimacy of the imaginary sanction; that the book which has been regarded as infallible will be shown to contain unmistakable evidence of fallibility. And it is quite clear that if these two things should come to pass simultaneously, the Church so based would be in imminent danger of being regarded as a useless encumbrance, of which society would be well rid.

Whether the coincidence is not more accidental than some persons seem to suppose it is hardly necessary at the present moment to discuss; for the fact is patent to the most careless observer that the Established Church is at this moment threatened in respect both of her real and her imaginary sanction. The labouring classes have suddenly risen to hold an

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independent position. Beginning, some three quarters of a century ago, with the population of the towns, the working man's antagonism to the landed interest has now spread to the most rural districts, carrying with it, as a necessary consequence, an antagonism to that Church which the landed interest has hitherto supported. Herein, no doubt, is to be traced the judgment on the Church for her Erastianism, a thing so offensive to the Puritanical mind. But the Puritan may see cause to postpone his triumph when he reflects that the Established Church is now threatened with another judgment for her professed adherence to the letter of Scripture, and for her casting forth from her midst the accursed thing of Popery. She elected at her first setting out to appeal to the popular imagination solely through the Bible ; and consequently an attack on the Bible imperils her own existence. She has leaned on a broken reed, and the reed has pierced her hand ; the Bible, being unduly dwelt upon, has at last given way under the pressure. And in these two facts together lies the strength of "Free-thought" when it urges the advisability of Dis-establishment. For it must be evident that, if the social prejudice of the lower class against the Establishment did not exist, the Bible might be criticized (as it has often been before) without any noticeable effect being produced ; and that if the infallibility of the Bible were nowhere

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doubted, a Church founded on the Bible would still have a powerful influence in spite of social prejudices. But the two things coinciding, the position of the Establishment is made extremely precarious; the scientific prejudice of the middle class and the social prejudice of the working class acting and reacting on each other to produce a most formidable opposition.

Now it must be admitted that the Established Church has not hitherto (from an abstract point of view) been happily constituted; and it must equally be admitted that there is something in the nature of the present time which may well demand some effort after religious reformation and reconstruction. To say no more than this (and this is quite enough to say), it might be most legitimately argued that our increase of critical knowledge necessitates the basing of religion on none but a real sanction—a sanction so real that it will be able to stand the keenest experimental tests; a sanction, too, which shall be more thoroughly a religious sanction, and not so much a social or political sanction in a religious disguise. But, granting all this, the question must now be asked whether the "free-thinker," in the midst of his talk about progress, has ever sufficiently reflected on the probable—nay, the certain—results of his endeavour to further progress in his own peculiar way? For suppose it even to be granted that some have arrived at that height of

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intellectual and moral excellence at which religion ceases to be of any positive use, what is to be done with those in the meantime who are not so blest? As has been already admitted (and the "free-thinker" will not object to the admission), it is only in respect of a few, comparatively speaking, that religion supplies an emotional stimulus to the higher volition; with the majority—the "Great World"—religion acts merely as an additional means of enforcing a negative social conformity. Now, though it is quite possible that all may ultimately arrive at the point where religion may be dispensed with as a positive help—at the intellectual and moral elevation, for instance, at which we shall be all able to ascertain with the utmost precision what acts of ours will be productive of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, and be utterly beyond the reach of temptation to act in any other way—though this may be possible and highly desirable, it is, in the meantime, sufficiently patent that the "Great World" has not yet attained to such a point, and that it has yet clinging round it the relics of that ignorance (if it may be called so) upon which the imaginary sanction of religion rests. In England, for instance, the "Great World" is habituated to the belief that the Bible is an inspired and infallible book, that going to church is a highly valuable practice, and that the morality of daily life—the maintenance of that average

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standard of conduct which is called respectability—is dependent on and sanctioned by the Bible. Absolutely it is not so, no doubt; but the "Great World" thinks that it is so, and the "Great World" is helped by this belief to keep up to that average standard of morality, the maintenance of which is so important in a progressive society.

And what then? It has been seen that, according to the evolutionary view which has been taken of religion in general, that, though there is always a real sanction and an imaginary sanction for the existence of the external forms of religion, and though these may be really very different from each other, yet that they are, and must necessarily be, mixed up with each other in the popular mind to a degree which practically makes them inseparable. This must of necessity be so; for the popular mind would never consent to the imaginary sanction unless that imaginary sanction seemed to be real—seemed, that is, to gather experimental confirmation from matters of fact about which there can be no dispute. And this being so, is it not evident that if the imaginary sanction be interfered with, some effect of the interference will be manifested in respect of those matters which connect themselves with the real sanction? When, for instance, the loosing and binding power of the clergy of the eleventh century was called in question, was not the Church

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plundered, and the progress of agriculture impeded? And to-day, when morality is supposed to be dependent on the Bible, will not morality be injured, and progress thrown back, if the authority of the Bible is called in question?

This is what the "free-thinker," whose existence in England is strictly manifested through his attacks upon the Bible, will do well to consider; and the more sincere he is, and the more he has at heart that progress which he so often talks about, the more is he bound to consider it. Nay, further—the nearer he approaches to the position of a "consistent free-thinker," and the nearer he gets to the "solid basis" of evolution and gives up his tiltings against Liturgies, the more is he bound to consider it; for the more value and importance will he then attach to the association of ideas. Further than this, the more he sees his endeavours becoming popular in the class below him, in the working class, the more he is bound to consider it. For he will see the members of the lowest class, who have therefore, because they are members of the lowest class, the most pressing need of being induced to live up to the average morality of the time, throwing off, in the heat of a social controversy, and in the following of a social prejudice, the beliefs which have been serviceable, certainly to some extent, and probably to a great extent, in securing

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their "negative social conformity." It is dangerous enough that, among a rapidly increasing class of persons, many of whom are certain to be considerably below the average of the time in respect of intellect and morals, there should exist a social prejudice against that which has hitherto helped them to be "respectable;" but how infinitely is the danger increased if they can borrow the intellectual objections of others to justify their prejudice! For any one who is practically acquainted with the intellectual capacity of the average working man will know that it is utterly hopeless to expect him to observe the nicer distinctions of criticism; with him everything must be either one way or the other. On questions in respect of which wiser men, if only a little wiser, would be inclined to be neutral and in suspense, the average working man will be positive (for he cannot be otherwise), with yes or no. Either there is a God or there is not; either there is a future life or there is not (a question with regard to which persons who would certainly claim to rank intellectually higher than the average working man fall into the same snare); either the Bible is literally inspired, or it is a mass of falsehoods; either his parish minister is a superior being divinely appointed to look after his spiritual welfare, or he is a tyrant and an impostor. Any dubiousness of assertion in respect of points such as these becomes

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to the average working man an absoluteness of negation; and may not the "free-thinker" therefore well reflect, before he gives to the world his pamphlet, or before he assists to circulate the pamphlets of others, whether he is really contributing to progress, and whether he is not rather, by attacking the imaginary sanction of the popular religion, weakening the prohibitory power of the popular morality, and thus bringing near an imminent danger of moral retrogression?

This is a doubt which the "free-thinker" might, even on this general view of the matter, most reasonably entertain; and if he refers to history he will find the doubt justified in a most striking manner. It is customary among "free-thinkers" to compare the work of their most eminent leaders with the work of the English Protestant Reformers, discounting in the present, as it would seem, the fame that falls due in the future. It will therefore be not uninteresting to see (always taking care to remember that the Protestant Reformation in England was quite a different thing from the Protestant Reformation in Germany) what one of the most noted of the English Reformers has to say about the social effect of the Reformation in England.

"I never saw surely so little discipline as is nowadays. Men will be masters, they will be masters, and no disciples.

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Alas! where is this discipline now in England? The people regard no discipline; they be without all order. Where they should give place, they will not stir one inch; yea, where magistrates should determine matters, they will break into the place, before they come, and at their coming not move a whit for them. Is this discipline? Is this good order? If a man say anything unto them they regard it not. They that be called to answer will not answer directly, but scoff the matter out. . . . Surely in Popery they had a reverence; but now we have none at all. I never saw the like."*

This is the testimony, not of any opponent of the English Reformation, but of that very Latimer whose name is familiar to all Protestant Sunday School children, through the cheap edition of "Foxe's Martyrs," as one of the sternest opponents of Popery. And most conclusive and damaging testimony it is against that indiscriminate and semi-political rage for religious destructivism which marked the spread of the Protestant Reformation in Great Britain. "Surely in Popery," says Latimer, as if somewhat puzzled at the fact, "they had a reverence." They had, no doubt; for Popery (which in Latimer's sense meant more especially the worship of images and relics) supplied the imaginary sanction to average morality which the rude masses of the time, the "rascal multitude," could best appreciate. The great mass of the population were as far as they could be from an ability to understand the new wares of

* Latimer's 7th Friday Sermon before Edward VI., at Westminster.

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Protestantism—the purely subjective dogmas of Justification and Full Assurance, and so on. What they could understand was that the churches were holy places, the relics of saints holy things; that the priest, with the saints to back him, had an unlimited power to do them service or disservice in their Purgatorial sojourn. And however great may have been the corruption in some of the monasteries (and nothing is easier than to exaggerate it), it would hardly be justifiable to suppose that the morality of the clergy was below the average level of the morality of the time; or to see in the indignation of the English Commons, when the report of the Royal Commission was read, anything much differing from the feeling which, four centuries previously, had led the citizens of Milan to take the side of Arialdus in the crusade against the married clergy—the feeling of scorn for those who, professing to be ascetics, were not ascetics. At any rate, the unascetical habits of the clergy were not popularly dwelt upon, and, as long as they were not popularly dwelt upon, the influence of the Church to secure negative social conformity ("discipline," as Latimer calls it) was not interfered with. And upon this point there can be scarcely a difference of opinion—that though to reform the clergy (as Wolsey was endeavouring to do) was a wise act, to publish their

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failings openly was the gravest error; for so great is the respect paid by sensuality to even an imputed asceticism, that a doubt thrown upon the imputation is liable to be distorted into a denial of all excellence whatever.

The Churches and all connected with them being so regarded by the popular mind, what was the natural result of the action of the Reformers in respect of them? That the Reformers, both English and Scotch, had no intention of accomplishing more than a purification of the churches, is certain; even though we have seen it suggested, with an appearance of gravity, that the ruins of Melrose are a fitting monument to the memory of John Knox. A monument to Scotch reformers' intentions such ruins can never be; though, unfortunately, they may be, together with the want of discipline mentioned by Latimer, a melancholy monument of the results of their action. The order of the Regent Murray, issued in 1560, for the "purification" of the cathedral church at Dunkeld, is a sufficient witness for the intentions of even the most eager opponents of the Scarlet Lady.

"To our traist friendis the lairds of Arntilly and Kinvaid.

"Traist friendis,—After maist harty commendacions we pray yow faill not to pass incontinent to the kyrk of Dunkeld and tak down the haill images thereof and bring furth to the kyrk-yard and burn them oppenly and siclyk cast down the

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altares and purge the kyrk of all kynd of monuments of idolatry. And this ye faill not to do, as ye will do us singular empleseur, and so committis you to the protection of God.

"From Edinburgh the xii. August 1560.

"Faill not but ye tak guid heyd that neither the dasks, windocks, nor dorris, be ony ways hurt or broken ——, eyther glassin wark or iron wark."

That this document expresses the feeling of the educated leaders of the Protestant Reformation, both in England and Scotland, there can hardly be a doubt; purgation, in the name of true religion, was the end sought, and not destruction. But it is surely sufficiently obvious that to the uneducated, the "rascal multitude," such purgation could only appear in one light—in the light of the most thorough destruction. For to the uneducated the churches only existed for the sake of the things which were cast out of them; their gods being taken away, what had they left?

> "Nay, take my life and all, pardon not that;
> You take my house when you do take the prop
> That doth sustain my house; you take my life
> When you do take the means whereby I live."

So Shylock said when told that his life was spared, though his property was confiscated; and this was the excusable feeling of the uneducated multitude in Great Britain when the churches and monasteries were "purged." The prop was taken which sustained the house; the churches were, for

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them, practically destroyed when that which made the churches sacred was destroyed; the images and altars were what to them consecrated the churches; and when educated men burnt the images and broke down the altars, who can be surprised that the uneducated failed to see any reason why the doors and desks, the glass-work and iron-work, should be respected? Who can be surprised to see "Melrose Abbey as it is," or to find the carved stones of the great church of St. Edmund's Bury built into road-side walls? There is nothing surprising in all this, however little such a result may have been foreseen by the leading Reformers. For they, being educated and able to distinguish to some extent between the real and the imaginary sanction of the existing religion, forgot that to the uneducated the imaginary sanction seemed the most real; that to them the symbols of religion, the statues of the saints, the miracles of the altar, the pomp and penances of the wonted ritual, were the realities themselves; and that if these symbols were all at once authoritatively despised and trampled upon by the educated, the uneducated would regard themselves as licensed to despise and trample upon the realities of religion also. The churches had been the conscience of the uneducated, and, as such, had kept them within bounds, had enforced upon them the observance of

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that "negative social conformity" which is to so many their highest virtue; and when the uneducated were deprived of that conscience they did what was right in their own eyes, they were "without all order." Lawlessness enough there had been in England in the previous century, while the houses of York and Lancaster were contending with each other for supremacy; but that had been military lawlessness. The lawlessness after the Reformation was a moral lawlessness—a lawlessness of a far more degrading and dangerous kind.* And for this lawlessness, which expressed itself in the spoliation of the churches, in promiscuous sexual intercourse, in the disregard of constituted authority, the English and Scotch Reformers, innocent though they were of it in their intentions, must be held indirectly responsible; they had taken away the restraining power of religion over the uneducated of the time, robbed religion of its imaginary sanction, and had put nothing in its place. True, they recommended the hearing of sermons, and extolled the virtue of honest labour;† but what were sermons or honest

* There is nothing, so far as I have been able to judge, in the "Paston Lotters," up to 1460 or thereabouts, which gives so dark a picture of English society as may be gathered from portions of Latimer's sermons a century later.

† "How shalt thou provide for thy soul? Go hear sermons. How for thy body? Labour in thy vocation."—Latimer's 6th Friday Sermon at Westminster.

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labour to those who had been accustomed to pilgrimages and relics, and who found a mine of wealth open to them in the deserted and unprotected and, as they reasonably thought, desecrated abbeys? No doubt, from an abstract point of view, it was very foolish of the "rascal multitude" to find the sanction of religion where they did; no doubt, too, it was very wrong of Shylock to see in his money the sole support of his life: but, foolish or wrong, so the case was, that Shylock saw in the loss of his money the loss of everything, and that the uneducated masses in Great Britain saw in the "purgation" of the existing religion, all religion, with its powerful influence to enforce negative social conformity, abolished: and had it not been for the fresh impulse soon after given to social reconstruction by the development of her maritime resources, it is almost impossible to say what would have been the ultimate fate of England through the indiscriminate zeal of those who took advantage of the existence of a political prejudice to attempt a sudden religious revolution.

There was Providence in all this, it may be said; the light of Evangelical truth was not to be extinguished in Europe; and therefore Drake and his fellow sea-rovers were allowed the opportunity, in the carrying out of expeditions not always righteous or merciful, of acquiring that nautical readiness which

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was so effective against the Armada. Be it so ; it is, of course, always possible that things may turn out better than undiscerning and headstrong people deserve that they should turn out. It is, however, a safer and more commendable plan not to draw on Providence too heavily, or, indeed, not at all, if we can help it ; to make up our minds rather that the days of miracles are over, that our deeds will bring their natural consequences after them, that no substitute will be found for Iphigenia at the last moment, and that if we leap from the gallery of a Belvedere we shall infallibly be taken up dead from the turf beneath. And therefore, though it so happened that the work of the English Protestant Reformers did not result as might have been expected, it will scarcely recommend itself as a wise or consistent act to the "free-thinker," in case his work in any respect resembles that of the Protestant Reformers, to blind himself with the hope that the evil consequences of that work will in some miraculous manner be averted.

And that his work does resemble that of the Protestant Reformers in Great Britain (though scarcely so much that of the Protestant Reformers in Germany), is undoubtedly true. Like the Reformers, the "free-thinker" has ample excuses; for surely there are enough things in the popular religion to make the intelligent man scornful, and the sensitive

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man sad. Like the Reformers, too, the "free-thinker" thoroughly believes in the righteousness of his cause. But, like the Reformers still, he is terribly lacking in discrimination. Even though (as is to be hoped is the case) he can for himself distinguish to some extent between the imaginary and the real sanction of religion, he cannot see that in the popular, the average mind, the real and imaginary are inextricably entangled together; he cannot see that, instead of making an onslaught upon the imaginary, he might be doing better service by adding reality to the real. No doubt, from an abstract point of view, it was very foolish of Shylock to think that his life consisted in the abundance of the things that he possessed, and no doubt, also, it was very foolish of the "rascal multitude" in the sixteenth century to think that pilgrimages, and relics, and altars, and images were the essential part of religion. But so it was—they did think so. And no doubt it may be very foolish, and indicative of intellectual mediocrity, for so many persons to-day to believe in the efficacy of going to church, or in the infallibility of the Bible. But so it is; and the belief helps them to be respectable, if nothing more—helps them to observe that negative social conformity which must be observed if society is to be preserved from retrogression. And unless we are to commit ourselves to the theory of a Millennium,

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we must accept it as a certainty, even if a melancholy one, that for the present they will continue to believe as they do, or at any rate, even though verbally casting away their belief, remain at that intellectual and moral level which makes such belief congruous and possible.

Now, it has some time back been noted, on sufficiently good authority, that no cognition can be absolutely free from emotion ; to which fact may now be added this other, suggested by universal experience —that the less any particular cognition is tinged with emotion, the more easily we can get quit of it. The difficulty we experience in acknowledging ourselves in the wrong, does not arise nearly so often from a want of intellectual appreciation, as from the emotional objection we have to confess our liability to make mistakes. Our cherished opinions are, as a rule, cognitions largely combined with emotion—cognitions tainted with the selfishness of personal considerations ; if it were not so, Tory speeches would cease to exist, and the "Origin of Species" would much more speedily have been accepted by the scientific world. And hence it may be reasonably concluded that if (as the language of "free-thinkers" would often seem to imply) the popular religious beliefs of to-day were colourless cognitions—cognitions almost absolutely free from emotion, nothing

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would be easier or simpler than to get quit of them and replace them with others. But they are not this; and nothing would be more absurd than to suppose that they are; for if they are, the amount of intellectual fatuity which the country contains must render all hope of intellectual progress a mere mockery. No; the popular religious beliefs, if they can be called cognitions at all, are cognitions largely combined with emotion; they are not associated merely with the highest results of nervous action; they extend deep downwards, no one can tell in his own case how deep, but certainly deep enough to give rise occasionally to that religious monomania which results from imperfect digestion, and to justify the sneer of the Spirit in Clough's "Dipsychus," that he might perhaps gain a pious rapture once a fortnight—

> "By the lucky chance
> Of happier-tempered coffee."

Extending, then, so deep, associated so intricately not only with the moral, but with the emotional, and even the physical being, it must be held as certain that they cannot be easily or quickly changed or thrown off; and that if by some sudden shock of contradiction, an apparent and verbal renunciation of them is induced, such a shock does not expend its force where it falls, but is transmitted, in undetectable

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modifications and with ever-decreasing vibrations, through all the thousand channels of mental association, effecting changes wherever it goes.

To trace the effect of such a shock as far only as the moral associations of religious beliefs are concerned, is quite enough for the present purpose. The average level of morality, as has been already allowed, does not in reality depend upon religion; but religion (because in a progressive society its maxims can never fall below the average morality) is to the many the means by which they get a clearer view, a more objective view, of the best morality of their time—by which an imaginary, but powerful sanction is given to their respectability. The association, moreover, between the popular beliefs and that average level of morals which is called respectability is so close that what affects the one will inevitably, in some way, affect the other. And if any one wants to understand how a negation of popular religious beliefs (which are in themselves imaginary) can affect the average morality of the time (which is a most stupendous reality), he has only to go among a knot of "free-thinkers," or rather, perhaps, disciples of "free-thinkers," and hear how, in discussing matters of conduct (let us say such as have reference to the relationship between the sexes), they make use of the word "only." "The religious sanction of chastity,"

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they will say, "is all a mistake and a superstition; it is only the custom of society that commands us in this respect; and this command we are quite free to disregard if we choose." Now to those who, possessed of intellect enough to know what the custom of society implies—that it is the net result of millions of unconscious experiments made through centuries, and that it stands on a firmer basis than any philosophy that ever was constructed,—to these such a way of speaking and thinking might be harmless, though they certainly would not employ the word "only." But to average persons, the disciples of "free-thinkers," who are to be taught by popular treatises, as some seem to think, to distinguish between "fossil sawdust" and the "bread of life;" who can see no more meaning in the customs that surround them than they can see in the coats they put on, or the ledgers they write in, the withdrawal of the religious sanction, the imaginary sanction, of chastity seems the withdrawal of all sanction apart from their own choice. And thus, even if in some cases ever so little, the inducement to observe a negative social conformity in this important respect is weakened, and the average morality of the time, even if ever so little, is lowered. For even if the idea that chastity is but a matter of choice should never be practically acted on, there is still danger incurred to the moral system. The moral system becomes

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relaxed; insomuch that whenever a temptation to unchastity comes in the way it is no longer resisted by a single impulse as a thing utterly incompatible with the higher life which even the most faulty form of Christianity professes to encourage; it is rather regarded as a thing to be argued with and speculated upon, to be dismissed, not altogether impolitely, as a visitor who would not be unwelcome save for those prudential considerations to which a man desirous of making his way in the world must yield. That the individual morality hereby suffers can hardly be questioned; and through the lowering of the individual morality the average standard of the morality of the time is lowered, even if ever so little. But it is just this "ever so little" that the "consistent free-thinker" is bound to take care of; because the whole sum of evolutionary progress is made up of countless "ever so littles," not one of which can be spared.

To produce moral retrogression instead of intellectual advance; to be regarded in the future rather as the headstrong fanatic than as the judicious reformer; —these are results the bare possibility of which might well induce the "free-thinker" at least to pause, and to question whether it would not be better for him to criticise the imaginary sanction of religion (if he feels bound to criticise it) privately to himself. But he must now be shown another probable result of his

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endeavours—a result which it may be thought he but little expects, and at which he will be anything but pleased. That he is sincerely wishing to do good by attacking superstition, may be fully admitted; but what if he is only casting out one unclean spirit to make room for seven? What if, in resisting a comparatively mild superstition, he should be playing into the hands of a superstition which is rampant?

A living female writer of some considerable popularity has given it as her opinion that the problem of the Future Life is the "question of the day, to which a distinct 'yes' or 'no' must be given, and on whose decision, one way or the other, hang portentous results for both religion and morality."* Now, if there were any reason for believing that Miss Cobbe is correct in supposing that such important results are depending upon the distinct answer given to this question, our case would indeed be pitiable; for it is precisely the endeavour to give a decided answer to questions that can never be decided (and this question of the Future Life is one of them) that has from time to time played such havoc with practical religion and with the peace of society at large. Being now in the agonies of endeavouring to give a distinct answer about Biblical inspiration, surely it seems a hopeless thing

* "A letter from Miss Cobbe to the Editor of the *Index*, Toledo, U.S.A." Published by Thomas Scott, Upper Norwood.

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to look forward to a new-commencing strife with the Hydra of Immortality. But though it may be hoped that Miss Cobbe will prove as much mistaken in her prediction as she is in her assumption—the assumption that to this question a distinct answer can be given—there can be no doubt that she represents a considerable section of English society in her belief that the question of a Future Life is an important question and one to be answered. Here is a popular belief—a belief which till within the last fifty years or so was accepted so widely as a matter of course that few persons cared to dispute about it. Within that time, however, there has arisen a continually growing sensitiveness upon this point; the proofs of immortality have been eagerly asked for; the popular mind, anxious, for several most natural and excusable reasons, that immortality should be a reality, and losing something of its old confidence in the presence of the inferences rather than the direct attacks of physical science, has sought for evidence of its reality. And lo! just as the whole world was in danger of sinking in the night of materialism (so the spiritualist puts it), here, by a beautiful design of Providence, comes Spiritualism to set us all right again.

Beautiful, and natural also;—intensely natural that, when we wish to believe a thing we should find the most convincing proofs that so it is; and who is

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not able to sympathize with the wish to believe in immortality? But not the less does all the finer feeling, and genuine reverence, and common sense of society stand aghast at the profane balderdash and trumpery tricks of that new profession of medium which the anxiety on this point has created; not the less is it felt that proofs the most convincing of a life to come would be dearly purchased at the expense of grafting such an evil as professional mediumship upon the life that now is. Of this evil the "free-thinker" has a most devout horror; and he would certainly not be without a large circle of sympathizers in regarding the existence of the professional medium as a public nuisance and a public danger. But suppose it can be shown that, if the existence of this nuisance should be indefinitely prolonged, the "free-thinker" himself will, in a great measure, be responsible for such prolongation?

There is no doubt that about this question of immortality the popular mind is at present very sensitive; there is prevailing (as probably there always will prevail) a strong wish to believe in immortality, even if in an immortality limited to the righteous only. Now, whether or not the sensitiveness upon this subject is really the reflex effect of the development of physical science, two things are quite certain —first, that physical science is popularly supposed

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to bear, by inference, against the old authorities for the belief in immortality; and next, that the sensitiveness on the subject being so great, whatever force bears against the old authorities will be a force driving the popular mind to seek for new authorities. Hence the conviction held by the believers in Spiritualism that Spiritualism has been providentially developed just in the very nick of time to save society from materialism—a belief which is not in the least hindered by the grossly materialistic nature of almost all that is called spiritualistic. Now, if left alone, this belief would die out and the popular sensitiveness on the question of immortality would subside; for as the physical sciences and the philosophy legitimately founded upon them become better known, it will be more generally recognized that (the idea of a corporeal immortality being now on its own merits practically abandoned) this philosophy does not touch the question of immortality at all so far as giving a decided "yes" or "no" is concerned. The popular mind will gradually become accustomed to the idea that a decided experimental "yes" or "no" cannot be given to this question, and that those who hold the belief in immortality must hold it, as it were, at their own risk. But in the meantime it is surely sufficiently obvious that to attempt to meet the popular affirmation with a negation which is itself experimentally unprovable,

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will be only to drive the popular affirmation frantic, will be to shut it up in a corner and compel it to justify itself by any means possible; will infallibly tend, in short, to create new professional mediums, more ingenious tricks, more of those piles of Spiritualistic literature which are to be found stored up in a certain street not far from the British Museum.

It may not at first sight be seen how the "free-thinker," whose efforts in Great Britain are mostly expended on the Bible, can exercise much effect on Spiritualism either one way or the other. But those who have interested themselves in examining the popular mind as it is, instead of laying down what it should be, will be fully aware that Spiritualism has ridden into English society on the back of the popular belief in Biblical infallibility. With many Spiritualists, indeed, if not with all, the keystone of their belief in the reality of the phenomena they witness is the unconscious (for it is unconscious) harmony into which Spiritualism has been brought with the narratives in the Bible. And the extent to which this harmonizing process is carried will hardly be credited by those who have not come in contact with it personally. Every miraculous event recorded in the Old and New Testaments is shown to have its counterpart in the Spiritualistic experiences of to-day. Regardless of all that has been said by Biblical critics

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as to the false translations, historical discrepancies, and mythological appropriations which the Bible contains, the Spiritualist insists on clinging to its English letter with a tenacity of ignorance which is only paralleled by the tenacity of the ignorance with which, by the professed Secularist, its English letter is assailed. For a double reason, then, is an incitement to the creation of professional mediums furnished by the work of the "free-thinker." Indirectly, the "free-thinker" assails the belief in immortality; directly, he assails the belief in Biblical infallibility. Spiritualism, having been, as it is thought, confirmed by the Bible, finds itself under the necessity of supporting Biblical infallibility; so that an attack on Biblical infallibility, instead of being met on its own ground, is met by the Spiritualists on another ground,—the ground that Spiritualism, "by many infallible proofs," shows the Bible to be literally true. And as the multiplication of these "infallible proofs" implies the multiplication of professional mediums, the "free-thinker" may enjoy the reflection that, in assailing Biblical infallibility, he is putting money into the pockets of men whom all the sober part of society regard as a public nuisance; that, in attacking one comparatively mild superstition, he is encouraging another which is rampant. Of course it may be shown that the Spiritualists argue in a circle; but

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what then? Nine-tenths of mankind habitually argue in a circle, and even make short cuts across it when they have some special object to gain.

To show him, as even the possible result of his work, a depreciated average standard of morality and the perpetuation of an acknowledged public nuisance, might surely be enough to induce the "free-thinker," if he is really in earnest about progress, to pause and reconsider his whole position. To these results, however, one other probable result must be added—a result which is perhaps the least tasteful of all to those who are desirous of steady and lasting progress. The social prejudice of the working-class against the Established Church is so great, that from this cause alone Disestablishment will be the probable result of an extension of the franchise downwards. But if to this social prejudice the "free-thinker" adds the weight of his own theological prejudice, the probability of Disestablishment becomes almost a certainty; and if the English Church is disestablished it will be disestablished, not by the jealousy of the Nonconformists, nor by the intellect of the "free-thinker," but by the brute force of the multitude which Nonconformists and "free-thinkers" have together helped to arm. And the Church once disestablished, will it all be peace? Will the car of Intelligence, guided by the spirits of common sense and national necessity, glide

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smoothly over the ground where the Church lies buried? A beautiful hope, but a delusive one. For, leaving the working-class (who will want a religion some day, when they have settled their trade disputes, and who will be attracted to the religion that is most objective in its form and doctrines) out of the question, there can be no doubt that the wealthy and aristocratic families will, in the event of Disestablishment, turn in large numbers to the Church which can show for itself the oldest traditions, the most æsthetic ritual, and the most learned clergy—in short, to the Roman Catholic Church. And surely this is the very last thing that the "free-thinker," if he is in earnest about progress, can wish—to see additional wealth and additional influence put into the hands of the Church with which religion is not allowed to occupy its proper place in the whole of human life, but is made to exist for its own sake, is encouraged to magnify itself into abnormal dimensions, to draw into its exclusive service the best energies of the time; thus storing up the elements of social tempests not less devastating, even if less material, than that which broke over Central Europe in the Thirty-years' war.

Such are the dangers of "free-thought,"—dangers the bare possibility of which might well induce the "free-thinker," even if he holds that religion can be of no positive value to himself, rigidly to withhold his

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hand from attacks upon the religion of others. If he is indeed, as he sometimes boasts himself to be, the advocate of progress and the restorer, or rather creator, of paths to dwell in, he will, on the merest hint of such danger, make a careful re-survey of the position which he occupies. Should he decline to do this, he is in no little danger of being regarded in the future as one who cared more for private gratification than for the public good ; and who would have let the whole universe perish sooner than part with one jot of his own self-importance.

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PART II.

PROSPECTIVE.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE CASE RE-STATED.

THAT some reform in respect of religious matters is necessitated by the circumstances of the time may be readily admitted ; and it may also be as readily admitted that such reform must lie in the direction of making the sanction of religion as real as possible, of bringing religion down as nearly as possible to direct experimental proof. And this necessity (strange as it may seem to those who are accustomed to associate the word "Evangelical" with all that is bigoted and unprovable) was foreseen little less than a hundred years ago by none other than the Rev. John Newton, of Olney; a man who, in spite of the prevailing fashion to regard him as an enemy to common sense, might well be regarded as the common-sense genius of the Evangelical revival, just as Wesley was its organizing and Whitefield its preaching genius. "At a time," says Newton, writing in 1782, "when hypothesis and conjecture in philosophy are so justly

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exploded, and little is considered as deserving the name of knowledge which will not stand the test of experiment, the very use of the word *experimental* in religious concernments is by too many unhappily rejected with disgust. But we well know that they who affect to despise the inward feelings which religious persons speak of, and to treat them as enthusiasm and folly, have inward feelings of their own which, though they would, they cannot suppress. . . . We know that there are people who seldom smile when they are alone, who therefore are glad to hide themselves in a throng from the violence of their own reflections; and who, while by their looks and their language they wish to persuade us they are happy, would be glad to change conditions with a dog. But in defiance of all their efforts they continue to think, forebode, and tremble. This we know, for it has been our own state, and therefore we know how to commiserate it in others. From this state the Bible relieved us. When we were led to read it with attention, we found ourselves described—we learnt the cause of our inquietude—we were directed to a method of relief—we tried, and we were not disappointed." *

It is necessary, no doubt, that we should put ourselves into Newton's time—the time of which his

* Newton's preface to Cowper's first volume of Poems.

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friend Cowper was the leading and only poet—in order to understand the full reality of meaning that may lie under expressions such as these; but it is worth remarking that it was indeed this experimental sanction that gave to the Evangelical revival its great strength. Its weakness, no doubt, was here—that the experiment extended only to a certain order of emotions, and that as soon as the occasion for these emotions passed away, which it did as soon as society had recovered from its moral relapse, the reality of the emotional experiment was so much outweighed and comparatively depreciated by the more objective reality of physical experiment, that it has come to be regarded as almost entirely gaseous and unreal. But nevertheless the argument by which Newton sought to justify his own religious views in the eyes of philosophy is the same identical argument by which any religion which is in the future to be positively beneficial to society, which is to be able to supply an "emotional stimulus to the higher volition," must be justified—the argument, namely, that it can be tested by experiment, and that, not only in respect of one side or of one aspect, but more or less in respect of all.

Most persons will probably be prepared to join with Newton in saying that the present is a time in which hypothesis and conjecture in philosophy are justly exploded, and in which little is considered as

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deserving the name of knowledge which will not stand the test of experiment. And our arrival at such a point in the history of philosophy is, it may be easily believed, the natural result of our progress in civilization. For while it may or may not be true that philosophy has shown an uninterrupted progress from Thales to Comte, and while it may or may not be true that (as Mr. Herbert Spencer would seem to hold) all philosophy whatever must ultimately become experimental, about these facts there can be no question—that the European (or let us say for greater clearness' sake, the Teutonic) mind has a remarkable affinity for the positive, or *à posteriori* method of thinking; that all through the course of European history it has been struggling, with growing success, to express itself through this way of thinking, gradually emancipating itself from the imported philosophies of other races and of other branches of the race from which itself has sprung; and that it now stands forth with a consistent philosophy of its own—the philosophy of evolution—which is daily gathering strength and confirmation from experiments carried forward in a hundred different directions. And here comes in the difficulty of the time—the difficulty which the existence of the "free-thinker" expresses, but which it may be suspected he is quite incompetent to deal with—the difficulty of finding a place or a use for

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religion at all. For a religion, if it is to exist outwardly, implies a creed, and a creed is (as Mr. Herbert Spencer says) an *à priori* theory of the universe—the universe either in respect of the whole of its relations or in respect of some of them—for example, in respect of its relations to human conduct or to human volition. And therefore the "free-thinker," even while he may see reason to restrain himself from attacks upon the religion of others, to be content to let others take pleasure, if they can, in what offends himself, may yet fairly ask whether there will be any room for a religion in the future, when the new knowledge and new ideas which he has become possessed of have percolated downwards through the whole strata of society.

It is not, perhaps, very difficult to understand what are the reasons that may lead many persons to doubt, even if they do not seek to communicate their doubts to others, whether there will be room for a religion in the future. Looking at the average religion which prevails at present, they see that it is apparently founded on ideas which are absolutely beyond all possibility of verification. They see that this religion presupposes the infallibility of a book (for we are restricting ourselves to religion in England) which, even if no attacks are made upon the idea of its infallibility, will inevitably in course of time be

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everywhere regarded as fallible. They see, too, that in respect of the most universally received religious doctrines—for example, the belief in the efficacy of prayer and in the duty of relying solely upon Providence—even averagely religious men are more and more restricting the limits within which they are held to be applicable, and they can hardly doubt that, these doctrines having been excluded from the field of pure physics owing to the gradual recognition of fixed laws, they will, when the fixed laws of mind are gradually recognized, be also excluded from that field of mixed physics which is the property of the modern psychologist. Religion, if it imply but little, must imply some amount of an assumption, of an *à priori* theory, with regard to the condition and reason of things; if it does not imply this, it is scarcely a religion; and will there (it may be asked) be room for such a thing when our knowledge of the universe is complete? Again, the progress of civilization brings about such an increased gentleness of manners, such toleration among men of each other, such spontaneous rejection of actions which may injure society, that it may be well asked whether there will be in the future a necessity for even the refined moral restraint which a creed much more refined than is now averagely accepted is capable of exercising—whether the necessity for personal con-

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siderations in the guidance of our actions will not be done away with in our ability to see clearly, and without reference to any considerations but those of the "abstract rule of right," what we ought to do. Or again (it may be asked), supposing the Bible to be the basis of Christianity, does not the Bible itself provide for the ultimate extinction of organized Christianity when the ends it was intended to serve have been accomplished?

That in this direction (for all these things are practically one) we are tending, there cannot be a doubt. We are tending, as John Newton said, to reject everything in the guise of knowledge that cannot be tested by experiment; we are narrowing more and more the possible limits of our assumptions with regard to the universe; our manners are becoming gentler; we are growing towards a moral condition in which external restraint may be more dispensed with; we are restricting the influence of personal considerations upon our conduct; we are getting to understand more clearly what are our social duties; and there is, without doubt, ground for asserting that Christianity, if founded on the Bible, contains provision for its own extinction as an organized system. But, leaving out of sight any question as to the enormous length of time which would probably be necessary to bring us to our ultimate destiny, it will

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be well to notice that, as progress goes on, it creates within itself certain retarding and antagonistic forces, the recognition of which may well cause us to correct our first impression with regard to the future of religion.

Knowledge increases, and may increase without practical limit; but then the more knowledge increases the more clearly its relativity is recognized. For instance, the savage believes the sun to be a fiery and capricious monster, and is certain of the fact beyond all patience of contradiction. The modern philosopher has much better reason for believing the sun to be a globular mass of matter of a certain size and weight, fulfilling certain predictable sequences as to its movements. But yet the modern philosopher is quite aware of the possibility that all this may be a mistake; and he knows also that there are conditions under which the conception of the savage may appear true. And thus as our knowledge of the relationships of the universe increases, and as we recognize the fact that this knowledge is only relative, we shall recognize the fact also that our "*à priori* theories" of the universe, our assumptions with regard to it, our religious creeds, were not absolutely false; but that they were true from some particular point of view. For example, we shall reject as an absolute truth the idea that volition, though it "counts for something,"

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is free and undetermined, and we shall reject as an absolute truth the idea that the will of God gave the first impulse to our own volitional endeavours to make the world a little less miserable ; but we shall acknowledge, whenever we are filled with the consciousness of our volition, whenever therefore we are regarding everything from the standpoint of volition, that the idea of the will of God, of a conscious and all-powerful Being, giving the first impulse to our own volitional action, seems both congruous and probable.

But another necessity, besides that of thus recognizing the *limits* of thought, will be laid upon us as our knowledge of the universe advances. The necessity will also be laid upon us of recognizing the proper relationships of thought. As the growth of society necessitates the greater subdivision of labour, so the extension of our knowledge will necessitate the recognition of certain convenient relationships in which things may be thought about and spoken of. That this is now largely done by us in practice, every one knows. We do not, for instance, when we are referring to an accident from lightning, speak of the lightning (unless, indeed, we happen to be reporting for a country newspaper) as an electric discharge, though we should be perfectly at liberty to do so if we chose. We do not, though we could if we chose (and as, indeed, we probably should do if we wished to dispute about

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the nature of candles instead of using them) speak of the act of lighting a candle in the terms of molecular physics. In short, when we are left free and unprejudiced in the use of common sense, we naturally observe common-sense distinctions. And surely one of the most obvious and natural of the distinctions which we shall observe in the future will be this—that as conduct depends more or less upon volition, volition will be the starting-point of our discussions about conduct; that, while acknowledging that volition cannot be absolutely free, that it must indeed be pre-determined, we shall acknowledge also that "volition counts for something in determining the course of events," and that it can, for all practical purposes, be freely exercised.

Again, it is without doubt true that, as civilization advances, manners become gentler; that the need, if ever it existed, for the moral restraint which religion supplies, becomes less and less pressing; that the acts that were difficult to our forefathers will become natural and commonplace to our descendants; and therefore it might be argued (and indeed is argued) that in process of time the necessity for religion will altogether disappear—that we shall live by the "abstract rule of right;" that we shall, in our greater knowledge, be able to see clearly what our duty is, and shall disdain to perform it on account of personal

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considerations. But then, as against this, it must be remembered that as society becomes more civilized, it becomes much more complicated and sensitive; that as duty becomes fixed between narrower limits, it becomes more difficult to see what our duty is. We may bisect a centipede, and life is only multiplied; we run a knife-blade into the ball of the human thumb, and death possibly follows. And thus, in a highly organized society, though the limits of conduct are made narrower, there are a thousandfold more points which are affected by conduct, and the whole social structure is many times more sensitive to even slight derelictions from duty than it was, in its earlier stages of development, to derelictions which we should now call stupendous. Even in respect of reform it is evident that the reform which would be possible and beneficial in a comparatively savage society might be completely fatal in a society further advanced. So that it may very fairly be assumed that, in proportion as manners become gentler and the temptations to neglect of duty less violent, the course of highest duty will become more intricate, and even a slight mistake as to duty more dangerous.

Again, it may be said with some degree of truth that if Christianity is based on the Bible it provides for its own extinction as an organized religious system; that it provides for that silent contemplation

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of the mystery of things, for that worshipping in spirit and in truth, which will always seem to a certain class of minds the very perfection of religion, and which can only be violated and depreciated by the introduction of the likeness of anything in heaven or earth, even the likeness of a verbal expression. But Christianity, as has already been seen, does not, as an organized religious system, depend on the Bible; it is the old Puritan notion to hold that it does—a notion which Selden, for the Puritans of his time, shattered effectually simply by his remark that there was no mention in the Bible of Parliament. And in like manner to the Puritans of to-day (or rather to those who make use of the Puritan argument against many existing conditions of religion) it is sufficient to say that, if the Bible provides for the extinction of organized Christianity, it provides also for the existence of the Peculiar People, and satisfactorily disposes of the whole medical profession and of the whole of that forethought by which modern society is held together.

From these considerations alone it might appear as if there will be room for religion in the future—room even for a Theistic creed, a belief in a conscious First Cause, which, though not at other times regarded as absolutely true, will be held to be true whenever we have to do with questions of making the world less

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miserable through the exercise of our volition—questions concerning that conduct which, as we all know, constitutes "three-fourths of life." But there is another consideration—a consideration suggested by that definition of religion which has been made use of, which seems to point still more decidedly in this direction. Religion is based, it has been said, on the universal experience as to the uncertainty of life, and finds its popular expression in the endeavour to propitiate the powers presiding over life and death. Now, the experience on which religion is based is personal, individual, experience; and the question naturally arises, "Unless these experiences as to the uncertainty of life are altogether eliminated, will there not still, even side by side with the most thorough dissemination of scientific knowledge, be room for the development of a religious creed, of an *à priori* theory of the universe, in respect of some of its relationships at least"?

It will be seen that it is rather the negative, the propitiatory side of religion that is here spoken of, than its positive side; spoken of, too, not as in advocacy, but as in an endeavour to reckon up probabilities, and with a view to the ultimate suggestion that, if there will indeed be room left for such a creed to exist, it will be safer for society that the creed should be generally recognized and systematized than

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that it should be left to develop itself fantastically under the pressure of strong individual feelings. For to restrict things too rigidly to their principal use, to make no allowance for weakness or pliability of material, is an error, which, in common life, is carefully avoided, and an error not to avoid which will very likely interfere with the main object in view. A chimney-stalk is intended to carry off smoke, but it must be built so that it can rock to the pressure of the wind; an iron-bridge is constructed to carry a road, but room must be left for its expansion and contraction under the action of heat or cold; and it would seriously militate against the ends for which these works are undertaken were not such provisions made. And thus, if a religion is to be retained to give strength to human nature, to supply that emotional stimulus to the higher volition of which we shall still, possibly, stand in need, room must surely be left in it to give sufficient play to the weaknesses of human nature—weaknesses which may else prove themselves destructive powers. It has been seen that it is at least probable that Spiritualism has resulted from an unconscious pressure against the general belief in immortality; can it be doubted (to put the case strongly) that if, with society as it is, the belief in immortality were prohibited by a parliamentary vote, sects would be created with whom the unprovable

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doctrine of immortality would seem the only thing worth speaking or thinking of? And would not this be a greater evil than a belief in immortality generally recognized, but kept in its proper subordination?

The difficulties of complete religious freedom and the temptation many persons would always be under to make a religious creed for themselves, even if there were none generally recognized, may be shown by one or two illustrations. In the first place, however, let it be noticed that, as civilization and intelligence advance, conscience will become more highly developed, and the social affections more refined and intensified. This must be so; for the external restraint which religion imposes can only be safely withdrawn when the self-restraining power of conscience is competent to perform thoroughly the function which formerly belonged to religion. And so with the social affections; the more we advance in that negative sympathy which restrains us from injuring our neighbours, the higher will rise our positive sympathy with those who stand most nearly related to us. And then, this being so, what follows?

It has already been seen what power a religion possesses to rescue those who have been educated in it from the pain that follows upon a consciousness of moral transgression, upon the commission of an act

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which seems unworthy to the doer of it. That religion should be able to do this is well, not only for the transgressor's own sake, but for the sake of society also. It is well for himself, not because of the deliverance from mental pain thus afforded him, but because the sense of transgression incapacitates him from exercising his volition to the best advantage. And it is well for society, not merely because a loss is sustained by society through the volition of this one man being impaired, but because he becomes a positive and actual danger to society. For a man with a wounded conscience *is* a danger to society; he is a man whose nature is very liable to become discontented, to become fit only "for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." He is as much a drag upon society as a physically wounded man is upon an army; and in his own interest, and in the interest of society also, he must be restored if possible. Now, if he has been trained in certain religious beliefs, these beliefs, while possibly they are able to depress him more at the first, can also restore him at the last; they can destroy, but they can also recreate; they can show him a picture of a God displeased with his fault, but they can also show him the picture of a God forgiving his fault and blotting it out of the book of remembrance. But now entertain the supposition of a man religiously free, one who holds "on the law within," who finds

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his religion in himself, who can trace, as Clough has it—

> "In the stones bread, and life in the blank mind."

As long as his actions do not offend his conscience, well and good. But suppose that, amid those increasing intricacies of daily life which, as society advances, will make it so increasingly difficult to follow the line of highest duty, he were to fall below his best ideal, and to offend his conscience, how shall he recover from the moral pain incurred through his loss of self-respect? How shall his volition be restored to its former level? By means of the religion within himself, it might be said, just as others are delivered by the religion external to themselves. An easy thing to say, but how difficult to do! How shall one whose conscience is accusing him trust his conscience to excuse him? His light was all in himself; but at the very moment when he wants that light most, it is dimmed. To every cry for deliverance from his moral pain he only hears the answer coming back, "He trusted in himself; let him deliver himself, if he delight in himself." And as he does not delight in himself, he dare not, scarcely, make an effort to deliver himself; for he suspects himself in any such effort he may from time to time make. No doubt it may over and over again be present to his mind that his fault took him by surprise, that it has

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not lessened his love for what is better; but such assurances he will always receive with a suspicion of bias that will never allow them to overcome thoroughly his contempt for himself. Now, is it not in the highest degree probable that one in such a case would divide his conscience in twain, and see in one half of it himself and in the other half a power superior to himself, judging of his fault and forgiving it? Would not the temptation be almost overwhelming to place outside of himself and roughly personalize that knowledge of his own love for what is better, and of the palliating circumstances of his unworthy act, which he naturally sets in the balance against his contempt for himself, and to regard that knowledge as part of a Supreme Knowledge which besets him behind and before, which knows the inmost secrets of his nature, his liability to make mistakes and act hastily, and which, being Supreme, can absolve him at least from the mental consequences of his transgression? And would it not be better, both for society and himself, that he should do this, and thus escape speedily from his mental disquietude—thus enable himself to carry on his daily work in the world free from the pain which, for the sake of our own moral preservation, must needs result from an act done contrary to our better nature?

Again, as society advances, the social affections,

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and more especially such as those which are expressed in the relationship of marriage, become intensified; but still the advance of society cannot altogether provide that death shall not interfere with their exercise. And here it might indeed be asked of those who profess to be desirous of complete religious freedom whether they are able to drink of that cup and to be baptized with that baptism? Are they able to bear misfortune that seems to crush all hope out of existence, without the help of the idea which religion presents that such misfortune will, in some way or other which they cannot see, work for their ultimate benefit? Can they bear the supreme separation from those whose life is part of their own, without the consolation of the religious belief that such separation is only temporary? Can they meet death, whose "ugsome face," as Latimer has it, all men must behold, in their own strength, and without the support of those beliefs which, whether true or not, every religion supplies to those whose life has reached its limit? For these are things which the man who is religiously free must bear; and those who talk of the glories of religious freedom little know of what it is that they speak. They do not know the pains, the doubts, the shadows which dim and interrupt those glories, often so much as to conceal them altogether, often so much as to make even the legitimate possessor

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of religious freedom (if there is such a person) long to go back to any faith, to any religious despotism, rather than suffer longer the pain that comes to him through his freedom. His task is like that of the hero who wrestled with death on behalf of his friend. The world around him can see the result of his wrestling, and can hail him as a hero; but the world does not know, and cannot know, with what labour, through how many hair-breadth escapes from being vanquished, that victory has been won. Upon him who is religiously free misfortune may light as upon any other; but to him is denied that light shining through darkness which is the consolation and support of his brethren around him. On him, too, the same bereavements may fall; from him, as from any one else, the desire of his eyes may be taken away with a stroke; but while others can go on their way in the strength of the hope of a reunion, he must be content to regard such reunion as all but impossible, must school himself not to hope for it, lest he should be thereby weakening his power of self-reliance. In times when others can find relief through the sympathy of their fellows, he must be alone; when into the wounds of others is poured the balm of religious consolation, he must be searching the blank desert of his own heart for even a drop of cold water, and often be searching it in vain. Glorious, no doubt, is

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religious freedom to him who has made it legitimately his own, who can indeed find in himself the same spur to duty, the same check to indulgence of the lower self, which others find outside themselves in the religion under which they have been educated. Glorious, very glorious at times, is the hill-top when the light is on it, when the warm air moves freely across it, when we can see at our feet the world stretched out as a map. But he that is religiously free must expect all weathers. His, too, will be the isolation of midnight; round him will roll the clouds; upon him will storms beat with treble the force that they exercise in the inhabited valleys; and can you, he might well say to those who would stand with him, endure the pain, the doubt, the loneliness of this height?—and even if you think you can, is it well that you should make the trial?

These, it might be said, are the difficulties of religious freedom in the present; in the future they will be much less strikingly made manifest, as emotion becomes more and more subject to the intellectual will. Be it so; but remembering that with the advance of society the social affections will be intensified, may it not be held that there will always be room for a wish on the part of those who are bereaved that immortality should be a reality? Remembering, too, that as society advances it becomes more intricate,

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and that consequently our individual efforts to improve it will be more often liable to disappoint us, does it not seem probable that there will always be room left for minds more sensitive than others, finding their attempts disappointing them, to fall back on the idea of a never-failing Providence, ordering all things in heaven and earth? And supposing it to be so, that in the future, no matter how completely our knowledge will be organized and disseminated, there will always be room for some to feel themselves oppressed by the sense of moral shortcomings, stricken by the severance of sympathetic companionships, humbled by the failure of their efforts to make the world a little less miserable—supposing this to be so, will it not surely be safer and better that society at large should, if it wants a religion for uses more positive and more open to experimental verification, take care that in that religion room is left for the play of these feelings and their resultant wishes and beliefs, rather than they should be left to be dealt with by the individuals in whom they arise?

This is not said as in advocacy of such feelings; for indeed there is no need to advocate the existence of things which will exist whether we wish it or not. Rather, having in view the certainty of their existence, the advocacy here is for such a recognition of that existence as will prevent them from ever becoming

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rebellious and destructive to the proper balance of society—an object in which every one who takes the liberal side of social and political questions is interested. No; if we are to have a religion in the future, we must have some better reason for its existence than a merely negative reason; we must have something better to say for it than the expression of a conviction that it is the lesser of two evils; it must rest on a foundation more solid than a metaphysical distinction or a wish suggested by bereavement. It must be seen to be capable of conferring a positive benefit; it must have a real sanction, a thoroughly experimental basis. Any other religion than this we shall not be satisfied with; any other religion than this will never hold its own in the presence of that enormous mass of experimental knowledge which is day by day becoming better organized and more widely distributed.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE REAL SANCTION OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN an address of a considerably later date than that on the "Physical Basis of Life," Professor Huxley, whose words have already been made use of as a text, expressed himself as follows :—

"I can conceive the existence of an Established Church which should be a blessing to the community. A Church in which, week by week, services should be devoted, not to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology ; but to the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just, and pure living ; a place in which those who are weary of the burden of daily cares should find a moment's rest in the contemplation of the higher life which is possible for all, though attained by so few ; a place in which the man of strife and of business should have time to think how small, after all, are the rewards he covets compared with peace and charity. Depend upon it, if such a Church existed, no one would seek to disestablish it." *

Here, again, as in a former instance, it might be interesting to notice, were it not that we are bound

* "Administrative Nihilism," an Address delivered to the members of the Midland Institute on the 9th of October, 1871, and subsequently published in the *Fortnightly Review*.

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to recognize the almost purely rhetorical nature of this passage, how completely the position of many of those who support the Established Church as it is, is conceded. The passage, however, is eminently rhetorical, and must not be leaned upon, except in so far as this—that it expresses the feeling of a man equally eminent for his logical faculties and for his steadfast application of those faculties to what is, to him, the ordinary business of his life, that there is something, after all, which stands above logic and ordinary business, something which is to be reached in another way, and which, if reached, will give more satisfaction than the most brilliant results of logic or the most thorough success in our ordinary occupations.

This "higher life, possible for all, yet attained by so few"—what is it? Is there such a thing at all? And, if there is, why do so few attain to it? An answer may possibly be best obtained by considering what is the nature, and what are the results, of our ordinary life.

It will hardly be necessary to prove, either to the "free-thinker" or to any one else, that the greater part of life with most persons, or indeed with all, is a struggle for existence. As Clough has it—

> "It is precisely this
> That keeps us all alive."

And it will be as little necessary to prove to the

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acceptor of the theory of evolution that, without the influence of such a struggle for existence, progress, either social, moral, or intellectual, could not be accomplished—that to imitate, if we could, the actions of the "Do-as-you-likes," would be ultimately to share their fate. That to ninety-nine persons out of a hundred, at least, life is a struggle, the most commonplace experience amply testifies. Each one, while he contributes, even possibly without knowing it, his share of energy to the great social machine, is interested in getting back from the social machine the means wherewithal to "make both ends meet"—the means wherewithal to keep himself and those dependent on him provided with physical and social necessities, or what are by habit regarded as such. And as civilization advances, this struggle, which at first exhibited itself intermittingly and mostly under physical aspects, exhibits itself under aspects more closely associated with the expenditure of nervous energy, and makes its presence more frequently felt; for whether or not, as civilization advances, the social pressure per square mile is actually greater, it is certain that we come to be more conscious of it; we *feel* the struggle for existence more, even though the antagonizing influence may not, on the whole, be more formidable. At any rate, the fact that the struggle for existence is more felt, tends to

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make it seem, and possibly become, much more severe; and the struggle would probably be felt out of all proportion, were it not that the advance of society is continually creating a greater variety of occupations—subdividing labour more and more in the following of that rigid economy of forces by which alone evolutionary progress is accomplished. But the subdivision of labour, while it is on the whole beneficial, has this condition attached to it—that it tends to narrow the conceptions of those who are engaged in labour. It leaves less room for individuality to assert itself; the men and women who would in former times have been St. Bernards or St. Theresas, must be content in these days to preach university sermons or to build model cottages. And as with the priest, so with the people; as with the distinguished and able, so with the ordinary and commonplace; the complication of the social machinery tends more and more to lead those who are interested in its several parts to identify themselves with their work, to seem to themselves only parts of the social machine—pistons or cog-wheels that have daily to make so many strokes or revolutions, and whose reward it is to be recognized as pistons or cog-wheels, and to receive their due share of lubrication.

Now it is for the sake of furnishing us with an

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outlet from the weariness of this machine-like life that Art and Literature exist—exist and are probably distributed by a natural process over a wider surface the more the social pressure is felt, and the more, consequently, their existence is rendered necessary. And while undoubtedly the Art and Literature that are sought after by commonplace persons will be themselves commonplace, still their effect, wherever they exercise an effect, will be always the same. We find in them an outlet from ourselves; a means of escape into a purer and more serene atmosphere than that we generally breathe; a means of showing us a wider horizon of life than we can see from the level of our ordinary occupations, or at any rate of reminding us that the possibility of seeing such a wider horizon exists. Above all, we gain through them a wider view of human affairs; we get to see that the springs of human action are more complicated than our own immediate experience, necessarily limited, would lead us to think; we gain the power, often unconsciously to ourselves, to suspend our judgments, to extend our sympathies; we acquire the habit of unconsciously comparing the actions and characters of those with whom we come in contact with a standard that ever widens as our acquaintance with Art and Literature increases. And thus, living in the midst of a wondrously complicated society, we gain

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an insight into its conditions and probabilities of the most valuable kind, and one which we should never gain from any study of political economy, useful as that science may be. In this way it is, as Sir Philip Sidney has well remarked, that the poet (meaning the artist in general) will always be the popular philosopher, because he sets before the mind a "perfect picture" of that whereof the philosopher "bestoweth but a wordish conception."

That a "higher life" of reflection is reached by the means of Art and Literature, the evolutionist must hold, whoever else may reject the proposition; for the life of reflection which he thus reaches, though not of another kind, is a life based on a wider circle of experiences, a life more complex, and allowing of more numerous and more subtle variations; and, as the evolutionist knows, it is the greater complexity of ideas, or of physical organisms, or of societies, that raises these things higher in the evolutionary scale. But now let it be remarked that the tendency to take a mean and inferior view of human action is not the only danger that arises to us out of our machine-like life of ordinary occupations. Coming in contact day after day with the same persons, or the same side only of human nature, there is a strong temptation to us to think that human nature has no other side than this one. And in like manner, being put into a fixed

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groove of business and finding our volition count for but little therein, finding ourselves met at every turn by a best or proper manner of performing our work as pistons or cog-wheels that has been determined independently of ourselves, there is a strong temptation present with us to think that our volition counts either for very little or for nothing at all. Even where in connection with our ordinary occupations we seem to see volition counting for something, it only counts for something in the struggle for existence, in the natural effort of each man to out-elbow his neighbours, and not as a means of making the world less miserable. And hence the temptation, a temptation waxing greater the more our sphere of business is limited through the subdivision of labour, to make a mean and inferior estimate of our volition, to think that it counts for very little, if for anything at all, and thus to shut ourselves out from that "higher life" of action in which volition is allowed a wider scope—in which, exercised on those numerous and complex human interests that lie outside the immediate field of daily occupations, it can, by making life more completely human, by helping the toiler to forget, even if ever so little, the groove in which he toils, do something towards making the world a happier world than it is.

This, then, is the "higher life," the life of the

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higher volition; the life in which an endeavour is made more and more to realize that most certain of all experimental truths, that "volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events;" this is the "higher life," most clearly possible for all, but, owing to the constant influence which daily occupations exercise to dull our sense of volition, a "higher life" to which many will fail to attain. But clearly, as different states and conditions of society produce different kinds of ordinary occupation, so different states and conditions of society will have each its own peculiar field for the exercise of the higher volition. It would, of course, be absurd to suppose that the higher life of action to-day can much resemble the higher life of action that was sought after by the founders of European chivalry. We can best tell, and indeed frequently we can only tell, of what nature is the higher life of action which is possible for us to-day, by noticing what is the nature of the temptations to which we are specially subjected in our ordinary occupations.

There can be no doubt that the average level of morality in England has now risen above open acts of violence and pillage. Such acts, when they occasionally occur, are condemned by the universal voice; they are, if nothing else, obstructions to business, and interfere with that general security of society in which

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wealth can be best accumulated. Clearly, then, it will not be necessary for us, in seeking after the higher life, to make such a marked and physical protest against acts of violence and open sensuality as was made, in the Middle Ages, by the religious leaders of Europe. The mere appeal to self-advantage, to the desire to be thought respectable, will exert, in respect of such acts, a prohibitory influence sufficiently powerful over all natures, except those which are to be found in that insanitary section of society known as the "criminal classes." The struggle for existence has now, with us, passed into that stage in which its pressure is more continuously felt, and in which it is less closely associated with mere physical conditions, and more closely with that expenditure of nervous energy which is involved in the following of pursuits less dependent on muscular effort than on intellectual acuteness. Still, the struggle for existence—competition, as it is more generally called—persists, and will be felt more and more; and though we shall not and do not resort to open plunder or regard all our neighbours as leagued to plunder us openly, still we shall regard them as competitors with ourselves for a certain limited commodity, the more of which they obtain the less there will be for us. There is, then, it might be said, some sort of a necessity laid upon us to regard all men, in the light of the world's ordinary occupa-

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tions, with suspicion ; a necessity laid upon us to shield ourselves against the greed of others by means of all the precautions which the events of each day may suggest, always, however, taking care not to injure ourselves by falling below the average honesty which is the world's condition of success. Now, the effect which this necessity (a necessity which must become more and more imperative with the increasing complexity of society) will exercise upon our volition is tolerably apparent. We shall be tempted more and more to think that we cannot help ourselves ; to think that, in spite of all we may profess to wish to the contrary, we are compelled to take things as we find them. To a suggestion that it presents an inhuman spectacle for class to be arrayed against class, or that certain practices sanctioned by trade are scarcely consistent with perfect honesty, or that it is degrading to be continually suspecting every man as an enemy—to such suggestions we shall find ourselves increasingly ready to reply that no doubt such things are not consistent with a desirable standard of humanity or honesty or brotherly feeling, but that we cannot help it ; that if we were to adopt a new course, others would not ; that those who go to Rome with the best intentions find themselves in the end compelled to do as Rome does ; and that, finally, to attempt to introduce reforms into trade would be our own ruin and no

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one else's advantage. And thus, leaving out of sight altogether the damaging effect which this spirit would be likely to exercise upon ordinary business, and without saying anything in blame of those who (too often, probably) might find themselves compelled to choose between following a dishonest trade custom and bankruptcy, it will become more and more habitual to us to think, not only in respect of our ordinary business, but in respect also of the many interests that are not immediately connected with ordinary business, that our volition does not count for anything as a condition of the course of events, that we must even be content to go the way the stream goes, to do our duty as if it were the "pure nonentity of duty," to surrender up our individuality completely, to throw in our lot with the Great World of average thoughts and average standards, and (if it may be allowed slightly to paraphrase two lines of one of Wordsworth's most exquisite lyrics) to be

> "Rolled round in its diurnal course,
> Like rocks and stones and trees."

This, of course, if we can find no way of escape, if we can find no means for lifting ourselves into a "higher life" of action, just as we are lifted by Art and Literature into a "higher life" of reflection. By the help of Art and Literature we attain to the knowledge that there is a wider horizon of life than we can see from

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the level of our ordinary occupations ; what we want next is a means whereby we shall be induced to act, to exercise our volition, as if there were such a wider horizon. We want a stimulus to our "higher volition," just as in Art and Literature we find a stimulus to higher reflection. And where is this to be found? It is needless to say that we cannot let such a stimulus be one of calculation ; we have been leavened enough by the religious tradition which has hitherto existed in Europe to know that, even supposing we cannot arrive at any "abstract rule of right," we shall run into all sorts of danger if we think of doing our duty for selfish and calculating considerations. And seeing how the increasing complexity of society will make it increasingly difficult for us to decide readily what particular acts of ours will be productive of the greatest happiness for the greatest number (even if we were in no peril of acting in some other way after all), we might well think it probable that the stimulus which sets in motion our higher volition in the future, will be the same in kind with that which has proved best able to affect our volition in the past—that it will be and must be an emotional stimulus ; not an emotional stimulus of that lower sort which arises out of a desire to avoid pain and injury ; but an emotional stimulus of that higher sort, which, in respect of those matters that most need our attention, will lift us up

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and carry us along with it, leading us to do the very best for ourselves even while it excludes from our consciousness the recognition of self-advantage. Besides which, there is the additional argument in favour of this stimulus being of an emotional kind—that an emotional stimulus is the more readily generated and acts most effectively, and that it is not without such a strict economy of forces as these two facts imply that evolutionary progress can be accomplished.

When we examine our own experience with the view of ascertaining what it is that can most readily move us to an exercise of our higher volition, we find ourselves bound to reply that, in nine cases out of ten, it is the force of example. As the "higher life" of reflection is best reached by means of the "perfect picture" supplied by the poet and not by means of the "wordish conception" bestowed by the philosopher, so it is found that the "higher life" of action is best reached through the contemplation of a "perfect picture" (the emphasis of course is on the word "picture") of action, and not by a study of the abstract reasons for action, which are the proper field of the philosopher. As Professor Huxley would seem to hint, we find ourselves, so far as action is concerned, most readily influenced by an ideal of action; we find, in short, that we are by nature hero-worshippers, selecting our heroes, however, with a discrimination

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far greater, though unconscious, than has been displayed by the modern prophet of hero-worship. The belief in the lasting influence, in the immortal and supernatural help of those who have nobly served their generation while living, is a belief which shows itself in so many stages of culture, and among races so different from each other, that it might be well conceived to be a primary necessity of the human mind. For while it may be true that the *theoretic* mythology of all races is associated with astronomical and meteorological changes, it is at the same time impossible not to see that it is the picture of the human hero, who is very probably popularly identified with some remarkable astronomical phenomenon, that makes any religion practical to the popular mind. In the Evangelical Christianity which is to-day popular with so many among us, it is (as has been already pointed out) the human Christ, the Christ of daily life, and not the metaphysical Christ of the theologian, that appeals to those who make the best use of their religion. And contented as we may be when our affairs go smoothly with a merely contemplative or speculative view of things, a very slight appeal to general experience will show that, in those knots and crises of human life when we must act or else be crushed, when our own volition seems to be put in opposition to a whole army of hostile forces, then it is a human help, the light of

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a human ideal, that we seek for. We want to know what man has done under such circumstances as threaten ourselves; we want to fill ourselves with the light of human actions, with the breath of the spirit that prompted them.* And it is interesting enough to notice this feeling, which is brutally expressed in the war song of the savage, finding an expression eminently refined and elevating (eminently Christian, it might almost be said) at the hands of one of the leading advocates in England of Comtism. For surely no one who read the concluding passages of Mr. Frederic Harrison's paper some little time since on "The Religion of Inhumanity," could fail to recognize therein his own highest ideal of an immortal existence; and as surely must it be felt that, if the mental atmosphere of the time had been favourable to such a thing, all the country would long ago have been astir with the appearance of the late Mr. Mill to the twelve apostles who wrote his life in the defunct *Examiner*.

Being hero-worshippers, however, it is not always the same kind of hero that we want; we select our

* "Though thou art fallen while we are free,
Thou shalt not taste of death;
The generous blood that flowed from thee
Disdained to sink beneath;
While in our veins its currents be,
Thy spirit is our breath."

BYRON.

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hero, almost always unconsciously, according to the nature of our necessities. And that different times have different necessities, we know. As society progresses the highest possibilities of society, or rather of the individuals composing society, undergo change; they become more complex, they associate themselves less and less with mere physical conditions, and more and more with conditions of the inner mental and moral life. The hero still keeps comparatively, the same place; he is still, as in the Grecian, the Scandinavian, or the Mediæval Christian mythology, the inspired or god-like man who, through his labours, sufferings, and victories, has gained a more than human power over the universe; he is still the minister, though never the supreme controller, of the decrees of Omnipotence, himself being subject to them except for his obedience; he is still the helper of the faithful and punisher of the wicked, while an eternal life in his presence and companionship is still regarded as the highest felicity to which mankind can attain. But the idea as to what the nature of that eternal life will be, and by what means it is to be obtained, varies continually, not only with the changing states of society, but with different individuals living in the same society at the same time, and to all outward appearance holding the same identical creed. It is in the nature of this idea that

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is to be seen the spirit of a religion, and thus it may be gathered that while the spirit of the Scandinavian religion was national and warlike, and the spirit of the Greek religion national and sensuous; the spirit of Mediæval Christianity was, on the other hand, cosmopolitan and ascetic—naturally cosmopolitan because it rested on the tradition of the Roman Empire, the *Orbs veteribus notus* of the schoolboy's atlas; naturally ascetic, because it appealed mostly to a race who were possessed of a great, though undeveloped, capacity for moral restraint. And as in times past, so in the future, the spirit of our religion will be determined by our necessities, the hero to whom we shall look for help in the knots and crises of our life will be a hero in respect of those matters which it most concerns us to attend to, those matters which are most closely associated with the highest possibilities of our time.

Now the highest possibilities of the present time, which we individually touch in the ascent to the "higher life" of action, do not, as has been seen, associate themselves very intimately with merely physical conditions. Where we are, and shall be, most likely to fail of our highest will not be in respect of points of conduct which are open, as it were, to the every-day inspection of our neighbours. The fear is rather the other way, that we shall respect our neigh-

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bours too much—that we shall conform so much to the usages we find existing around us as to forget our own individuality and take a mean and inferior view of the power of our own volition. It may be very true that volition in a highly organized society does not count for very much—that there are but few points in respect of which it will be at any time possible for us to exert an appreciable influence; but the temptation we are constantly under in such a society to think that volition counts for nothing at all, certainly suggests the necessity of keeping ourselves reminded of it. As the advance of society brings about the further subdivision of labour and makes the pressure of the struggle for existence more keenly felt, we shall be more and more tempted to confine our view of mankind to the recognition of their classes, to regard our neighbours with suspicion, and to be satisfied with average notions as to the proper standard of morality; to be content first with observing the average honesty of our daily occupations, and afterwards, by the force of habit and association, content with the average standard of conduct in respect of other matters also. We shall be tempted, in short, to regard ourselves as and to become machines, and to forget our humanity. What we shall want, then, clearly will be an ideal of action in the following of which we shall become re-humanized, in the beholding of which we

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shall ever be reminded that men are more than classes; that the points of possible agreement between them far outbalance the antagonism fostered by the competition of daily occupations; that it is not sufficient for us, if we would make the world a little less miserable, to conform to the average standard of conduct, but that we must always be striving to make our conduct conform to the highest ideal which we can compass. The hero, in short, from whom we shall gather our ideal of conduct in respect of those matters which most need our attention, will be a moral hero of the very highest order; a moral hero, that is to say, who has not merely contented himself with observing rigidly those grosser distinctions between good and evil in which are to be found the virtues of half-civilized communities, but who has refined upon those grosser distinctions and carried them further inwards; and who upon such refined distinctions has based a life of action which to the full and ungoverned pulse of barbaric society will appear indeed pale and uninteresting, but in which the dweller in highly civilized states will see more strongly coloured than he himself will ever have a chance of colouring them, those delicate gradations of conduct which most concern his own existence. More highly coloured we may well say; because as in a landscape we only get an aspect of nature strikingly presented to us through a partially

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false distribution of colour, so it will be necessary, in order that we may recognize an ideal of conduct in its most important aspects, that these aspects should be a little more dwelt upon than would be consistent with an absolutely truthful picture.

It is possible that here the "free-thinker" will remark, especially if he have a leaning towards Comtism, that all this he never doubted; that of course a knowledge of the great things that men have done will have its effect in helping other men to attempt great things also; that to have present to the mind the pictures of such men as Epictetus, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Confucius, or even Christ himself, will be eminently serviceable in helping us to live up to our best ideals in respect of action—that by thinking of such heroes as these we shall be lifted into that "higher life" of action which is possible for all, though attained by so few. Herein lies the real sanction of Comtism, and a very powerful sanction it is—a sanction which probably will lead many to overlook the scientific errors into which its founder has been betrayed. And surely, as long as we are in that frame of mind in which we are content with a contemplative view of things, scarcely any thoughts can be more elevating, can lift us more above the ordinary level of our daily occupations, than those which are suggested by the pictures of men of diverse races,

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and living in widely separated times, working out the same moral problems in their own lives, stretching forward, as it were, to the same invisible point of human perfectness. But, obviously, when we are concerned to act, to exercise our volition (and we may at any instant be called upon to do so, if only to a limited degree), it will be best for us to make an appeal to that ideal of conduct which will present to us the clearest and most unmistakable picture. Nay, more than this—in a highly civilized society there must often be put before us choices of action of the most delicate kind; we must often be placed in situations out of which there will be two ways, one better than the other, but with their immediate consequences so much alike as to make it appear as if there was not a pin to choose between them; and in order to select unerringly and rapidly the best of these ways, it may be necessary for us to make an appeal to our ideal of conduct so rapidly as to be almost or quite unconscious of it. For instance, in a highly civilized society the manner of giving a necessary order to a subordidate may be almost of as much importance as the nature of the order itself; for upon the manner in which the order is given will depend the manner in which it is fulfilled. Now, in respect of such a matter as giving an order it may well be that there is no opportunity for a conscious reference to our ideal of

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conduct for the purpose of ascertaining in what manner the order should be given; we shall only be sure of acting in conformity with our ideal if we have the power of making an unconscious comparison of the two or three courses open to us, and the power of unconsciously selecting that which is in closest conformity with our ideal. And here again do the conditions under which we can best and most constantly rise to the "higher life" of action resemble those under which we can best and most constantly rise to the "higher life" of reflection. For as an extended acquaintance with Art and Literature promotes in us the habit of unconsciously comparing the actions and characters of those with whom we are brought in contact by an ever-widening standard; so the habit of unconsciously comparing our actions with an extended ideal of conduct will be promoted in us the more we get intimately acquainted with our ideal of conduct, the more it becomes part of ourselves, the more readily and the more generally it can be appealed to, the more are included within its circumference the innumerably various ideas which the ordinary course of life in a highly civilized society can bring before us.

Now here is clearly the suggestion of a choice to be made with regard to our ideal of conduct; the suggestion that, given a hundred human ideals all equally

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valuable intrinsically (and a high human ideal is so valuable that it might well be found best to consider all such as practically equal), there may yet be one of such ideals which accidental causes, or what may be called such, will make infinitely more valuable than all the rest under certain circumstances. We know (to speak of a parallel case) that certain musical compositions will more readily than others call up in us certain feelings; and this, not by reason of their peculiar fitness or superiority, but because they are associated with such feelings in our minds. We have been accustomed to hear those particular pieces of music; our feelings are therefore more intimately connected with them; and even in spite of their possible intrinsic inferiority they appeal to us strongly. And so, too, if the association of ideas means anything at all, that ideal of conduct with which we are most intimately acquainted, which is most precious to us by association, will be and must be that which, out of a hundred others even perhaps intrinsically superior to it, will be most readily able to supply an emotional stimulus to the higher volition, to call us up into that "higher life" of action which is possible for all, though attained by so few. It is not enough that we have an ideal of conduct. The doubts which history and critical analysis must throw upon all human lives that can be widely known enough to be ideals of conduct

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would, if we depended on historical knowledge alone, make the impulse derived from them too faint to be of much practical service at any time, certainly too faint to be of practical service on those multitudinous occasions when we have, as dwellers in a highly civilized society, to decide rapidly and distinctly upon delicate matters of conduct. No ; what we want, and what we must have, is *an ideal of conduct made precious by association ;* an ideal of conduct that has so grown up with us, as it were, that has insinuated itself so closely between all the fibres of our mental and moral being, that it will act continually as an external point of reference without our being aware of it ; that it will of itself give a certain quality to every nervous discharge ; modifying the nature of the communication from the lower nervous centres to the higher, modifying the nature of the reflex communication from the higher nervous centres to the lower, even though the fact of its own existence may not at the moment be present in our consciousness. It must be an ideal of conduct so clear to us by familiarity, so distinct from all other ideals, so distinct, too, from all the thoughts that may crowd in upon us during twenty-four hours of civilized life, that we may be able to recognize it instantaneously, be able, as it were, to set our finger upon it without hesitation, and say, " About this, at all events, there can be no dispute." Now whether or not

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psychical habits are hereditarily transmitted, whether or not the individuals in one generation will sway more readily to a given ideal because the individuals in the preceding generation swayed to it—whether this be so or not, it is certain that an ideal of conduct that has served many generations will be intertwined with the literature of a society in the most intricate manner, and most especially with the literature that has a wide popular influence. And as the music which a man has been accustomed to hear in his youth, which has twined itself about the fibres of his emotions, will to the end of his days continue to waken in him the self-same feelings, irrespective of time or place; so the ideal of conduct which is interwoven with the popular literature of a society, which (because it is so interwoven) every one who is in the smallest degree educated will have heard of and will be familiar with, must be the ideal of conduct which out of a hundred others even intrinsically superior to it, will most readily appeal to those who, chiefly by their conduct, by endeavouring to rise always into a "higher life" of action, are to accomplish for that society a further advance in evolutionary progress.

There is nothing to be gained by drawing out the argument to greater length; every one knows, both those who rejoice in the fact and those who lament it, that we are as a society possessed of an ideal of con-

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duct made precious by association, an ideal which is interwoven with our most popular literature; that this ideal is Christ, and that we can, as has been said, recognize it instantaneously, can lay our finger upon it without the slightest hesitation, and say, "About this, at all events, there can be no dispute." But what Christ? for there are many. Not the historical Christ, nor the mythological Christ, nor the theological Christ; not the Christ of M. Renan, nor of the student of the science of religion, nor of the doctrine of the Atonement; not the Christ of public meetings and charitable dinners; not the Christ of anarchy, as Arnold of Brescia would have made him, nor the Christ of social organization, as the author of "Ecce Homo" would make him; not the Christ who, according to Scottish fiction, is the Supreme Head of his Church, and votes the most cultured of his ministers out of it; not the Christ who is a shadowy fulfilment of more shadowy types; scarcely even the Christ of the Four Gospels and the Sunday School, though possibly nearer to these than many would be willing to allow. Not any of these, for about all these there are manifold disputes and hesitations. No; but it is the Christ of daily life, the Christ of tradition; the Christ that walks among us unseen by the grosser senses of sects and corporations and theologies, but is seen by each individual who has in conduct satisfied

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his or her better nature, and has ascended into the "higher life" of action, possible for all, yet attained, it may be, by so few. To this ideal of conduct which has for so long stimulated individuals in their individual capacities to fulfil the highest possibilities of their time, our thoughts are turned by an irresistible power of association whenever we are made cognizant of an action in which we feel the highest possibilities of our own time are displayed. To define what are the highest possibilities of our time, in respect of individual conduct, might be difficult and tedious; but we all know them when we see them. Feeling, for instance, as we do, the iron walls of competition pressing in upon us more and more, forbidding us to look forward with any certainty to that period of repose which some may reach by success in their ordinary business, we would think that an elixir of life indeed which would give us some repose even in the midst of a life-long toil. Feeling this, we know that one of the highest possibilities of our time, because seemingly such an impossible possibility, is a life of action which shall bring its own repose with it—a life which, while necessarily and continuously devoted to the lower aim of "making both ends meet," shall yet not be devoid of a higher aim, moving in larger circles and through calmer regions of thought. This, we feel, would be a possibility worth attempting, and a possibility possible

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for all. And whenever it occurs to us, as it has occurred to Professor Huxley, that that almost impossible possibility nowadays—a life of peace and charity—is far superior to the rewards which we covet as men of strife and business, then by an irresistible power of association we are led, no matter how great may happen to be our prejudice against the popular religion, to think of our familiar ideal of conduct, and to ask ourselves whether there may not, after all, be some wisdom in the recommendation to seek first of all the Kingdom of God—the kingdom which is eminently not of this world of strife and business, but which stands above it, and is the sphere wherein move, not inharmoniously, those gleaming and distant lights of "highest possibilities," upon which the heroes of all time have ascended into their power and their glory.

Now the ideal of conduct which the recognition of the highest possibilities of our time most readily suggests to us, will in turn, by the law of association, be the ideal of conduct by which the "highest possibilities" of our time will be most readily suggested. But here comes in a slight difficulty. We all know, as has been said, what are the highest possibilities of our time when we see them, and to all of us, however prejudiced we may be against the popular religion, the recognition of the highest possibilities of our time suggests that ideal of conduct which association has

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made precious. On such occasions we see that ideal in an undefined sort of way, each according to our own peculiar fancy. But, obviously, an ideal of conduct which is to act as an "emotional stimulus to our higher volition," cannot be so vague and undefined; it must have some clearness about it; it must be a picture that will bear looking at, not a phantom image constantly assuming different shapes and vanishing as soon as it appears. The Christ of tradition, the Christ of daily life, is, we may say, within us and around us; which of all the other Christs enumerated, and about which (as has been admitted) there are manifold disputes and hesitations, are we to take as a means of appealing, upon stated occasions (and it has yet to be seen whether such stated occasions are desirable and necessary), to the traditional Christ within us—the Christ that we have assimilated (or "put on") through centuries of moral progress? Clearly the historical, the mythological, and the theological Christs we can have nothing to do with; for we may say we know little or nothing of the first, we have no respect for the second, and we have been much over-weighted with the third. We cannot adopt the Christ of anarchy, for we want order, nor the Christ of social organization, because we have already our individuality nearly pressed out of us, and our desire is to preserve what we have left. Certainly, and above

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all, not the Christ of the Puritan—the Christ who now speaks chiefly through the rancorous majorities of the Presbyteries of the north. Certainly none of these; but certainly, on the other hand, we must adopt, if we need adopt any at all, the Christ of the Four Gospels, the Christ, that is, of Literature—the Christ whose figure is familiar to the youngest of Sunday School children and to the most illiterate of adults, and on whom, for the better educated, some new light has at least been thrown in the pages of Mr. Arnold's "Literature and Dogma."

But here comes another difficulty. We want, and we cannot do without, an ideal of conduct, a "perfect picture" of action; but at the same time we might well guess that the most "perfect picture," in Sir Philip Sidney's sense, cannot help being imperfect in another sense. In painting, as we know, there is always an antagonism between breadth of effect and delicacy of treatment; breadth of effect, it might be said, is what we chiefly want, and yet there is always the danger present of losing breadth of effect in delicacy of treatment, and the temptation improperly to ignore delicacy of treatment for the sake of broad effects. Every painting is a compromise between these antagonistic extremes; for the most faithful delineation of stair-carpets can no more escape completely from breadth of effect than Turner in his later

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days could completely escape from delicacy of treatment; a truly great artist being one, it may be presumed, who knows instinctively where the compromise in each particular case is to be made. And thus, though it may readily be allowed that in the Christ of the Four Gospels we may see certain broad principles of conduct illustrated which are admirably suggestive to our own time and state of society, still it will always be objected (and always ought to be admitted) that to follow the example of the Christ of the Four Gospels in every respect would be misleading and dangerous. Now this is a difficulty, this necessary imperfection of our ideal of conduct, which we should meet with no matter where we looked for that ideal; for we could not follow Socrates to the letter without placing ourselves occasionally in situations which would, to say the least, be ambiguous; while the exact following of Confucius would compel every clerk in the civil service to resign his post upon the death of either of his parents. This kind of imperfection in our ideal, consisting in its want of *entire* suitability to our own conditions of life, is then unavoidable and must be borne with. We might, indeed, go so far as to say that an ideal presenting an entire suitability would be less valuable; because as in painting no aspect of nature can be strikingly presented to us without a certain falseness of general colouring, so no

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ideal of conduct can be made forcible in some respects without a certain exaggeration, which amounts to apparent imperfection in other respects. And if the assistance we get from the Christ of the Four Gospels is of a moral kind (as we know it is), we might well believe that its value would have been lessened had the Christ of the Four Gospels been, as some say he ought to have been, an encourager of artistic and and scientific pursuits.

Another difficulty or objection must be noticed It may be asked whether, granting the ideal of Christ to be in all other respects the fittest to appeal to us, there is not danger that a figure which has once been so overclouded with mythological conceptions may not be so again—whether it would not be better to find an ideal that is nearer to us, about which we are more historically certain, and which is therefore less likely to be made the centre of religious misconceptions. To this, it may be answered that the historical indistinctness, which truly enough leaves room for mythology to assert itself under certain circumstances, is almost a necessary condition of any picture of human life which can exercise an influence in affording an ideal of conduct. For in order to be useful as an ideal of conduct, it must be made precious by association; and for it to be precious by association is to make necessary its existence through a long

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period of history; and consequently to render it probable that it has had its origin (and if it has materially helped progress must have had its origin) amid the thick fogs of times and events which are hardly historical at all. So that at least we must not mind if we find it otherwise best to accept for an ideal of conduct in our daylight times the picture of a human life which has appeared to others, while the mists of dawn were yet about them, superhuman and supernatural. But there is more in it even than this. For if progress is not simultaneous, if we shall always have living side by side minds that have arrived at daylight and minds that are still wandering in the regions of dawn, then always to some among us this ideal of conduct will not appeal unless it can be clothed with that superhuman and supernatural garniture which is proper to the region of dawn. For as (to quote Sir Philip Sidney once more) it is possible to make men who are "more beastly than beasts" hear the voice of virtue through fables in which beasts are the speakers; so, as we know well enough, there are many men less human than humanity who need a superhuman sanction for human acts, and who would not perform those acts but for such sanction. And may it not be an advantage that, in a society in which all sorts and gradations of morals and intellect find a place, the same ideal should be capable of receiving different

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sanctions according to the different natures of those who are to be leavened by it—receiving from some the sanction of reason, and from others the sanction (if we like to call it so) of superstition? For surely the great thing is that we should have an ideal and follow it; our justification of ourselves for doing so is but a secondary matter.

But passing by these objections (one of which at any rate will have to be referred to again), let us notice how the whole question now stands. We have existing among us an "ideal of conduct made precious by association;" and it has hitherto been enough to let this fact of its being made precious by association speak for it alone; because, if the association of ideas means anything at all, such an ideal, made precious to us by association, must be infinitely more valuable to us than a hundred others perhaps intrinsically superior, but lacking the special value which association can supply. But now it must be noticed that the ideal of conduct afforded to us by the Christ of the Four Gospels, is, in its broad aspects, eminently fitted beyond all others to appeal to us under our present and future social conditions. Two of these broad aspects may be mentioned, and only two; for they are of such infinite importance to us that they would more than counterbalance any number of points in respect of which it might be urged that such an ideal is unsuitable.

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We have seen, and we all know, that the tendency of the conditions under which we live is to make us forget our humanity, to lead us to regard ourselves as mere parts of the great social machine—to look, consequently, to what is done for the knowledge of what we must do, to be content with the average standard of conduct only—to let ourselves float with the stream and think that we have no power of doing anything else. And often for a long time together we are satisfied with this sort of existence; we feel that it is enough to be recognized as the pistons or cog-wheels which we are, and to be well lubricated accordingly. But to all of us there will come, and must come by the very nature of things, times when we get sick of this sort of existence, times when, moved by all sorts of causes, we look more inwards than outwards, and make the lamentable discovery that, though we may have gained the whole world, we have lost our own souls—that though our merits as pistons or cog-wheels may be noticed in every daily newspaper, we have extinguished, or well-nigh so, the individuality within ourselves; that we have become mere empty husks of routine, and have lost the possibility of feeling the pleasure of living. Now it is just here, because we are so liable in an increasingly complicated society like ours,

"To lose in action, passion, talk, the soul,"

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and to reap the keen pain and disgust of life that result therefrom, that the Christ of the Four Gospels becomes, and will become more and more, so valuable as an ideal of conduct—so valuable as a means of putting us in mind of the highest individual possibilities of our time. For if there is one idea which the simplest reader—the reader who is unpossessed with a wish to find support for a favourite theory of his own—can extract from the Four Gospels better than another, it is the idea of the essential individuality of Christ's character. It is not that he acted always differently from every one else; indeed, to act on all occasions differently from every one else is often the sign of mere eccentricity, which is as much a weakness as individuality is a strength. It is not, be it said, that Christ—the Christ of Literature—acted differently from every one else, for he did this in extreme and special cases only; but it is that he always had his own reason for doing as he did, so that though he conformed in action he threw a new light upon action through the reason for which he conformed. And his individuality, shown in this way plainly enough, is further enhanced by the fact that he always found his reason within himself. If there was no other reason to advance there was always the reason of peace—the conviction of the undesirability of vexing himself and those about him by haggling over

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matters which were really unimportant, but in which others saw, it may be, some principle involved. It was the high value he set on the inward individual life that, plainly enough, led him to keep it free from unnecessary disturbance, uninvaded by profitless discussions as to things of secondary moment; that led him to place, in figures of rhetoric that have been strangely misunderstood, this inward life first in importance, and to ask that question which we all, at some time or another and in some phraseology or another, ask ourselves, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And it is because he is continually attracting us to the inward, individual life which we are all in such imminent danger of forgetting, that the Christ of the Four Gospels is in the present, and will be in the future, of the highest value to us as an ideal of conduct, even apart from the fact that it is an ideal made precious to us by association.

Again, we are all of us at present, and probably shall be for some time to come, tempted to do great things in the way of reform—social, religious, political; and it is not unusual to hear the Christ of the Four Gospels spoken of as a "great Reformer," who denounced existing institutions, proclaimed freedom, set things upon their proper basis, and did all those other wonderful works which we are now so many of us

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longing to have a hand in. But here, again, what reader of the Four Gospels, who is unpossessed with a foregone conclusion, can fail to see that it was not the reform of the institutions that the Christ of the Four Gospels aimed at, but the reform of the men who were included under them? that he denounced Scribes and Pharisees, not because they were Scribes and Pharisees, but because they were, or some of them at any rate, bad Scribes and Pharisees, taking an official and public credit to themselves which was not necessarily wrong or injurious in itself, but which their private manners contradicted? that instead of disestablishing the institution in which the abuse existed, he rather aimed at making those within it employ it to its proper use? A very different spirit this from the spirit of the reformers of to-day—reformers the peculiar focal adjustment of whose organs of vision prevents them from seeing anything smaller than classes—reformers who would treat modern society not as if it were a highly specialized vertebrate organism, sensitive to the least touch of internal or external disturbance, but as if it were some huge jelly fish, out of which whole sections might be cut without its being much the wiser—reformers who, ignoring the fact that we are already half slain by the pressure of competition in respect of our necessary business, would carry the sense of competition into every

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corner of human existence by the creation of new antagonisms or the fomenting of old ones. And it is just here, again, because we are all so occupied with questions of reform, and are so likely to injure society rather than help it through our want of patience and delicate handedness, that the Christ of the Four Gospels becomes immensely valuable to us as an ideal of conduct. For we see in him the picture of one who felt as keenly as can ever possibly be felt the abuses and hollownesses of the society around him, but who ever kept his indignation in check by his lucid distinction between the possible and the impossible, the expedient and the inexpedient; who made no scruple (so little desirous was he of popular applause) of rebuking publicly his associates when their zeal, as was not seldom the case, overran their discretion; who told the admiring crowd what he thought of them, and declined to be honoured at their hands. It is an ideal of conduct in this respect that we want almost more than any other, because it is our impatience and our want of critical distinction between the possible and the impossible, the expedient and the inexpedient, and (above all) our desire each one for our own glorification and advantage and not for the benefit of the whole society we belong to, that are threatening us with greater evils than many of those from which we are attempting to escape.

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Such, then, is the real sanction of Christianity—of Christianity, surely, because as that religion has been well called Christianity in the past which supplied an emotional stimulus to the higher volition by means of the doctrines specially centering round the figure of Christ, so the religion which in the future will set the Christ of the Four Gospels before us as an ideal of conduct may fitly be called Christianity also. But upon what is this religion based? It is based, clearly, on the universal experience as to the difficulties of moral rectitude—the difficulties, owing to the pressure of the struggle for existence, of acting out those "highest possibilities" of our time which we all recognize when we see them. And if this religion ever has a popular or negative side, that popular or negative side will certainly be expressed in an endeavour to propitiate the powers presiding over righteousness.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE REAL SANCTION OF CHRISTIANITY (*continued*).

THE justification of the negative or propitiatory side of Christianity is clearly a thing with which we have here nothing to do. All we can say is that if Christianity in the future has a positive side—a side, which by affording an emotional stimulus to the higher volition, will be useful to evolutionary progress —it will probably (nay, almost certainly) have a negative or propitiatory side also; that if some persons find themselves lifted up into the "higher life" of action, find themselves helped to fulfil the "highest possibilities" of their time by contemplating the ideal of conduct presented by the Christ of the Four Gospels, others again, who are conscious of having fallen short of the "higher life" and "highest possibilities," will almost certainly connect with the Christ of the Four Gospels some machinery by means of which their shortcomings may be made good. This we cannot help and must be patient with. We

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cannot help it, because, if the basis of religion, generally, is such as has been described, the positive side of a religion will always be liable to suggest a negative or propitiatory side. And we must be patient with it; because (as has been seen) the negative and the positive sides of religion merge into each other so gradually, the impulse to seek good is at many points so little distinguishable from the impulse to avoid evil, that we shall never be able to say how much of the positive side of Christianity a purely negative verbal expression of it may not contain. Of one thing, however, we may be certain; that the more rational and the more able to touch life in all its aspects we make the positive side of Christianity, the less dangerous, the less likely to develop mischievous doctrines, the negative or propitiatory side will be, wherever it exists.

Nor are we concerned either with the justification of the religious creed, of the *à priori* theory of the universe in its relation to human volition, which will probably attach itself to the Christianity of the future. Creeds will be held whether we wish it or not, according to the moral necessities and mental culture of those who hold them. As has been already hinted, there may be always some who will not be powerfully enough appealed to by our ideal of conduct unless it seems to possess a superhuman and supernatural

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sanction; and if we were to find our ideal of conduct, which is so precious to us by association, invested by some with a superhuman and supernatural dignity, we must, as in the other case, be patient; remembering always that the great thing is to have an ideal of conduct and follow it, and that our justification of ourselves for doing so is but a secondary matter. And here, too, we may be certain that the more rational and the more able to touch life in all its aspects we make the positive side of Christianity, the Christianity which has a real sanction and is useful to evolutionary progress, the less likelihood will there be of the creed that attaches to it developing into dangerous and abnormal shapes.

A creed, however, is one part only of the threefold external form in which religion exists; and if we have nothing to do with the justification of a creed, are we any otherwise situated with regard to ordinances and organizations? A creed, it might be said, is a necessary evil towards which it behoves us to exercise patience; is there anything in ordinances and organizations which can make them positively valuable? With regard to ordinances, at least, we have high authority for believing that there is something positive to be said; for Professor Huxley, in the passage recently quoted, clearly makes a distinction between ordinances and creeds. He would not have a Church

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devoted "to the iteration of abstract propositions in theology"—to the exposition of creeds, that is to say; but "to the setting before men's minds, week by week, of an ideal of true, just, and pure living." Now this act of the setting before men's minds, week by week, of an ideal of conduct is clearly and unmistakably a religious ordinance; an ordinance of a kind, it may be, to which the world is too little accustomed, but still an ordinance.

To deal with the question of ordinances first. There can be little doubt that ordinances have existed in the past because they have been found useful; and under the word ordinances are of course included not merely religious formularies, but all those ideas which attach a peculiar sanctity to certain times and places. To go back no further than that period of European history which has already been spoken of—the period when St. Bernard was acting to Europe the part of an awakened conscience, and inaugurating in himself that dawn of better civilization which began to be openly apparent with the commencement of the thirteenth century—going back to this time, a time in which vice was not the mere abstract thing that it is now, but took everywhere, unless restrained by the fear of similar retribution, the grossest and most material forms—we can easily see, by the light of modern psychology, how absolutely necessary it was that the

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better side of human nature should be appealed to by means not less evident to the material senses than were the crimes that endangered society. As the wealth of commercial cities needed the protection of fortified walls, so whatever in society was gentler and more human needed the protection of fixed limits that might not be crossed with impunity, or that at any rate could easily be seen and recognized—the protection, that is to say, of the greater sanctity attached to places, to times, and to persons. Not only, had the imaginary sanction of this supposed greater sanctity been lacking, would the churches and monasteries, the centres then of civilization and progress, have been wasted and swept away; but, more important still, the distinction between good and evil (as we understand the words), the idea of the possibility of such a distinction, would have been obliterated from the inner life of the toiling and struggling forefathers of the Europe of to-day. Not only round their towns to protect their commerce against lawless rovers, but within themselves, to protect themselves against lawless .passions, was it necessary that fortifications should be built. Those who could only see the distinction between *meum* and *tuum* when they reined up their horses before a fortified gateway, were not capable of discerning between good and evil until they reined up their

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passions before the threat of an interdict or an excommunication. And thus, while the walls of the town guaranteed the freer development of commerce, the walls of religious ordinances guaranteed the freer development of social virtues.

This state of things was, of course, extreme; but in this extreme state of things it is easier to recognize the necessity that, under certain circumstances, exists for religious ordinances—for an artificial and periodical representation to men's minds of the best of which they are capable, of the highest individual possibilities of their time; for this it is that religious ordinances at any rate profess to be. But now the question obviously arises, "If religious ordinances are under some circumstances necessary, under what circumstances, then, do they become unnecessary?" According to that evolutionary view of things which we are all along adopting, there is no doubt that as society advances questions of morals become more abstract, connecting themselves less and less with merely physical conditions, and that, following a similar rule, religious ordinances and ideas become more abstract also. But when will the point be reached, if ever, at which moral perfection—the ability, let us say, to see distinctly and to perform unhesitatingly the acts that will be productive of the greatest happiness for the greatest number—will cast out the

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necessity for religious ordinances? When will the point be reached at which, supposing we have before us an ideal of conduct, we shall never need to be reminded of the existence of that ideal, but shall carry it about with us in all places and respond to it at all times alike? Now here we touch a matter about which a good deal is said at present, particularly by those whose interest or whose fancy it is to maintain that the religion founded by Christ contains provision for its own extinction as an organized system. A religion, it is said, which depends on or encourages forms and ordinances and fixed times and places of worship, is an impure, materialistic, and un-Christian religion. It is said that the true ideal of Christian religion, of the religion at least which Christ meant to teach, is a religion which does not allow of any such thing as priest or Liturgy, of holy places or holy days; that there should be no necessity for us to go up either to Jerusalem or to Mount Gerizim to worship, but that we should worship God, who is a Spirit, anywhere and everywhere, in spirit and in truth. To do this, it is said, would be real Christianity, and only when we consent to do this shall we be anything like Christians.

Well for us, certainly, if we could do this; well for us when we can hold so firmly on the law within that we not only fail not in our duty, but perform it

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even better than those who feel the necessity for an external type. And this we might doubtless expect to be able to do more and more the more we advance in civilization—the more power we get to perform unconsciously and naturally acts which in earlier phases of progress we perform, it may be, with an effort and under external compulsion. But whether we are ever likely to reach that point of perfection at which we shall be all in all to ourselves, and never require the stimulus of an external reminder, is another question entirely. Possibly some few may reach, or appear to reach it; but we have only to glance for a moment at the present and future conditions of society in order to be convinced that for all but a very few such attainment will be impossible.

For, as has been already pointed out, the progress of society in some respects, itself creates an antagonism to progress in other respects—an antagonism through which, though the general average level of society is raised, it is still made just as difficult for the individual to perform those acts which will raise himself, and society with him, above the average level of his own time. This condition of things is not without its parallel in other departments of the social economy. For instance, when wealth becomes more widely distributed, the struggle for existence is more severely felt. And similarly, though duty lies now

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between narrower limits, yet the guidance of conduct has become a much more intricate matter; so that it might be said, if we wished to state the matter theoretically, that what has been gained on one hand has been lost on the other, and that the necessity for religious ordinances to remind us of our highest possibilities is just as great as it was six hundred years ago. But without venturing on a theory, let us look at the matter practically, and endeavour to see what chance there is of an ordinary man of business (and we are all more or less ordinary men of business) being able to dispense with religious ordinances, being able to keep his ideal of conduct constantly before him without being reminded of it periodically, without submitting to some equivalent of that "ceremony of church-going" which the "free-thinker" deems may be dispensed with.

The whole question of religious ordinances is centred, at least in England, on the observance of one day in seven as a day of rest from ordinary business; an observance which, though possibly based at the outset on a sanction purely imaginary, has nevertheless become so habitual to us that it might well be thought we could not, even in a physical sense only, do without it. But let us suppose such an observance entirely done away with, and trace the result. Living as we do under an increasing sense

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of the struggle for existence, we become increasingly afraid of neglecting our business, lest our neglect on some one point should do it a permanent injury. Some one else, not necessarily unscrupulous, we fear will take advantage of our neglect or absence, and draw away our customers (of whatever kind they may be) to himself. Clearly, then, unless we wish to have cause to reproach ourselves for inflicting injury on our own business, a holiday, a day of rest at any time (Sunday being abolished) will become a greater impossibility to us the greater is our responsibility, and the more, therefore (because of the extra strain upon the nerves which greater responsibility involves), we need such a day of rest. We must keep our place of business always open, for fear not only of immediate, but of permanent loss; and though our less responsible subordinates may take a holiday when they like, we, upon whom the whole anxiety falls, must be there day after day to see that things go on smoothly. But, besides the unbroken strain which would be thrown upon the nervous system, the practical inconvenience of such a state of things would be incalculable. If it is necessary that those whose nervous, or even physical, energy is subjected to a powerful strain should have certain intervals of rest, it is surely a necessity of a highly organized society that they should all take their rest together on the

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same day; for, when time counts for more and more, it would be inconvenient in the extreme to find that a person whom we wished to consult upon business had on that particular day shut up his place of business and gone away on his holiday. It is a necessity of social evolution that, as society advances and becomes more and more complex, its functions become more specialized; its labour more and more subdivided; its seasons of toil and relaxation more and more fixed within definite limits. This fact in itself is the strongest possible philosophical argument in favour of the observance, in the future, of a particular day of rest; while a popular argument might well be stated simply by asking what would be the result to thousands of struggling men of business if they were deprived of the relief of saying once a week, "Thank goodness, that need not be thought about till Monday."

So that, whatever may be the origin of the observance of a weekly day of rest, however loud may be the disputes that its (possibly) undue and exaggerated observance have called up, there is not the least likelihood of such an observance being abolished as we advance in civilization, and there are almost overwhelming reasons, quite of an unecclesiastical kind, against such abolition. And as it has been already admitted that it would be dangerous and misleading

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to attempt to follow our ideal of conduct in every particular, so here we get a glimpse of one particular in respect of which it would never do for us to follow the ideal of conduct presented to us in the Christ of the Four Gospels. For granting (and there is plenty of room in the Four Gospels for those who are not disposed to grant this) that his teaching and practice encouraged the idea that one place or time of religious service and contemplation is as good as any other, we find that the practical conditions of European society entirely and totally contradict such a proposition. We find that from the earliest European times moral progress could not have taken place unless distinct times and places for religious ordinances had been universally recognized. And we shall find, too, that in the future, unless such distinct times, and probably also distinct places, for the contemplation of our ideal of conduct are generally recognized, we shall be in imminent danger of losing sight of that ideal altogether.

For this is a thing as plain and simple as anything can be, to those who have the smallest knowledge of psychology—that, given six days on which a man is in close and constant contact with the lower necessities of life, and a seventh day on which he is more or less free from such contact, he will, without being aware of it, and by the mere force of association, be

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less open to the contemplation and recognition of the "highest possibilities" of his life on the six days than he will be on the seventh; that, supposing he has a desire of a certain average force to act out these "highest possibilities," the force of that desire will fall below its average on the six days, and rise above it, or be ready to rise above it, on the seventh. And equally simple and plain is the converse of this proposition—that, if for men who are on six days in close contact with the lower necessities of life, their desire to act out their "highest possibilities" is to be kept up to its average force, it will be absolutely necessary to supply on the seventh day the force that is lacking on the six. And how is this to be done? Surely by attracting and stimulating from without the force that has grown indolent within; by "the setting before men's minds of an ideal of true, just, and pure living" in some one of those innumerable aspects which life is capable of assuming; by reminding them of the "higher life" of action which is so difficult of attainment, the "higher life" that moves in larger circles and through calmer atmospheres of thought than does the life of their six days' labour; by reminding them, as men that must labour, for what ends they must labour, and in what spirit they must labour; by warning them not to be content with the average standards of thinking and acting, but to be

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always endeavouring to make a standard of their own above the average; by reminding them that, though they are in truth parts of a great social machine which cannot be rashly interfered with, yet that still "volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events," and that if the social aspect of things displeases them, they can exercise their volition towards making that aspect more pleasant, towards making the world, even if only in the regulation of their own conduct, less ignorant and less miserable than it was when they entered it.

And if we found that this end could best be accomplished by an equivalent for that "ceremony of church-going" to which the "free-thinker" objects—if we found that the "ceremony of church-going" had a real sanction which went a long way towards making it anything but a mere ceremony—what then? The "free-thinker," it is likely enough, will here put in an accusation of special pleading; but who that thinks for a moment can escape from the conviction that it is natural to our race at any rate, if not to the whole human race, to frequent public places for social objects? Who can fail to see that the spirit which makes so increasingly popular attendance at the public hall or at the concert-room when matters of politics or of art are concerned, will also make popular, whenever persons are in earnest upon

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matters of daily conduct, attendance at public places where some side or other of the science of daily conduct is dwelt upon? It is against the nature of the inhabitant of Great Britain to immure himself at home for the purpose of contemplating or reading about things privately, when there is full liberty for him to hear them discussed publicly; "the multitude *will* come together." And surely, if nothing else could be said for the maintenance of public places for religious purposes, there is this to be said—that it is more conducive to the general interests of peace and quietness that a safety-valve should be provided for a popular feeling, than that a popular feeling should be left to make a safety-valve for itself; that if we were limited to the choice as a perpetuity between High Mass and a Camp Meeting, every good Protestant even, who had any regard for social order, would decide in favour of High Mass.

But there is more than this to be said. As has been seen, it is a necessary consequence of the pressure of the struggle for existence that men, during their six days' labour, feel all at variance with, and in opposition to, one another. Their aims are then (if such an expression is allowable) all diametrically opposed to each other. Each one, as a piston or cog-wheel, is desirous of obtaining a little more than his share of the general amount of lubrication which

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the whole social machine receives; every one with whom he comes in contact is more or less an enemy, the success of whose projects will imperil the success of his own. And thus during the six days' labour the thousand grand points in respect of which all human interests are agreed and harmonious, are eclipsed behind the ever-present consciousness of the one point in respect of which those interests are really or apparently opposed. Now, if the association of ideas means anything at all, surely it should have a powerfully humanizing effect, even if an unconscious effect, upon those who for six days have been toiling in a tacit antagonism to each other, to find, on the seventh day, when they have a respite from their toil and their antagonism, their common interests emphasized by their meeting together under one roof for a common purpose. And surely, whether the building in which they thus met were called a church or not, its very existence would be the symbol of the "higher life" to its surrounding neighbourhood, simply through our knowledge of the purpose for which it was used; and surely, too, whether or not it were called a house of prayer, it would to the toilers of the world be a veritable house of peace—"a place in which those who were weary of the burden of daily cares might find a moment's rest in the contemplation of that higher life" to the encouragement of which its walls were dedicated.

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But there is yet again an economical reason in favour of special places for religious purposes. In bringing a number of persons together who may be in all sorts of frames of mind, it will be desirable and necessary to have the means at hand of appealing to all sorts of frames of mind. Supposing it to be granted that the main thing to be considered is the light that may be thrown upon the events of daily life by means of a lecture (let us call it) on some particular aspect of conduct; yet still it can scarcely be expected that all persons, or indeed the same persons at different times, will be equally disposed to listen attentively to such a lecture. The intellect may often be in need of rest even in the case of the most highly intellectual natures, while plainly enough, in a mixed assembly, the topics and the manner of dealing with them that interest some may be quite away out of the sight of others. While, then, it may be said that the weekly Lecture supplies what is wanted by those who are in a more intellectual mood, Art and Literature must be drawn upon to supply the wants of others. Art and Literature, not in any of their aspects, not made to appear existing for their own sakes, but Art and Literature in their nearest relationships to daily conduct, and appearing to exist for the sake of the light which they can throw upon matters of daily conduct; Art which calms and deepens the current

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of reflection rather than excites it; Literature which chiefly deals with the actions of those who have notably succeeded in raising themselves to that "higher life" of action, possible for all, yet attained by so few. Art and Literature, too, of the very best that can be made available; Art that expresses the utmost effort of the resources of the district; Literature upon which is stamped in unmistakable characters the mark of classicality. And here it is that the economical argument in favour of special and public places for religious purposes makes itself felt; for to secure these things in their greatest excellence the whole resources of each district must be put under contribution, a thing which can never be done except for a public purpose and under public sanction.

Looking at things, then, from that purely evolutionary point of view which has been adopted, it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that, as society progresses, we shall find a real sanction for an equivalent of that "ceremony of church-going" to which the "free-thinker" objects—we shall find, that is to say, a real sanction for, and derive a positive benefit from, religious ordinances. But the necessity for religious ordinances draws after it, we might think, the necessity for religious organizations—the necessity, that is, for the existence of a certain class of men whose sole business it shall be to attend to religious

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ordinances. There is this argument, at least, in favour of the existence of religious organizations, if there is no other—that as society advances, the functions of its several parts become more and more specialized; that if, therefore, the services of a specially organized body were in the past, when society was but imperfectly developed, engaged with religious ordinances, all the more reason why in the future, when society is highly developed, religious ordinances should engage the services of such a specially organized body.

But the practical argument has far greater force than any theoretical argument ever can have. We want from week to week an "ideal of true, just, and pure living" presented to us; we want, in our periodical seasons of relaxation from ordinary business, to see more clearly that ideal of conduct which we live by, to be reminded of the manner in which it works, often unconsciously to ourselves, upon even the insignificant events of our daily life. And how is this to be done, by whom is it to be done for us? Nothing can be more illusory, more uneconomical, more out of keeping with the whole idea of modern society, than to suppose that the man who has laboured with his hands or with his brain at the ordinary business of life for six days, can on the seventh become an eligible expounder to his brethren of the workings of their inner, individual

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life. Here, again, is a matter in respect of which the exact following of what is by many affirmed to be the direction of the Christ of the Four Gospels, and the example of his immediate associates, will only mislead and confuse us. That the man who week by week, or on any other occasions, occupies himself with an endeavour to the best of his ability to set before his brethren "an ideal of true, just, and pure living," should be by profession (let us say) a tent-maker or a market-gardener, and by such occupation should sustain himself, is an idea which, like Communism, has something of the beauty of a true Republican simplicity about it; but which, like Communism and like (it may be thought) true Republicanism also, is found to be utterly impossible and unpractical the moment even an endeavour is made to set it in action. For not only would the pressure of the struggle for existence make it generally impossible for a tent-maker or a market-gardener to exercise his calling profitably if he were weighted with the extra responsibility of instructing his fellows on Sundays, but the pressure of ordinary business would render it impossible for him to undertake such a task satisfactorily. Even supposing him to be physically equal to it, he could never make his performance acceptable or useful. And for this reason: the conditions of daily life continually become more and more intricate; a

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special training and considerable leisure for the contemplation of those conditions are needful for those who would deal with them to advantage. The conditions of daily life are certainly not more easy to be understood than the conditions of biological existence; yet imagine the outcry that would be raised by all those who call themselves "friends of progress" if it were proposed that the duties of a professor of physiology should be discharged, during his intervals of leisure, by a tent-maker or a market-gardener.

But, on the other hand, is it easy to over-estimate the positive benefit that would result to the residents in any locality, to any set of persons engaged in ordinary business and feeling the pressure of the struggle for existence with all its results, if there were among them one whose special business it was to keep, as it were, his head above water, to study the conditions of the "higher life" which for them is in such imminent danger of being excluded by the consciousness of the lower life, and to report to them from time to time what he saw in their lower life which unnecessarily kept them back from the higher? To such a man (who might, if we had no other name for him, be called a "professor of daily conduct") it would fall to be acquainted intimately with the structure and tendencies of the human mind; to know

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and be able to discriminate between the physiological equivalents of mental states ; to know, both by study and by personal experience, under what circumstances, in different characters and at different ages, certain predispositions to certain lines of conduct are likely to arise, to know how these should be met, so that jeopardy to the delicate balancings of society may be avoided. Psychology, with its allied sciences of physiology and sociology, he should be versed in, and well versed in Literature also ; for Literature will give him the synthesis of that daily conduct of which psychology gives him the analysis. More than this, he will have to deal with the beliefs of men—with those shadows of their own wishes and necessities which are cast upon the uncertainties surrounding them ; he will need, therefore, to be acquainted with what men have believed and under what conditions they have believed it, in order to be aware beforehand under what new conditions a new belief, or the revival of an old one, is likely to arise. The history of what men have believed and why they have believed it must, therefore, occupy some part of his attention ; he must, that is to say, have a tolerably wide acquaintance with Church history and with comparative theology, even though he may wholly abstain from maintaining "abstract propositions in theology" week by week. Such a training as this, it will easily be seen,

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is one that might absorb years of an able and industrious man's life and yet be capable of being carried farther still; and it might well be said that if such a training as this would not fit a man to be, in a time like ours, morally useful to his fellows—if such a training would not enable him, week by week publicly, and whenever occasion might arise privately, to give ordinary men of business wider and healthier ideas of life than they are accustomed to form for themselves—then the whole scheme of modern education is a delusion and a fraud.

But the social advantage would be, or ought to be, equally great. In a highly organized society, in which the greater subdivision of labour leads to a greater complication of interests, disputes may often arise which, though not worthy to be carried to a legal tribunal for decision, may, by interfering with the spirit in which work is done, seriously jeopardize the peace and the progress of the community if left undecided. And in cases of this sort it is impossible not to see that the "professor of daily conduct" (as we have termed him) might often act as arbitrator with the greatest advantage. Standing outside all class interests (as it will be seen immediately he must do if he is to be useful at all), well educated, and universally known to be concerned on the side of peace and of fair dealing, nothing would seem more

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natural than that he should be appealed to as arbitrator in minor disputes by those among whom he is stationed. Who can tell, indeed, how many law-suits, each with its ever-multiplying chain of bad feelings and social disturbances, might not be avoided by reference to such an arbitrator in the first instance? And whatever else may be prescribed with the object of making the world a little less miserable, there can upon this point be no dispute—that the world would be saved a vast deal of misery if the contentions of opposing interests could be settled without being paraded before the whole world.

But now we approach a question which is, in fact, almost the most important of all; the question, namely, as to the position of the "professor of daily conduct" with regard to the rest of society; for it is clearly of no use giving a man a splendid education and telling him that he may do this and that if he is all the while prevented by his social position from turning his education to proper advantage. And it is no less clear that, in a society in which classes, and the complications of interests which classes imply, are daily becoming multiplied, the usefulness of the "professor of daily conduct" in any direction will be terribly interfered with if there are circumstances in his social position which lead him to identify his interests, or which may lead others to suspect him of

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identifying his interests, with the interests of one class more than another. To be of any service at all, he must clearly be independent of all classes. And it is just as clear (looking at the matter from the standpoint of common sense and not under the influence of millennial dreams) that, in order that the position should be well filled (and it had perhaps better not be filled at all than badly filled), the dignity and emoluments attaching to it must be sufficient to attract men of the highest class of intelligence—must be able to compete on equal terms with the dignity and the emoluments that attach to the Civil Service or to the study of the law. And in order that this should be the case, it seems almost impossible to resist the conviction that the "professor of daily conduct" should be a servant of the State, appointed by the State, either directly or indirectly, for life, and responsible to and removable by the State only.

We are not here concerned (it will be observed) with any theory as to what the State may or may not do; and it may be readily granted that, as a matter of theory, the more the sphere of Government is restricted, and the more the individuals composing society are induced to rely upon themselves, the better. But the most consistent advocates of the restriction of the sphere of Government are far from saying that English society, at any rate, has now

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arrived at that point where State interference, except for the enforcing of contracts, may be dispensed with. The practical difficulties are as yet far too much for theoretic consistency, and in urging the advisability of making the "professor of daily conduct" a servant of the State, it is to the practical difficulties, and not to any theoretical consistency, that attention must be paid. Nay, as far as theory is concerned, a State Church may be, in the abstract, that "polluted inner chamber" which the aggressive nonconformist says it is; there is no necessity to dispute the point with him; only if we are to use our candles instead of disputing as to the manner of lighting them, if we are to have an ideal of conduct and religious ordinances for the sake of helping us to rise now and then into that "higher life" of action which is so much more valuable than the rewards and successes of daily business, we must take care to arrange for those ordinances in the manner which will make them practically and, under our present social conditions, most economically effective. That everything in society is not as it should be, and that the average of human nature is as yet anything but what it may be, no one will dispute; and if the imperfections of human nature make the existence of a State Church desirable, those who on principle object to a State Church must get rid of it by

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doing all they can to make human nature more perfect.

Granting, then, that a State Church may possibly be a necessary evil only, and that in a perfect society it would not exist, let us see what are at present the practical arguments in its favour. If the "professor of daily conduct" is not directly or indirectly appointed by the State—appointed, that is, either directly by the Government then in power or by permanent commissioners appointed for such purposes—and if he is not paid by the State, how then shall he be appointed and paid? Let us take the question of appointment first. The only other method of appointment likely to be suggested is election by those among whom he is to labour. But who does not know the almost certain accompaniments and consequences of an election of any kind—the antagonistic feelings that are sure to be stirred up, the dread lest one class should be represented more than another, the certainty that the elected person (who is, after all, but human) will lean towards those who have been most prominent in securing his election? Who does not know the roots of bitterness that spring up even out of parliamentary or municipal elections, the only antidote to which is the determination of the disappointed party to have their revenge next time? These things are bad enough to be borne with

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in political elections; but, taking place in connection with the appointment of a "professor of daily conduct," one of whose chief chances of usefulness is his entire disconnection from all classes and parties, they would be intolerable. Moreover it is found (and it accords with a general knowledge of human nature) that those who elect like to have a power over those who are elected; and consequently, if the election of "a professor of daily conduct" were for life, few at last would care to interest themselves in it; the election would fall into the hands of a clique, whose obedient servant the elected person would be thought to be, even if he were not so in reality. Or if the appointment were to be held only during the pleasure of the electors, and the "professor of daily conduct" were liable to dismissal at six months' notice, not only would his independence be completely destroyed, but the dignity of the whole position would be so irretrievably lowered that no one would undertake it who could get from a Government appointment even half the emoluments attaching to it. So that, unless the office of "professor of daily conduct" is to be a delusion and a sham and a burdensome encumbrance on the revenues of the country, it is essential that the office should not be elective, just as it is essential, and as every one feels it to be essential, that the offices which have to do with the administration of the law should not be elective.

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Again, how is the "professor of daily conduct" to be paid, if not by the State? Presuming that the State appoints him, he might be paid by fees, by voluntary subscriptions, or by the interest on funds lodged in the hands of Trustees. Now with regard to this last-named method, it is pretty certain that no one will be desirous to undertake the office of a trustee who does not thereby acquire some real or imaginary dignity or advantage therefrom; and, as a matter of fact, trusteeship almost invariably carries with it a certain amount of power over appointments to the office to which the trust refers.* If the State is the trustee and appoints accordingly, well and good; but if the trustees should be private persons or corporations, any appointment made would always lie under the suspicion of having been made in the interest of the trustees, and that the person appointed would chiefly serve the interests of those thus influencing his appointment—a suspicion which, as has been seen, would be eminently hostile to the usefulness of any one holding the position of a "professor of daily conduct." Again, is he to be paid by fees?

* It might at first sight seem as if this point should have been dealt with under the head immediately preceding. It will be borne in mind, however, that under the present condition of things in the National Church, the person nominated by the trustees to an incumbency is totally independent of such trustees from the moment of his institution, and is practically the servant of the State.

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The payment of a fee attaches to the performance of some specified act, and the fee cannot be claimed unless the act is performed. Now for the State to enact that the population in a certain district must perform certain acts in order that the "professor of daily conduct" may be benefited by the reception of certain fees, would be simply to establish a State Church under the most galling conditions, and make the office of "professor of daily conduct" a cause of continual irritation, if not an object of positive hatred; while to make optional the performance of acts for which fees might be paid would be to place the "professor of daily conduct" completely at the mercy of those to whom he is to be useful—as completely at their mercy as the Incumbent of a Proprietary Chapel is at the mercy of those who take sittings under him. And with regard to the payment of the "professor of daily conduct" by voluntary subscription, it is obvious that such a system involves more evils than any other. No one of any independence of feeling would undertake it so long as his acquirements and position might enable him to gain a permanent position under Government or even under some large corporation. Few persons of any worth of character would not prefer to be (say) the superintendent of a railway station at £300 a year rather than a "professor of daily conduct" paid by voluntary subscriptions, with

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the possibility of £600; and the office which of all others should be beyond the suspicion of being held for speculative reasons, would be the very one which all sensitive and high-minded persons, who had an idea of thinking of their duty before all things, would carefully avoid, through fear of the stigma which justly attaches to those who speculate with an appearance of religious enthusiasm for capital.

But are these, it may be asked, the only reasons which can be given for putting the supervision of religious organizations into the hands of the State; that unless this is done, men will be tempted to sacrifice their higher things for their lower, to become insincere and make a pretence of fulfilling for duty an office which they only fulfil for gain? Is there no higher principle than this on account of which the State ought to make itself the teacher of moral duty? Is a State Church only to exist by reason of human imperfections, and imperfections, too, mostly associated with the love of money? As has been said already, we are not here concerned with any theory as to what the State may or may not do; all we have to do with is the fact that certain evils are likely to arise if certain things are under any but State supervision. And as for human imperfections, whatever may be the true abstract theory of the duties of the State, with ourselves at any rate the State has existed almost

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entirely by reason of human imperfections. With ourselves the functions of the "civil magistrate" are, with one or two trifling exceptions, purely negative; and though he is perhaps not such a terror to evil-doers as he might be, it is no particular business of his to be the praise of any that do well. It is a human imperfection, and an avoidable one, which leads us to break our contracts; to swear to our neighbour, and disappoint him when we find that the oath is to our own hindrance; and to overrule the evil results of this human imperfection is allowed to be the duty of the State even by those who would reduce the sphere of Government to its narrowest limits. It is also a human imperfection, and possibly an unavoidable one, that leads us to attach a good deal of importance to the possession of money, and to think that we are bound to observe greater deference towards those from whom we receive money, or the means of making it. And clearly if circumstances arise under which the usefulness of a great and expensive organization may be in a great measure invalidated by the existence of this monetary deference towards private persons, that may well be a sufficient reason for the State to become paymaster and controller, and thus, by drawing all the monetary deference to itself, distribute it over a wider area, and make it less noxious. For it is plain that a man who feels bound

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to be deferential to the State can be no respecter of persons or of classes, because the State includes all persons and classes; and to be subservient to one class or to one set of persons only, would be unfaithfulness in the discharge of his duty to the State. Of course it may be said that, after all, the "professor of daily conduct" will be paid by those among whom he labours. This is true, as true as it is that the Judges are paid by those to whom they administer justice. The connection, however, is in neither case obvious or patent; and in both cases the State, the whole nation as expressed by its chosen executive, comes between as a guarantor of fair play. If any one wishes to see plainly what are the practical advantages of this arrangement, he has only to call to mind the agitation that once arose over certain condemned gas-stokers, and to calculate to what a height that agitation would have run if we had been in the habit of paying the Judges by a percentage on the profits of the gas companies.

But there is, after all, a far stronger argument in favour of the State supervision of religious organizations than is to be found in this fact of human imperfection—an argument, too, that will appeal, or ought to appeal, most forcibly to those who, with the "free-thinker," are inclined to regard organized religion as consisting of certain meaningless ceremonies

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that might well be dispensed with. The argument referred to may be stated in the proposition that only through the means of a State supervision can religion itself be kept in check—that only thus can we insure (under present conditions at least) its adding its proper proportion to the whole of life, and prevent its making itself the principal thing to be lived for; that only by a State supervision can we repress that abuse of religion which makes religion exist for religion's sake; that only thus can we counteract what must be called in as plain terms as possible the social high treason of Ultramontanism—high treason which the Jesuit commits when he abjures nationality in the interests of his order, and which the English nonconformist no less commits when he speaks of viewing and judging social and political questions "from the standpoint of religious citizenship." Now the truth is that, if religion and citizenship mean anything at all, there can be no such thing as "religious citizenship." Citizenship refers to a certain relation between the individual and the society in which he moves; religion refers to a certain set of feelings and ideas which, among many others, are the property of the individual. The two things lie, as it were, on different sides of us, and though there need be no practical antagonism between them, yet by no possible means can they be made to include each other. There

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is, however, a spurious religion, a revolutionary and anarchic religion, which, not content with influencing the individual, and society through the individual, would be a society in itself, would make the individual religious conscience, with its limited experiences, the measure of that Imperial law which should clearly, if justice means anything at all, be founded upon the total experiences of all those over whom it is exercised. It is of this spurious, insurrectionary, and anarchic religion that the social high treason of Ultramontanism is the offspring; the offspring, be it observed, not of religion in its healthy activity, but of religion diseased; religion raging into fevers or congesting into sores; religion tainted with all the accumulated refuse of passions that cannot or dare not fully show themselves in the ordinary life of society. And wherever this pest of society wanders, there we find the clear though sheltered founts of pure religious feeling bared to the day and overflowing with the defilement of party polemics—defilement even exceeding that which political questions receive from the operations of faction, which makes the very name of religion seem a curse, and turns away from healing waters those who most thirst for them. Now it may not be the duty of the State to provide good water or rapid travelling, or any other desideratum of modern civilization; but it is clearly both the duty and the interest

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of the State to take care that there springs up in society no authority antagonistic to its own; it is clearly both the duty and the interest of the State, in the presence of a strong popular feeling which tends to run into organizations and to make itself paramount, that it should itself provide an organization for the expression of that popular feeling, should take it in hand and guide it, lest the popular feeling, left to itself, should build up an organization to consume and defy the State. And Ultramontanism is the building up of such an organization. What mischiefs it has created in one place or another we know very well; and when we consider that every religious journal in Great Britain—no matter what its name or its professed principles—each with its habit of viewing social and political questions from its own particular religious standpoint, is a centre of Ultramontanism, ready to be developed to the extremest degree if occasion should serve—when we see that the popular feeling with regard to religion is strong and active enough to support all these journals and the parties they represent—when we consider these things, however strong might be our prejudice against religion altogether, even though we held, with the "freethinker," that the "ceremony of church-going" and all other such ceremonies might be well dispensed with, as far as we are personally concerned; yet for the

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sake of keeping religion itself in check, for the sake of making it do what it ought to do and no more, for the sake of preserving society from the tyranny which is inaugurated when religion goes beyond its limits, we might well insist that the State should take the supervision of religion into its own hands; and thus, while not repressing independent organizations, should so construct the State organization as to leave as little room as possible for any others to exist.

Speaking, then, of the threefold external form in which religion exists, we may say that there is a real sanction, in respect of the Christianity of the future, for both ordinances and organization, and that it is highly desirable for that organization to be under the supervision of the State. And with regard to Creeds, though, as has been said already, a creed is a thing which perhaps we shall be rather called upon to have patience with than to justify, this much must be insisted on—that if there is a popular tendency to certain beliefs, towards the framing of certain *à priori* theories of the universe (if only in its relation to human volition), no religious organization can be called national which does not take account of those beliefs and leave room for their expression. The State is not called upon to draw up a Creed, but the Creed of the State Church, if there is to be a State Church, must be *what the people believe;* and it may

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certainly be the duty of the State to see that any formulated expression of that Creed is drawn up in such general terms as to insure its acceptability, more or less complete, by persons of all sorts of different degrees of culture—to insure (to paraphrase the maxim of the utilitarian) the greatest adherence of the greatest number. For, granting that Creeds will be held by different persons according to their culture and intellect, whether we wish it or not, it will clearly be to the advantage of the positive side of Christianity, the side that supplies an "emotional stimulus to the higher volition," that no one should be kept back from making the fullest possible use of that positive side by any suspicion that all aspects of life, or some particular aspects in which he is particularly interested, are not touched by it. For (as has been said more than once) the great thing is to have an ideal of conduct and follow it, even if but occasionally and to a slight extent, the justification of ourselves for doing so being but a secondary matter.

Finally, as to a matter of detail, in case it should be urged that to dot the country over with Government officials in the possible proportion of one to every thousand of the population would be to create an undue Governmental influence, it might be very feasibly suggested that those who are appointed to the office of "professor of daily conduct" should not

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be appointed until they had served a certain period of probation in subordinate situations (as assistants, for example, to existing professors, by whom they might be nominated), nor until they had passed a final examination in subjects specially relating to their profession ; and that their appointment (where the rule of seniority was not followed) should not issue directly from the Government then in office, but from permanent Commissioners appointed by the State for that purpose and for general purposes of supervision —Commissioners selected from among the "professors of daily conduct," as the Judges are selected from among the members of the Bar, for their distinguished attainments. And if it were found desirable that such permanent Commissioners, for the sake of more intimately acquainting themselves with the matters under their supervision, should divide the country into districts and each reside within his own ; and if it should be found necessary, in order to secure men of sufficient intelligence and standing, to give such permanent Commissioners a salary not inferior to that received by the Judges of Assize ; and if, further, they should be entitled, like the Judges of Assize, to appear in their public capacity in a certain dignified official costume—then it seems difficult to assign any sufficient reason why they should not be called Bishops.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM.

Is a Millennium possible?

Hitherto we have been content to pass the possibility by, with the remark that the idea of a Millennium does not stand very well on that "solid basis" of evolution which has been adopted throughout this discussion. For a Millennium involves the idea of a sudden and complete change in the condition of those who are to enjoy it—the idea of a strongly emphasized line of demarcation such as the theory of Evolution scarcely gives us room to hope for. Still, supposing the tidal wave of intellect were to register the same height simultaneously in respect of the whole mass of the individuals composing society, there might be room for believing that at a certain point a new condition of things would all at once begin to be apparent—a new condition which might or might not be a Millennium. But if this is not the case—if the individuals composing society are so circumstanced

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that the tide has scarcely begun to flow with some, while it is already full flood with others, then clearly an intellectual Millennium, however desirable in theory, is totally impossible in practice. For as the prime condition of the Millennium of the Apocalypse was the absence of sin, so the prime condition of an intellectual Millennium must be the absence of ignorance. If Satan had not been bound, the saints would not have profited much by their resurrection; and similarly in a society in which ignorance is still rampant, the full benefits of intellectual perfectness can never be enjoyed by those who are happy enough to be possessed of it.

Now it might be very reasonably said that the late Mr. Mill's treatises on Logic and various other subjects are an unexampled trophy of intellectual perfectness, and undoubtedly they have a wide circulation among all classes of society, particularly (if the printing of "people's editions" means anything at all) among that class which ultra-radical journals, with the possible object of satirizing its supposed adoption of Malthusian principles, have sometimes spoken of as "the proletariat." Whether the members of this class who possess these works really value them for their own worth, and whether they do not rather regard them as endowed with some talismanic power against capitalists and landowners, may be an open question;

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but even granting that they do properly appreciate their value, still there are other works that circulate even more widely, and which are certainly indicative of anything but intellectual perfectness. There is "Zadkiel's Almanac," for instance, a work of great ingenuity, which has an annual sale to the extent of several thousand copies in one provincial town in England only; a work which, dealing in predictions based on the movements of red dragons and the development of little horns, might enable us, if we put faith in it, to regulate our actions for the year with the best possible chance of causing the greatest happiness to the greatest number. Or again, not to speak of publications, what shall be said of Spiritualism, which has at one time and another produced conferences for the purpose of discussing, among other things, "the benefit of physical manifestations to the community," and "the best method of developing mediums"? What shall be said, either, of that distinguished and typical working man of Greenwich, of whom we once heard, who became a convert from Radicalism to Conservatism because Mr. Gladstone's Government refused to allow him to commute his dockyard pension? Clearly, looking at all these things and many other such things together, we cannot find much reason for thinking that the Satan of ignorance, whose work it has been for a long time

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past to lead people to act under the influence of superstition or of the narrowest self-interest, is chained up, and that therefore we are at liberty to enjoy a Millennium of intellectual perfectness. Far from this, there are many indications which might lead us to think that the Satan of ignorance is at present specially unloosed and active. This may be, of course, because he knows that he has but a little time; but it is just during this little time, of transition, if it really be such, that we are bound to be most upon our guard against him, to give him no advantage, no, not for a moment.

At any rate, Millennium or no Millennium, here are two great facts we have to face in dealing with the tendencies of English society—"Zadkiel's Almanac" and Spiritualism; and they are facts so significant of the failure of the tidal wave of intellect to influence as yet vast tracts and reaches of English society, that a remembrance of them might well be bound upon the hands and worn as frontlets between the eyes of those whom zeal for intellectual perfectness predisposes to regard all men as equally gifted with themselves. But the indirect significance of these facts is far greater even than their direct significance. That so many persons should desire to know beforehand the precise moment at which they ought to marry or the exact nature of the condition of their

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friends in another world, is not nearly so important as the fact that so many persons are ready and anxious to adopt any means for making those things seem palpable and certain which are really impalpable and uncertain. The position of uncertainty, of suspense of judgment, is, it cannot be too often remembered, the highest and most difficult philosophical position that can be held. It is a position of unstable equilibrium; a position from which deviation in one direction or another, to a greater or less degree, is momently imminent, and may be determined by the slightest occurrence of daily life. And round this position in respect of matters that are uncertain (as any one who is in the habit of taking note of his own thoughts will observe), our thoughts are constantly circling, sometimes for a moment seeming to reach it absolutely, but always driven away again by the accession of some new emotion, however slight. It is a position so difficult to achieve and so impossible long to retain, that the majority of persons (at any rate as human nature is at present constituted) never attain to it in respect of the most thoroughly speculative questions—questions with regard to which the evidence is so nicely balanced as to amount to an entire absence of evidence. In respect of such questions, among which the main questions involved in all religious creeds are included, the

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majority of persons form an opinion in the following of their wishes ; and seeing how suspense of judgment may paralyze action, it is much better that the majority of persons, who have to pass their lives in acting and not in thinking, should do so, and, in the room of a suspense of judgment, admit a certain amount of affirmation. Now it is by means of this "certain amount of affirmation" (which is subject to infinite variations) that the majority of persons seek to make certain and palpable matters which are in truth uncertain and impalpable. They fill up the gulf of their ignorance with an assumption of knowledge, their wishes or necessities suggesting a belief, and their degree of intellectual culture determining its intensity and its limits. Knowing little of the real reason of things, they create reasons. "To fill the vacuum of thought (as Mr. Herbert Spencer says) any theory that is suggested seems better than none." * Failing of a sanction which is real, they frame one for themselves which is imaginary. The greater their ignorance, the more positive are they of the correctness of their theory, and the more universally do they apply it. And thus, while the poet can talk of "starry influences" in a figurative manner which the most intellectual of philosophers can feel to be obscurely true, the farm-servant who purchases

* "First Principles," 3rd edition, p. 30.

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"Zadkiel's Almanac" is absolutely certain that his or her miserable doings are under special planetary care; and while the English Apostle of Comtism can speak of an immortality of influence in language of which no one could feel ashamed, the grossly materialistic nature of the average Spiritualist leads him to discuss "the benefits of physical manifestations," and to recognize ghostly interference in respect of his dealings on the Stock Exchange.

The loss of such persons is, of course, their own; for the higher we advance in intellectual culture the more completely do we become convinced that the reality of things is, and always must be, infinitely greater and more wonderful than we can ever imagine it to be. But the existence of such persons, purchasers of "Zadkiel's Almanac" and believers in Spiritualism, shows us one thing very plainly—that we cannot hope strongly to attract the attention of large sections of English society in any particular direction without the help of an appeal to their imagination. In other words, if we are to make our ideal of conduct nationally effective, it must be capable of having attached to it a powerful imaginary sanction, as well as that real sanction which has just been discussed. We may regret the necessity, but we must not the less on that account admit it. The creed of a Church, as we know, is not, after all, a very important part of the

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Church; but still the creed of a Church which is to be national must be *what the people believe.* And if large masses of the people are in that low intellectual condition out of which the belief in "Zadkiel's Almanac" or in Spiritualism is naturally developed, it will not be the least use setting before them an ideal of conduct which does not receive such an imaginary sanction as they can best appreciate. We may pipe to them for ever of the social and physical benefits of a seventh day of rest, or of the superior happiness of a life of peace and charity, but it will, without some such sanction superadded, be piping to deaf ears. Except they see signs and wonders, they will not believe; and those who would wish them to believe without signs and wonders will become to them inferior and foolish people, infidels and outcasts, persons who would be rightly executed for their criminality, were they not rather to be pitied for their incredible obtuseness. We must be content, for a time at least, if we would see our ideal of conduct widely accepted, that it should be capable of appealing strongly, by means of an imaginary sanction, to those who will not accept it if devoid of such sanction. And though, as has been said, we may regret this necessity, still we must be patient with it; seeing that the great thing, after all, is to have an ideal and to follow it, and that our justification to ourselves for doing so is but a secondary matter.

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But when we speak of an imaginary sanction for Christianity in England, the question arises, Where are we to find it? For the only imaginary sanction (such as it is) which we have allowed ourselves in England for more than three centuries (the belief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible) has gone—gone as we deserved that it should go, seeing that we were so hardy as to lean entirely upon it—gone, too, never to be restored in its integrity; for who can be blind to the fact that the efforts of the Christian Evidence Society or of the promoters of the "Speaker's Commentary" are the efforts of polite despair? The doubt as to Biblical inspiration is a doubt that was sure to arise some time, and a doubt, too, which, having once arisen, could not help being fatal to the cause of those who leaned upon this one point. All the theological works that have been produced in England since the Reformation, it might be said, have been buttresses to support this main bulwark; and in the crumbling of the bulwark the very presence of the buttresses only seems to make the confusion worse. And it is not merely the overthrow of the imaginary sanction of Christianity in England that we have at this moment to face. That imaginary sanction, as has been already pointed out, never was of very much practical service. The real sanction of the past existence of the Church of England has been her social power, has been the

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authority which she acquired from her eminently Erastian constitution, and from the identification of her interests with the interests of the landowners. And if this social power had been left unimpaired, whatever doubt had been thrown upon the doctrine of Biblical Inspiration would probably have mattered little. But, as has also been seen, the social power, the real sanction (or what has hitherto been so) of the English Church is at this moment even more seriously undermined than her imaginary sanction. Not only is the fact of her close connection with the landed interest now of no advantage to the Church of England, but it is a positive disadvantage. Even were her religious basis more secure than it is, her social constitution would render her an object of mistrust to the ever-increasing labouring classes; and when these classes, by the help of the middle-class "free-thinker's" publications, get an idea of her theological weakness also, the Church's case may be considered as well-nigh desperate. It cannot, indeed, be too plainly acknowledged and admitted that the day of the Church of England, as it has been—the Church appealing solely to the Bible, and tied down, for good or evil, to the land—is completely gone by. It has done its work, and an important work, in helping to preserve through many generations that "negative social conformity," the preservation of

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which is so essential to the well-being of society—done it, however (it must be said), rather in spite of its Biblical exclusiveness than by reason of it. And if the Church of England is in the future to be a National Church, and is to exercise an equally powerful influence in keeping morality up to a certain level (leaving the question of positive usefulness for the moment out of sight), it cannot be too plainly acknowledged and admitted that the Church must find some new theological basis, a great deal wider than its theological basis has hitherto been, and that also, as the social power that has hitherto been derived from connection with the landed interest declines, that power must be replaced with something fully equivalent.

Now here the theory of evolution will help us to a suggestion. To the doctrine of the Plenary Inspiration of the Bible the theory of evolution has nothing to say except this (but this is, in fact, a very great deal)—that such a doctrine would never have been held unless men had found it to be in some respects congruous with their other beliefs and experiences. This very doctrine, however, upon which we have leaned too exclusively, is but a part of the whole religious tradition of Europe, of the whole mass of beliefs which were accepted by the forefathers of our present civilization. And they accepted the whole of those beliefs for the same

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reason that they accepted part of them—because they found them to be congruous with their other beliefs and experiences. They were superstitious, these forefathers of ours; they found no difficulty in believing in signs and wonders, in apparitions of the dead and in prophetic stars.* They found, let us say some four hundred years ago, a religion which by its own merits alone, by its possession of the whole European tradition, and apart from any political influence, exercised a powerful effect upon them, both negatively and positively, in the religion which the English Reformers, with many bad immediate results and with one good ultimate result, so successfully laboured to overthrow. But so also are great numbers of the present generation superstitious, disposed to believe in signs and wonders, in apparitions of the dead, and in prophetic stars. And consequently, if we accept the proposition (as we must do if we set any value on the theory of evolution), that persons of the same race and possessed of the

* "The kyng (Henry VI.), as it was tolde me by a grete man, wolde have hym (the Duke of York) chief and princepall counceller, . . . and hise patent to be made in that forme, and not so large as it is by Parlement. But soome men thinken it will ner can otherwise be; and men speke and devyne meche matere of the comyng (of the Duke) this day in suche array to Westminster. And the Lordes speken this day in the Parlement of a greet gleymyng sterre that but late hathe be been diverse tymes, merveilous in apperyng."—Paston Letters, edited by James Gairdner. No. 275, dated 9th February, 1456.

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same amount of intellectual culture will hold very much the same religious creed, we seem to be led to the conclusion that the Church of England, if she is to exercise in the future a wide national influence by reason of her own merits and apart from that social power which has now left her, must revert more or less to the creeds held in England four centuries ago, must fall back on the whole European tradition—the tradition from which, with a single reservation, the Protestant Reformation too violently and completely severed us. In other words (and it is well to be as plain as possible), an acceptance of the theory of Evolution as applied to these matters impels us to the belief that, if the Church of England is to be in the future a National Church, the errors of the Reformation must be reformed; that the Reformation was not by any means, except in respect of its protest against Papal interference in national affairs, the glorious thing which, owing to political prejudice, we have been accustomed to think it; and that only in one respect—in respect of the strong emphasis it gave to State Supremacy—has it been permanently useful.

Now this, which an acceptance of the theory of Evolution impels us to think ought to be done, is at this moment being done upon a scale which we shall call alarming or promising according to our

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intelligence or our prejudices. The Ritualistic movement in the Church of England is, in fact, a movement of return to that European tradition of Christianity which the Protestant Reformation almost annihilated in England. And the rapidity with which this movement has gathered force, and is still gathering force, is one of the most significant phenomena of our time. For nothing can be more contrary to an evolutionary view of things than to suppose that this movement, though it may express itself chiefly through the action of the clergy, is the mere fabric of clerical vanity and ambition. An evolutionary view of things rather compels us to believe that for every one of the four hundred and eighty clergymen who signed some few years ago a petition in favour of Sacramental Confession, there are a thousand lay persons who approved of the object of that petition; and that, as there are probably many more hundred clergymen who, though not committing themselves by the signing of that petition, are yet in general harmony with the principles which Ritualism supports, so there are many more hundreds of thousands of lay persons who occupy the same definite, though unpronounced, position. Regarding Ritualism, then, as a national movement (as the numbers interested in it oblige us to do), of what national feeling is it the expression? Certainly, and chiefly,

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it is the expression of a feeling of insecurity as to the basis of Protestantism, a feeling of insecurity with regard to that one dogma of Biblical Infallibility upon which the Church of England has for so long chosen to lean. It has been felt that something more than this is wanted; it has been seen, only too plainly, into what ridiculous and dangerous positions men might be carried who, acting on the strength of Biblical infallibility in a manner more logical than customary, set up the Bible as the rule, not only of individual conduct, but of social organization. It has been seen that everything which redeemed the services of the Church of England, even in their gloomiest days, from sinking to the level of the unedifying performances of the extremest Puritanism, has been the fragment of European tradition which was saved from the general wreck caused by the Reformation. It has been felt that if Christianity meant anything at all, men could not have been left in darkness; that there must be, not only the Bible, but a recognized and traditional interpretation of the Bible, so that ignorant and licentious persons might have no excuse for justifying, by a reference to the letter of the Bible, the injuries they inflicted on society. And that traditional interpretation, it has been felt (and most reasonably and logically felt) is to be found in the general European traditions which,

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though the Church of England rejected them at the Reformation on many important points, have yet been the only means by which the Church's dignity has been in any degree preserved. What more natural, therefore, what more in accordance with the general principles of Evolution, than that, as soon as the fading away of the political prejudice against Catholicism permitted, a return should be begun to be made to the European tradition, the Catholic tradition, of Christianity in its completeness? What more natural, too, than that this return should have been accelerated by the critical attacks which have been made upon Biblical Infallibility, that those who felt the single ground of Biblical Infallibility going away from under them should have taken refuge in the wider tradition which, for all practical purposes, is proof against every critical attack? And, granting that the social influence of the Church of England is rapidly declining, and that there are numbers of individuals in English society who need an imaginary sanction for their ideal of conduct, what more beneficial than this return towards the wider tradition? Surely it is better for an ignorant person, for one who has either no time or no capacity for thinking, to be dependent on an objective sanction, rather than on a subjective—to follow the teaching of a trained body of men and of a powerful and visible Church

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rather than be left to mould his conduct and his theology out of his own consciousness. That Ritualism has run into exaggerated forms and has made all-important matters which are really of but secondary importance, is true; but this is an accident, and is owing more to want of education on the part of the clergy than to want of earnestness on the part of the laity. And from an evolutionary point of view, it is with this vast and still increasing body of lay persons that we have to do; the clergy, if they do not fulfil those duties which the time requires of them, must and will be left behind in spite of their pretensions to Apostolic succession.

Now, in spite of the fact that Ritualism receives the abuse of every other party and faction, either political or religious, in the kingdom, and in spite of the ridicule with which it is regarded by those who make most claim to be disciples of reason and progress, the proposition must yet be ventured, that, while Ritualism left to itself is full of the elements of social danger, Ritualism under proper control is full of promise for social progress, and that it is to Ritualism that the politician and the philosopher must look if they wish to see a speedy and permanent settlement of that question of Science *versus* Religion which is vexing so many persons just at present. That is to say, of course, Ritualism as a

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national movement, and not merely as a clerical manifestation. As a clerical manifestation it is often foolish enough and difficult of toleration. But were it as a clerical manifestation ten times more foolish than it is, there are considerations connected with it which might well lead even the most thorough-going of Radical politicians to deal with it in a lenient manner.

For instance, it is in accordance with the principles of the party which the more democratic journals represent to object to all religious establishments, and to see in everything untoward that happens in connection with the Established Church an indication of its speedy collapse. And not so very long ago, in connection with the affair of the petition in favour of Sacramental Confession, an article appeared in one of these journals, which exultingly wound up with a prophesy of the disruption of the Church of England at no distant day, chiefly through the machinations of the Ritualists. This is not at all impossible; the Church is threatened from without and from within, and possibly the greatest difficulty in many minds as to Disestablishment is the question, "What shall be done with the Church after it is disestablished?" Disestablishment, preceded or followed by disruption, is quite possible; but what shall be said of a writer in a journal professing to represent the most Liberal

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principles, who sees nothing to object to in the prospect of the Ritualistic party, in the event of such a disruption, "drifting to Rome"? Nothing is more probable, it might be said, in the event of Disestablishment or disruption; but surely, if only to avoid such a contingency, it should be the interest of the liberal politician to protect the Establishment to the last. For, as has been said, Ritualism is the result, not of a clerical ambition, but of a national feeling; it is not the four hundred and eighty signatories of the petition that we have to consider, but the four hundred and eighty thousand lay persons, and several hundreds of thousands more, by whom Ritualism is more or less patronized. And can it be conducive to social well-being, to the advancement of liberal theories of government and education, to turn over this large section of English society to the Church whose special mission it has been, and may be still, to make itself superior to the civil authority? That, in the event of the Disestablishment of the Church of England, or in the event of her Liturgy being subjected to a Calvinistic revision, Rome would become the refuge of those who now find profit in Ritualism, can hardly be doubted. Even if Rome had no special attractions for them, there is nowhere else they could well go; and Rome has, as we know, marvellous attractions for all those who do not wish particularly to individualize

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their mental life. The power of tradition, of association, of art, of antiquity, of organization, of learning, are nearly all on the side of Rome; and many will those be who, in any case, will find shelter beneath her wings in the England of the future. Let it be said that those who follow Ritualism and would be turned over to Romanism are mostly women, the case is not made any better, but rather worse; for nothing can be more fatal to the whole tone of society than a marked antagonism of feeling and opinion between the sexes. It is to remedy such antagonism as is now said to exist between the sexes that the movement in favour of what is called female emancipation is being carried forward; and surely those who are engaged in promoting this movement cannot consistently do anything to throw power into the hands of those who, like the modern supporters of Roman Catholicism, may be interested to counteract it.

So that, strange as the juxtaposition may seem to be, it would be the interest of the extreme Liberal party to deal leniently with Ritualism, to keep it under State supervision, even were it impossible to make Ritualism any better than it is. That few things can be more pitiably absurd than Ritualism as it is—Ritualism, that is to say, as a clerical manifestation—will be on all sides admitted. What makes it so absurd is that it is Ritualism and nothing else—that

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it is the accidents of Catholicism without the substance. That the services of the Church of England had fallen to a very unedifying level previous to the development of the Ritualistic movement, it may be supposed every good Protestant will now admit; for even the extremest leaders of the Evangelical party would scarcely wish us to return to the days of sheep-pens and village psalmody. That there is a great effect to be produced by an elaborate and artistic Ritual, every good Roman Catholic will admit with equal readiness. The difference between the Roman Catholic and the Ritualist, however, in respect of Ritual, any one can feel is enormous; and it might perhaps be not inadequately expressed if we said that, while with the Roman Catholic Ritual is the shadow of a substance, with the Ritualist it is the substance of a shadow. In witnessing the performance of the Roman Catholic Ritual we feel that we are looking at the mere drapery of a great reality—a reality that would command a large share of respect and attention (of fear, at any rate) even were that Ritual entirely discontinued. We feel respect and admiration, even if admiration mixed with dislike, for a body of men who are arduously trained to perform a most difficult and delicate work; men who to their knowledge of literature and theology have added a consummate knowledge of human life and human nature; men

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who, while we are all filling the air with cries for this and that reform, agitating ourselves and our neighbours to the utmost, are content to hold their peace and reap the fruits of our mistakes. We may dread their social influence in some directions, but we cannot but be thankful for it and acknowledge its power (and a well-deserved power) in other directions. But how different an impression does the Ritualist's performance create! The whole thing, we feel, is a pretence and a sham. Possessed with an evil spirit of archæology, the Ritualistic priest wanders through the tombs of the past, and whatever he can exhume from thence, be it a system of notation or a Litany long defunct, is thenceforth sacred. He is a musician, for he knows the history (if it be a history) of the Gregorian Tones. He is an architect, for he is always on the look-out for concealed *sedilia;* he is a theologian, because he has got hold of a translation of St. Chrysostom's Commentaries. He prowls about the churchyard in a cassock, and plants flowers on the graves of departed choristers. He fits up an oratory in the top story of his house, and has a differently coloured sermon-case for every feast in the calendar. His sense of his own importance is as profound as his ignorance of human nature, while his respect for the Church is shown in his defiance of his Bishop. Like a child with a new knife, he

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feels bound to try his sacerdotal authority upon everything that comes in his way. Assuming the god, he flatters himself that the spheres shake at his nodding. Because the Vatican thundered at Galileo, he deems that he, too, may exercise a wholesome check upon infidel speculations; only succeeding, however, in creating such laughter as that with which we should regard the spectacle of one who went forth to shoot a mountain with a pocket-pistol.

Nevertheless, it behoves us to distinguish well between Ritualism as a clerical manifestation and Ritualism as the expression of a national feeling, and not to think that the national feeling is not strong because the clerical manifestation is weak. It is not all at once that the hollowness of mere Ritualism can be seen through, and for the present it supplies to many persons, who would be horrified at the idea of becoming Roman Catholics, the authoritative and traditional standard of doctrine which they are in search of. But it is important that the reason of the weakness of Ritualism as a clerical manifestation should be noticed, because by this means we shall get an idea of one of the directions in which an immediate reform in respect of ecclesiastical matters should be instituted.

It is a common saying that the Church, Law,

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and Medicine are the three learned professions. But, whatever may be said of the last two, no one can now assert that the Church, except in the most accidental manner, has any pretence to be called a learned profession. It is true that the high dignities which the Church has to bestow draw into its ranks a certain small proportion of men who have been eminent at the Universities, and who are not unfrequently, it may be well believed, men of the highest intellectual capacity. But, notwithstanding this, it is notorious that the point which many legal and medical practitioners take as the beginning of their professional studies, is regarded as the point at which the studies of one who is shaping for the Church may be broken off. Put two cases side by side. Two men enter at the same College at the same time. One, a man of superior intellect, by steady reading, goes out well in honours, and then begins a course of (say) hard legal study which for several years is almost certain to bring him in nothing at all. The other, an inferior man, takes his ease and an ordinary degree; he is straightway eligible for a curacy of at least £100 a year, and, if he has relations who take an interest in him, he may, without the necessity of ever again opening a book, be the possessor of a tolerably good living, a Government appointment, at the age of five-and-twenty.

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In fact, the case stands thus—that any man of average character, and with no education at all that is worth calling an education, is eligible for any ecclesiastical appointment which his friends are rich enough to purchase for him, the value of which may vary from £300 to £1000 per annum; the only use which his university course serves being this—that it is a tolerable guarantee as to his moral character. This, it will be remarked, is the worst that can be said; but then surely it is bad enough; bad enough as a crying scandal, bad enough as an effectual means of keeping the best men out of the Church; for not only does the system of lay patronage, in concert with this low standard of qualification, put a premium upon idleness in respect of those who are fortunate enough to have appointments in store for them, but there is scarcely a man of any spirit who will not prefer to work his own way up by his own merit rather than be indebted to favour.

Now how this state of things, to which the weakness of clerical Ritualism must be attributed, has come about is tolerably clear. Under the old *regime* of the Church of England, when the Church held its own and was widely useful in restraining the manners of the labouring classes through its close connection with the landed interest, it was quite enough that the parish clergyman, who was to act as the landowner's

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lieutenant, should have the same amount of education as the landowner himself generally received. It was enough that he should be a gentleman, have passed creditably through his university life, and thus be able to exercise that class influence which, till recently, the landed class did exercise, and exercise on the whole for good, over the classes below them. But clearly, fit as this qualification might be as long as class influence was the main support of the Church, as long as the clergy were kept in the rails by the general swing of aristocratic life, no qualification can be more absurdly insufficient now that the class dependence is vanishing away and class antagonism taking its place. The parish clergyman is not now, and must not think to be, the lieutenant of the landowner. His profession is becoming a more and more independent profession, and at the same time a more and more difficult profession—a profession which above all others needs a special intellectual and philosophical training, and which, if it is to be of any service at all, more than all others needs to be made attractive to the best intellect that the country contains. And therefore, great a scandal and danger as Ritualism may be, here is a greater scandal and danger to be dealt with first in the ignorance of the clergy—an ignorance which above everything else makes clerical Ritualism the ridiculous thing which it

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is. This scandal and danger must be dealt with by raising the standard of clerical qualification, and by allowing seniority and accomplishments to count for more in the appointment to benefices; and though this reform will not be directly aimed at Ritualism, it will affect it, as will be seen immediately, in the most marked manner.

Ritualism, it must once for all be observed, cannot be safely touched by way of suppression; and that for several reasons. In the first place, it is an expression of the way the world is going. Even in Scotland this is seen to be so, as the restoration of the High Church at Edinburgh and the quiet acceptance of organs in more than one Established Church in that city will show. Even the Wesleyans are affected by the same spirit—the same desire to reject, as far as their services at least are concerned, the reference to the simple letter of Scripture, and to throw themselves back on what is both practically and theoretically the European tradition. Further, Ritualism must not be suppressed, because to suppress it would be to injure our social order by putting additional power into the hands of the Catholic Ultramontanes; nor, out of pure gratitude, ought it to be severely dealt with, seeing what an improving effect it has exercised upon religious ordinances. It must not be suppressed because it offers to the minds

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of busy men a clear and distinct notion as to where their ideal of conduct is to be found and what it is; while to the minds of ignorant men it supplies in its more doctrinal aspects a powerful imaginary sanction for their following of that ideal. While the Evangelical school of theology is crumbling away, and while the Broad Church school—the school of the late Professor Maurice—can never, by reason of its indistinctness, become popular, the High Church school, of which Ritualism is the extreme expression, offers to the public mind a secure anchorage—an anchorage from which it will not be lightly shaken, however much reason we might see for wishing it otherwise. And therefore, even were it impossible to make Ritualism, as a clerical manifestation, anything else than the weak and ridiculous thing which it is, those who hope to see in English society a general intellectual and moral progress, must take their account with Ritualism. Ritualism, as the expression of a national feeling, being above all others the adversary with whom it behoves them to agree while they are in the way.

And this, even if clerical Ritualism could be made no better than it is. But it can be made much better. It is now ridiculous by reason of the want of education on the part of the clergy generally—by reason of the fact that any man of average character and possessed

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of an education which is not worth calling an education at all—an education that would not obtain for him the most infinitesimal part of a fee as a physician or lawyer—is eligible for any ordinary appointment in the Church which he is rich enough to purchase, or to which he has interest enough to get presented. Clerical Ritualism is ridiculous because it is mere Ritualism and nothing else; because, instead of being the shadow of a substance, it is the substance of a shadow. But give to the Church of England the doctrinal authority and the elaborate Ritual which Ritualists claim for her; permit the Church, while fully maintaining her insular constitution, to revert to the European tradition as fully as she pleases; and then, behind all this, place a body of men every one of whom is qualified to be a "professor of daily conduct"—every one of whom has occupied himself with a special study of human nature and human life; has studied human nature in Literature, is well acquainted with Psychology and its allied sciences of Physiology and Sociology; knows at what ages and under what circumstances acts of all sorts which are dangerous to society are likely to arise; knows what are the physical equivalents of mental states; knows, too, through a study of Comparative Theology and Church History, what men have believed and why they have believed it, and under what circumstances new beliefs or the

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revival of old ones are likely to appear—place such a body of men behind the ordinances and the doctrines of Ritualism, and make them responsible either directly or indirectly to the State alone, and Ritualism would then be indeed no longer the substance of a shadow but the mere shadow of a most important and venerable substance. We should then, in addition to two learned professions which are just now daily qualifying themselves more and more to deserve the appellation, have a third really learned profession, not a pseudo-learned profession, as it is now; a profession as dignified and as capable of giving full exercise to the intellectual energies as either of the other two—a profession the members of which would be in very truth, and not merely by an ecclesiastical figure of speech, "physicians of the soul."

But how, it will be asked, can the holder on to Ritualism consistently study modern sciences, more especially that modern science of Psychology which tends more and more to express itself in materialistic phraseology? The answer is, that no one can be better able than the Ritualist to add to his faith knowledge. For while the Evangelical Protestant must hang on the letter of the Bible, must believe, in the face of all criticism, that the science and history of the Bible are as accurate as its call to righteousness is inspiring; and while the Broad Churchman, who is a good deal

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of a Theist and often still more of a Pantheist, is bound to an intuition which positive science rejects; the Ritualist, going back to European tradition, can be totally careless as to whatever positive science may urge against the absolute truth of the beliefs of the Church. "It is quite possible," he can say, "that these beliefs do not represent actual realities; they have been held in Europe, however, for many centuries, and they are held still. The people believe thus; and this is enough for me; for the creed of the Church always has been and always must be what the people believe; and the universal sanction given to a particular belief is a scientific fact of the highest importance. Creeds, very likely, are not of much account any way; but it is my business to get people to live as they should, to follow out a certain ideal of conduct, and I cannot hope to do this unless I appeal to them more or less through what they believe. You may say that this is Jesuitical, but it is not; for while it is the interest of the Jesuit to make religion exist for religion's sake, to appeal to the people through what they believe for the sake of his own order; I, on the other hand, am only interested that religion should exist for the sake of the help it gives to social life, and I appeal to the people through what they believe for their own sakes. As the people progress in general intelligence, their creed, no doubt, will undergo modi-

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fication ; it is my interest and desire that they should so progress, but in the meantime I must take care not to interfere with their chance of moral progression by saying anything to weaken that imaginary sanction by which they justify themselves for following that ideal of conduct which has become so precious to us Europeans by association. And therefore I feel not only at liberty but bound to study the positive sciences to the utmost; not because I think, with the Broad Churchman, that they throw light on the Bible; not because I think that reason and revelation are the same thing, for I do not see how anything is gained to reverence by supposing that the universe contains nothing to puzzle the human intelligence ; but because the positive sciences help me to understand those mysteries of human life and of human nature which I am especially interested in understanding—because they help me better to fulfil my duties as a 'professor of daily conduct.'"

It is, then, to the Ritualist—the Ritualist under State supervision and educated up to that point at which his profession will really earn the appellation of "learned"—that the philosopher and the politician must look for a settlement of that much-vexed question of Science *versus* Religion. And lest the mere general statement of this proposition should be doubted, it will not be amiss to point out the advan-

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tage gained, in one particular respect, by giving up the attempt to establish religious creeds on an evidential or intuitional basis, and going back, with the Ritualist, to that European tradition which was accepted in England previous to the Protestant Reformation. No one who has the smallest respect either for his own religion or for that of others could have failed to be distressed and disgusted with the controversy that took place not very long ago as to the efficacy of prayer. Difficult as it was to be patient with those who, as assailants of the efficacy of prayer, commenced the controversy, it was still more difficult to be patient with those who, as defenders, carried it on. It has been well said that, while the exhortation to fear God has made many men pious, the proofs of the existence of God have made many men Atheists. And so with the question of prayer. There can be no doubt whatever that many are helped by using it; but who could possibly reap anything but despair from the various defences and justifications of prayer that at the time referred to appeared in magazines and elsewhere? Perhaps the least satisfactory contribution to the controversy, and the one which more than all others seemed likely to convey the impression that prayer must be a very ridiculous thing if nothing more logical could be said for it, was a paper of Dr. Littledale's ("The Rationale

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of Prayer") which was printed in one of the leading magazines—I think the *Contemporary Review*—in the earlier stages of the discussion. Now Dr. Littledale is a Ritualist, a leader of Ritualists; and, unlike a good many of those whom he leads, he has been able to give some sort of philosophical appearance to his arguments. But what a world of trouble, both to himself and to his readers, might Dr. Littledale have saved, if, being a Ritualist, he had been a more consistent Ritualist; if, going back to European tradition in respect of many things unimportant, he had taken the pains to discover what was the doctrine practically held on the important subject of prayer in the Anglican Church of some four centuries ago, in a time, too, which was so unscientific and superstitious that the House of Peers did not think its dignity compromised by a discussion as to the political significance of a "grete gleyming sterre." For about that very time, and certainly not later than the year 1462, did one Friar Brackley preach a Whitsuntide sermon at Norwich, in the course of which, referring to what he had said on a former occasion, he used these words: "How that ye should pray to God and ask, I taught you on Easter day. *Therefore ye shall pray to God by good working, right full labouring, and in all good deeds persevering.*" *

* From the "Paston Letters," edited by James Gairdner, No. 372.

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What a relief this, we cannot help feeling, after the windy discussions which were inflicted upon us—a piece of clear daylight after a groping through dubious mists. And this "Rationale of Prayer," which is as old as European Christianity itself, but which we can only reach for popular use by throwing ourselves back on the European tradition, is one which will not only satisfy to the utmost the most fastidious and critical mind, but the most devout also. We *feel*, without needing to be convinced of it by arguments, that this is the essence of prayer—good working, right full labouring, and perseverance in good deeds, and that any form of words added above this is merely a form and a remembrance to us of the direction and the spirit in which our real petition is to be made. By accepting this definition of prayer, which the tradition of European Christianity fully permits us to accept, we escape from both sides of the controversy. We escape from divines painfully arguing out miracles from mechanics, and from men of science supporting suggestions of practical tests, which, while offending nearly everybody, could satisfy nobody.

It is worth noticing, also, as showing the small extent to which what are called Romish superstitions had worked their way into English society previous to the Reformation, that out of over two hundred of these letters which end with a religious salutation only two make any reference, and then very remotely, to the worship of the Virgin Mary. Reference to "the Blessed Trinity," however, occurs frequently.

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Standing, then, on this firm basis of tradition—a basis which no criticism can shake—it becomes possible for the parish priest, so long as his interest is bound up with the interest, not of a class, but of the whole State, to become, while he attends to the edifying performance of religious ordinances in their artistic and literary aspects, a thoroughly qualified "professor of daily conduct," a centre of literary culture, a student of the positive sciences and a promoter of the highest education. But in order that he may become this, care must clearly be taken to secure a superior set of men to those who now ordinarily seek the position, and care must be taken not only to make the parish priest independent of all class interests, but to provide that his merits and attainments shall be taken into consideration as much as possible in respect of his promotion. By what practical means these ends are to be secured must be discussed in another, and a concluding chapter.

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CHAPTER X.

THE LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS REFORM (*continued*).

VOLITION, whatever it may be, we all know counts for something as a condition of the course of events. But this is not the only belief with which we must be possessed if we would do anything to make the world a little less ignorant and miserable. We must also believe that it is not necessary for us to exercise our volition in the dark, but that rather we are enabled by our faculties to ascertain the order of the universe to an extent which is practically unlimited. And the most commonplace experience shows us that, if we attempt to exercise our volition without having first ascertained what is the order of that portion of the universe in respect of which we exercise it, our exercise of volition will not have any beneficial effect, but will rather turn to our own hurt; it will indeed act as a condition of the course of events, but of events as unpleasant as they are unexpected. If it were otherwise, we might give our children razors to play with, or

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attempt to cross the Atlantic in a racing skiff. We have, however, ascertained the order of the Universe to such an extent that, though it is still quite open to us to exercise our volition in either of these directions, we do not do so. Volition in such cases would only become our destruction. But when, having ascertained by our faculties the order of the Universe in some particular direction, we make our knowledge practical by the exercise of volition—then indeed do we see the full glory of humanity. When, having learnt what forces are involved, in what direction they are working, how we can make them help us, how avoid their acting against us, leaving always a margin for possible mistakes of investigation—when, having done this, we become the masters and not the slaves of nature—when we guide natural forces for our own beneficent ends, as William Blake professed to have seen the spirit of Pitt guiding Behemoth—then something is done which the world calls a work of genius, and which gives the doer of it a place in the pantheon of heroes.

It is for this reason—because, in spite of the volition being ready, care has not been taken to ascertain properly the order of the Universe in a particular direction—that so much of what is intended as Reform acts only to the discomfort of its promoters and of society at large. We are all just now calling out for

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reform in this or that direction ; we have become very anxious (and this alone is a thing to be thankful for) to do something to make the world less miserable. But it may be that we have not sufficiently considered how the world is going—whether in recommending certain means of accomplishing desirable reforms, we shall be running against the prevailing forces of society, or enlisting them upon our side. If we would inaugurate any measure of reform which is to answer our expectations, we must first of all find out whether such a measure will be helped or hindered by the forces prevailing in society—whether, in fact, we shall really be guiding Behemoth, or vainly endeavouring to stop him with rush fences. And further, seeing that our powers of investigation may not always lead us to a right conclusion before acting, it is well to take care, if possible, that whatever measure of reform we propose shall be one which, even if it does not effect all we desire, will at least do no harm, thus allowing a margin for possible mistakes of judgment.

Now there can be no doubt whatever as to the fact that one of the most powerful forces of the present time is the desire for a higher education, particularly of a scientific kind ; a desire coupled with the demand that, however much education is neglected by private persons, those who hold permanent public appointments shall hold them by reason of their ascertained in-

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tellectual fitness.* So that when the proposition is made that the chief thing wanted to make the Church of England what a National Church should be (according to an evolutionary view of things) is the raising of the standard of qualification for those who are appointed to benefices therein—the making the clerical profession more really a learned profession by the institution of a special professional course of study—no one is likely to object that such a proposition is unfair and beside the mark; and few indeed must they be who have not had painfully impressed on them the necessity for

* As showing how widely spread this feeling is, the following programme presented to the State in Prussia, for the examination of all future candidates for the clerical office, will not be without interest:—

"A. Philosophy.—The candidate must be accurately acquainted with the nature of philosophy, and its various subdivisions. A knowledge of the history of philosophy is required to such an extent that the candidate shall appear to be acquainted with the peculiarities of the principal philosophical systems in their mutual connection and historical relation. He must, besides, possess a thorough knowledge of the principles of psychology and pædagogics as practised during the last two centuries.

"B. History.—The candidate must have obtained a clear view of the general history of the development of the world, and be accurately acquainted with the history of the last three centuries. In particular, it must appear that he has a clear conception of the ideas which, in the domain of politics and civilization, govern the different periods of history. Further, the influence which religion and church have had on political life and civilization must be discussed.

"C. German Literature.—The candidate must be acquainted with the inner course of development of German literature. He must know the principal writers, in particular those of the last two centuries. Further, it must appear that he has studied the chief classical works of German literature."

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such a reform. Even in respect of matters of theology, which every one confesses fall within the peculiar province of the clergy, it is notorious that the clergy of the Established Church are lamentably deficient—that in a country or provincial town we must go to the Roman Catholic or Unitarian chapel if we wish to hear a theological discourse worth listening to, and that the last place we shall go to, as a rule, will be the parish church. No one can say, then, that a proposition to raise the standard of clerical qualification in the Church of England is a proposition that is beside the mark or uncalled for. And it is at the same time a proposition so simple that it might almost seem at first as if it rested entirely and solely with those who, as ministers of the Church of England, are most interested in her usefulness, to carry out such a reform each one in his own person.

The clergy, however, are but human; in spite of the assertion of the "free-thinker" to the contrary, priests are not a specially created species. They are but men, tempted in all points as the laity are tempted, and by no means beyond the reach of those mercenary considerations which influence so widely the crowds to whom they minister. And if it may be supposed that nine-tenths or thereabouts of the laity, if recommended to improve their intellectual opportunities, would first of all ask, "What shall we gain by it?" so it may

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be supposed that when the same recommendation is made to the clergy, they too, in the same proportion with regard to their whole numbers, will first of all ask, "What shall we gain by it? Without questioning (they will say) that such a higher standard of qualification is very desirable, still to raise ourselves to that standard will be a work of no small labour; and we want to know how we are to be recompensed for that labour. It is all very well to talk about the Church being rendered more serviceable and religion made more intellectually attractive. A few of us possibly may be enthusiastic enough to put these matters first without any regard to other considerations. But as for the majority of us, we want to know, as men who have to live in the world, whether to undertake this extra labour will pay us. And if it will not, no matter what we may feel constrained to say in the pulpit about working for nobler ends than such as are merely mercenary, we shall quickly express our real opinion by leaving the matter alone."

Now leaving the enthusiasts, who are paid simply in their consciousness of following their duty, on one side, it will be seen that, under presently existing conditions it will not pay the clergy to take voluntary measures, each one in his own person, to raise the standard of clerical qualification. Their interest, as a body, is rather to lower it; except of course so far as

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the lowering of the standard of qualification may lead to the Church being more quickly disestablished. According to the infallible working of the law of supply and demand, no man ever gives more than just the market price for what he purchases; whenever a price is paid apparently above the market price, the excess is either a commission paid for trouble saved, or an extra price for some quality of the thing purchased which does not make itself apparent to ordinary by-standers. It follows, then, that (other things being equal) if clerical appointment is purchasable by intellectual effort, the more clerical appointments there are in the market the smaller will be the amount of intellectual effort by which they can be purchased. Now at present, owing partly to a general religious activity, and partly to the competition of independent bodies with the Established Church for the public esteem, there are a large number of clerical appointments in the market, and the intellectual standard of clerical qualification has in consequence been lowered. This lowering of the standard of clerical qualification is to the whole body of the clergy an advantage; for, there being a certain number of vacant benefices to be filled up out of their body every year, the value of which does not vary, they are interested, whether they know it or not, in succeeding to these benefices with as little expenditure of labour as possible.

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If, therefore, things are left to themselves, the chances seem to be in favour, as long as the demand for clerical labourers remains in excess of the supply, of a continued depreciation of the intellectual standard of clerical qualification.

But further: supposing things are left to themselves, it is not only the interest of the clergy, as a body, to lower the standard of clerical qualification, but there is no encouragement whatever to the individual clergy to raise it in their own persons. Intellectual acquirements are no more held in regard as constituting a claim to preferment than seniority. If an ordained minister in the Church of England be without friends and without money, he may spend twenty of the best years of his life in a curacy, no matter what his attainments; while another, who has perhaps spent the greater part of his time at one of the Universities in billiard-playing, and has at last been admitted to his degree out of pure compassion, will be in the enjoyment of the living, for which he has condescended to enter the Church, at the ripe age of five-and-twenty. This, it will be said, is a bad case. But it is a possible case; and it is what is possible under a system that in the long run guides the popular opinion with regard to it. And as long as such a case is possible, so long will there not merely be no encouragement to the clergy to raise the stan-

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dard of clerical qualification by their own individual efforts, but there will be no inducement for the best intellect of the country to enter the Church at all. So much is intellect at a discount that, supposing a man possessed of neither friends nor money to have entered the Church after taking a high degree at Oxford or Cambridge, his best chance for being promoted is to forget his education as fast as possible, and to busy himself in that sphere of parochial work in which the duties of relieving-officer and scripture-reader are so curiously compounded together—work which is really the proper business of other people, and which can be undertaken without any intellectual preparation at all.

Things, then, cannot be left to themselves. If an improved intellectual standard is desirable among the clergy of the National Church, measures must be taken to make the National Church attractive to intellect, and to reward intellect by promotion. Apart from any question of national policy, it is the interest of the Church that such measures should be taken; because what is now threatening to make the Church odious not only in the eyes of her hereditary enemies but in the eyes also of many of her friends, is the party warfare over ridiculous points of ritual in which the want of cultivated intelligence leads so many of the clergy to indulge. And in order to ascertain what measures those are which should be taken to make the National

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Church attractive to intellect, it will be well to sketch out briefly the conditions under which intellect would be most attracted.

The first requisite is a high standard of intellectual qualification ; the second, without which the first would be useless, is certainty of promotion to a certain point, and the prospect of higher promotion for proved superior ability. Looking at the positions which at present are sought by men of first-class intellect and attainments, and at the rate of remuneration which is accepted, there can be no doubt whatever that a public institution which should hold out the certainty of promotion, by seniority, to appointments worth say £300 a year to all who had qualified up to a certain standard, with the prospect of further promotion to higher appointments worth from £700 to £800 a year, for those whose qualifications were markedly in excess of that standard, and the ultimate prospect of appointment to a position equal in dignity and emoluments to that of the Judges of Assize— there can be no doubt that such a public institution would have the first choice of the intellect of the country, more particularly if it encouraged the study and provided opportunities for the exercise of that science of human nature which, while it is the most complex of all sciences, is the most interesting and the most inclusive. Now the National Church is

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a public institution which, if relieved of certain disabilities and disadvantages, would be peculiarly able to offer such attractions. For a fair distribution of her revenues, while it would smooth away those ridiculous discrepancies which now exist, would yet make a distinction between the rural benefice with its cheaper living and easier work, and the town benefice with its dearer living and call for greater intellectual effort, and also between what might be called central and subordinate appointments; the smaller and more subordinate appointments being necessarily much more numerous than those which are more central and important. And if to every one entering the ministry of the National Church and qualifying up to a certain pretty high professional standard there were the certainty of appointment, by seniority, to a small benefice, and the prospect of further promotion, if he had specially distinguished himself, to a larger benefice, and the ultimate prospect of promotion to the dignity of a bishopric, there can be little doubt that the ministry of the National Church would soon present the appearance of a well-organized and painstaking body of highly intelligent men, unconnected with any political party, and interested in nothing so much as in promoting the intellectual culture and the orderly living of those with whom they come in contact.

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This, it may be said, is the theory of the National Church already. If so, all the better; as it will be the easier for it to put the theory into practice. That it is at present not the practice, and is indeed very far from being the practice, we know; and to those who make a proper estimate of the complexity of a society as highly civilized as our own, and of the impossibility of dealing with it by mere Act of Parliament, it might well seem at first sight hopeless to expect to be able to turn the practice of the Church in such a desirable direction. We should have to deal, it will be said, with the question of patronage, with the question of the sale of livings, with the question of the equal distribution of Church revenues; and these questions are so mixed up with other social and political considerations, that not only would it be almost impossible to get an Act passed to deal with them at all, but the putting such an Act into force, even if passed, would almost inevitably bring their political house down about the ears of the Government that introduced it. It is perilous work dealing with the Behemoth of national tendencies, undoubtedly; to do anything at all with safety we must see which way Behemoth is going, and get him, as it were, upon our side. But if we see that Behemoth is bent upon a certain work which we would wish to see done, we may rest perfectly

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content that it will be done, and that if we humour him carefully we can make him do it in what way we please, and perhaps restrain him from doing too much ; while if we can make our own particular work his work, we may be sure that our work will be done, if we only have a little patience, in a far more thorough and lasting manner then we could ever dream of doing it for ourselves.

Now no one who watches the signs of the times can doubt that the Behemoth of public opinion and feeling is moving in the most determined and resistless manner towards an elimination of those arrangements which at present stand in the way of the practice of the Church of England being assimilated to what some will maintain is its theory. The right of private persons to nominate to public appointments has been to a great extent discredited within the last few years, and is becoming more discredited still. A question as to this right is involved in the question of Church patronage; and such is the temper of the nation with regard to it that it may be considered certain that within a short period the National Church will either be purged of it or else disestablished on account of it. Now there are two things which make lay patronage worth retaining. First, that the patron for the time being can make provision for members of his family by presentation to livings ; and next,

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that the right to present may be disposed of. Stripped of these two possibilities, Church patronage would not be worth keeping; and even if there were doubt as to the abstract principle of such patronage, there is no doubt in the public mind with regard to the two questions included under it. We are getting to dislike more and more intensely the idea of the sale of ecclesiastical preferment, and the making use of it for family provision; so much so that it might almost be predicted that in a few years' time the traffic in such preferment will be held to be as disreputable as the traffic in human beings. To estimate the strength of the national feeling on these points it is only needful to notice with what universal approval any action in an opposite direction is commented on by the press, irrespective of party. And when once the force of public opinion, by working in this twofold manner, has made the possession of Church patronage comparatively worthless, it will not be long before the whole question is in a position to be discussed with the view of arranging a scheme of promotion by seniority. The same may be said with regard to the more equal distribution of Church revenues. The absurd disproportion between work and pay that exists in so many instances in the Established Church is everywhere felt to be a drawback and a difficulty, and any step that is taken

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to lessen such disproportion is met with universal approval. This is a matter, too, that will be dealt with if the Church continues to exist, and which, if left untouched, is perilous to the Church's existence; for it might well be urged that a Church which contained or encouraged such anomalies was more likely to be a hindrance to the cause of religion than a help. This is a question, however, which cannot be dealt with on an extensive scale till the patronage question has been to some degree settled, nor, though an important question, is it a question of such pressing necessity as the other.

We find, then, that the task of making the Church attractive to the best intelligence of the country is not so Herculean as might at first appear; for we see that public opinion and feeling are setting in a direction which is on the whole favourable to that end. But it must not be forgotten that public opinion and feeling are also setting in a direction which threatens the elimination of the National Church altogether, unless the Church can so reform itself as to show a sound justification for its existence. Public feeling and opinion are setting strongly in favour of what is called religious equality, and against the State recognition of any Church which, apart from its history, can only be distinguished from others in respect of matters almost purely religious; and the

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only thing that can save the Established Church from experiencing the full force of this current of public feeling and being swept away by it (to the great profit of Catholic Ultramontanism) is the enlistment of a stronger current of public opinion and feeling on its own side. Now the help of such a stronger current can be secured by giving the National Church a distinction from other Churches which shall be something more than religious in its nature—by attracting into it the best intellect of the country, and thus making it intellectually supreme. For on the recognition of the claims of superior intelligence public feeling and opinion are insisting even more strongly than on religious equality—a fact which is exemplified by the change effected with regard to a qualifying examination for admission to the Bar. So that the question may be stated thus—Is the National Church to be destroyed by the adverse currents of the time, or is it to take advantage of favourable currents to float into new usefulness and popularity?

The question is both wide and complex, and to those who can regard political and social problems apart from the emotional influence of party, the present prospects of the National Church must seem, in the light of such a question, gloomy enough. And yet the proposition must be ventured that there never was a time in which so good an opportunity offered

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for making the Church of England what it should be, and must be, if it is to exercise in the future any of that useful influence which has been described in a previous chapter—that there never was so good an opportunity for making the Church of England pre-eminently a National Church in virtue of its attracting and retaining the best intellect of the country, and pre-eminently national in virtue of its constitution also, even while European in respect of its traditions. And as the idea of "volition counting for something" in determining the course of events has in these pages been insisted on possibly to the slight weariness of readers, so now again (and without any apology) it must be insisted that "volition counts for something;" that in respect of this matter of preserving the National Church by making its ministry attractive to the best intellect of the country, the volition of some five and twenty persons is capable of setting an irresistible machinery in motion for the accomplishment of that end; and that these five and twenty persons (or thereabouts) are the Anglican Bishops.

Few persons who place any value on a quiet life would care to be an Anglican Bishop in these days. The snares of death are verily round about them. With the pit of Ritualistic ignorance and fanaticism on the one side, and the quagmire of ultra-Protestant ignorance and fanaticism on the other; with excited

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vestrymen clamouring for the suppression of the movement in favour of Confession, and plausible incumbents pleading for increased elasticity in the interpretation of rubrics; exposed to the patronage of Conservatives, the pity of Liberals, and the abuse of Radicals—it might well seem as if they were literally fulfilling the fate of their Apostolic predecessors, and being made a spectacle to angels and to men. The complaint is made against them that they do nothing; but those who make the complaint forget (and sometimes forget purposely) that the legal power of an Anglican Bishop is one of the most undefined and uncertain things in the world; and that in respect of ecclesiastical matters it may often be found better, as it is often found better in respect of other matters, to suffer a little infraction of the law than to enforce its rigorous execution. There is one thing, however, which it is quite certain an Anglican Bishop cannot do—he cannot refuse to institute to a benefice any ordained minister who may be nominated thereto, except on grounds which, as a matter of practice, are never raised. And this inability is one which cannot but be keenly felt by any Bishop who is sincerely desirous of influencing the tone of clerical society, or of raising the standard of clerical efficiency, in his diocese. A very short experience of diocesan business must make it plain to him that, in

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respect of the most important matter of filling up benefices that fall vacant, he is frequently made the unwilling accomplice in proceedings which are to him, as a gentleman and a man of culture, to the last degree odious and undesirable. For while even the average feeling of the country is opposed to the traffic in Church preferment, it is not to be supposed that the occupants of the Episcopal Bench can view that traffic with favour or indifference. Suppose, then, the present occupants of the Episcopal Bench, taking counsel together, should decide, and promulgate the decision, that in respect of preferment over which they have full control they would in future give precedence to men who could give proof of their superior intellectual qualifications; and suppose they were further to ask the Legislature for an Act empowering them to refuse to institute to benefices the nominees of private patrons, unless such nominees could furnish satisfactory proof of their intellectual fitness for holding such a position? *

* The application of such an Act would probably have to be restricted to those who had not previously held benefices or who claimed institution in virtue of transferences of advowsons or next presentations effected subsequent to the passing of the Act. And it would also probably be found both politic and economical for the Bishops to establish in London a common "Ecclesiastical Examining Board," instead of relying each one on his own examining chaplain.

It might be unadvisable to fix the standard of qualification too high in the first instance; but surely a knowledge of what has been done by the German writers in the fields of Theology, Biblical Criticism, and

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How would such a request be received? It is scarcely too much to predict that it would be received with acclamation by the whole country. For in the first place it would be an act of self-reformation on the part of a public institution, and we have had numerous instances within recent years of the popularity which a public institution can secure by such an act. For the present generation, in spite of its many partial self-deceptions, has at bottom a strong desire to be honest and disinterested, and fully appreciates, when it sees them, any efforts that are made towards a better adjustment of interests, even if those efforts should turn out in the end to have been misdirected. Again, it would be an endeavour to remedy what every one of any decent feeling knows to be a great scandal; and further, it would fall in with the natural movement of the time in favour of a higher standard of professional qualification. There is not a political party in the kingdom that could oppose such a request without drawing upon itself the imputations of inconsistency and of seeking to encourage a crying abuse. Indeed, the only party that would be interested to oppose the measure would be the landowners, in whose hands

Church History would be a most appropriate point to commence at; for no one can systematically study the German writers on these subjects and remain a fanatic.

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the greater part of the private patronage is presumed to rest; but it is scarcely to be expected that the landowners, who are mostly on the side of the Established Church, would stultify themselves by opposing a measure of Church reform which the Bishops had initiated; and, moreover, their power to nominate to benefices would not in the first instance be interfered with, unless they chose to nominate unfit persons. And even if the landowners did oppose the measure, their opposition might, as will be seen directly, be more advantageous than their acquiescence.

And supposing the measure, which might be made permissive only, passed into law, what would be the result? It must not be counted on to produce an immediately visible effect, though it might possibly do so; nor would it have a direct effect in bringing a better class of men (intellectually speaking) into the ministry, though, as will be seen, it would, without any further measure to supplement it, exercise an indirect influence in this direction. Its first effect would, most appropriately, be made evident in its action upon that greatest of all ecclesiastical scandals, the traffic in Church preferment. This traffic is only made possible by the fact that the Bishops are bound to institute to a benefice any ordained minister whom its patron for the time being may choose to nominate. Once, however, let the Bishops be relieved of this

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necessity, and the traffic in Church preferment would fall to the ground for the most satisfactory of all reasons—because it would not be worth any one's while to carry on such traffic. This result alone would be of immense value to the Church, for it would be both the abolition of an abuse and the removal of a stigma; but there would be other indirect effects perhaps even more valuable. The Church would no longer be attractive to men of small intelligence yet possessed of interest or money. Now the absence of such men would be no loss, for it is in a great measure through such that the National Church is brought into disrepute. But it would be not only no loss, but a positive gain; for the more such men were kept away, the greater amount of preferment would there be available to bestow upon real merit; and it might well be thought that if the legitimate possessors of patronage (to distinguish between these and what may be called speculative possessors) found themselves debarred from nominating members of their own families, irrespective of intellectual fitness, they would guard themselves against the mortification of their nominees being possibly refused institution, by taking intellectual merit largely into consideration in their selection. And by this means, through promotion being made much more largely dependent on intel-

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lectual qualification, there can be no doubt that a very much larger proportion of high-class intelligence would be brought into the Church. A better competition for preferment would be established—competition which would go. a long way towards counteracting the effect of that increasing demand for ministerial labour which has done so much towards lowering the standard of clerical qualification.

But the reforms secured at the moment would be trifling compared with the power which the Church would gain to herself for the accomplishing of further reforms. The Church is at present not really popular; it conveys to most people the idea of a machine too old-fashioned to be of much use, and yet too cumbrous and too much involved with the social life of the nation to be got rid of; the very apologies made for it by Conservative members of Parliament showing plainly enough that the Church is to them more a political institution than a help to right living. But if it were once seen that the Church was on the side of a higher education, the whole aspect of things would be altered. The Church would at once become popular, in spite of a divided opinion as to the abstract principle of a National Church; and having become popular, having got Behemoth upon its side, it could proceed to further reformation with the utmost confidence. And this is why it is possible

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that opposition on the part of the landowners to the Church's first measure of reform might be an additional advantage to the Church; because if it were once seen that the Church was fighting against the landowners, the formidable interests of the middle-class and of the labouring population would be enlisted on the side of the Church. It must be borne in mind that the close connection between the land and the Church is not a necessary, but only an accidental, connection; and that if the Church is to be useful in the future—is, indeed, to exist at all—it must not be afraid of severing that bond which has been its strength during times that are past, but which will be its weakness and its destruction if allowed to exist in times to come. And, having once got the popular feeling on its side, it will be comparatively easy for the Church to take such further steps as will make its ministry attractive to the best intellect of the country. It has already been seen that public feeling and opinion are moving irresistibly against the idea of private property in public appointments, and in favour of promotion according to seniority and intellectual fitness; and it needs but the popular support which the Church would gain by encouraging intellectual culture to enable it to mould the whole system of Church preferment and promotion to its own highest advantage, and to the highest advantage of the nation at large.

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Granting that a National Church, a Church under State control, is a desideratum under the present conditions of society, it is impossible not to see how thoroughly, through the exercise of volition on the part of the Bishops, the Church as it is could be transformed into the Church as it should be; and, how thoroughly, too, such a transformed Church would be relieved of many disadvantages under which the Church as it is labours. Take only three of these disadvantages into consideration—the envy of the Nonconformist bodies, the palpable existence of internal divisions, and the neglect of the higher culture of the day. Now at present there can be no doubt that the Nonconformist envy of the Church of England, however it may be condemned, is justified in a great measure by the Church's position and conduct. The Church of England, say the Nonconformists, does not teach religion any better than we do; its ministers do not receive any higher professional education than ours—in many cases, indeed, it is not so high; and if the Church attracts, in some districts of England, men of better birth than we can attract, that is only by reason of that odious subjection to the landed interest which we should be utterly ashamed to admit into matters of religious concern; and yet the Church is endowed and protected by the State, while we have to support

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and protect ourselves. This is to-day the substance of the Nonconformist complaint, and it is a complaint which is eminently calculated to appeal to that rude sense of political justice which is not wanting in all ranks of English society. But a National Church which was free from the stain of Simoniacal traffic (taking Simony to mean a principle and not an act); which attracted to its ministry the best intelligence as well as the best birth of the country; and which stood separated from all class interests—though the existence of such a Church might not lead to the extinction of Nonconformity, it would yet entirely deprive it of popular sympathy and popular support; for Nonconformity would then cease to have a grievance except upon a matter of abstract principle; and it is needless to say that a grievance founded upon a matter of abstract principle does not recommend itself heartily to the English mind. Again: a National Church, in which the best intelligence of the country was included, would not be disturbed by those internal dissensions which now scandalize society; for these dissensions are stirred up and carried on simply because the low scale of clerical qualification has brought about the admission into the Church of men who, not being intelligent enough to see that there are at least two sides to every question, must needs fight for every triviality of

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doctrine, or of ritual which their general position seems to involve. And further still: a National Church which attracted the best intellect of the country would be a Church in which modern science and modern criticism would receive every encouragement and recognition, for the higher culture is carried, the more plainly is it seen that, though science and religion are essentially different things, there need be no collision between them.

To deal now with the objections that might be urged against the adoption of such a course as has been traced out. In the first place, it might be said that the great demand of the Church is for men and not for mind; that both for the sake of the "perishing multitudes" in large cities and for the sake of its own *prestige* the Church is above all things called upon to send forth labourers into these neglected portions of the vineyard, and that to adopt any such measure as has been proposed would be to keep men out just when they are most wanted. Now (as will be explained presently) there is a legitimate way for the clergy to be serviceable to the "perishing multitudes" and an illegitimate; and the legitimate way requires a certain amount (probably a large amount) of intelligence and understanding of human nature, without which the work had much better not be undertaken at all. So that, even if the raising of the

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standard of clerical qualification and the placing of a premium upon intellectual culture were at the outset to reduce the numbers of those offering for ordination, the Church would probably gain in one respect as much as, or more than, was lost in another. But it must be remembered that the making the Church more attractive to intellect would enable the Church to draw its supplies of men from new areas. There must be thousands of men, many of whom have graduated at the Universities, who are now struggling at the Bar or in the Civil Service, and who would willingly enter the Church if it were only made attractive in the manner proposed—men, too, who have seen something of life, and who know enough of the world to know that peace and good living are worth far more than exactness in respect of doctrine and ritual. From among such men as these, to whom it would not be a matter of great difficulty to qualify themselves up to the proper professional standard, and whose intellect has more nearly reached its maturity, it is almost certain that the ministry of the National Church would be recruited during any slack time that might follow the establishment of promotion by seniority after due qualification.

Again: the objection might be urged (though it seems hard to believe that such an objection would proceed from any occupant of the Episcopal Bench)

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that for a profession whose office it is to "save souls" such acquirements as have been alluded to—a knowledge of Psychology and its allied sciences of Physiology and Sociology, of Church History, of comparative Theology, of general Literature—are not fitting. Such an objection would scarcely proceed from any of the occupants of the Episcopal Bench, so many of whom have been not unworthily distinguished in the field of Literature and Philosophy. But it is a very likely objection indeed to proceed from those who, though they little deserve it, have at present the flood-tide of an important aspect of popular feeling behind them—the Ritualistic clergy; for if recent utterances of some of their number are to be trusted, the very name of a scientific man is the signal with them for general anathematizing. And to these, if they made such an objection, an answer might well be given by asking them to take the Jesuit opinion on the subject. It is certainly no part of the Jesuit's persuasion that a man is a better priest in proportion to his ignorance; the Jesuit opinion, and practice also, is quite the reverse of this. There is no philosophical or historical objection to the religious system he upholds which the Jesuit is not trained to meet upon rational grounds; and no one of any impartiality, however much he may dislike the political tendencies of the

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Jesuits, can fail to be struck by the conviction that if high intelligence, knowledge of the world and of the people with whom they have to deal, controversial politeness, and untiring perseverance constitute a claim to respect and a title to success, no set of persons deserve to be more respected or more successful than the Jesuits. And it is with the Jesuits (to speak of them as the leaders of Catholic Ultramontanism) that the National Church has, at the present juncture, to compete. For they, as well as the High Church section of the Church of England, can entrench themselves in that impregnable fortress—impregnable to all scientific attacks—of European tradition; they, moreover, do not in England labour under the disadvantage of class suspicion; and they have the intellectual qualification for dealing with the minds of men in an unsettled state, and will not fail to use it. If, therefore, the clerical Ritualists are desirous of emulating the Roman Catholic Church in some ways, let them emulate the most active section of that Church in respect of their intellectual acquirements, and they will never have cause to repent it.

There is a third possible objection to be noticed. It might be urged that, although such a system of rewarding intellectual superiority by promotion would be in many respects highly desirable, yet under such a system the clergy would be tempted to spend their

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time in study, to the neglect of their proper work. Now here we come upon the question, "What is the proper work of the clergy?" a question to which an answer must be ventured not at all in harmony with the prevailing idea of the majority of the clergy themselves. A hundred years ago, or even considerably less, the clerical office was undoubtedly very much misused in the Church of England. The parochial clergyman was still then the landowner's lieutenant, and his duty was thought to be sufficiently discharged if he did not ride too well up to the hounds, if he did not drink absolutely to excess, and if he proved the divine origin of Christianity, to the best of his ability, once a Sunday in the pulpit. In the meantime he was not concerned with the doings of his parishioners except in a magisterial capacity; and would have been considerably astonished if he had been taken to task by public opinion for not inquiring into their moral and spiritual welfare. Little or nothing is to be said for such a condition of things; it was the last corruption of a system which could never have existed but for a peculiar state of the political atmosphere—a corruption which, while it cannot be said to have constituted any formidable argument against the principle of a National Church, did nevertheless put an immense power into the hands of the independent bodies which about that time came into existence.

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From this state of corruption and inactivity the Church has in a measure recovered; it has become the property of a more earnest generation, and a hard-working clergyman now knows that his hard work is the surest claim to respect, no matter to what party in the Church he may belong. But, unfortunately (as will not unfrequently happen), the reaction against idleness has been carried too far, or rather, it has run a good deal in the wrong direction. For it is not too much to say that if any system could be contrived for the express purpose of producing hypocrites and for lowering the self-respect of large sections of the community, that system would bear a remarkable resemblance to the system of clerical work which at present receives popular encouragement. And the secret of the mischief lies in this—that under it the clergyman is encouraged to leave the Word of God and to serve tables; to put all his power into a species of work which is properly the work of others, and which can be undertaken without any special preparation, and to neglect work which, if a professional qualification means anything at all, no one can do but himself. There are certain acts which it is popularly supposed ought to be performed in a Christian country, such as visiting sick persons or giving alms; and it may be beneficial (and under proper conditions and intelligent supervision cannot but be beneficial)

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that such acts should be performed. But it is certainly not beneficial that the clergyman should perform them for the whole parish, much as he might be praised for feeling that he must do all such work himself rather than that it should not be done at all. It is certainly not beneficial that lay persons should be withheld from performing an act which it is their duty to perform, through the encouragement of the idea that, if no one else performs it, the clergyman will. Nor it is beneficial that the clergyman should have anything to do with the distribution of alms, and appear to his poorer parishioners either directly or indirectly in the light of a relieving officer; this least of all, because it is his duty rather to encourage providence and self-help than to encourage improvidence and dependence upon others, not to speak of the utter impossibility of his ever being useful in another capacity, or of his being able to judge how he can be useful, if his visits are connected in the minds of those whom he visits with the giving of alms. Nor, seeing how much social distress arises out of the failure of persons, rich as well as poor, to act fairly and honourably by each other, how much charity is rendered necessary by the neglect of ordinary justice, is it in any respect beneficial that the clergyman should run the risk of warding off the ill-effects of some of his parishioners' neglect of duty. Nor is it beneficial that he should

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make himself cheap—that it should be understood that he will go into cottages too dirty for any one else to visit, or that he will be the friend of families too disreputable for others to have anything to do with. Those who recommend that he should, entirely lose sight of the fact that what people want they will make an effort to get, and that what they do not want it is of no use forcing upon them. It costs people, for instance, very little to be clean, and those who were desirous of a visit from the parish clergyman would willingly take that trouble as a condition of his presence; while to those who do not want him he can do much more good by stopping away. For is it to be supposed that it does not seem a fine thing to those who live in dirty tenements to have a man in a good suit of clothes continually dancing attendance upon them, and doing anything short of bribing them to induce them to perform acts which it does not suit them to perform? Or is it to be supposed that they have a regard for a man who thus makes himself cheap, and whom they can gull with a tale which the relieving officer would see through in a moment? Or, again, is it to be supposed that the clergyman himself is improved by coming personally in contact at every turn with persons whom he is always bound to suspect of hypocrisy? Or can that be regarded as a sound system under which all the men shuffle out of the way,

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if a parochial visit is made after working hours, leaving the visitor to feel that his business is only with the women, who possibly would be as rude as the men, but for reasons of domestic economy?

To return to the old carelessness and deadness of last century is, it may be hoped, an impossibility for the National Church; but there is no reason at all why the greater earnestness of to-day should not be supplemented with some of that discretion which is born of a knowledge of the ways of the world and of human nature. And while a knowledge of the world and of human nature tells us that a man who makes himself cheap will be held cheap, so the same knowledge of human nature tells us that there is nothing that ignorant persons reverence so much as knowledge; and that consequently a parochial clergyman who had a reputation for learning, and who let it be seen that his interest was on the side of intelligence, would have a much greater real power over his parishioners, even while keeping comparatively aloof from them, than could ever be possessed by one who engaged in the most fervent house-to-house visitation. And in the meantime those acts of kindness and of mutual help which are popularly regarded as part of Christian duty, and which are now left to be discharged vicariously through the clergyman of the parish, would form a fitting field for the exercise of

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that "lay help" about which so much is said, but so little that is satisfactory defined. It is part of the clergyman's tasks, and a very important part, to see that his parishioners perform their duty in these respects, to see that help is rendered to those who need it as much as possible by members of their own class (for only in this way often can such help be above suspicion); but certainly not to do all that work, or indeed much of it, himself. To observe, to advise, to admonish, to be the standard of fair dealing and of right living, to be known as the enemy of stupidity and ignorance, to keep himself somewhat in the background as a sort of unknown quantity of intelligence and influence—this is work in which the most intelligent and the best educated man might take a pride, and from the performance of which nothing but practical good could result, no matter with what abstract theories of the universe it might be associated in the minds of the unlearned.

But not only must the National Church be made attractive to the best intellect of the country in order to secure for it a future of usefulness; it is also essential that it should be separated from all class interests—that with regard to classes it should show an impartiality at least as great as that which is shown in the tribunals of public justice. And though this proposition is here made in a general form, it is

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quite clear that it has a special application, which is that the National Church must be separated from the land, and be placed more directly in contact with the whole will of the nation, as expressed through its chosen executive. On abstract principle this should be done; while the actual circumstances of the case demand that it should be set about without delay. For the land question is at present one of the tenderest points in the commonwealth; it is a question that is being continually led up to from minor matters of grievance, and around which there is gradually collecting an overwhelming amount of public interest; and this naturally enough, seeing that the tenure of land is the basis of our whole social constitution. The land question, then, is the City of Destruction from which it behoves everything to escape that values its own existence; and it is needless to say that the National Church is especially concerned to make such an escape. For the National Church, as it is at present, is emphatically a weight upon the land, an additional factor of complication in respect of the whole great question; and it may well be believed that in the present temper of the nation the Church will be the first thing sacrificed in an endeavour to arrive at a settlement of that question. Now, as has been said already, this close connection between the Church and the land is not a necessary, but an

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accidental, connection—a connection arising from the fact that in the earlier times of the Church land was the only means by which it could be endowed. To sever a connection of such long standing will require some effort (shall it be said some faith?) on the part of the Church; but it is a severance which, if the Church has an eye to the things which belong to its peace, it will do all in its power to initiate, and which it will never repent. And indeed it is even now open to the Church, through its individual clergy, to bring about such a separation. It is now open to the individual clergy to make a slight sacrifice of their social comfort (and a heavy sacrifice would be worth making) for the sake of the religious organization in which they are included. It is now open to them to resign those magisterial functions which it is becoming more and more difficult for them to exercise without calling forth critical observation; to show their parishioners by a withdrawal (if only temporary) from county society, that they are determined to be neutral in the prevailing struggle of Labour with Capital—a struggle which could not but come, however great may be the folly or the covetousness of some of those through whom it has come. Already it is open to the individual clergy to exercise their volition in this direction; and if they were only to do so they would find their volition "counting for some-

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thing" by no means unimportant as "a condition of the course of events." It is not too much to say that if only ten clerical magistrates, taking counsel together, were to agree to resign their magisterial functions, on the ground that they considered their duties as clergymen interfered with thereby, the influence of such an act would be felt from one end of the kingdom to the other, and would of itself gain an additional breathing-time for the Church to set her affairs in order. And if in addition to, or even instead of, the resignation of the ten clerical magistrates, one Bishop would for similar reasons resign his seat in the House of Lords, a similar result would be induced. For so curiously is human nature constituted that, in an age in which every class is seeking its own against all the rest, nothing will more strike all classes with admiration than the conduct of an individual who voluntarily gives up a distinction which he might blamelessly, from an individual point of view, have held. Even if principle did not suggest such a course, it is a course strongly suggested by policy; for there can be little doubt that if the Bishops do not of themselves make a virtue of withdrawing from the House of Lords, public opinion will before long force such withdrawal upon them as a necessity.

Still, in this case as in the other, it must not be expected that the individual action of a few of the

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clergy will be able to make up for the unsoundness of the principle which renders such action advisable. In its theoretical constitution, as well as in the practice of its ministers, the Church must be severed from the land if either the Church or the land is to be made fully serviceable to the national interest. And here we come face to face with a problem towards some solution of which we are inevitably drifting—a problem so complex in its nature, and so stupendous in its dimensions, that he will indeed be but a thoughtless Statesman who desires to have the handling of it. "What is to be done with the Church?" is a question that we see looming more and more solidly before us through the mists of the political future; a question the real magnitude of which dwarfs into complete insignificance the jealous attacks of Nonconformity and the angry sneers of Republicans. And before a suggestion is made towards the solution of this difficulty, notice must be briefly taken of two courses of action which are often spoken of as probable with respect to the National Church, one of which must be described as very undesirable and the other as practically impossible.

Nothing can be more undesirable than that the Church of England should be treated as the Church of Ireland (to use that name for it) was treated. Even if Mr. Gladstone's "ninety millions" were obtainable,

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no one who has any sincere regard for sound policy, for political safety, for the highest interests of religion itself, could wish to see the country saddled with such an enormously powerful private corporation as the Church (no longer national) would then be. The Church, thus disestablished and compensated, would constitute a far greater religious grievance than it constitutes even now; for religious equality would be as far off as ever so long as a private corporation could retain in its hands, and possessed the funds to enable it to retain in its hands with unabated dignity, the traditions and associations of a national and historical institution. Religious equality, if that were the thing aimed at, could not be obtained by the compensation of the disestablished Church, but only by a process something very like extinction; even those among the Nonconformists who are most opposed to the idea of an Establishment would rather, if their own journalists are to be trusted, see the Church left as it is than see it existing in the shape of a largely endowed and irresponsible sect. And it would be as impossible to disestablish the Church without full compensation as it would be undesirable to disestablish it with such compensation. No assembly of landowners (as the House of Lords may be taken to be) would ever consent to an act which interfered so much with their privileges as would any act that proposed a disestablishment

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without full compensation for all whom it affected. Disestablishment without full compensation, in fact, could not be achieved except through a revolution, except (if the expression is allowable) over the dead body of the Upper House; and it may be taken for granted that no one who thinks himself worthy of the name of Statesman would willingly do anything to further such a contingency, with all the unknown and incalculable amount of disturbance which it would produce in the general aspects of political matters.

These remarks are merely made to show that the scheme of the political reconstruction of the National Church which will be mentioned immediately, though it might appear speculative and impossible, is at any rate no more so than schemes which are matters of daily discussion; for of course it might very well be argued that by the time a majority could be found in the Lower House to vote for Disestablishment, the Upper House might have become so far influenced by the same wave of public feeling as to show a majority in the same direction. And if, indeed (as some would seem to expect), such a radical measure as the abolition of Primogeniture were presently to gain the assent of both Houses of Legislature, there would be little difficulty felt in dealing with such a minor question as the property of the landowners in the Church. Such an event, however, much as it may be desired by a

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certain sect of politicians, must be distant; while the reconstruction of the Church, not for the purpose of saving it from destruction but of making it nationally useful, is a work which cannot be undertaken too soon. And if the abolition of Primogeniture, in which the whole privileges of the landowners are concerned, is an allowable matter of practical discussion, much more so is the surrender by the landowners to the State of their property in the National Church—a surrender in which is involved a very small portion of their privileges only, and to which they might well be moved by several considerations of simple justice and expediency. It must be remembered, moreover, that it is here presupposed that the action of the Church itself through the Bishops, in raising the standard of clerical qualification, will have prepared the way for such a surrender by making the landowner's interest in the Church considerably less worth keeping. For it is essential that the first move towards reform should come from within the Church; without this the possibilities of its usefulness will be permanently depreciated and become scarcely worth taking into account.

Now it is a sound maxim that whatever reform is attempted in a highly complex society must be attempted gradually; that sudden action on a large scale is to be avoided not only on account of the reactionary forces that are thereby likely to be pro-

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voked, but also because such sudden action leaves no room for repentance in the event of a mistake having been committed. It is very probable that most of the measures of reform which have been sanctioned among us during the last forty years have failed to produce all the results expected from them, simply because those who sanctioned them did not take sufficient account of the power of the passive resistance of custom, or of their own liability to make mistakes. And therefore in venturing a proposition with regard to the political reconstruction of the National Church, care has been taken to keep these two considerations in view. The proposition is this, that the State should be empowered (and whether any Government would find a majority willing to sanction such a scheme is of course an open question) to take possession of all Church lands as the existing individual interests in them die out, and sell them, applying the proceeds to the reduction of the National Debt, and taking a vote annually out of revenue to provide for the salaries of those clergymen who should be appointed to the "sequestered" livings; the titles to all such lands to be registered, and made indefeasible through the fact of their sale by the State.*

* Of course it will be at once objected that much of the present revenue of the Church is derived, not from the rents of land, but from

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This is, of course, such a simple and concise method of stating such a proposition as is suitable to the present discussion; and if it should seem impracticable it must be remembered that it is possibly not more impracticable than other schemes which are daily spoken of. Perhaps it would be safest to say that if such a thing could be done, the National Church would have the best chance of becoming really useful and popular under the present and future conditions of English society. And that for reasons which must briefly be stated. In the first place, the Church would by such means be completely separated, in the public mind, from class interests, and especially from the interests of the landed proprietors. The clergy, also, receiving their salaries direct from the State, would be saved from that which must always be an annoyance and a hindrance to a

tithes, which are charges upon land; and that any Act passed to deal with Church land would have to be supplemented by an Act dealing with the Church's interest in land. The two questions, however, are at their root the same. For supposing it were enacted that the tithe-charge upon any estate should be abolished on the death of its present possessor, the abolition would at once enhance such an estate's annual value. Now the difference in annual value would be, on every principle of justice, the property of the State, and might be made subject to commutation; the amount received by the State for such commutation being applied, as in the other case, to the extinction of the National Debt, with a similar undertaking given to pay the parochial clergyman's salary out of revenue. The greatest difficulty would, doubtless, be felt in dealing with the lay impropriators of tithes, whether individuals or corporations; though there can be no doubt that such appropriation is as unwarrantable in principle as it is immemorial in practice.

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man sincerely desirous to perform his clerical duties to the utmost—the consciousness of a mercantile relationship between himself and his parishioners, or at least some of them. Again, an admirable opportunity would thus be afforded for the correction of what every one feels to be an evil—the want of proportion between work and pay that exists at present in the National Church; for it is not to be supposed that the nation would sanction the acquirement of Church property by the State unless a guarantee were given for the removal of universally recognized abuses. Under such a consolidation of the Church Revenues as would practically take place, nothing would be easier or more acceptable to the feeling of the whole nation than the proportioning of clerical salaries to the nature and population of the clerical districts; and nothing would be easier than to arrange gradually for that system of certain promotion by seniority up to a certain point which must be instituted if the National Church is to be made attractive to the best intellect of the country.

But besides the beneficial results that would be manifested within the Church itself if such a course of action were adopted, there are other advantages external to the Church which would not fail to make themselves felt. As has been already said, we are drifting nearer and nearer to the question "What is

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to be done with the Church?" and the nervousness which many feel in respect of that question arises from the fear that some sudden action may be taken, expensive at the moment, and irremediable if shortly afterwards shown to be a failure. The proposition here ventured, however, is one which could be carried out gradually and in a wholly inexpensive manner, and one, moreover, the execution of which could easily be put a stop to if a brief trial of its working should prove its unfitness. It is, further, a proposition that points towards a national economy; for though, in the event of the proceeds of the sale of the Church lands being applied to the extinction of a portion of the National Debt, the same amount would have to be annually taken out of revenue to pay the salaries of the clergy as is now applied towards the payment of interest on such a portion of the National Debt; yet the amount so taken out of revenue would be more economically and advantageously disposed of; for instead of being paid to persons who are mostly idle, and who contribute little or nothing to the general prosperity of the country, it would be paid as the price for securing to the State the earnest labours of the most intellectual members of the community—labours directed towards the encouragement of that most pressing requisite of national greatness and prosperity—the peaceable and

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honest living of responsible and industrious citizens. To those, again, who sincerely doubt the principle of a National Church, it might be pointed out that we have never yet possessed a National Church in anything like the full sense of the expression. We have possessed a landowners' Church, whence the idea that Dissent is unaristocratic; but this landowners' Church, though (as has been argued) useful in its day, has been a State Church more by accident than by design. We do not know yet, therefore, and we cannot know till it has been tried, what the possibilities and value of a State Church may be. But such a Church as would result from the carrying out of the above proposition would be emphatically a State Church—a Church under the control of the nation, employing the best intelligence of the nation, and standing aloof from all those class dissensions which a complicated society cannot but contain. And if, after a sufficient trial, it were found that the national feeling was against such a Church, then it could be disestablished with far less difficulty and far less danger to the whole structure of society than would necessarily accompany any present attempt in such a direction.

But it must not be forgotten that in respect of all these matters "volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events," and that if any-

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thing beneficial to English society is to come out of the existing agitation with regard to the relations of the State to Religion, the volition of the occupants of the Episcopal Bench cannot be too soon set in motion in favour of raising the standard of clerical qualification, and against the admitted scandal of traffic in ecclesiastical preferment.

And now, having reached the set limits of the present disquisition, the writer cannot help feeling that, whatever else may result from his attempt, he has probably succeeded in effectually arraying against himself the displeasure both of the English Ultramontane (of whatever Church or sect) and of the advocate of "free-thought." The Ultramontane, who sets religion before all things, and would have it to exist for its own sake simply, may very well complain that this is but a sorry sort of religious reform which deals with questions of supply and demand, of the advantage of secular learning, and of State policy. This, he will say, cannot be true religion, certainly not true Christianity, for it seems to proclaim that religion cannot exist without a proper adjustment of purely secular and often selfish interests. It will be observed, however, that these secular arrangements are not for the sake of making religion exist, but to prevent its existing in excess. No political act can create in a

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country a strong religious feeling; but if there is existing a strong religious feeling the political organization of the country may be called upon to deal with it and, by directing it, keep it in check. And it is really the highest possible compliment that could be paid to the religious feeling of the country to recommend that it should be dealt with in such a manner as has been described. It is as much as to say that the religious feeling of the country is powerful and working in a beneficial direction, that it may be trusted to carry us forward towards a better condition of things, provided it does not forget itself and act on the assumption that man was made for religion, instead of religion being made for man.

And therefore, shapen and conceived in the iniquity of Erastianism as the foregoing propositions may be, the religionist of Ultramontane tendencies, if he wishes to deal fairly with the matter, can scarcely complain that what he would call the "great realities of religion" are overlooked. The complaint of the "free-thinker," however, is likely to be much more serious. How, he will ask, can that be called religious reform at all which does not even hint at any adjustment of theological difficulties, which would pass by without a word of alteration those thirty-nine articles about which opinion is so much divided? This, however, is precisely the reason why the thirty-nine

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articles must for the present be left untouched; along with all the popular theological ideas which they contain—*because* opinion is so much divided about them. To derive a parallel from physiology, it is always considered unadvisable to attempt an operation on any portion of the human body without first reducing as much as possible whatever local inflammation may be present; and in like manner the inflammation of the public mind around these thirty-nine articles is in itself the very reason why no present attempt can safely be made to operate upon them. No doubt they are open to objections; no doubt, also, there are many men now living who could point to portions of them that seem imperatively to demand alteration; but it is quite obvious at the same time that to attempt such alterations at once would be to add to the confusion and agitation which are already too much associated with religious questions. For it is quite certain that if we wish to raise up a theological conflict, the thirty-nine articles are full of occasions to that end. No articles can be more easily made articles of war; while, on the other hand, if we are resolved to be intent upon action, upon following "an ideal of true, just, and pure living," and to let these articles represent what they were chiefly intended to represent —the general beliefs of the people—no articles can be more easily made articles of peace.

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That this way of treating the question will not satisfy the "free-thinker," whose disposition it is to regard religion as a kind of knowledge, is of course to be expected. But if the "free-thinker" has really a mind to deal with the thirty-nine articles, and to make them conformable to scientific reasoning, it will not be amiss to remind him of the difficulties of the task he undertakes. Take one question only—the question of Free-will and Predestination. Every reasonable man, "free-thinker" or not, cannot but deplore the practices which have from time to time followed upon the acceptance of the doctrine of Predestination in too absolute a sense; every day, indeed, we may see the grievous results to life and to character that follow upon any person's conviction that he or she is doomed or fated to certain courses of action. To expunge altogether from among the articles of religion those which encourage or sanction such a dangerous belief, would be, and always has been, a natural desire with reasonable and energetic minds. It is felt by such minds that it is infinitely more healthy for the moral system and more encouraging to right action if the contrary habit is entertained—if the belief that "volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events" is dwelt upon, and even exaggerated till volition is believed to count for everything. But though this is the common-

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sense belief with regard to practice, and though in respect of practice it receives high scientific sanction, nothing can be more thoroughly contradicted by scientific reasoning, as a matter of theory, than the belief in free-will. For, as Mr. Herbert Spencer says, "physical changes either conform to law or they do not. If they do not conform to law, this work" (his own, "Principles of Psychology"), "in common with all works on the subject, is sheer nonsense; no science of psychology is possible. If they do conform to law, there cannot be any such thing as free-will." * And he goes on to point out that absolute free-will, if it existed, would be a positive evil and a hindrance to progress. So that from a scientific point of view, the action of the will, though practically free, is absolutely predetermined. Now, would the thirty-nine articles be improved or rendered less dangerous by the substitution of the above-quoted passage from a nineteenth-century philosopher in place of the XVIIth article, which is the work of a sixteenth-century theologian? Is not this question of the freedom of the will, which lies at the root of so much theological discussion, another logical Leviathan which cannot be drawn out with a hook? And would it not be better for would-be reformers of theology, even if they have succeeded in keeping the influence of this Leviathan difficulty

* "Principles of Psychology," vol. i. p. 503.

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out of their own practice, to take the advice given to Job—"Lay thy hand upon him; remember the battle; do no more"?

But, after all, the "free-thinker" is not dealt with in these pages for his own sake, but as expressing in a concrete form that widespread uneasiness which is shared in by thousands of persons to whom the appellation of "free-thinker" would, whether rightly or wrongly, be the most offensive appellation possible—persons who have not yet formulated to themselves the desirability of treating "the Bible as a human book" (as if, in its bearing on practical life, any sane person treated it otherwise!) or of "dispensing with the ceremony of church-going," or of "founding morality upon a rational basis." It is of these silent thousands, and not of the few score obtrusive talkers, that account must be taken in saying or doing anything in connection with religious matters; and the great question to be answered—a question which cannot be fully answered save by time—is, "Whither are these thousands turning, under the influence of modern intellectual and social forces, in the matter of religion? Are they turning to Theism, or to Materialism, or to Catholicism?" Scarcely, it may be thought, to Theism; for if the old creeds of Europe are in conflict with modern intelligence, much more so is the new creed (for new it is in its present

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adoption) of Theism in conflict with that intelligence. Theism demands the recognition of an "intelligent and personal Creator and Governor" of the Universe; rests all its strength on this belief; brings it continually into the foreground, and challenges dispute upon it. But this belief is one which scientific reasoning will not countenance for a moment, rather condemning it as a belief that is far outstripped in grandeur by a very small portion of the known reality of the Universe. Theism, moreover, is not less in conflict with general experience also. In order to make Theism attractive and consistent, the only relationship allowed to exist between God and men is that which is called "fatherly;" a relationship in virtue of which no one will be punished (practically) for what he does wrong, and every one will be rewarded for what he does right. This is an idea pleasant enough to be conceived, but one which any man with a very slight knowledge of human life will reject as both mischievous and incredible; knowing as he does that there is a dark side to human life which cannot harmonize with or find a place in such a creed as this. Wanting, moreover, as it does, the power of a human example, it would scarcely be too much to say that Theism has every fault and danger of Calvinism with none of the advantages. It has with Calvinism the faults of relying wholly upon an

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unverifiable proposition; of dealing, often with a degrading familiarity, with the most stupendous considerations; of narrowing the whole conception of the universe; of encouraging, through the necessary predication of Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence, predestinarian fatalism. And while it wants the human example and emotional force of Calvinism, it has some faults peculiar to itself; notably the fault of not distinguishing sufficiently between morality and immorality. For if the moral man will be made happy for ever, and the immoral man eventually share the same privilege, it is as much as to say to the popular mind (no matter what nicer distinctions may be drawn by theologians) that good and evil are identically the same. Now according to the doctrine of evolution, good and evil do, indeed, theoretically differ only from each other in degree, though no evolutionist would fail to insist that practically they are very different things. But to say with the Theist that good and evil, which he holds are distinguished in the mind by an absolute Divine intuition, are in the end to meet with the same recompense from the Divine Hand, is a proposition so absurd and so dangerous that it would probably not be entertained for a moment were it not for the influence of a certain reactionary feeling against an over-wrought Calvinism.

Seeing, then, that men's minds will naturally,

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when receiving new impressions, move towards a position of reconciliation or equilibrium, it is not likely that Theism will have anything more than a temporary and limited following in England. Nor would the attraction seem to be very strong towards materialism; if it is, of course the "free-thinker" is more than justified, and this attempt condemned. Appearances, however, would seem to indicate a danger rather from an excess than from an entire absence of superstition. But towards Catholicism, towards the tradition which has grown up with European history, which therefore reflects the tendencies of the European mind under all the changing conditions of life, there does seem to be a strong attraction; and a few words must be said in conclusion as to the fitness of Catholicism to furnish a sound basis for the religion of the future.

In the first place, Catholicism does not, like the modern Theism, seek to appeal to the popular mind through an unverifiable proposition. True, Catholicism is Theistic; but those questions as to the nature and attributes of God which Theism would bring to the foreground, Catholicism has always studiously kept in the background; not forbidding their discussion by competent theologians, but discouraging to the utmost their discussion at the untrained hands of the unlearned. And thus, under Catholic auspices,

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while to the popular mind the idea of a Supreme Power of the Universe has always been dimly present, the popular mind has nevertheless always been content to leave that Supreme Power undefined as something undefinable and inscrutable, never daring to ascend to that insolent familiarity with which, in defiance of the opening sentences of the thirty-nine articles, so many modern writers within the pale of the Anglican Church describe the Supreme Power of the Universe as a "Person who lives and thinks." Now for assuming this more reverent attitude the popular mind has the sanction of the Philosophy of Evolution, as any one may see who will refer to the second and third chapters of Mr. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles." Not caring to encourage metaphysical speculation, but anxious above all things to promote good living, Catholicism has concentrated its force upon the presence and example of Christ in and to His Church. And this is a point in respect of which verification is quite possible—in respect of which every mind may understand just as much supernaturally and as much naturally as accords with its own culture and requirements—in respect of which, indeed, the possibility of verification increases, the more an advancing critical intelligence demands verification. There may at first sight seem to be a wide gulf indeed between the man who believes in the real

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presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and another who feels simply the power, through association, which the figure of Christ possesses to furnish him with "an ideal of true, just, and pure living." The gulf, however, is only one of imagination, and if both follow their ideal they will find themselves perfectly at one in respect of conduct, even though their respective justifications to themselves for following this ideal may be utterly dissimilar. Now the object of religion is to produce right conduct, to which end it supplies to the higher volition a stimulus more or less tinged with that personal feeling which we call emotion. And so long, therefore, as religion is put to its proper use (in an evolutionary sense), the well educated and the little educated may meet on the groundwork of Catholicism without the slightest hint of disagreement.

Catholicism, but never Catholic Ultramontanism; religion resting on the great European tradition, and existing for the sake of society, but not religion making use of the power of the European tradition to exist for its own sake and to become paramount. And though it may be no duty of the State, as a matter of abstract principle, to provide a religion for the people, yet it may well be, under certain circumstances, expedient for the nation, through its chosen executive, to guard itself against such a great national danger as modern European history shows plainly

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must exist when Catholic Ultramontanism (not using the term to convey any reproach to the individuals included under it) asserts itself prominently. If such a national danger can be best averted through the adoption of the "free-thinker's" programme, by "treating the Bible as a human book, dispensing with the ceremony of Church-going, and attempting to found morality on a rational basis," then the "free-thinker" will in the future be indeed hailed with the recognition which awaits a public benefactor. In the meantime, however, let it be suggested that the "free-thinker" is playing into the hands of Catholic Ultramontanism, and that nothing but a sincere endeavour to popularize the National Church through attracting into it the best intelligence of the country and separating it from the landed interest, will be effectual to help the English nation satisfactorily through the religious perils that surround it.

THE END.

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