

ARTICLE VIII.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE UPON THE
HUMAN CONSCIENCE.¹

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WHAT differentiates the Hebrew cosmogony from the cosmogonies of the other early nations of the earth is not merely its dignity, its simple and sublime movement of particulars, its flexibility, its facility of adapting itself to the scientific progress of the passing generations of mankind, its freedom from puerilities, but its ethical character. There is a first great Cause: yes; out of nothing, nothing comes. There is a material Sovereign: yes; the world-economy of matter has its supreme ruler. There is providence, superintendence. From atom throughout the vastness of the great whole, one will is formative and regnant. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made, that was made." "By him all things consist." But what of man? More important than nebulae, than star-dust, than day and night, than liquid and solid, than the firmament with its great lights, than the moving creatures in the waters and on the land, than the fowls that fly on strong wing heavenward, than the beast and the creeping things, is the being made in God's image, on whom rests his original benediction, and whom he makes his vicegerent to subdue the earth and all the forces that are regal in it. What of man? This is the great problem for solution. The carpenter theory of creation, as it is called, as though the system were nailed together in a car-

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painter's shop, and then set up under the blue concave; the egg theory, the tortoise theory, as against the theory that material things have been evolved from protoplasm, is of comparative unimportance, if man can still discover, not so much what he was made out of, and by what process, but who made him, and what God, that Maker, made him for, and requires at his hands. And here in this Hebrew cosmogony,—if derived from others, why so much wiser than they? and if they are derived from it, why have men eliminated the thing most important?—here in this Hebrew cosmogony, is, at least, an attempted answer to this great ethical question.

The Bible is preëminent in its influence upon the human conscience. It indeed stirs the intellect. It makes a man think: do his best thinking. But it is not thinking that saves men. There is a great deal of thinking done, when it is no longer of avail, when things cannot be remedied. There is more thinking done in penitentiaries than in colleges and universities. The devils believe and tremble. They believe what they are thinking. The rich man, who went to perdition and was in torment there, did more thinking than he had ever done before in all his life. Faring sumptuously every day, wearing purple and fine linen, does not promote high thinking.

The Bible is an ethical book. It has to do with morals, with the moral sense. And it has scarcely finished the making of man, before it gives him a lesson in ethics,—a lesson for him and all his posterity, a lesson for the whole world, and, so far as we can conjecture, for all worlds. One great problem of theology is to determine the origin of evil; how a man just fresh from the hands of the Creator, whose nature is sinless, can be betrayed into sin, can commit sin at all. Skeptics and infidels derive a great deal of amusement from the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But whether we look at it as a fact, or

as a study in psychology, there is not anything more instructive and important within the limits of the Bible. In more senses than one it is the kindergarten of the great Master; of the Being who came here to bruise the serpent's head; who felt for us the bite of the serpent's fang in his heel; who killed death in dying.

Teachers of moral science define a moral being as one who has intellect, sensibility, and will. These three fearful and wonderful endowments figure there in the sin of our first parents and in every transgression. The story is so simple that a little child can understand it; the issues are so great, so clearly outlined, so projected upon us, that the philosopher cannot add a single explanation which will make the transaction clearer. It is a typical case; fits all mankind. Fruit in a garden of fruit, hanging there, tempting to the eye, luscious to the taste; forbidden! Desire awakened! Without a personal Tempter, subtle, sagacious, a flatterer and a liar, the issue to transgression is possible; with such a Tempter, is probable. There is no knowledge of good and evil. That distinction is yet to be discovered in the abyss of transgression, under the shadow of the wrath of God! They had been cautioned: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!"—that is, lose the motive-power to do right. That is death to man; and to recover it is life.

It is this correlation of intellect, sensibility, and will—of thought, desire, choice—that makes sin possible, that makes holiness possible; that opens the depths of hell, that opens the gateway of heaven. Men say, "Why could not God have made men so that sin would have been impossible?" There is a carpenter conception of man, as well as a carpenter conception of creation. God made man in his own image. The test of God's economy is the man that is possible to make in it. The first Adam yields to the craving of his sensibilities,—his desire for happiness of the

earth-sort,—and breaks away from God, when he sees that the tree is good for food, and that it is pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise. What Eve does, Adam does of course; he plucks and eats. That is the Adam that first appeared. Could not God have prevented this lapse from virtue? Only by destroying man's freedom; only by destroying the possibility of holiness; only by destroying in man his own image, his capacity to be noble and good. How about the second Adam, under the same economy? How does he come into the world? Heralded by the angels, with the words: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will." Born among beasts in a stable, cradled in a manger, without a place to lay his head; when he was forty days a-hungred, tempted in the wilderness; living among men who called him Beelzebub, who tried to cast him headlong from a precipice, who hung around his footsteps to misrepresent and catch him in his talk; falsely convicted of the crime of blasphemy, though there was not an angel in his Father's presence who did not adore him; surrendering himself to the shame and agony of the Cross; in death, even, not where to lay his head,—all because it was the will of his Father: "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me."

Here are the two extremes under the same economy. And, should it be said that the second Adam was the Lord of glory, and therefore able to do this, look at the multitudes of ordinary souls that have followed in his train from the death of the martyr Stephen until now; transformed into his image, touched by his example, glorying in his shame; in every latitude, under every star, lifting up the Cross, and pouring out their lives as a libation. It is a new race from a new Head. And, so far as we know, this second Adam and all who are like him, are impossible without the possibility of the first. It is possible for us to

fall, as did Adam; yes, to stand, as did our Elder Brother, and those who have adopted his words: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will."

In order to do this, the direction in which a man needs to be strengthened is his moral nature, his conscience; and the Bible is so constituted as to do it. A conscience which finds its standard in the word and will of God, is a Christian creation; can come only through the renewal of our fallen nature, by breathing the atmosphere of heaven. What is the standard of the word and will of God? It is embodied and illustrated in the man Christ Jesus; the Son of God, the glory of Heaven; the Son of man, the First-Born from the dead, both material and moral. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." It is the feet of the new man, the path of the new man, on the highway to glory. Nicodemus inquired, "How can a man be born, when he is old?" He can be born, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible; by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." Nicodemus found it so.

Take the historical personages of the Bible, and mark that what is said of them, relates to ethical character and ethical conduct. We have already called attention to the story of the Garden of Eden. Evidently this was introduced for ethical reasons. It has in it the fundamental principles of all moral science. We might go one step back of even this initiative narrative. Genesis introduces us to God, the Creator of the earth we inhabit. This is not for scientific reasons. It is to remind the creature of the claim, which, as Creator, God has upon his love and service. He has fitted up this earth for man's occupancy. Man is to have the care of it, dominion over it. Even before the fall, when labor is made an element in man's punishment, God put man into the Garden to dress and keep it; made him a man with the hoe. That was employment,

—always a benefit. The care of the earth is man's natural and safest occupation. Building cities, flocking to them, congesting them with inhabitants, and all the social evils which spring from this course, is not in the original plan. The hardest sociological problems would be solved, if earth's multitudes would go back to the earth, and become the man with the axe and the hoe. This nation is what it is to-day, because the Pilgrim Fathers, and men and women of kindred spirit, came back to the earth, sent back by the great Husbandman to dress it and keep it. We are looking up our genealogies. The men and women from whom we descend, back in the seventeenth century, were under appointment of God, to dress the earth and keep it. The resources of the American continent have scarcely been touched in the direction of agriculture,—the surest, the healthiest, I had almost said the divinest, of all employment; the employment which has in it the largest ethical element.

The Bible has its theory of Nature; and it is an ethical one. How any student of Nature can lose the ethical quality of his mind, the habit of his mind to judge all things ethically, is a mystery. The study of Nature, meditation on Nature, sends us back to duty and to God. Emerson writes, "If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations, the remembrance of the City of God which had been shown. But every night come out these envoys of beauty and light to the Universe with their admonishing smile." Admonishing smile! There is the ethical quality in the stars. Why admonish us? What has man done of which the stars take cognizance? Then, turning from the stars to the earth, Emerson adds, "The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowl-

edged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet it is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right." Moral beauty in man is suggested by material beauty in Nature. What Emerson has said about the stars, had been anticipated by the Hebrew psalmist, in words that Daniel Webster used to repeat, as he paced augustly back and forth, a procession in himself, beneath the piazza at Marshfield: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" There is, what Emerson calls, an "occult relation" between these shining worlds, which, looking off from the parapet of his palace, the psalmist considers, and ourselves. The moon and the stars do not come under man's dominion: they come under God's dominion, to light man's pathway between the two eternities. As Addison has said,—

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim."

The celestial worlds move around God's throne, obedient to a material law,—that of gravitation. They cannot escape from it. Nay, they would not escape. Their obedience is so full of alacrity, so exact, that man sets his chronometer by them; guides his ships by them. There is such harmony of movement among them that it is said of it: "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God did shout for joy." You cross the continent behind a massive locomotive, every revolution of whose wheels has been so carefully estimated, that when you take out your watch in San Francisco and then look at your guide-book, you see

you have come right in on time. But, when you look up into the heavens, you see the very planets described in the book of Job: "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the South." There they are still in the constellation of the Great Bear, just as the patriarch saw them; just as Isaiah saw them, when he wrote: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth forth their hosts by number: he calleth them all by name by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." The ethical use of this passage is this: If the Creator does not lose a single one of these countless worlds; if at the nightly roll-call, they all answer, "Here!" do you think God can forget you? The argument is just the same as that used by the Saviour respecting the lilies of the field,—another ethical lesson,—"If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

The Bible cosmogony suggests a system of ethics such as is sure to promote the sense of personal responsibility in man. Here are no two forces,—Ormuzd and Ahriman of the ancient Persians, joint creators of the world and all things in it, henceforth contending for possession,—but, one Creator, who makes man in his own image, and who teaches man, through the Eden narrative, as well as in the Epistle of James, this lesson: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts [desires], and enticed." Sin is morally possible to every free moral agent. That is why holiness has a value. A system of free moral agents is the only system that can satisfy either God or man. That system, God has chosen. Man is under it. Under it, he is to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling"; knowing that God

“worketh in him both to will and do of his good pleasure.” There is a Tempter. But our Elder Brother, who has entered the lists for us, flesh and blood as we are, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; our Elder Brother has crushed his serpent-head on Calvary, as the serpent bit the first Adam’s heel in Eden. The race has been reënforced in Christ Jesus. All things are possible for us. We have only to regulate our innocent desires—not to give the world, nor the things that are in the world, supremacy over us—to crucify our sinful desires, to bring body, soul, and spirit under dominion of the law of love, as shown us in the pattern on that mount where our Elder Brother said of his human life and of his divine sacrifice, “It is finished,” and gave up the ghost; we have only to do these things, and our victory is sure. “Wherewith shall I come to the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, or the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth God require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” And to this end are given all the ethical standards of the Bible; all the ethical impulses, all the ethical life recorded here. And to this end came He who went about doing good; and who died that men might walk as he also walked, and reign with him in glory forever.

Even the Lord’s Prayer is provided with an ethical standard,—“Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” This petition is, that the ethics of earth may be as the ethics of heaven. God is love. Love is the standard of ethics in heaven; the love of Calvary. He who came from heaven to teach its ethics, to seal its ethics with his own blood, has taught us to pray thus: “Thy will be done,”

here, as it is done there; to pray according to the ethics of heaven. All things finite and earthly require a standard, have to be compared with a standard; or we cannot know their value. We seek to know whether the building we are erecting, is true to the line of the horizon. We compare it with a spirit-level. God's liquids take the horizon level. We seek to know if its walls are perpendicular, we drop along their surface a lead and line; matter obeys in straight lines. These two simple instruments will answer our queries. And taking them along with us as we go upward, obedient to them, we can erect a structure as high as the Tower of Babel. "Brethren, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things." Omniscience is an infinite attribute. But if omniscience were the attribute of a being with whom we had no ethical relations; a being who lived in another sphere; and especially a being who applied to us an imperfect ethical standard,—it would not trouble us so much. Sinful men have no feeling of shame as they admit their ill deeds to each other. In his "Confessions," St. Augustine says he used to make up anecdotes of wickedness, and attribute them to himself, for fear his associates in sin would not think him bad enough. It is a common trick with bad men. But we dislike to be condemned or too well known by beings who have a perfect ethical standard. When God said to Adam, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat?" that question was like the probe of a surgeon, hunting after a bullet in a wound; searching the heart of our nature, it divided asunder the joint and marrow of his being.

The ethical standard of the Bible is ideal, is perfect. The Bible makes such demands as these: "Be ye holy, for I am holy,"—man's holiness measured by God's; "All things ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,"—man's life tested by the God-man's! It has

been claimed that this last was not original with the Great Teacher; that Confucius uttered it before his day. Confucius phrased the golden rule in this way: "Do nothing to others which ye would not have them do to you." He puts it in the negative form. Obeying him, the thieves who robbed the man that went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, would have refrained from doing him injury. But our Saviour's phrasing of the golden rule is affirmative: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." To obey that would make them all Good Samaritans. The trouble with Japanese art is, it fails in one of its dimensions. It brings remote things as near to the spectator as things distant. A negative statement of the golden rule fails in one of its dimensions; does not imply that a lost world would trouble one of the inhabitants of heaven; least of all, the King's Son there. It does not imply that God might so love the world, as to send his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. If the Jews—his own, to whom he came from the Father—if the Jews had kept the golden rule according to Confucius, they never would have crucified the Saviour. But, if that negative was the height of celestial attainment, heaven never would have emptied itself to sing Hallelujahs at Bethlehem, or been hushed to silence when the dying God-man cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There would have been no Bethlehem, no Calvary. God did not need to enjoin upon the citizens of heaven, that they should refrain from treating others as they would not like to be treated. "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The ethics of heaven inspired the Son of God to say, "Deliver them from going down to death; lo, I have found a ransom"; led the angels at Bethlehem to sing, "Glory to God on the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men"; led them

to minister to the Saviour, when he had resisted the temptation in the wilderness; and when the bitter cup was presented to him in Gethsemane.

The theory that the ideal standard of ethics is the result of evolution; that it is a biological result; that there needed to be no moral endowment, such as is implied in the passage, "And God made man in his own image; in the image of God created he them"; that ethical sensitiveness, ethical principles, have been evolved by society, through association with others, and that man needs no perfect standard of right and wrong from God,—is out of harmony with the analogy of man's endowments in all other directions. How does a man become a great sculptor? a great painter? He sets before himself a high ideal, a perfect standard, and works toward it. Many a mountain, as you climb it, seems to recede before you; beckoning you up, higher and higher, till it is lost in the clouds. Art is long! The art of holy being and holy living is long! A man that would be a great artist has to watch himself and educate himself, as though his artistic nature were a school-boy. It is said of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that when in Rome he painted a kind of parody on Raphael's "School of Athens," into which he introduced about thirty likenesses of English students, travelers, and connoisseurs; and that he said of himself, that it was "universally allowed that he executed subjects of this kind with much humor and spirit; yet he thought it prudent to abandon the practice, since it might corrupt his taste as a portrait-painter, whose duty it was to discover only the perfections of those whom he represented." He would sometimes ask the great Edmund Burke how he liked an unfinished painting, and when the great man expressed his admiration, he would shake his head and say, "Well, it pleases you, but it does not please me"; and then, taking his brush, in a few moments would add, "There, I have

improved it." Allan Cunningham says of Sir Joshua Reynolds' portraits: "Every captain has the capacity of a general, and every lord, a soul fit for wielding the energies of an empire." This, because he so let himself out, exercised himself, so idealized.

We talk about an educated conscience. Hear what was said by the Apostle Paul: "Herein do I exercise myself [work myself up] to have always a conscience void of offense towards God and men." He treated his conscience as Sir Joshua Reynolds treated his æsthetic taste: he kept before himself the highest standards. We study children, because the Master says, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Sir Joshua Reynolds studied children, to get glimpses of nature; to see them imitate the attitudes that he had delineated in some of his paintings; to catch, if possible, their instinctive æsthetic criticisms. No one is so shocked to see an adult, from whom they have a right to expect better things, violate the dictates of their moral sense, as are children. The moral revulsion is instinctive with them. They may do wrong; but it shocks them if mother does wrong.

The conduct of Bible characters was often far short of the ethical ideal. If Adam and Eve began to disobey God in Eden, the race justified their kinship to them when Cain slew Abel; when the sons of God selected wives of the daughters of men, and raised up offspring, that were giants in stature and in wickedness, till God repented, not only that he had created man, but also that he had created even the beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air; saving only one family from the wreck, in which all the rest were involved by the deluge.

The Bible does not treat men sociologically, when it judges their ethical conduct. God was ready to spare Nineveh because of the little children there. "Every man shall give an account of himself to God." Noah is treated

as a man by himself. He is isolated, insulated. He is not embraced with those of whom it is said, that their wickedness was great upon the earth. He breaks all sociological ties, and lets God shut him and his household into the ark, as furnishing the beginning of new sociological conditions. So of Lot, whom the angels hurried away from the cities of the plain, where the ethics of the inhabitants had so vexed his righteous soul. It is respect for the sovereignty of the individual conscience, which has made the Bible what it is. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." This is what has made the moral greatness of all who believe the Bible and obey the Bible,—that every reader and believer uses it to enlighten his own conscience, for the guidance of his own feet. When a man in the Bible deviates from the ethics of the Bible, it is recorded against him. David cannot escape the ignominy of Uriah's death. This keeps the atmosphere of the Bible pure; makes it not only a book safe to give to the people, but makes it the branch to purify the fountain of human conduct, whose waters are so bitter.

Recall the biographical records of the Bible. Take some of the great derelicts of the Bible; yet men in some respects declared to be men after God's own heart. How can the Bible be a pure book, a salutary book, and speak so frankly about their transgressions? Its safety consists in its frank speaking. Abraham prevaricates, to prevent the loss of his wife. That prevarication precipitates the very thing he fears. Jacob deceives his old father, Isaac, as he lies upon his death-bed, secures the benediction of the first-born by deception; steals his way into covenant with God! It results in making him a life-long exile from home-ties; gives him a father-in-law who is a greater liar than he, who changes his wages ten times, who is jealous of his good fortune, betrays him into marriage with a woman he does not love, his own daughter; and converts his

brother Esau into an avenger, sweeping after him and his household with an army. The Bible says, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Jacob finds it so. David finds it so. Read the Fifty-first Psalm. Solomon finds it so. Read about his last days. All of David's sons find it so. And because the Bible so deals with the individual conscience; because it says to Abraham and Jacob and David and Solomon, "Thou art the man," it has the power to make such men as Martin Luther and Oliver Cromwell and the Pilgrim Fathers out of just such stuff as we are made of. When Lady Macbeth is urging her husband to consummate the deed they have conspired to do; when she ridicules him, as only such a woman could, actually overwhelms him with her irony, and taunts him with having no love to her, he answers her:—

"Pr'ythee, peace.

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none."

It is this sense of individuality that makes manhood. It is this sense of accountability to conscience, to God who is greater than conscience, that makes manhood. Macbeth did not get his sense of manhood from any biological or sociological laws. He is not thinking of preservation or expansion of life, as his ultimate end; nor of himself as about to act a part in an ideal society, where moral conduct will produce pleasure unalloyed by pain. He stands there in a strait betwixt two; afraid of his own shadow, of his own inner self, of the shadow of a dagger the handle toward his hand, of the knocking at the south entry of the castle; crying out to new-comers right on the heels of the foul deed then, alas, committed:—

"Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst."

He wants to undo what he has done; wants somebody else to undo it. It is too late. It is beyond his reach. It has gone into the eternities.

Yes, conscience may be educated: the moral sense is just like the natural. The watchmaker knows the inside of a watch; the conscientious man knows his own inner nature. But conscience must be there, within us, first. The Bible educates the conscience. The Bible handles wrong-doing and wrong-doers in such a way as to discourage them. The wrong-doer says, "Art thou come to torment me before my time?" It asserts its dominion over man, as though it had a right to be supreme. Henry Frederick Amiel says, "The free being who abandons the conduct of himself, yields to Satan; in the moral world there is no ground without a master; and the waste lands belong to the Evil One." I have mentioned how the Apostle Paul educated, worked up, his conscience. The young man Joseph, in the house of Potiphar, answered the Tempter, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" The young man Daniel, like Joseph, the depository of the purposes of the Almighty respecting kings and kingdoms, when the commandment of King Darius was to the effect that for thirty days no petition should be offered up to any god or man, except to Darius himself, opened his window toward Jerusalem, as Solomon had conditioned prayer for the exile in the dedication of the temple, and prayed as aforetime! These men are samples of conscientious men under the old dispensation. As the psalmist expresses it after he has sinned: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight," so these men are kept from sinning, because it is always sinning against God.

We are very much perplexed by sociological questions. Edward Markham, in his remarkable poem founded on Millet's "Man with the Hoe," urges this very searching interrogatory:—

"Who made him dead to rapture and despair?
A thing that grieves not, and never hopes?
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?"

Certainly, not America, where no such peasant was ever known. The very implement that he handles, shows him of medieval or oriental origin. Certainly, not Christianity. We have a new word for an old thing. We have come to study what we call sociology, as though it were a science especially of this period. But, if we will know the Gospels better, and apply them to our civilization, as they were applied by the apostles, we shall see that we are confronted by old questions under new names. We study the subject philosophically; supplying the results of our psychological analysis. And we seek less the renovation of society, after the method of the apostles, than for power to analyze and account for deplorable social conditions, according to psychological principles. We talk about the deplorable social condition of man. But, one of the challenges God makes, is that the "wayfaring man," though a fool, need not err in treading the highway that has been thrown up between earth and heaven. The Man of Nazareth comes with Gilead's balm, even for such a wreck of manhood as Markham has depicted. He straightens up this shapeless thing, monstrous and distorted; he touches it again with immortality, gives back the upward look, the light, the music, and the dream of life. He attunes it to heaven; he makes right the immemorial infamies, heals the immedicable woes,—he, the Man who had not where to lay his head; the Man, from whom his generation, all generations, have hid as it were their faces; who was treated as an outcast and put to death between two felons. Is any man offended, and he burns not? It is not social conditions that necessarily degrade men: it is ethical conditions. This Man of Nazareth consecrated the cross to which he was nailed. So may any man consecrate his axe, pen, dungeon-depths, the scaffold. There is not a working-man living, however humble his lot, who might not find in that lot something like what Burns found in

the lot of the cotter, as portrayed in "The Cotter's Saturday Night,"—parental love, filial love, honest service, reverence for God, love of country. Suppose we take now a man with all the genius of Burns, and condition him so that he finds nothing in the lot of his father, or in his own lot, but what awakens discouragement or disgust. Let us go a step farther, and imagine him as conditioning himself; that it should be true, as Wordsworth describes Burns himself:—

" He faltered, drifted to and fro,
And passed away."

Suppose now we ask, respecting Burns,

" What gulfs between him and the seraphim !
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him
Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades ? "

And then recall that God in Nature came to him, as perhaps never before or since has he come to any man, in the mountain daisy, the laverock, the mouse, the sheep, home-life; that he did not have to climb heights to bring poetry down, but found it everywhere. What need had he of Plato and the Pleiades ?

When the Bible encounters that which makes us discuss sociological perplexities, it brings us an ethical solution of them. For an imperfect domestic economy, it says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Take the Cross into domestic relations. Does psychological science ever present such a solution as this? How many homes would be broken up, how many desecrated by man's awful law of divorce, if such love could be guaranteed from the husband to the wife? And so of filial love; here is the antidote for any deficiency there: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." Every time, we have the conscience taken right back to the Cross. And as to civic duties, what is the remedy for failure here? "Let

every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God"; "For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing"; "Owe no man anything, but to love one another; he that loveth another has fulfilled the law." And as to labor questions, how are they treated? "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ"; "And ye masters, do the same things unto them; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him."

The ethics of the Bible imply that God makes men to differ; is in their differences. The psalmist appeals to these differences to illustrate his Godhead in human affairs. God governs men through these differences. These differences afford opportunity for development, for the exercise of graces, for the unfolding of Christian character; they constitute the economy through which man manifests himself to man and to God; yes, God manifests himself to man. And the improvement or neglect of them is the ground on which we are to be called to account hereafter. If differences sometimes discourage men, they more frequently inspire them.

I think it is a mistake to suppose that, in "the man with the hoe," the author of the "Angelus" intended to furnish a text for the socialist and the anarchist. His group of peasant pictures, of which this is only one, only gives us the round of situations and employments among the humbler classes. The One Hundred and Seventh Psalm has this repeated refrain: "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men!" The psalm is a series of pictures of man in various conditions and experiences, out of which God interposes to deliver him: of men in captivity,

hungry and thirsty, wandering in the wilderness; under God's chastening hand for their sins, their hearts brought down with labor, abhorring all manner of meat, and drawing near to the gateway of death; in perils by sea, mounting up to the heavens and going down to the depths, their soul melted within them because of trouble; making a new settlement in the wilderness, and preparing to sow fields and plant vineyards, as did the Pilgrim Fathers; and all this enumeration of particulars is to illustrate how God interposes for each several class; while the psalm closes with the verse: "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." God reveals himself in the differences in human economy, in the heights and depths of social life; and we are not to talk about whether this man or his parents have sinned, but to see the works of God manifested in them. In his father, a stone-mason, Carlyle saw greater possibilities than in himself. Why should not their lots have been interchanged? Simply, that a foundation in life, like masonry underground, might be made by the father for the son. Precious stones in architecture are these foundation-stones. Says Walt Whitman even:—

"Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?

It is not chaos and death; it is form, union, and plan."

"Consider the work of God; for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful; but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other." Into this economy, we are introduced for ethical purposes; just as Adam and Eve were placed in Eden. And God asks us, as he asked them, "Hast thou eaten of the tree, of which I said, Thou shalt not eat of it?" Here is where we stand or fall.

Invaluable as is the mariner's compass, it has to be regulated. In Boston Harbor there are four buoys, anchored

at the four points of the compass, for this very purpose,—to regulate the compasses of vessels that are going on a long voyage. The compass has to be compared with something man did not make; something that represents the eternities; something that God made and fixed eternal. What man makes, is only relative in its qualities. With the man who says, "And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man," it had not always been so. There was a time when, as he said of himself, he "verily thought" he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." The light that was in him was darkness. It was not long ago that an ocean liner took its large freight of living beings right upon a rock lying seventy miles out of its regular course. The man at the wheel; where was he? The North Star? There was a dense fog. In the conflict between the Mother Country and the Afrianders, a chivalric general confessed that the failure of his soldiers was his own fault, and not theirs. He had blundered, not the men. Brave General White!

It is so of everything in which man seeks proficiency. He is liable to failure in it. His success is always relative. He has to exercise himself with reference to it; to keep himself up to it. All art is of this nature; even with animals. The horse whose owner makes a specialty of speed, has to be speeded every day; and the day this is neglected, that day he begins to depreciate. Since the advent of the Man of Nazareth, two new ethical forces have come into the world: First, his life has given to man a new ideal, has shown what is true moral greatness; secondly, what he has done on the Cross has made it possible for man, in some true sense, to realize this new ideal in himself. He has been set on his feet. There has been no change of the ideal. The law of love requires no more, expects no more, to-day, than has always been the case,

than when Adam and Eve were in Eden: requires no more than it did when Abraham lived; when Enoch walked with God. But, in the human life of our Elder Brother, we have seen the ideal realized; what was before, like Mount Blanc, standing up distant and frozen against the sky, has been actually surmounted: its summit reached, its altitude conquered, it is beneath man's feet. Our Representative has been there: is there. "Leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps"; "Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"; "Thou art fairer than the children of men"; "The Chief among ten thousands, the One altogether lovely."

There is no painting of Niagara that compares with that by Church; and since this painting came from his hand, all painters of such subjects have had pressed home upon them a new standard. There is no painting of animals like the animal-painting of Rosa Bonheur. A German artist has made a specialty of painting childhood. He stands at the head of his class. Every great and original artist presses home upon mankind a new standard, whatever his department of work. Now, instead of having presented to us moral standards that fail just where we need them most, we have, in Jesus of Nazareth, a Being who actually lived and died on earth, of whom his contemporaries had to say, "He hath done all things well," and who challenged them thus: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" "In morality as well as art," says Renau, in his "Life of Jesus," "words are nothing, deeds are everything. The idea which is concealed beneath a picture of Raphael is a small thing; it is the picture alone that counts. Likewise, in morality, truth becomes of value, only if it pass to the condition of feeling; and it attains all its pre-

sciousness, only when it is realized in the world as a fact. Men of indifferent morals have written very good maxims. Men, very virtuous also, have done nothing to continue the tradition of their virtue in the world. The palm belongs to him who has been mighty in word and in work ; who has felt the truth, and at the price of his blood has made it to triumph. Jesus, from this double point of view, is without equal : his glory remains complete, and will be renewed forever !” Yes ; Christ has revolutionized the moral standards of the race, by showing that love to God and love to man is the fulfilling of the law ; that it is not intelligence and philosophy that are required, since this Man went to no great schools of philosophy ; it is not stoicism, since this Man wept at the grave of Lazarus ; was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, had his Gethsemane and Calvary ; in the garden cried, “ It it be possible, let this cup pass from me !” and on the Cross, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ” ; it is not in moderation, since this Man defended himself from extravagant deeds in the temple, with the words, “ The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ” ; poured out his life unto death for transgressors, displayed the love that conquers death.

We have now in the world not only the new ideal, but a practical way of realizing it. “ I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me. ” Humanity is supplemented, filled out, made sufficient, by help from God ; and that help comes through the Man Christ Jesus ; through his death, which brings life. Nearly all artists have some secret, which is real or imaginary, and which they purposely conceal from all competitors. But, our great Master became incarnate, came into flesh and blood, that he might show us how to do it ; what is real human nature as God intended it, when he said, “ Let us make man in our own image. ” The marring of the first Adam has been more

than retrieved in the second Adam; the Lord from heaven. And he does his work through an inward method; not by our being born of flesh and blood, but by our being born of water and of the Spirit; by giving us a new mind and a right spirit. "The man of true genius," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "instead of spending all his hours, as many artists do, while they are at Rome, in measuring statues and copying pictures, soon begins to think for himself, and endeavors to do something like what he sees." The coming of the Great Master into our lives through the new birth, was not intended to make us copyists.

But he makes us think for ourselves; and do something like what we see in him. He says, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" A voice from the most excellent glory says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Master's great pupil, the Apostle to the Gentiles, says, "Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man." He is living under the new commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." How does he do it? Just as his Master,—by coming not to do his own will, but the will of Him that sent him. His will is set at that angle. It catches all the breezes of heaven. Or, in his own terms, "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." There is nothing more *sui generis* than the life of Cyrus Hamlin, or John G. Paton, or Alexander Duff, or Chinese Gordon, or Saul of Tarsus, or Mary Lyon, or Fidelia Fisk. Their lives have all the fascination of romance. Truth is not only stranger than fiction; it is mightier. Christianity is the supernatural illustrating itself in the natural. "True art," says Allan Cunningham, "is nature exalted and refined, but it is nature

still." And when our Saviour teaches us, that 'Except we receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, we cannot enter therein,' he implies that Christianity, as Adolphe Monod has phrased it, in the title to one of his sermons, is glorified childhood. It may be said, if said reverently, that our Elder Brother had a genius for perfect morality; was constituted so that it was his nature; had a perfect moral balance. The kingdom of God was set up in him at birth. He stands as our Model, Master, Teacher. He has the perfect Christian conscience; intelligent, practised, sensitive, imperial.

Yes, in the life of the Son of man, the human conscience finds a new standard. Quintilian accuses ancient philosophers of concealing the worst vices under the name of philosophy. But Christ always called things by their right names. Christ's life was as open as the day. Dr. Bersier of Paris says, "I should like to forget for one moment that I am a Christian; to forget all that I have learned in the Gospel; to contemplate for the first time, this holy, this adorable figure, and tell you what I find in his presence. A man can depict beauty that is imperfect, because some feature impresses him beyond all others. We speak of the moderation of Epaminondas, the constancy of Regulus, the faith of St. Paul, the charity of Vincent de Paul. But, what trait is prominent in the Lord Jesus Christ? In him all is harmony. And his character makes real the admirable definition of perfection, given by Pascal: 'That which fills the two extremes, and all between!' All good qualities are at the basis of his character, and combine in the attribute of holiness, which crowns them. In his presence, one can no longer analyze, he must admire; if his heart is right, he must fall upon his knees, and adore." Think of the period at which Christ came; how cruel it was, how cruel the nation to which he came, how obtuse to spiritual things. "In him was life, and the life was the

light of men." In the "Library of Famous Literature," occurs an article by Anthony Trollope, the novelist, on "The Savagery of Classic Times." Suicide was the common way of avoiding otherwise inevitable misfortune. That was the method too of the jailer of Philippi. Trollope gives thirty-seven prominent names in Roman history, —warriors, statesmen, orators, philosophers, including the names of Cæsar and Pompey, the three Ciceros (brother, father, and son), Mark Antony, Cato, Brutus, Cassius,—adding that of Cleopatra, and saying that not more than three of them all died a natural death, or fighting in battle; they were either assassinated by their personal enemies, or put to death at their own request, or killed themselves. This fact gives to the word of the Saviour, "The Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them"; yes, and to the word under the Cross: "He saved others, himself he cannot save," new significance. "Do thyself no harm," said Paul to the jailer of Philippi. This was the gospel against suicide.

The weakness of the ordinary conscience is that it is not practised. It is like the unpractised eye in vision. At the grave of Lazarus, our Saviour said in his prayer, "Father, I know that thou hearest me always." He did always the things that were pleasing to the Father. To grieve the conscience, shuts out the vision of God: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; "Brethren, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." This is a *sine qua non*. It is the practised conscience that pleases God; the conscience exercised so that it is without offense toward God and toward man. It is the eye that has not even a mote in it, that can see to remove other motes. Think of standing before an open tomb with the expectation of calling the dead

back to life, because we have fulfilled the condition of always pleasing God! This is what our Elder Brother, the Lord of glory, did. There has been in others such a degree of intimacy with God, such an attitude of inquiry and obedience toward him, that 'women have received their dead raised to life again; others have been tortured, not accepting deliverance; others had cruel mockings and scourgings; were stoned, were sawn asunder, tempted, were slain with the sword, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.'" Miracles and martyrdom in persons sane, are incomprehensible without a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man; without it, there is no communication with God, no comfort in him.

The next quality in the Christian conscience is its sensitiveness. "Truly the light is sweet, and pleasant it is for the eyes to behold the sun." But the eye must be adjusted to the light. The light must be friendly to the eye. It may be too intense. A man may have lived so long in darkness, that every ray of light is a dagger to him. There was a king once who broke relations with God. God's prophet forsook him. He could get no answer from God, whether by dream, by Urim or Thummin. In desperation, he stole away one night, in disguise, the night before he was to perish by the hand of his armor-bearer in battle, and called on the witch of Endor for information respecting his fate. He had on his head the anointing of God; God's prophet had kissed him in approval. But he had become so far estranged from God, and was in such desperate straits; yes, his conscience had become so seared as with a hot iron, that he could do this; he could break the law of God, and the law of the land, which was represented in himself, and ask counsel of a witch of a woman who professed to communicate with the inhabitants of the unseen world. He got his answer, his doom

confirmed! The other world already knew of his coming.

Cases of casuistry are not for the man of the sensitive conscience. He is not splitting hairs. He is not quibbling. He is always on the side of obedience. He is not asking how near he can go toward disobedience, toward apostasy, without losing his balance, and going over. The man who once thought he verily ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, who stood sponsor for the death of the martyr Stephen, became so sensitive that he would not eat meat offered in sacrifice to an idol, lest he might cause a weak brother to stumble or be made weak. Where did St. Paul get that illumined conscience? He got it at the Cross of Him who had said to the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

But this sensitive conscience is imperial. When it has struck, the hour is come. It is the only earthly authority that is supreme. It always says with Luther at Worms: "Here I stand! I can do no other." What other was he asked to do? To take the moral supremacy of another man. What did he himself propose? Only that his views might be shown to be wrong, from the Word of God; from the mouth of God's servants; from the life of the Man Christ Jesus; to find God and to obey him. Why was he out there in the forefront of the battle? What kept him there? Conscience. Loyalty to conscience. His enemies were ready to make terms with him; to buy and sell if he would. Why was it impossible for him? Because of his conscience. Carl Von Miltitz, a Saxon nobleman, said, "I would not undertake, with twenty-five thousand men, to carry Luther across the Alps," a harder task than ever fell to Hannibal or Napoleon. What made him so ponderous? so like a mountain of rock? The Alps could be scaled, but not with Luther as a burden. What had brought him along that painful and dangerous way to the edge of the precipice on which, as it seemed to his best friends, he

now stood? His conscience. His conscience, that sat on the throne within, the great white throne of his being, and wore the crown of his being; the crown of crowns! He wanted no such collision with the great of the earth as that in which he found himself involved. He said, "Convict me of error, and I am ready to throw my books into the fire." If error, no bonfire than that of them would have pleased him better. After his interview with the Diet at Worms, he said to a friend, awaiting him at his lodgings, "I am through! I am through! I am through! Even though I had a hundred heads, I would have had them all cut off at once, before I would have recanted anything." There would be no bonfire of his kindling, if he had to furnish the fuel.

It is conscience that clears the atmosphere. It is conscience that sounds the bugle-call. It is conscience that presses home the standard. It is imperial. It brooks no appeal. "Piety," says Amiel, "is the daily renewing of the ideal, the steadying of our inner being, agitated, troubled, embittered by the common accidents of existence." What says the North Star? Steer that way. "Thou hast a witness in thy conscience, and thy conscience is God speaking to thee, speaking in thee." "I was afraid of nothing," said Luther, reviewing the events at Worms, from his death-bed. "God can make one so daring!" The ideal of our being is renewed, is reestablished, every time we kneel to God in real prayer. We take the oath of allegiance anew. In that act we are compelled to compare ourselves with God's requirements; with our own covenant; with the purchase-money paid for our redemption; with the duty then upon us from God! It compares us with these things. Am I ready to obey? When I ask for light, am I ready to walk in it? It is not, What would Jesus do, were he in my stead? but, What would he have me to do? He cannot be in my stead; I am in his stead.

I in my generation, as Martin Luther in his. Christ lived his earthly life: I must live mine. Martin Luther lived his life: I must live mine.

This is an age in which we allow conscience to have but little part. That is Puritanic, it is charged; and Puritanism is a back number. We have surrendered its scepter to expediency, to taste, to society, to philosophy. What do they say? Ah, it was conscience that made our forefathers great; that founded this great Republic; that has given it its great mission. If it had not been for conscience, the Mayflower would have foundered on Plymouth Rock. It is conscience, and conscience alone, that can make the future secure; that will take us through the golden gate of our coming years. Do we sometimes forget that Christianity addresses man in his moral nature; and through his moral nature, regulates him, guides him, inspires him, makes him act like a new creature in Christ Jesus? Dr. Forsyth, at the recent Congregational Conference in Boston, said, "The Redeemer from moral death is the seat of authority for all mankind." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Commandments! Art thou a king then? "For this cause, came I into the world." Every time we inhale the atmosphere of the Bible, every time we approach the mercy-seat in prayer, every time we walk with Jesus, we clarify the blood of our spiritual nature. Every beat of our hearts is not only the beat of funeral marches to the grave, but better, a life-beat demanding more life from Him who says of himself, that he came here that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. We ought to grow in grace, through the constant pressing home upon us, by our consciences, of God's word, of the life, the claims, of Him who spake as never man spake, who lived as never man lived, who is the unspeakable gift, and to whom we owe the unspeakable debt.